

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: Wednesday, September 1, 1993

2:30 p.m.

Date: 93/09/01

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head:

Prayers

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

Our Father, we thank You for Your abundant blessings to our province and ourselves.

We ask You to ensure to us Your guidance and the will to follow it.

Amen.

As is our tradition in this House, we offer our respect to a former member who has passed away.

On July 10, 1993, the accidental death occurred of Donald Hugh Sparrow. Don Sparrow represented the constituency of Wetaskiwin-Leduc for the Progressive Conservative Party. He was first elected in the general election of November 2, 1982, re-elected in the 1986 and 1989 general elections, and served until 1993. On November 19, 1982, Don Sparrow was appointed associate minister of public lands and wildlife. In February 1986 he was appointed minister of forestry and held that portfolio until September 1987, when he was appointed minister of tourism. On December 15, 1992, he was appointed Minister of Economic Development and Tourism and was responsible for technology, the Alberta Research Council, and the international trade offices until June 29, 1993.

I would ask that we bow our heads in a moment of silent prayer as we remember this former member of this House.

Rest eternal grant unto him, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon him.

Amen.

head:

Notices of Motions

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise under Standing Order 40 to give oral notice that after question period I will rise to seek unanimous consent of the Assembly to deal with the following motion:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly congratulate Cecilia Johnstone in her new position as president of the Canadian Bar Association.

head:

Tabling Returns and Reports

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table copies of the final communiqué issued at the 34th Annual Premiers' Conference, held last week in Baddeck, Nova Scotia.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table today the following financial statements for the year ended March 31, 1993: the Alberta health care insurance fund, the Alberta Children's provincial general hospital, the Alberta Hospital Edmonton, the Alberta Hospital Ponoka, the University Hospitals Board, the Glenrose rehabilitation hospital, and the Foothills provincial general hospital.

MR. SPEAKER: I am pleased to table with the Assembly the Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the 1993 General Enumeration, as submitted to the Speaker of the Legislative

Assembly and distributed to all members pursuant to section 4 of the Election Act.

Pursuant to section 23 and section 25 of the Conflicts of Interest Act I am pleased to table with the Assembly the report of the Ethics Commissioner's investigation into allegations involving the Hon. Kenneth R. Kowalski, Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services, August 26, 1993, as submitted to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and distributed to all members of this Assembly.

Pursuant to the provisions of section 4 of the Election Act I am pleased to table with the Assembly the report of the Chief Electoral Officer concerning the provincial general election which was held on Tuesday, June 15, 1993. Copies of the report are being distributed to members of the Assembly.

head:

Introduction of Special Guests

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you a third-year university student from the riding of Calgary-Foothills. She's studying political science at the University of Calgary and is visiting us today before she begins classes next week. She's seated in the members' gallery. I'd ask Colleen Williams to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

MR. BRACKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to introduce to you and through you a special guest from Cape Town, South Africa, Margary McLelland, who is visiting our province and our country. She is accompanied by Marion Godwin and Bob Godwin of St. Albert and further their daughter Jenny, who is a page here in the Legislative Assembly. They are located in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. We would ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

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

MS HALEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly two former MLAs for the riding of Three Hills: Connie Osterman and Allan Warrack. Please rise. I invite all members to give them the traditional welcome of the House.

head:

Ministerial Statements

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Environmental Protection.

Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to announce today the implementation of the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act, an Act that sets the standard for environmental legislation in North America and an Act that provides Albertans with a one-window approach to environmental protection, regulations, and consultation. The Act was developed by Albertans through the most comprehensive consultation process in our province's history and establishes the protection of our environment as an important part of our daily affairs, whether as individuals, groups, or corporations.

While the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act provides a framework of broad environmental laws, its new regulations outline specific rules governing a wide range of activities that affect our environment. Some of these regulations include the establishment of a legislated environmental impact

assessment process; stronger penalties for corporations and individuals who knowingly pollute the environment; increased public consultation, participation, and education; and improved access to information on proposed developments affecting the environment. These regulations recognize that all sectors of society share responsibility as stewards of our environment and provide the legal foundation for protecting and enhancing our environment for present and future generations.

Mr. Speaker, the implementation of this Act sets a milestone in the history of our province, establishing environmental protection standards that will carry us into the 21st century.

In making this statement today, I'd like to recognize the efforts of our Premier, who initially developed the Act and regulations as minister of the environment. I'd also like to recognize the work of my department staff who assisted in developing the Act and the regulations. Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize the thousands of Albertans who participated in the process that made the Act what it is: an Act made by Albertans for Albertans and an example of what our government is all about.

Thank you.

2:40

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

MR. DECORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The opposition is pleased that the Alberta Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act is now implemented. I recall, as many members of this Assembly who are returning will recall, the black process that we saw unveiled in the AI-Pac process, a process that didn't exist at the outset, that saw environmentalists from all over Alberta calling for a proper review, that saw members of this Assembly calling for such a review, a government that at first denied a review, then allowed a review, and then a Premier who in spite of the recommendations of that review thwarted or circumvented those recommendations. This kind of an Act, we hope, will never allow that kind of procedure to occur again. We are on the front line in terms of the protection of soil and air and water for Albertans. We must ensure that everything is done that needs to be done for that protection for Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, there are some problems with the Act. There is still uncertainty as to decisions that are made and then those decisions being reviewed by ministers or political people in authority. We don't think that's right. We think that's wrong for business and wrong for the protection of Albertans. We will be making suggestions in due course on how that can be improved. So it's with good and bad that we see the implementation of this Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head:

Statement by the Speaker

Oral Question Period Practices

MR. SPEAKER: Just for the advice of hon. members, it's the Chair's understanding that there are negotiations proceeding concerning the number of questions the Leader of the Opposition has but that they haven't been concluded. So it's the Chair's intention to carry on with the agreement that was in effect in the last Legislature until these negotiations conclude, at which time the Chair is happy to accede to the agreement. Therefore until that is completed, we will continue with the previous agreement, which was two questions for the Leader of the Opposition with two supplementals to each of them.

head:

Oral Question Period

Child Welfare

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, it's an honour for me to stand and to put forward my first question as Leader of the Opposition in this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, all of us in this Assembly and every Albertan knows that there has to be expenditure cutbacks, but I think every Albertan knows, accepts, and wants to see that those cutbacks aren't done on the backs of the poor or the disadvantaged. For over 20 years commissions that have been set up by Conservative parties in this province have condemned the government's treatment of children who are under the care of the government, child welfare. In August the latest report, the Children's Advocate report, stated that there was a direct relationship between poverty and children coming into the care of the government. Just two weeks after getting that report, the minister ignored the recommendations of the report and forced cutbacks on children whose families are receiving social assistance. My first question to the minister responsible for social services is this. I'd like the minister to explain to Albertans why he has bludgeoned families on assistance when his own report says that this action will have no other effect than to force even more children into the care of the government.

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured that the new Official Opposition leader would ask me the first question in this House. I'd just like to indicate to this Assembly, like I have before, that we are concerned in Alberta and we care for the people we look after under my department. I've also always indicated that our budgets will be in line with that. Our target was to make sure that the high-needs area of this department gets the dollars. That is why, even with the cuts we've done in the department, we have increased the budget in that particular area by \$9 million this year.

I would like to ask the opposition member, Mr. Speaker. In the January 20th *Edmonton Sun* the member was quoted as saying that there will be brutal cuts if he was . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, hon. minister. I really can't allow the minister to ask a question.

First supplemental question.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, we accept that there should have been and need to be brutal cuts, but that means getting rid of free cars, that means stopping the giving away of moneys to corporations, that means closing down foreign offices. It does not mean putting this on the backs of poor people and children.

Mr. Speaker, there are 88,000 Alberta children who are part of families who get social assistance. We've had a Premier traveling around Alberta saying to Albertans that he cares. I want to ask the Premier to tell Albertans why he doesn't care for these children in poverty.

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, that question was framed in a very negative way, but I'll try to answer in as positive a manner as I possibly can. The welfare reforms that have been brought in by the minister are specifically designed to get those who are capable and willing to work back in the work force. The welfare reforms are designed to look after those who legitimately need the care of society. It's as simple as that. The minister is not out to hurt anyone. The Premier is not out to hurt anyone. The hardworking people within the Department of Family and Social Services are not out to hurt anyone, and for the Leader of the

Opposition in his inaugural statement to say that we're putting everything on the backs of the poor and children is a disgraceful statement relative to those professionals and those politicians who are committed to caring for the people in this province who need care.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, we're talking about cuts to children.

My last question is to the minister responsible. The minister has indicated that if these cuts are too hard, he would reconsider his position, the government's position. There are all kinds of experts who must have been around to give advice to the minister on this issue. I'd like to ask the minister who the experts were that told the minister to cut back the assistance on school transportation to children living in families that get social assistance. Who were the experts that said cut back school supplies to children that are on social assistance? Who were these people, Mr. Minister?

MR. CARDINAL: I'd like to advise the hon. member – he may not be aware – that we spent close to \$250 million in my budget for programs designed for children. Child welfare's total budget is \$160 million, handicapped children's services is \$90 million, and day care is over \$70 million, Mr. Speaker, to look after the needs of children in this province. The welfare reforms we've put in place allow in fact welfare recipients to earn additional income, and when that happens, they will have the dollars to be able to pay those additional fees.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, the question was: who were the experts?

Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, my second question, if I'm permitted to proceed. There are 15,000 Albertans who are part of a program that we know as the assured income for the severely handicapped. These are people with mental and/or physical disabilities which make it impossible for them to work. The minister has instructed his department to take one out of every five people on AISH off AISH. Presumably these people will go on social assistance, and the government will save a few hundred dollars on each of these people each month. My first question to the minister responsible is this. Mr. Minister, hog boards have quotas; chicken boards have quotas. Why would you want to put people on these kinds of quotas?

2:50

MR. CARDINAL: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to advise the hon. member that our budget in this province for people on AISH is \$158 million. We have over 15,000 cases of AISH in this province. Our overall plan of reform is to assist those people that are able to work either through training or direct placements in employment to have that opportunity to get back into the work force. Those that are not able to do so will continue the assistance under AISH.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, when the minister talked about \$158 million for AISH, he should have also said that a million dollars was given by that government to a riverboat that still has to see the water.

Mr. Speaker, my second question to the minister is this. It's my experience and it's the experience I'm sure of members of this Assembly that when they're trying to work for a constituent who wants to get on AISH, they must talk to doctors, they must talk to professionals, and those professionals must verify whether or

not a person goes on AISH. I'd like to ask the minister how it's possible for departmental officials arbitrarily to simply take somebody off that AISH list, ignoring that verification.

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to advise the hon. member that part of the policy is to ensure that we are consistent in following our regulations. A monthly review is done on AISH files, and a report is required on an ongoing basis. The only people that will be moved to SFI, if they're eligible, will be people that cannot get those certifications from doctors.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, the verification process, the process of putting somebody on AISH, acknowledges the fact that these people are unemployable. By just the flick of a pen some bureaucrat or some minister can say: you're no longer on AISH. I'd like to ask the minister: with an 11 percent unemployment rate in this province where does he expect these people to go?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, I believe that when the hon. member indicates that people on AISH are unemployable, he's totally wrong, because a lot of people on AISH want to get back into the work force. They may not have been employable at one time for various reasons. I've had two people just recently that are in wheelchairs. One with amputated legs and diabetes approached me and said: you are doing the right thing, because I want to take training and I want to get back into the work force. My plan is to do exactly that.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

Health Care System

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Health. The constituents in Lethbridge-West have a number of concerns, and this includes deficit and debt, unemployment, the management of water, and of course health care. At the recent roundtable in Red Deer we were pleased to have a representative within our constituency, the chairman of the Lethbridge regional hospital board, invited and participate in those deliberations. However, my question to the minister is: why was the chairman of the St. Michael's hospital board excluded?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, there were 12 individuals from various sectors in the province requested to assist in the process as moderators and reporters at the conference. The person that the member alludes to was requested to attend as a moderator and a reporter, which she did in a very capable fashion, and was not there representing the distinct interests of a hospital.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, it is very important in the constituency that we be consistent regarding issues that we see as local issues. I want the minister to assure this House through me, then, to the constituents of Lethbridge-West that this is not an example of a favouritism situation toward the Lethbridge regional hospital and would like to hear what the current government position is regarding that local issue.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. minister.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The issue the member refers to is the two institutions in Lethbridge: St. Michael's, which is an extended care facility, and the Lethbridge

regional hospital. There have been discussions within the community and between the two hospital boards as to the appropriate role for each of those institutions. I would inform the House that I have met with both the chairmen and CEOs of both boards. I have asked them to carefully assess the health needs of the community and the communities around them that they serve, because they are a regional area, and to ensure that we are able through those facilities to meet those health needs in the most cost-effective, efficient manner possible. The boards have assured me that they will do that. They are meeting, and I have offered any other assistance that the Department of Health might offer. They are elected and appointed duly in their communities to represent those interests, and I think that's most appropriate. I'm most pleased with the progress that they are making.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

Government Appointments

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government talks about promoting the Alberta Advantage in trade around the world, yet so far it seems like the only advantage they are interested in promoting is that of former Alberta Tory cabinet ministers. The Minister of Economic Development and Tourism talks about a minor job being created. My question is to the Premier. If the government is concerned, in fact, about cutting costs and in fact this is a minor job, could the Premier explain why a minor job for \$50,000 for six months was created for the former minister from Red Deer-South, Mr. John Oldring?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, as you know, we're interested as a government in pursuing our advantage under the North American free trade agreement, and this involves becoming involved to some degree in Mexico. The former member was working on a number of international initiatives. It was an undertaking by the then minister, the late Don Sparrow, that he would continue work as a consultant, and the current minister is simply fulfilling that commitment.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, the work doesn't seem very good so far, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there are 146,000 Albertans unemployed today. The government claims that they're interested in promoting jobs. Why didn't they allow one of those other 146,000 unemployed Albertans even the opportunity to apply for this job? Why wasn't it opened up?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe the former member had a certain amount of expertise in this situation. It was not inappropriate at all to make this appointment understanding that there was a commitment by the former minister and that this individual, Mr. Oldring, had some expertise and indeed was working in the international field.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

3:00

Irrigation Funding

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development announced the government would be providing funding to irrigation districts to assist in funding. My question in this dynamic area of irrigation, which predominantly in southern Alberta assists to a great degree the value-added component that was previously alluded to and is an integral part of the farming picture in southern Alberta,

is: would the minister please advise the Assembly what action has been taken in this recent announcement?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you to the hon. Member for Little Bow. It's certainly well recognized that irrigation plays a very important role in the agricultural development of our province, for though it only covers 4 percent of the actual agricultural area of some 53 million acres, it generates fully 18 percent of all agricultural revenue. So certainly the irrigation component of agriculture is a very important one.

The announcement that was made was basically to cover short-term funding that may or may not be required by the various irrigation districts to carry on with their operations. As the member may understand, the agricultural community basically is front heavy with costs. Now, as far as irrigation is concerned, the revenues from the water usage don't come in until later on in the year. Though the costs are ongoing, the revenue comes in later on in the year, and in some cases there may or may not be a need for some additional funding. This would allow the opportunity for the irrigation districts to borrow at an enhanced interest rate and would therefore allow them some cost savings.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your answer, minister, and I know that the irrigators themselves are appreciative of any assistance in the form of this funding project that you've offered to them, given that they're subject to the rates of EEMA on a commercial rate and the fact that they are subject to seasonal crops. Can the minister advise whether there has been any cost associated with this practice that happened in the past?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This practice has been ongoing for many, many years – some 15 years, in fact. With the new open-government policy of our Premier and our government we have now acknowledged the fact that this is here. There has never been a nonpayment in the past, and we don't anticipate any reason to be concerned at all. There is virtually no risk whatsoever in this area.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Leduc.

Propane Buses

MR. KIRKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question this afternoon is to the hon. Minister of Transportation and Utilities. As the hon. minister is aware, this morning a propane-fueled school bus caught fire while transporting schoolchildren to St. Joe's high school. Fortunately, all the children were safely evacuated. This is not the first occurrence of this type that we've had in the province, pertaining to school buses being fueled by propane. I think it's important and it's very imperative that we determine if it is safe or it is not safe to transport schoolchildren on school buses that are fueled by propane. Will the minister commit to establish a task force of industry experts to determine if our schoolchildren are at risk as they are being transported on propane-fueled school buses?

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that we get a report back first and see what happened before we decide whether we should have a public inquiry. My understanding from my brief report is that it was not an explosion, that it was an

electrical fire. Once we have the report back, we'll be able to decide whether we should move with an inquiry or not.

MR. KIRKLAND: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary to the minister. As I indicated in my preamble previously, this is not the first occurrence, and from our information I think that propane was involved in this particular situation. As the hon. minister knows, a task force was commissioned after the 1991 Carseland accident. I would ask the minister today, if in fact he's not willing to commission a task force to deal with this situation, why he will not release the full report of the task force that was commissioned as a result of the 1991 Carseland fire.

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware that the task force report of the last incident was not released. I'll have to have a look at that.

First of all, with compassion and with care and with sincere support for the students on the bus, I would like to see an investigation done, see what the report has in it before we move with a task force ruling out all propane buses. I might say that the propane bus industry in the province has worked well for a number of years, but certainly if there's a reason to change it, I would be looking at that.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury.

Beatrice Foods Inc.

MR. BRASSARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the last provincial election we heard very clearly how the people of Alberta felt about loans and loan guarantees. They told me in no uncertain terms that governments have no business in business. I recently learned that we've advanced \$2 million to Beatrice Foods for the construction of an \$11 million cookie plant. To the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development: can the minister explain how he justifies our involvement in this project?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you to the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury. Certainly we have an opportunity to fulfill a commitment that we have made to the agricultural community of Alberta. This is the process. We have the opportunity to fulfill the commitment to diversification; we have the commitment to fulfill the opportunity of value added. This will make a very substantive contribution to the development of both of those processes in Alberta. The program that you are referring to is the CAPA program. It's a federal/provincial program that is capped at \$18 million. It's a five-year program that was put in place in 1992 and will continue until 1995. It fulfills all of the commitments that we had made to the agricultural community. We have to keep in mind that the processing, the valued-added component of agriculture, is growing at three times the level of the primary industry. So this is an excellent opportunity for us to fulfill the opportunities of agriculture as well as for the poor people who may be seeking jobs in Alberta, who were referred to earlier by the Leader of the Opposition. This fulfills their opportunities and their dreams as well.

MR. BRASSARD: Well, Mr. Speaker, we've justified our involvement in the agricultural industry: to create jobs and so on and so forth. I realize that this particular program may be different from the others, but could the minister then tell us what our track record is in this program? How many projects have we got on stream, and what's their status?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, the opportunities that have been presented in this program have been multiple and cover a very varied field of agricultural opportunities. To date we have dealt with 32 applicants. That will create \$25 million of actual value that has been contributed by the various companies themselves to the growth of this province. To date we have not had a setback, and we have no reason to anticipate a setback. Our equity that we are involving ourselves with into the overall projects is always very low. We keep our portfolios balanced so that we do have that protection as well.

DR. PERCY: Mr. Speaker, throughout the election campaign we listened to this government say that it was going to get out of the business of being in business. In the throne speech we heard this government say that it was going to be out of the business of being in business. My question is to the minister of agriculture. Mr. Minister, how is it that you can justify this type of loan when we're cutting back payments to schoolchildren whose parents are on social assistance? How can you make that type of justification for this loan?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, as I had responded to the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury, this is an opportunity that we had committed to. There will virtually be no cost to the Alberta taxpayer, so I'm not quite certain that I understand how we have that rationalization. We have an opportunity to expand our diversification, which we had committed to during the campaign. Albertans told us: "This is what we want. We want to have the opportunity to go to work. We want to have the opportunity to allow the people of Alberta to be beneficial, to be productive." This type of program will allow those opportunities as well as the opportunities to the agricultural community to better utilize at a higher value the products they are producing.

3:10

DR. PERCY: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is to the minister of agriculture. Beatrice is a huge Canadian/U.S. conglomerate. It's well-to-do. If this is such a great market opportunity, why do they need a loan guarantee? Why aren't other firms coming in? [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order, order.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity of responding to the question.

The opportunities of course are varied, as I had mentioned to the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury, who had originally asked the question – the same question, by the way. We want to make sure that we carry through with the opportunities in many aspects. In this case, the Beatrice Foods application fulfills all of the obligations that we had undertaken. It covers the opportunities for value added, it covers the opportunities for diversification, and it also allows the poor people of Edmonton, who may be without jobs, an additional 100 short-term jobs, an additional 100 long-term jobs, as well as significant taxes to Edmonton, as well as opportunities to those in Alberta. The option that Beatrice Foods had was to locate in Chicago, where it would cost them nothing. It would have cost them nothing. It simply would have been a share transfer. So those were the options that Beatrice Foods had. At this stage we consider this an excellent opportunity.

Perhaps the Premier would want to supplement this.

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess I could only supplement with – well, it wouldn't be really a question. It would be a ponderance more than anything else. I'm just wondering, sir, if the Liberals are suggesting that ADC be disbanded. It was mandated to do this kind of thing. In this particular case they exceeded their limit and had to receive order in council approval. Are they suggesting that we should get rid of Alberta Opportunity Company? Are they suggesting that we should get rid of the Treasury Branches? All of these are agencies of government that are mandated to do certain things, and ADC is mandated to do that. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order please.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Beverly.

Social Assistance

MS HANSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Cutting the funding for school supplies for children on social assistance is the most mean-spirited action ever undertaken by a government. To cut the funding to just \$25 shows how little this government knows or understands about the true cost of education to families. To help educate this government, I'm going to file a sample list of all the required school supplies and fees for all grade levels. My questions are to the Minister of Family and Social Services. Why does the minister insist on punishing the children? That's exactly what he's doing by only giving them \$25 when the actual costs for supplies and fees can be as much as \$200.

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, I don't believe this minister is here to punish any poor families or any children. My plan with the three-year strategy of welfare reforms is to get more people off welfare and back into the work force. That's what the welfare people of Alberta want. They want off welfare so their families can earn more money. I want to advise the hon. member also that the people on welfare now have never had a better opportunity to earn additional income without deductions.

MS HANSON: I'm sure people do want jobs when they can get them.

My next question is to the Premier. Children on assistance have enough problems without this government making it worse. Will the Premier intervene and make sure that these children have the necessary funds to buy the supplies needed so that they can go to school this fall?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, this government was given the mandate first of all to reduce expenditures and to do it in an orderly and a rational way. It was also given the mandate to implement welfare reforms that would get people off the welfare rolls and into the work force and to care for those who really need care.

Mr. Speaker, I bring to your attention Four Good Reasons to Feel Good When You Vote Alberta Liberal. I would like to remind the Liberals of what they were prepared to do: we can cut spending; more than 150,000 Albertans have read our detailed plan to bring spending under control; our plan will cut total government spending by \$1.1 billion in the first year – in the first year, without a plan. So when we're talking about cuts, they should consider what they said during the campaign. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. [interjections] Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Health Care System

(continued)

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The way in which the discussions were manipulated at the recent roundtable on health proves that this government is much more committed to cutting health care funding than finding the key to ensuring cost-effective access to health services for all Albertans. Focusing on cuts just to meet a political objective instead of seeking consensus for meaningful reform is putting the health of all Albertans at risk. My question to the Minister of Health: will the minister please inform the Assembly as to what indicators she is using to determine that the arbitrary across-the-board axing of over \$200 million this fiscal year will not jeopardize the health of Albertans?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, this government was elected on a platform of fiscal responsibility. I should suggest to this Assembly that with the Department of Health consuming fully 30 percent-plus of the budget, we could not be exempt from the discussion. I take exception to the member's comments about the roundtable on health. I appreciated the involvement of a number of MLAs from this Assembly from both sides of the House and the very positive discussions that occurred in Red Deer at the roundtable. The roundtable was facilitated, one, to look at the short-term expenditures and how we can best achieve those and maintain our very quality health service and, two, as a building block to the restructuring of our health system, which everybody at the roundtable and I think generally in this province agrees must happen. I think the member is being rather political in his comments.

MR. SAPERS: I thought that was the point.

Mr. Speaker, my supplemental to the minister: without these indicators how can the minister know whether these cuts are enough, too much, or not enough, without agreeing to the measures to determine that these outcomes are important to guarantee access to health services?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity for the member to get to a point in the discussions that many of us are in this House. Health review and reform in this province has been occurring for some time. It began with the Rainbow Report and the response of this government to the Rainbow Report. It began with a number of regional meetings that were held across this province, and it also continued into a commitment from this government to full consultation with the health providers and the public in this very important discussion. There is general agreement, and there was consensus at the roundtable – and I think the gentleman was there – that indeed we can offer a very quality health system in this province with fewer dollars and that we need to work together. That was the spirit of the roundtable, and that was the spirit that the people who were at the roundtable worked. I thank them for their very positive input into this process.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

3:20

Hospital Construction

MR. DOERKSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to echo what the Health minister has just said, and my question is directed to her. I found the process of the health roundtable discussion in Red Deer to be very informative. It was a good discussion, and a number of good ideas came forward. My question has to do with one of the ideas that came forward. There was a call for a moratorium on capital expenditures. I'd like to ask the minister

if she could tell us what the plans of the government are to act on that particular proposal.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the process following the roundtable was the assurance from the chairman of the roundtable that we would have a full summary within days of the session. There were a number of recommendations brought forward through that process, one of them being the recommendation that the member has outlined. We made it very clear that we would listen to all ideas, we would review all ideas. When we receive that summary, which I'll be prepared to provide for all members, certainly we will review all of those including the request for a moratorium on capital spending.

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

Forest Management

MR. LANGEVIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Environmental Protection. Alberta Newsprint Company has discovered that the volume of timber in their forest management agreement area is about 30 percent less than the original indication by the former holder of the same FMA area. This raises some very serious concerns about the government's own inventories and about the government's role in auditing the detailed inventories that are required by the FMA holders. Would the minister assure this House that the timber supplies of other FMAs are not less than originally predicted?

MR. EVANS: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In point of fact my department has been working with the FMA holder and with the quota holders in the same area, because we do have a problem. When the statistics were being gathered to determine the amount of wood fibre in that area that Alberta Newsprint has their forest management agreement, we were using a formula that was accepted by industry and was accepted by government. That formula has proved out not to be accurate, in particular with respect to the softwood in that area, and we are looking at ways to accommodate the forest management agreement holder and the quota holders. We're making good progress with those negotiations, and I'm confident that where there is a will, there is a way.

MR. LANGEVIN: My supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the minister of the environment again: given the uncertainty of supply in that area, what is the minister doing to assure that Alberta Newsprint and other companies in the area will not overharvest the area and still have sufficient supply for their own use?

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member may or may not be aware, all of the forest companies that are operating in Alberta have to file every year a forest management plan. That plan takes into account the amount of cutting that can be done and more importantly – probably most importantly – the regeneration that must be done to ensure that we have a sustainable yield in our forests. Those rules are well known to the industry, well known to my department, and we are working within those boundaries. Now, with Alberta Newsprint we have a situation where we have an allocation of wood fibre for their first plant. We have an allocation of wood fibre for a plant that they plan to build in the future. We may be using some of that wood fibre in the second plant designation to take care of some of these problems, but that will only happen if we've exhausted all other remedies.

Agricultural Fuel Taxes

DR. NICOL: Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign and in many subsequent press conferences the Premier has emphasized his strategy to balance the budget with no tax increases. His strategy also committed to no changes in policy which affect the competitive position of Alberta industry within Canada or internationally. My question to the Premier is: how can you justify to the agricultural producers of Alberta the imposition of a 2-cent per litre fuel tax, which for these producers is both a new tax and competitively discriminatory?

MR. KLEIN: I'll defer, Mr. Speaker, to the minister of agriculture.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you. I assume it's the AFFDA agreement that the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East is referring to. The AFFDA agreement is indeed not a tax, never has been a tax, and never was identified as a tax. The AFFDA program is basically a gas rebate program. It has nothing to do with taxes. It's simply a rebate. The program in the past was 10 cents on diesel and 4 cents on purple gas. There still remains a program of 9 cents tax rebate, which I assume the hon. member was referring to. That still stays intact. It was never touched. The AFFDA program still stays in place. The change is that it's now 8 cents for diesel and 2 cents for purple. There were no changes from the original policy that we had in place where there would be any tax increases.

DR. NICOL: Mr. Speaker, to the minister of agriculture: given that this promise of tax exemption has been broken, what steps is the minister prepared to take to make sure that the province's agricultural producers are recognized as part of the government's Alberta and will not be subjected to further tax increases?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, there were no broken promises. There have never been any broken promises. Agriculture has been referred to as the wheel that drives the economy of this province. This is the wheel that drives the economy of this province. Agriculture is very important to this province and will continue to be of utmost importance. We have a program that is in place to assist the agricultural community. We have a multitude of programs. We have safety nets that are in place. We've all just gone through an election where we talked to farmers. One of the things that farmers have asked is: "We want a fair return for our product. We don't want to go to the mailbox for our cheques."

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. [interjection] Order please.
The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This Assembly has been advised by ministerial statement that effective today the Alberta Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act comes into force in its entirety. As alluded to by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, this Act is seriously flawed in that it tolerates and in fact promotes ministerial discretion or, more appropriately, political interference. This threat of manipulation and interference creates an air of uncertainty for business, for investors, and for all Albertans interested in the management of our environment, and they do not support this approach. My question to the Minister of Environmental Protection: why is the minister so paranoid about allowing qualified and competent individuals to make final

decisions under this Act without the threat of political interference?

MR. EVANS: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member may or may not know, while serving as an MLA in this House, I had the opportunity to chair the Environmental Legislation Review Panel. That panel went around the province seeking input into our new environmental legislation. What we heard throughout Alberta was that there was a recognition that ministerial discretion was in fact important but that it should be minimized. Those kinds of statements were certainly considered and were given impact in the final Bill that we have created. This was not done, Mr. Speaker, by a government sitting in a series of rooms looking at a piece of legislation. It was done by going out and taking input from Albertans. As I mentioned in the ministerial statement today, the process is a process that's never been followed anywhere else in America. This is truly an Act which is made by Albertans. Albertans recognize that ministerial discretion has been minimized in this Act but that it does have a place. There must be ministerial responsibility, and therefore there must be some ministerial discretion.

3:30

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The significant inclusion of ministerial discretion is what's wrong with this Act.

The Premier has repeated on several occasions that if something is not right in the government or with his legislation, the standing policy committees will stand ready to address those issues. My supplementary question is to the chairperson of the standing committee on natural resources and sustainable development. Will the chairperson place the issue of ministerial interference in the new Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act on the committee's agenda?

MS CALAHASEN: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for that question. I think it's very important when we have the committees to indicate what the committees are all about. I applaud the Premier in terms of what he has done relative to the committees and establishing them so we can look at policy development. Anything to do with policy can be directed to myself as chairman, and at that point it will be determined as to when it can go on the agenda, and yes, I will see anything that comes to my desk.

MR. SPEAKER: The time for question period has expired. The Chair would like to congratulate everybody who participated in this process for the first time.

The Chair has also received notice of a point of order that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre wishes to raise.

Point of Order

Questions by Standing Policy Committee Chairmen

MR. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd refer the members to *Beauchesne* 413. Previously in question period the hon. Member for Little Bow asked the government a question. *Beauchesne* 413 clearly states that

those such as Parliamentary Secretaries who are clothed with the responsibility of answering for the Government ought not to use the time of the Question Period for the privilege of asking questions of the Government.

I also refer to the last question in question period, where the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake answered a question on behalf of the government.

We all know, Mr. Speaker, that when the Premier created the four standing policy committees in December, it was clearly in an effort to stand up and say: I'm reducing my cabinet, but I'm going to create four quasi-cabinet ministers and pay them like ministers without portfolio. [interjections] My point of order, if the members would allow me, is very clearly that the four standing policy committees of the government indeed respond for the government in question period, indeed are responsible, as the Member for Lesser Slave Lake suggested, for developing policy for the government and for answering for the government in question period, just as parliamentary secretaries do in the House of Commons in Ottawa. I think that's inappropriate. I think it's a waste of question period time, and I'd ask you to take it under consideration and rule at a future time that the four quasi-cabinet ministers or committee chairs not be permitted to take up question period.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. [interjections] Order please. Order. The Chair has heard the point of order as raised by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre and will in fact take it under advisement.

Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. DAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the fact that the member opposite is relatively new. He will learn that there's more than one reference in this book. In fact, we have no parliamentary secretaries here, so you can't transpose that. There are references to chairs of various committees being allowed to respond. In terms of wasting time in question period, I hope he'll read his remarks in *Hansard* tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair will take the representations of both members into account in bringing a report back to the Assembly.

head: Motions under Standing Order 40

MR. SPEAKER: Now, a notice of motion was received prior to question period relating to Standing Order 40, and the Chair would now call upon the Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert to briefly explain to the Chamber the urgency of this motion.

Canadian Bar Association President

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is the first opportunity this Assembly has to congratulate Ms Johnstone, who was elected as president of the Canadian Bar Association just last week. I ask the Assembly today to send our congratulations for obtaining this prestigious position. I believe it is imperative upon us as legislators and as Albertans to recognize Ms Johnstone's tremendous accomplishments. I ask for unanimous consent under Standing Order 40.

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the argument in respect of urgency for the moving of this motion – it requires unanimous consent of the Assembly for the matter to proceed – the Chair would now ask all those in favour of the motion being put to please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say no. Carried unanimously.

The hon. member may now proceed to speak to her motion.

Moved by Mrs. Soetaert:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly congratulate Cecilia Johnstone in her new position as president of the Canadian Bar Association.

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We agree.

At the age of 42 Ms Johnstone becomes the second woman to reach the presidency of Canada's largest and oldest legal group and the first Albertan woman to achieve this distinguished office. A vocal activist for women's rights, Ms Johnstone begins her presidency as the association starts to deal with the revealing report by former Justice Bertha Wilson on gender bias in the legal system. We understand Ms Johnstone intends to make this report her top priority. Her recent quote in the local media is an encouraging indication of the contribution she will be making to the Canadian legal system. I quote:

By the year 2000, the majority of lawyers will be women. We must ensure that women have the right to work free from sexual harassment, to have children without losing position or seniority, and to be individuals first. By putting our own house in order, we'll be able to keep the best and brightest from leaving the profession and improve our negative public image.

I ask this Assembly to send Cecilia Johnstone our most sincere congratulations for achieving such an esteemed and respected position.

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government I congratulate the member for bringing forward the motion and extend congratulations to Cec on behalf of the government. She's indeed the first Alberta woman to be president of the Canadian Bar and the second woman to be president, and frankly it was consecutive. The immediate past president is from Quebec and was of the female gender. It's significant.

Cec is certainly worthy of the honour. In fact, I was honoured to be at her inauguration, if I may call it that, and have worked with her very closely as she's worked up the ladder in the Canadian Bar Association, Alberta branch. I would actually ask all the House to unanimously pass this motion and extend our congratulations to her.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The Hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am delighted as the opposition Justice critic to join both my colleague and the hon. minister to recognize the remarkable achievement of Ms Johnstone. She's a partner in the Edmonton law firm of Lucas, Bishop, Bowker, and White and a graduate of the University of Alberta, and to become a president of this particular organization with its some 37,000 members is indeed a singular honour. As has been pointed out, one of the things I think most notable is the fact that while serving on a national gender equality task force, she and her colleagues were able to come up with a very specific, concrete action plan, something that should be instructive to members of this Assembly in terms of dealing with gender equality and gender discrimination.

Sir, this caucus is proud to support the motion brought by the Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

Thank you.

3:40

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: The question having been called on the motion proposed by the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, all those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say no. Let the record show that this motion has been carried unanimously. The record of same will be transmitted to Ms Johnstone in the appropriate form.

Thank you very much.

head:

Orders of the Day

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I have received certain messages from His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, which I now transmit to you.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Order!

MR. SPEAKER: The Lieutenant Governor transmits a schedule of certain sums required in the interim for the service of the province for the 12 months ending March 31, 1994, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

The Lieutenant Governor transmits a schedule of certain sums required in the interim for the service of the province for the 12 months ending March 31, 1994, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

The Lieutenant Governor transmits a schedule of certain sums required in the interim from the Alberta heritage savings trust fund for the 12 months ending March 31, 1994, for the purpose of making investments pursuant to section 6.1(a) of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act in projects which will provide long-term economic or social benefits to the people of Alberta but which may not necessarily by their nature yield a return to the trust fund and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

Thank you. Please be seated.

head:

Government Motions

1. Moved by Mr. Dinning:
Be it resolved that the Assembly do resolve into Committee of Supply, when called, to consider interim supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

[Motion carried]

1993-94 Interim Supply Estimates

2. Moved by Mr. Dinning:
Be it resolved that the messages of His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, the 1993-94 interim supply, and all matters connected therewith be referred to the Committee of Supply.

[Motion carried]

3. Moved by Mr. Dinning:
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 58(6) the number of days that the Committee of Supply will be called to consider the 1993-94 interim supply shall be two days.

[Motion carried]

head:

Consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Moved by Mr. Severtson:

That an humble address be presented to His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To His Honour the Honourable Gordon Towers, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta:

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

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to move acceptance of the Speech from the Throne.

I'd like to congratulate His Honour the Lieutenant Governor for the dignity and grace he exhibits in executing his duties as representative of Queen Elizabeth II. I'd like to thank the Lieutenant Governor for his reading of the Speech from the Throne to open the First Session of the 23rd Legislature.

The Lieutenant Governor is no stranger to the Innisfail-Sylvan Lake constituency. He served with distinction as a Member of Parliament in my area for 16 years. I'd like to thank the Lieutenant Governor on behalf of my constituents for his years of faithful service and stewardship.

I would also like to extend a warm welcome to our new Speaker of the House. I have worked with you since my election in '89. I have watched you perform your duties as an MLA and Deputy Speaker with great respect. I have every confidence in your ability, Mr. Speaker, and I congratulate you on your election to the Chair.

Lastly, I would like to thank our Premier, Ralph Klein, for his leadership and support. It is his leadership that has brought this government here today. It is his vision and his strength that will enable us to fulfill the mandate we have received from Albertans for the next four years.

I would also like to welcome to the Legislative Assembly my new colleagues on both sides of the House. I look forward to working with you for the benefit of Alberta. Your constituents have placed their trust by selecting you as their MLA. We all have an awesome responsibility ahead of us.

This government is about change, and we are a new government. We have 24 new members in this Assembly. We have 11 members starting their second term. This means that 70 percent of this government is starting its first or second term. I believe and it is my hope that this will enable us to bring a fresh approach to governing the province and facing the challenges the future holds.

I'm proud to represent the constituency of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake in this Legislature. It stands in the heart of Alberta. The Red Deer River winds through the western portion of my constituency and forms the northern and eastern boundaries of my riding. The rolling hills, the grassland, and the lakes were the hunting grounds of the Blackfoot Indians many years past. The first white man to set foot in Alberta, Anthony Henday, stood at the top of Antler Hill in my constituency and looked to the west and saw the beautiful Canadian Rockies. This was the area where Henday lived and traded with the 2,000 Blackfoot Indians encamped at Pine Lake in the winter of 1754. Another 130 years or so would pass before European settlers settled the Innisfail area. Immigrants settling from Germany, Holland, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Iceland, and many other countries have helped make the Innisfail-Sylvan Lake constituency the area it is today.

My constituency is in many ways the heartbeat of Alberta. It has some of the finest agricultural land in Alberta. It has a strong oil and gas industry. Small business is the cornerstone of our economy, and my constituency is the home of some of the most thriving small businesses in the province. It is also the home of some of the finest tourism areas in the province. Sylvan Lake,

Pine Lake, and Gleniffer Lake are three of the most beautiful lakes in Alberta and the centrepiece of our tourism industry.

3:50

The concerns of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake are concerns we all share: maintaining our quality of life, educating our young people, keeping our communities healthy and viable, and making sure to leave a strong Alberta for future generations. We cannot do this by continually spending more than we take in, Mr. Speaker. My government's first commitment is to balance the provincial budget within four years. The constituency of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, along with the majority of Albertans, feels that our biggest challenge is eliminating the provincial deficit. I campaigned on balancing the budget. So did Premier Klein and the rest of this government. Albertans have provided us with a mandate to eliminate the provincial deficit, and we will not disappoint them.

We laid the blueprint for change in the Deficit Elimination Act. We are now faced with the challenge of working within those parameters to balance the budget in 1996-97. We're going to stick to our spending goals on a year-by-year basis. In this fiscal year alone we'll reduce the consolidated deficit by some \$700 million. Over \$130 million of that will come from streamlining and reorganizing government to make it more efficient. Albertans will be involved in every phase of the budget-cutting process. We have opened up our books to the public, and we'll provide Albertans with quarterly financial updates. These will prove to Alberta that we are on target, and if we are not on target, we'll make adjustments so we'll stay on target every step of the way.

We have started at the top in terms of cutting spending. We've reduced the size of cabinet. The salaries of ministers have been reduced. We have eliminated the MLA pension plan. We're consolidating government departments, reducing the number of deputy ministers without affecting service to Albertans. This shows our dedication to reducing the size of government.

We have an opportunity before us to lead this province, indeed the rest of the country, in pulling government spending in line with our revenues. We'll do this without raising taxes, without implementing a sales tax. This government was elected with a majority on the basis of a promise to cut spending. Governments must get their fiscal houses in order if our economy is to continue to grow and create jobs.

This government is about listening to Albertans. Public consultation is an important commitment we made. The four standing policy committees are an essential part of the planning process. We have replaced the old caucus committee structure with our four committees. These committees can take public submissions, and their meetings are open to the public. This way Albertans can come in and make recommendations and submissions on government policy, and this is a great way to get people involved in government.

The roundtable is another process for people making themselves heard. Our budget roundtables have enabled us to hear the views of Albertans on how to control government spending. We recently began roundtable discussions on the future of our health care last Thursday and Friday in Red Deer. We are also poised to begin roundtables on the future of our education and advanced education systems. We'll host a number of roundtables on the directions of our programs aimed at seniors. I am also chairman of the Special Places 2000 committee, which has been hearing views of Albertans on the future of the Special Places 2000 document. The input from these meetings will be essential in helping us plan our next four years.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, we have talked to thousands of Albertans through *Toward 2000 Together*, *Tourism 2000*, and

Creating Tomorrow. We've been told that the role of government is to create a climate conducive to investment and job creation.

We're seeing a change in the role of government in the '90s. We must restructure government to keep it out of the way of growth in this province. Deregulation is the wave of the future. Each government department is now required to submit deregulation plans by year's end. These plans will take action against unnecessary and intrusive rules and regulations. I'm especially in favour of the sunset clause on all new government regulations, forcing them to be reviewed after a certain time has elapsed to see if they're still necessary. We also have to continue to work to reduce duplication and overlap between the provincial and federal governments, especially in the environmental area.

Lastly, we'll have to change the way government does business. The government should stay out of the way of private-sector growth. We must make our laws and regulations even more responsive to the needs of the marketplace in the '90s. Laws exist to protect the public from unfair business practice, not to restrict business. This government must continue to work to free up the red tape that can hamper business growth while continuing to safeguard the public. We must also continue our policy of privatizing government services that could be handled more efficiently by the private sector. Rather than interfering directly in the marketplace, we must work instead to offer a hospitable environment for business in Alberta. We offer a favourable tax rate, no sales tax, and we are receptive to the needs of business. Businesses are fleeing other provinces which are hostile to business and are coming to Alberta looking for the Alberta Advantage. That is a sign that we are on the right track, and this is what will create jobs for Albertans, Mr. Speaker.

As we involve Albertans in setting directions for government, we have to adopt a policy of making information available to them. With that in mind we'll be dealing with the new Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act. This Act will guarantee the accessibility of government information to Albertans. It will also protect the privacy of individual Albertans. An all-party panel will consult with Albertans over the next few months on the direction this legislation should take. I look forward to this proposed legislation becoming a reality.

I also feel that we should change the Standing Orders to streamline and facilitate the business of this Assembly. One change that I'm in favour of is shortening the maximum speaking length for individual members to 20 minutes. In honour of that, Mr. Speaker, I will limit my comments to that 20-minute time frame. I also agree with the idea of private members' statements. Hopefully this will be debated tomorrow when Motion 201 comes up for discussion, and I hope we can pass that in the Assembly tomorrow.

We are pursuing these goals with the support of Albertans. I cannot recall another government that was elected with a majority on the basis of a promise to cut spending. Albertans have given us that mandate, telling us that government has to spend less, and they are willing to see cuts in order to ensure that this province remains viable for their children in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I promised to be part of this government. I'm proud to be part of this government, and I'm determined, as this government is, to deliver on each of the four fundamental commitments: to balance the budget; to create a climate for meaningful job creation in the private sector; to reorganize, deregulate, and streamline government; and to have open consultation with Albertans. These commitments echo the wishes of the people we represent. We'll continue to listen to Albertans and take our direction from them as they work towards a better Alberta.

Thank you.

4:00

MS HALEY: Mr. Speaker, it is with a great deal of pride that I rise today on behalf of my constituency, Three Hills-Airdrie, to second the Speech from the Throne. I would like to congratulate the Lieutenant Governor on his insightful speech. I know I'm not alone when I say how much I appreciate his wisdom and vision for the future of Alberta.

I would like to thank our Premier, Ralph Klein, for the honour he has bestowed upon me and my constituency for not only giving me this opportunity to second the Speech from the Throne but also for being able to give my maiden speech.

I would be remiss if I did not take a moment to congratulate our newly elected Speaker. His wealth of experience and vast knowledge of parliamentary procedure will hold all of us in good stead during the interesting times ahead. As about 60 percent of the MLAs here are new to the Legislature, when I say "interesting times ahead," I do sincerely mean it. Many of us have much to learn, but with your guidance, Mr. Speaker, I know that we will get the job done.

Getting the job done is what this is all about. We simply must get our financial house in order. For too long we've been living beyond our means. My government has made a commitment to end that during the next four years. It won't be easy, but then change never is. What we all have to do is come to the realization that it is fundamental restructuring that is going on with our economy, not just compression. While some call this a crisis, I prefer to call it an opportunity: an opportunity to reassess what programs should exist, what is the cost/benefit ratio of our programs, and in fact what do we as Albertans really need versus what we're getting. I read once that God's idea of hell was to give us everything we ever wanted all at once, and I think we've been there. But now we need to get back to what Alberta is known for: independence, freedom, and the right to succeed or fail, depending upon what we do for ourselves. I believe we are facing an opportunity to create an Alberta that is better today than the one we have: better for the seniors, better for the middle-aged, and better for the youth of today and tomorrow.

One of the nice parts about giving a maiden speech is that it gives an MLA an opportunity to acquaint others with his or her constituency. In other words, it's a great chance to brag. In representing Three Hills-Airdrie, I have a lot to brag about. We have over 27,000 people in my riding, with close to half of them living in Airdrie, which is my home community. Airdrie is one of the youngest communities in Alberta, with over 5,000 of our 13,000 residents under the age of 18. This is reflected by the fact that the Rockyview school division is the largest employer in the city, with over 250 teachers and support staff there to educate our ever increasing school population. There are 411 businesses in Airdrie, and our unemployment rate is 3.2 percent. As a matter of fact, one of the problems inside my constituency is finding people to employ. So I have a message for all of those who are looking for work: don't be afraid to go outside the major centres; check things out. We really do have a lot to offer you.

There is growth and expansion in almost every part of my constituency. For those of you who are not familiar with my area, I'm going to give you a brief tour, so I want you to sit back, relax, and enjoy your visit to the heart of Alberta. I'm going to start at the southern edge, which has coterminous boundaries within part of the northern and eastern edges of the city of Calgary. Agriculture is the main industry in my area, and that's obvious just as soon as you leave Calgary. As it is fall now, the fields are filled with ripening grain and oilseed crops, beautiful cattle, and horses. Delacour, Kathyrn, Keoma, and Balzac are the first communities

you come to in my area. Balzac has three major businesses: a tropical greenhouse; Western Breeders, where you'll find the world's finest beef and dairy bulls; and Alta Genetics, which is a state of the art research and working lab on embryo transplants.

Livestock has always played a major role in the Alberta economy, but in the last few years it has become a major player in the export market. We have always known that we raise the best livestock, but it's very gratifying to know that the world is now finding it out too. A number of my constituents are actively involved in trying to set up an all-breeds display centre which would enable foreign customers to see at a glance the excellence and diversity of our livestock industry.

When you head north from this area, you find yourselves in Irricana with 803 residents, many of whom work in Calgary but choose to live and raise their families in a rural setting. One of the province's historical museums is located here. It's called Pioneer Acres, and not only do they have antique agricultural implements on display, they also have an area dedicated to women who helped pioneer our province. Next summer Pioneer Acres will host the North American Case tractor display. A similar show in the United States last year attracted over 50,000 people. The directors of Pioneer Acres feel that they can attract a minimum of 25,000. This is a real success story and a great draw of tourist dollars into Alberta.

Just a little north of Irricana you find Beiseker. They boast a small airport that many skydivers from Calgary and surrounding area utilize. Beiseker has been actively searching for businesses to locate in their area and in the past few years has been successful in attracting Bovar industries, which is a state of the art biomedical waste incinerator, as well as Lampson Canada. Lampson is a crane assembly and service company headquartered in the United States. It has created employment and brought new dollars into this area.

Still moving on a northeasterly direction brings you to Acme, which is another one of our growing rural communities. It now has over 500 residents. One of the major employers here is Pig Improvement (Canada), who has a major presence in the hog industry, supplying purebred boars on a local, national, and international level.

Just another 13 kilometres north on the highway you'll find yourself in the Linden-Swalwell area. I have to tell you that this is one of my favourite places. It's a small but truly vibrant community that's just full of surprises. They have a beautiful park in the centre of town complete with a lake that you can really fish in – there are real fish in it – or you can just sit and enjoy the park. Linden had some very prudent financial managers as well, and evidence of this exists in the fact that this year they had a tax decrease for their residents. I can hazard a guess that not too many communities in Alberta can say that. Laden industries is a major employer in town. They design and manufacture seed systems, again sold locally, nationally, as well as internationally. Linden is also expanding this year. They are developing a new subdivision that will house over 100 people.

By this time on our tour you are about halfway through my constituency, and I really hope that you've noticed all the fine restaurants that we have as you've gone through. I was fortunate enough in June to have the hon. Member for Red Deer-North, the Minister of Labour, spend a day in my constituency, and we went on the coffee circuit. I proved to him that you can stop every 15 minutes and have coffee and eat if you are so inclined.

Moving on again, our next stop is in Three Hills. This is a beautiful, well-established area with approximately 3,500 residents. Three Hills has a trading area of over \$200 million per year. It's another one of our open-for-business communities. The Prairie

Bible Institute has a thriving school and college attracting students from all over Canada and indeed the world. If any of you have an interest in cars, Three Hills is the place to be on cruise night. It's an annual event held in June, and this year they attracted over 1,100 entrants. They have everything on display, from the oldest antiques to the hottest muscle cars to half-ton trucks that any red-blooded Albertan would love to drive.

As in all of my communities agriculture is the major industry in Three Hills, but in this particular area oil and gas production is a close second. We also have a number of award-winning Hereford and exotic cattle breeders in this area. In fact, I need to stop and tell you about a farmer who lives near Three Hills who told me during the election campaign that if it rained before election day, he'd vote for me. You have to understand it wasn't raining, and there'd been no rain in the north of my constituency. On election day it was just pouring. I was doing a tour of all of the polling stations, and I ran into him coming out of the polling station . . .

MR. N. TAYLOR: The public was crying.

4:10

MS HALEY: No, they weren't.

Anyway, he'd voted for me. He gave me a smile and said: "Way to go. Thanks for the rain." It's true. Anyway, it hasn't really quit raining since. I ran into him about two weeks ago, and he had sort of a puzzled look on his face and said to me, "What do I have to do for you, Carol, in order for it to stop raining?" I don't know; I haven't quite figured it out yet.

Anyway, while you're in the Three Hills area, you really should make a visit to the Guzoo Animal Farm, which has an excellent mix of domestic and exotic animals on display.

Once again you're heading north, and you'll find yourself in Trochu. As is typical of my communities, this one is also seeking economic diversification. They have a town council that is actively trying to establish a tire recycling plant, an idea that is not only environmentally sound, Mr. Speaker, but economically sound as well. Trochu also has a privately owned meat packing plant that has gone international selling prepackaged meat overseas. Almost every community in my area has a golf course, and Trochu is no exception. They have a very challenging course right on the edge of town, so when you come out to visit us, please bring your clubs.

At the northern edge of my constituency you find Huxley, Wimborne, and Torrington to cap off your journey. Torrington is a small community with a vision. They have developed a theme, Little Village on the Prairie, and are actively seeking your tourist dollars. One of the attractions is a doll-house museum which holds some of the most beautiful porcelain dolls you'll ever see.

I have now taken you through my city, my towns, and some of my villages, and I hope you will have noticed that in each one of these communities there's a common theme. Each one is filled with hardworking, creative people. Many of them have gone after international sales. That requires a great deal of expertise, and they have worked hard to develop it. These communities are growing despite the trend away from rural life in other areas. They are all actively seeking new businesses to start up in their areas. Mr. Speaker, they are truly an example for our whole province on how to get the job done.

You can't have a rural area without farmers, and I have some of the brightest and best, from outstanding grain and oilseed producers to feedlot, hog, and poultry producers. We have purebred cattle and horse ranchers, and to top off the mix, we have a number of very progressive Hutterite colonies. While I was touring the riding, I was invited to go through the Beiseker

colony. I can't begin to tell you how impressed I was with their beautiful church, their kitchen, and their homes. Everything was handmade, even the tables and chairs, and I've got to tell you that the quality of workmanship was second to none.

I also want to mention the youth of the Three Hills-Airdrie constituency. We not only have award-winning students on an academic level, but we have athletes as well and some of the finest sports teams at the junior level that you'll find. Basically, Mr. Speaker, we've not only got it all, but we do the most with it.

Most of my constituents are very politically active and not the least bit shy about telling me their political philosophy, which, fortunately for me, reflects my own. I feel very comfortable with the message in the Speech from the Throne because it truly reflects what my constituents told me during the election campaign: we must put our finances in order. My government has made a commitment to balance the budget within four years. If we could do it faster, I'd be willing to try. I have two wonderful teenage sons who deserve more out of life than trying to pay off a debt they had no part in attaining. I want to ensure that they have a future here in this province. It's no longer good enough to sit back and complain. All of us must be willing to take a stand, and for me that's part of getting the job done.

We must as a government facilitate business as much as possible without being in business. We must not pick the winners and losers in our economy. We must deregulate. We must simplify how business is done in our province. In short, we must create a climate where business can establish itself, grow, employ people, and create wealth. Government does not create wealth, Mr. Speaker, it only consumes it.

Overwhelmingly, inside the Three Hills-Airdrie constituency people told me to get rid of subsidies, whether it was for business, agriculture, or in our private lives. My constituents told me to stop making it so hard for people to succeed: don't raise taxes but cut expenditures, and stop regulating people out of business, work with them and understand their problems. For the most part, Mr. Speaker, my constituents want to have the right to succeed and the right to fail. They want to take responsibility for their own lives, and they want government out of their homes and off their property. My constituents don't mind paying their fair share, but they don't want to pay one cent more. They don't want to see waste or abuse in government programs.

At the same time, my constituents are all human beings. They care about their neighbours, and right now they are worried about the changes that are happening. So I know they will appreciate the message in the Speech from the Throne. Our commitment is not only to balance the budget but to involve Albertans in the decision-making process. To be accountable to Albertans, we have committed to share financial information on a quarterly basis, something that's never been done before.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents will be pleased to see that the government has seen the need for change in how we regulate businesses; that we are truly going to create and show the world the Alberta Advantage; that by doing business differently we will help the marketplace create jobs instead of government trying to create jobs; that when government gets out of the marketplace, we leave room for Albertans to seize the opportunity; that to help people deal with their fear of change, we will communicate with them through consultation in Health and Education, through consultation with senior citizens, through consultation with all Albertans so that we can all participate in restructuring our economy.

I am pleased to see the emphasis in the Speech from the Throne on change right here in the Legislature, because I have to ask how many laws we really need. I'm in favour of deregulation, and I'm

also in favour of freedom of information, providing that there are safeguards on people's privacy.

While it is important that we focus on expenditure reduction, I think it's important that we not lose sight of what will be left when the changes are made. It's important for everyone not to get caught up in fearmongering and finger pointing. The truth of the matter is that when it's all said and done and we cut close to \$200 million out of health care this year, we will still be spending close to \$4 billion, and at some point we must look at that glass to see if it's 3 percent empty or 97 percent full.

There are things that we as Albertans can do to take the pressure off the health care system. We can make sure before we go to a doctor that in fact we really need to; that when we do see a doctor, we see our family physician and not just run to an emergency ward when it's not a true emergency – I say that because less than 7 percent of those visiting emergency wards are actually admitted to hospital – that when we must go in to see a specialist, we take copies of tests and X-rays with us to reduce the ever increasing costs of diagnosis; that we question from time to time the need for all the pills we take home from the drugstore, because indeed there must be a problem when you see literally tons of drugs being collected in the annual drug roundup for disposal. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we must all become more mindful of how we spend our health care dollars, and if it's true for health care, I have no doubt that it's true for other areas as well.

When we look at our education system, it is important for everyone to understand that while there were some funding adjustments this year, there was still an increase in the education budget. We must help our young people understand that education is their ticket to the future, that we can't afford to have anyone take it lightly. I have sincere hopes that education professionals, parents, and students will all participate in discussions about streamlining the education process and not be afraid of trying new ways to deliver the service. Maybe for a while we could look at spending less on bricks and mortar.

Mr. Speaker, we need participation from our seniors as well. We need their help and we need their wisdom to make the right choices and decisions on programs that impact not only their lives but the lives of all of us. I do sincerely hope that the concept of universality will be looked at for all programs and that one day our scarce resources will be used only for cases where need exists, perhaps on the same or a similar basis as the family allowance program was changed. It was an example of the government getting much needed dollars into the hands of those who needed it the most, and interestingly enough, when the program changed, virtually no one complained.

I also hope that we can look at sunset clauses on government programs so that everything can be reviewed on a regular basis to ascertain whether in fact they are still providing a needed service and that a cost/benefit ratio be used to determine necessity and effectiveness.

Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is: we have a problem. But it's fixable if we work together and don't lose sight of our goal, which is a better Alberta with sustainable programs.

I'm proud to be an Albertan. I'm proud to be part of a new government with a new philosophy, a government that's willing to deal with problems of the past to create a new and better tomorrow. In saying that, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my constituency of Three Hills-Airdrie, I'm proud to second the motion on His Honour's Speech from the Throne.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

4:20

MR. DECORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I first want to start by welcoming to this Assembly the colleagues that are with me in the Liberal opposition. When I became leader of the Liberal Party less than five years ago, there were but four Liberal members in this Assembly. Those four members went to eight members after the '89 election and 32 members of this Assembly in the June election. In 1982 our party very unhappily received only 1.8 percent of the popular vote from Albertans. In this last election we received 40 percent of the popular vote. I'm happy to say that we are the Official Opposition.

Our role in dealing with matters that come before this Assembly will be, first, to be strong opponents to matters, to issues, to directions that we think are wrong but also to provide positive suggestions to the Premier, his cabinet, and to this Assembly on how things can be made better for Albertans. We intend to be businesslike in the manner in which we do business in this Assembly. We will fight hard for those issues that we think it's important to fight hard on. Liberals by definition and by philosophy are those who have a compassion for human issues or human matters. We are fiscally responsible, but we have a compassion for people: that's the best way to explain our philosophy.

So you will be seeing, Mr. Speaker, during the course of this session, in days and months to come, that kind of compassion for human beings, with the additional strength that we'll bring in ensuring that the government is fiscally responsible.

This has not been a particularly happy province in terms of economic development. When I arrived in this Assembly four and a half years ago with the hon. Premier, the debt of our province was \$10 billion. That debt is now \$25 billion. One of the things that our party, just eight of us, from 1989 said was that all efforts had to be taken as quickly as possible to get the financial mess put under control. Nobody listened. Nobody thought it was very important. Loans and loan guarantees and moneys continued to be shoveled out the door, and we saw the horror stories of Gainers and NovAtel and MagCan – some \$2.3 billion in accumulated financial messes – come before this Assembly. Our party takes particular pride in being the first party to press for fiscal responsibility in this province. Our party takes particular pride in ensuring that there will be programs and plans – real plans, clear plans – from the government that deal with fiscal responsibility. We will press hard on that issue.

Mr. Speaker, I want to deal with some of the items that appear in the Speech from the Throne. I have more disappointment than I have hope from this document. First of all, the government talks about a plan: a plan to deal with unemployment, a plan to deal with employment, a plan that suggests that there are going to be some 110,000 jobs created for Albertans. We were told that 37,000 jobs would be created in the first year. [interjection] Well, Mr. Treasurer is laughing and thinks that's pretty funny. We did, too, when we heard it, Mr. Treasurer, because we didn't believe it, and we still don't believe it, because this isn't a plan. It was a phony target then, and it's a phony target today. To suggest in the Speech from the Throne that this government and this Treasurer are going to create 110,000 jobs is phony. It was phony, and it still is phony.

There are 146,000 Albertans who are out of jobs right now, and the solution that this government has come up with – the only solution, the only plan that it has come up with that we can look at and see – is a \$2 million loan guarantee to Beatrice Foods that appears today. The Treasurer should be ashamed of that one, and so should the members, particularly the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury, who stood up and said that when he traveled through

his constituency, he was told by his constituents that there should be no loans and no loan guarantees. To see it fudged and faked, to see the wool pulled over Albertans' eyes by giving Beatrice Foods a \$2 million loan guarantee – the hon. member should be ashamed of what he said in this Assembly today.

Mr. Speaker, Beatrice Foods is one of the huge conglomerate companies in North America. It makes ice cream and all kinds of food products in Canada and the United States. Why did Alberta with a \$25 billion debt have to give a \$2 million loan guarantee to Beatrice Foods? When do we start saying no to the game that corporations are playing with governments? Unless you do this, corporations say, we will take something to Chicago, or we will take something to British Columbia, or we will take something to Saskatchewan. Let's wake up, government. That kind of initiative has to stop.

This Conservative Party created \$25 billion of debt for Albertans: their initiatives and their actions. Two point three billion dollars in loan guarantees that went sour that every Albertan has to pay for, and we see today another loan guarantee. It's beyond belief. Some of the members across the way I know campaigned on the basis that there would be no loans and no loan guarantees. It's sad for me to see the minister of agriculture stand in this Assembly and cloak this thing under some kind of a joint agreement with the federal government. The essence of what we had by the order in council is that Albertans are on the hook for \$2 million. That's what happened, and that's the same story of NovAtel and MagCan and Myrias and GSR and every other company that has been given money that has failed.

Mr. Speaker, there isn't a plan for 110,000 jobs, and Albertans are waiting for that plan. There isn't a real plan to deal with fiscal responsibility. We were told on May 6 in this Assembly by the Treasurer that there was a plan in place, that expenditures were under control. May 6 we were told that. There is now the need for a mid-course correction because the plan has crashed, because \$279 million in overruns has appeared. Some plan. Some control. Some leadership. Albertans have to be sad to see a paper that talks about a plan when in fact the plan has crashed, has failed, and we're already in more difficulty.

Mr. Speaker, our party wanted to see some teeth in the Deficit Elimination Act. I know that one of the members opposite wants to see the same thing. What's the point in passing an Act if there are no teeth in it, no penalties, nothing happens? We've seen Acts in this Assembly before . . .

MR. ADY: We're seeing one now.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Minister, you're going to get your chance in the Assembly too. When you stand and try to defend your plan that shows that young Albertans are going to get access to postsecondary institutions and you stand and try to defend how 26,000 Albertans can't get into postsecondary institutions, we're going to be on your back to have you account, because this party does care about human beings, Mr. Speaker, and part of caring for human beings is ensuring that Albertans are well educated in postsecondary institutions and ensuring that 26,000 students who want to go to school can go to school and aren't turned away like the minister is forcing them to be turned away.

Mr. Speaker, no plan for fiscal responsibility, no plan for the creation of jobs, and one year or six months from now when we stand in this Assembly, I predict that things will have become worse, that the financial mid-course corrections will have to be further mid-course corrections, that the 110,000 jobs and the 37,000 we're supposed to see in the first year will just be a big joke.

4:30

Mr. Speaker, I want to remind some of the members in this Assembly, having listened to the hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler, of how members of the Conservative Party thought of freedom of information just a year and a half or two years ago, including the hon. member who made the statements on freedom of information. This Conservative government just a year and a half ago said that there was no need for freedom of information, that Albertans didn't need freedom of information legislation. This Conservative Party said through its Premier, the member who then represented Stettler, that Albertans didn't need that kind of legislation because hon. members of the Legislature could simply come forward and ask any question they wanted and get any answer that they wanted.

We didn't get answers on NovAtel. We had to get information from states in the United States that had freedom of information legislation that gave us information on NovAtel. It was there that we learned that NovAtel had made special deals with corporations in California that made other deals with people in South America. We couldn't get that from our own government; we had to get that from freedom of information legislation in California. We couldn't find out the kinds of moneys that were being paid out to these American corporations. The minister himself didn't know that there was more than simply product financing that was going on. We had to discover through California and Washington freedom of information legislation that Alberta taxpayers' moneys were being used to pay directors' fees and corporations in the United States, that Alberta taxpayers' moneys were being used to buy land for some of those corporations, were allowing some of those corporations to buy up other corporations. So there's a need to look back on the history of this issue in terms of the Conservative Party.

I hope that the hon. member is correct when he says that there's going to be proper freedom of information, that Albertans will be well served. I'm not optimistic because the Bill that the hon. member is now part of in backing, the Bill that the Premier introduced just yesterday, provides for exemptions the likes of which allow for the NovAtel and MagCan situations to continue without information being disclosed. Those exemptions include the possibility, if there is another NovAtel, for the government to stand and say, "Sorry, we're not providing that information because that information involves a third party and the financial aspects of a third party." That Bill that was introduced yesterday calls for meetings to be done in secret by a commissioner. That Bill says that if the commissioner orders that certain information be made available by a minister or a department, the minister, the deputy minister, or the department can ignore the request for the information and nothing happens. There are no teeth in the Bill. Is that your idea of freedom of information legislation, the kind of manner that bureaucrats can thwart the public? I hope not. Albertans are entitled to know everything that goes on, with some very few exceptions. Canadians have had all kinds of experience in dealing with freedom of information legislation, and we need only look to that experience to write up, to finesse a Bill that's right for Albertans. It's a poor start to see the same Bill with some 27 – or is it 31? – flaws come forward again.

Mr. Speaker, the last point that I wish to make is the human side that is missing in this Speech from the Throne, and much of what we did today in question period highlighted that theme. Of course we know that cutbacks are needed. Of course we have heard taxpayers say that they don't want any new taxes. Of course we know that taxpayers want to see efficiency and the fat cut out of the system. That means that there will be some difficult areas

for Albertans to get through in terms of cutting back, but on the human side, when you cut back on children who are going to school whose parents or whose mother or father are receiving social assistance and you say to that child, "You now can't have access to the transportation grant to get you to school," that's not right. When the government says, "We're going to limit help for school supplies to \$25," when we know from the documents that have been filed by an hon. member of our party that there is a minimum of \$68 in elementary to a maximum of some \$217 in high school that's needed for school supplies – that's what the experts say – what kind of homework has the minister done and what kind of homework has the government done in looking at this? Obviously, it hasn't been very effective and very proper, because this child that's now being denied school supplies, that's now being denied the ability to get to school, isn't going to be the kind of child that has the advantage to be put into a workplace in just a few years. That's the ultimate goal, the ultimate objective. You've already, through your improper initiatives, hampered that child.

We talked about AISH today. There are some hon. members in this Assembly who have not yet had, I'm sure, the opportunity of dealing with somebody in their constituency who wants to be put on AISH. These are proud Albertans who will be coming to you, Albertans who have worked – usually they have worked – but through some physical disability or some mental disability or both they are unable to work. The department will put you through all kinds of hoops, hon. members, to ensure that there is proper verification that that man or that woman isn't able to work, that for the long-term future the prognosis is that that man or that woman will not be able to work. You will sometimes have to argue with the department and say, "The doctor's reports are clear; the doctor has verified, the psychologist has verified that this constituent of mine cannot work." For us to see the government come down hard on AISH recipients – that is, to say that one in five people that are on AISH will be taken off AISH by simply a ministerial stroke of the pen – isn't right. It flies in the face of that whole verification process. It flies in the face of the dignity that Albertans have in themselves, the pride that they have in themselves. It wasn't done right. It isn't right. It needs to be corrected, and we're going to keep the pressure on to make sure that it is corrected.

Mr. Speaker, since 1972 when the Catonio report came forward, this Assembly has been told that the whole child welfare sector is in trouble. All kinds of suggestions have been made on how to improve dealing with children who come under the care of the government, all kinds of recommendations. From Catonio in '72 we went to another report and then to another report and then to another report, and finally we get to this report that hon. members have seen that was issued in August, the most thorough of all the reports, a report that talks about decentralization, a report that talks about making sure that service-delivery people have the best possible education, a report that clearly talks about the effects of poverty, that if you take opportunity away from children, from people who temporarily need help, you put them into a bigger hole.

4:40

It was sad for our party to see that the minister had no plan, that even though the minister had the report on his desk for a couple of weeks, the minister didn't come forward with a plan to say: "You know, this is now enough. Enough is enough. We've seen so many of these plans we now have to do something, and here's the plan of action to get the thing under control." Instead of doing that, the minister released an internal study that verified

the fact that there was difficulty in his department. The minister only expressed concern for the problem. Our party is going to be here, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that this matter is dealt with and children are looked after properly.

Mr. Speaker, we are afraid of the way that the health care process is going. We are afraid when you call upon Albertans to provide input – and that's the right way to do it; you must ask for their consultation. You must have their consultation when you go through the process of cutbacks, but to cut back or to cut away before this consultation process has even started seems to be a mockery of the whole process. I think I'd like to see the minister stand and respond to this in a very definitive way, a clear way: how the Minister of Health can allow for cutbacks to be imposed without even the consultation process having started.

Mr. Speaker, we have grave concerns. Albertans are not in store for good times. There is a mess that needs to be cleaned up. We'll be here to try to help, but we will not allow for poor people and disadvantaged people to be easy targets for this government.

I cannot accept the Speech from the Throne in the manner in which it's set out, and accordingly I wish to make the following amendment. I have copies for all hon. members. Mr. Speaker, I move that the Speech from the Throne be amended by the addition of the following words:

but that the Assembly condemns the government for failing to develop a comprehensive fiscal plan which presents proper budgetary and human service priorities, since the most severe budget cuts made by this government have been extracted from Albertans who form the most unfortunate and vulnerable sectors of society, such as children, the poor, and the disabled.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour and a privilege to represent the citizens of Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

Point of Order Amendments

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Mr. Speaker, point of order. Is there an amendment on the floor? I was waiting for the amendment to be circulated so that we could then address the amendment. Could I have a ruling on that, please.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The Chair understands that it is in the process of being circulated.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Mr. Speaker, would we now then be dealing with the amendment?

MR. SPEAKER: The debate will now proceed on the basis of the amendment.

The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

Debate Continued

MRS. SOETAERT: Speaking to the amendment, Mr. Speaker. My constituency aptly has the longest name among the constituencies of Alberta because this constituency is among the most diverse in this province. Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert boasts two cities, one municipal district, one reserve, a Hutterite colony, and thousands of people who care about each other. It has been jokingly passed around our caucus that the only reason I got elected was because all of my relatives voted for me, and

admittedly it helped. My grandparents and those of my husband's were the pioneers of this province that settled in the Villeneuve and Rivière Qui Barre area in Sturgeon, and they worked hard to make this province a wonderful place to live. Therefore, my constituents not only know me as a politician but as a granddaughter, daughter, wife, mother, teacher, cousin, and friend, and because of these strong ties I have a very strong sense of commitment to my constituents.

Of great importance to Spruce Grove at this moment is their bid for the blood fractionation plant. Their mayor, Joe Acker, and his energetic and ambitious council have worked hard to put the best bid forward, as the hon. Member for Stony Plain can attest. In Sturgeon, our reeve, Frank Schoenberger, expresses the need for better roads. These are not selfish wants; these are needs based on safety. Anita Ratchinsky is the mayor of St. Albert. Ever versatile, Anita has learned how to work with two vocal MLAs. These three areas make up the diverse yet strong constituency of Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

When my people visit with me, they express their fear about the future of Alberta. Those fears are valid. I share those fears. That is how I came to be in this Assembly. I am afraid of how this government has addressed budget restraint. The old adage, "Do as I say but not as I do," has never washed with parents and children, and it cannot wash with this government and the people of this province. In the course of the next few years I want to alleviate the fears of my constituents. I want to be able to tell them that this government listened to them and me and rethought those brutal and thoughtless cuts. They want to hear that this government worked with the opposition to develop plans of vision that maintain the quality of health care, restructure our crippled social services, and enhance education.

Finally, I continue to reassure my people that we will constantly be watchful over the misuse of power that this government must stop. I'm concerned about lottery funds. Will the hardworking people of this province suffer from lack of support from this government for the way they voted? Patronage appointments, lending to companies, and faulty Bills that restrict freedom of information have to become a thing of the misguided past. Let us continue to work toward a true democracy.

I am sure that every member in this Assembly has had countless calls about the cuts to our health care system. Let us not forget that these calls will soon be coming from our family members who have had to wait years for a hip replacement and months for heart surgery. When health care cuts start to hit close to home, is that the time to listen? I hope it will be long before that.

Our social services are in desperate need of drastic change. The report by Bernd Walter was not only shocking to Albertans but woke us up to the desperate inadequacies of this system. Most of us have been aware for a long time that this bureaucracy needs to change tactics and rebuild a failing program. Mr. Walter has courageously pointed out the weaknesses in the system and offered concrete suggestions for rebuilding. Let us not allow this report to collect dust. Let's wear out those pages through constant reference and by so doing give hope to so many of our poor and particularly our children, who so often are lost and abused within the very organization whose mandate it is to supposedly protect them.

My area of critique is that of culture and multicultural, and within that is women's issues. In many ways the term women's issues could be turned around to children's advocate. The issues that affect women ultimately affect children. Though it is a federal mandate, I would like to see our government lobby the unfair taxation of support payments. Child care must be addressed. Pay equity, a simple concept of equal pay for equal

work of equal value, sounds sensible, doesn't it? You're right; it is. I'm concerned about our poor. I'm concerned about the plight of our immigrant women who often live frugally and contribute willingly to this province but are often denied their basic rights. I speak specifically of one immigrant who is now disqualified from landed immigrant status due to breast cancer that was treated and cured three years ago. She's being punished because she got sick. Being that one in four women in Alberta will suffer from breast cancer, this hardly seems fair. This hardly sounds like the Alberta I have loved all my life. Alberta is a place of acceptance and diversity. We cannot punish people because of gender, race, or religion.

4:50

Mr. Speaker, another area near and dear to me is our education system. Having been an educator and being married to an educator, as well as having four children that I'm expensively putting into school this fall, gives me an understanding and a perspective of the new roles schools must play. Our society used to be based around the security of home and community. Unfortunately, that is not a reality in the '90s. For many children the school has become the only secure place in their lives. The school system must now do much more than teach. The school must provide emotional support that families used to provide. I see the need to co-ordinate health care and social services within the setting of the school. Many of our youth are troubled, and if we care for them when they are young, they will in turn care for us when we are elderly.

We members of the Assembly have a heavy responsibility to shoulder in the next few years. We have to be farsighted in the decisions we make. We have to be aware that these decisions affect real people with real names, faces, and families. Let's not forget our aboriginal people who are in a state of transition or our elderly who deserve respect, not neglect.

Finally, we cannot forget that this province is blessed not only with good people but by its geographical diversity: from prairie to forest to mountains. Let us never forget that this environment is a gift that we should treasure.

Mr. Speaker, I end my first speech in the Legislative Assembly, but I would like to leave on a note of caring. If every decision we make in this House is made with forethought and a sense of caring for all the individuals who make up this wonderful province, then we will come out of the next few years intact. As individuals we care about our neighbours and help them when they ask for help, and in turn they help us. Now we must think past our own back doors, beyond our own constituents, and think of the betterment of all Albertans.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Labour.

MR. DAY: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. First, let me congratulate the Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert for an excellent first start. The proposition that I'm going to bring forward has nothing to do with that particular speech. I would like to suggest that the Speaker give consideration to the fact that this amendment actually is quite out of order. I'd refer to *Beauchesne* 578(1), which refers to the fact that "an amendment proposing a direct negative, though it may be covered up by verbiage, is out of order," and also 578(3) saying that "an amendment approving part of a motion and disapproving the remainder is out of order." I'd ask you to give consideration to ruling that amendment out of order.

Thank you.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, diligence was taken in ensuring that the amendment was cleared with Parliamentary Counsel, and I think it meets the customs and traditions that are usually put forward in an amendment by the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair will take the matter under advisement.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to that amendment. I rise also to speak to that amendment specifically on behalf of the constituents of Edmonton-Avonmore, whom at the outset I want to thank for placing me here and giving me this privilege to not only address you, Mr. Speaker, and the other members of the House but at the same time to also take very seriously upon myself that oath, as other members here are doing, too, to be here to serve in the good public interest of all Albertans and not just a privileged few.

In that regard and with specific reference to our proposed amendment as brought forward by our honourable leader, I want to start by thanking the authors of the throne speech for having included several references to some very, very familiar jargon which appears to have been borrowed directly in many instances from our Liberal policy paper, *Mandate for Change*. I enjoyed those sections, having had a small hand in drafting some of them myself. I find in particular how interesting it is that the speech specifically, Mr. Speaker, refers to things like sunset clauses on new regulations and getting out of the business of direct business subsidies. However, all of this, as we know, is to make an attempt at correcting some of the flaws of the past, and I must tell you and other members here that I was absolutely shocked to hear that more of these flaws seem to be perpetuating themselves yet again. For me to stand here today and hear about the Beatrice Foods circumstance really did put a different kind of downward glow on the proceedings of this House so far. However, I'm sure that the members on the other side will have ample opportunity to correct that, because we on this side are looking at these things with finer tuned microscopes, as are members of the general public right across the province.

The other thing I would like to say in that regard, Mr. Speaker, is that if these authors of this throne speech are going to continue in this fashion of borrowing certain phrases, I would ask that they observe at least some general common courtesy of copyright and give us credit where credit is due, since many of these highly innovative if not provocative statements about change were in fact first introduced by some of the members who are here today on this side of the House as being innovative ideas brought forward for the benefit of all Albertans. We're appreciative that you're picking up on some of those cues. I wish you would do a more complete job with some of them by removing some words like: as much as possible we're going to get out of the business of government giveaways to private enterprise. I think it's a very weak escape in an attempt to eradicate some of these direct subsidies. I won't go through any missive reminding the other side of the House of all of the mistakes of the past. I would only make an urgent plea that they please put Beatrice and others to rest here once and for all, and please don't continue in that same manner. I don't think it's in the good interests of the public, and I certainly don't find it in the best interests of this House.

I want also, in speaking to that amendment, to address some of the things that our honourable leader referred to already, and those are some of the absences and omissions that are very blatant. Whereas this particular document speaks reasonably well to some of the financial considerations that have been placed under their purview, I find a total lack of information and specific direction

of where this government is headed insofar as its concerns for people go. Where are the initiatives that we're looking for, for example, that would help sing some praises in other areas besides health care, education, and the economy, such areas as the culture and heritage and history of this province? I have seen, Mr. Speaker, as you have for the past number of years, a rather constant and deliberate erosion and, shall we say, departure from some of the traditions that were established several years ago in this House wherein we recognized the different cultures who comprise this province, all the different people who contribute so greatly. I was looking for just even a passing reference to something to do with the pride that we Albertans take in ourselves and the pride that we take in sharing our heritage with others. Where is that in this document?

Mr. Speaker, as a former schoolteacher I have waxed eloquent in the past on this subject, and I will continue to do so because it is the people that are important in this province. It is the people that we must take into account first. We can't let this hollow ringing of cash registers go on pleasing some ears while at the same time it is absolutely disharmonious to the rest of us who constitute, dare I say, the majority in this province. We all have a pride, we all have a history, and we all have an ancestry that helped build this province. When will people on that side of the House start figuring that one out, that we have to on occasion thank those people somehow, at least give them the courtesy of recognition? So from that standpoint, I stand quite disappointed.

5:00

Another area that I feel quite passionately about, Mr. Speaker, is the entire area of the arts, which is also deliberately absent in this report. The arts are an incredibly important aspect of our society, and for them not to have even rated a mention in here is also rather unfortunate – and dare I say it's also, again, deliberate – because the arts do breathe an incredible amount of oxygen into your everyday life, into my everyday life. Being from that background myself, I am particularly fond of the arts for the value that they do bring. That is not to take away from the millions of dollars that the arts contribute through jobs and other programs in this province, and I would think that it would behoove the government to at least look at those areas as well.

We can't just focus all costs on balancing the budget. This is not the answer that we were looking for, and I hope the government will take that under advisement. It's time for that hollow cash register ringing, Mr. Speaker, to come to a stop and for this government to stop scrambling in that regard by avoiding some of these areas that really do need some support and some attention.

The other part that I find is truly missing in here is the social conscience of the report and of this government. In fact, it brings to question whether or not there is a social conscience here. I read with great interest, Mr. Speaker, in preparing myself for the opening of the Leg., the actual *Beauchesne's* orders. I see in there that among the fundamental premises on which parliament is based it says that we are here “to protect a minority” and protect against “the improvidence or tyranny of a majority.” I was looking for some proof of that, some substance to sustain that thought in this first, all-important document which sets the pattern and path that the government is going to be following. Again, dare I say, it was not there. I don't see where that protection is being given. I see constant references to the plan, and I hope one day to be privileged enough as an Albertan to see the plan. I'm not sure if the plan exists. It reminds me of the popular musical *the Phantom of the Opera*. Perhaps this will become the phantom of the Legislature; I don't know. One day it would be a joy for

the Treasurer to share that with us, and I'm sure he has every intention of so doing; at least I would hope.

The other part of that is that I find it very difficult, Mr. Speaker, to sit here listening to references to the plan and then shortly to be called upon to vote on the absent plan with a view to providing money for the government to operate based on a single one-pager that has been circulated today, when we all know that in a business environment banks and other lending institutions would advance money based on purpose and based on a sound financial business plan. I don't think that should become a phantom, and I think it's something that the government should come forward with and come forward with in some detail very quickly, because I for one am going to feel very uncomfortable having to vote on something that is otherwise absent. So I would make that pledge and that plea on behalf of all of us, for the Treasurer to bring that forward with some expediency.

I see references frequently, Mr. Speaker, to terms like openness and freedom of information, and I wonder how it is that we can go on accepting those phrases of openness and freedom of information when we have seen exactly the opposite kinds of practices already being put into place. I would tell you that I was in Red Deer last week, and I had the pleasure of auditing one of the committees, the standing policy committee on community services chaired by the hon. member two rows down from me. I was pleased that the hon. member allowed me to sit in on that meeting. I thanked him for it, along with several other ministers, and I was a bit shocked at the invitation to leave that meeting. I was under the impression that this was going to be open, honest, accessible government, and I was there as an Albertan as much as I was there as an MLA hoping to take all kinds of precious gems of information back to my constituents and to my caucus, but I wasn't given the opportunity to stay that extra little bit. So I would hope that maybe they could take that under consideration under that term of openness.

I would also like to relate that openness to the Minister of Health, whom it was a pleasure to see in Red Deer, having met her on one occasion before. We had a nice chat, and I expressed to her a small concern at that time which I will reiterate now. That is, if we are going to proceed in this new system and get off to a good start of freedom and openness and public consultative processes and so on, that she, too, please take that under advisement when the next set of roundtables is going to occur. Otherwise, if that's not going to be open to everybody, then let's stop calling them public, let's stop calling them open, and find a new term.

Within all of that too, Mr. Speaker, is the commitment on page 3 that I read with great interest about how this government is committed to listening to the people. Well, you can't listen to them if they're not there, so it's time that we opened up those doors. I congratulate the government on its policy of getting out from under the dome. Now let's just open the dome up so some people can find out what's going on in here, and I suggest that's one way of doing it.

That brings into question the reference on page 2 to a strong commitment to the people. I wonder how strong it is when we see some of the flaws of the past which we surely could have and should have learned from by now: the Beatrice Foods example and the unfortunate patronage appointment here given to Mr. Oldring. I'm not sure that that's the kind of strong commitment Albertans were really looking for. I think what they're looking for when they say a strong commitment to change is something that distances the new practice, the new method, from what we've seen in the past.

I read with great interest too, Mr. Speaker, the reference on page 3 to being "compassionate." I looked at that and thought to myself that this must have been written several months ago. Otherwise, how could they justify the compassion that has clearly been lacking in the way in which some of the cuts have been made to areas of health care and to Family and Social Services? I find that to be a real paradoxical situation as explained by the Minister of Family and Social Services: on the one hand he's having to make these cuts, and then he's doing it under the false guise that he's actually helping Albertans get jobs. I fail to see the logic in that, that there are going to be these drastic cuts made from people who are so deserving.

I think you build a strong and healthy economy in a different way, Mr. Speaker, and I was looking for some new, innovative ways to come forward from the minister in that regard. I'm afraid that that too is absent, but the lack of compassion I think is what needs to be focused on here. I frankly was very disappointed when I read that, and I was quite surprised. How dare anybody use the term "compassionate," flying in the face of those cuts as they were announced?

They in fact go so deep as to preclude in some instances our most valuable resource of all from getting on with life, and that is our children, our youth, our school kids. We've got to take a look at that, Mr. Speaker, if we're really going to set something in motion here for the long run. We can't have these knee-jerk reactions creeping up from time to time that say we'll cut now and we'll ask questions later. I don't think that smacks of sound financial governing, and I would hope that they can change the method and mannerism of how those things are being done. It's disgraceful that some of those kids, some of whom, unfortunately, live in my constituency and are appealing for help – in small droves, and I'm sure they will grow shortly – can't even afford the school supplies needed. On the one hand, we have in education circles at higher levels the inability to admit some students to higher faculties of learning in this province, and on the other end of it, at the very beginning steps, we can't even get them in for Grade 1. That's really, really a backward step, and I would hope I'm making the point reasonably well to substantiate some kind of a more serious thought process from both those two ministers.

5:10

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I looked at this with a renewed, I thought, sense of hope for the future of Alberta. In actual fact, I'm afraid I found more examples of absence of concrete hope. There are many flowery words that have been strung together in fine fashion here. There are big promises of new jobs, "generating new employment." I'm just wondering: when and where are we going to see these phantom jobs? At the moment, unless I'm reading different newspapers and hearing from constituents that are extremely unique, I don't see that there's any of that job creation taking place. Now, government doesn't necessarily have to be charged with creating jobs, but the job should be to create that environment that would stimulate job creation. All I see, in actual fact, are numerous layoffs. I see job losses by the droves. I see companies going under, one of them being a large co-op that has existed for many years right in my own riding. I see longer lines at the employment office. I see health care givers, nurses and graduating medics and others, not being able to find jobs. They put caps on the licences, as you know, which would preclude our graduating medics from getting jobs in this province. The brain drain has started; we're losing them. I suspect the educators will be possibly the next to go. I'm disappointed in that. I know the Minister of Health will take this under consideration and

advisement. I would hope, too, that so would the Minister of Education.

I find it very interesting that the quote on page 10 sums up the paradox most beautifully for me. It reads, "You build a strong economy with healthy, well-educated, and well-trained people." Why then is it that the people on the other side feel it so incumbent on them to go exactly against those three principles in the first few initiatives in the first couple of months of being elected. Healthy, well-educated, and well-trained: I was hoping to see some initiatives to in fact see those things come to fruition, and I feel there's a really strong absence of that in this report.

With 40 percent of the population in Alberta having given us a mandate to sit as a privileged group on this side of the House, I would hope that we would be given at least 40 percent consideration for the ideas we're giving. I think that they borrowed a few in the beginning, as I mentioned, and I would look forward to even more of them being picked up as we go along.

So with that, let me simply make a small plea for us to work together not for the betterment of just a privileged few. Let us work together for the betterment of all Albertans, respecting the oath that we all took and respecting the *Beauchesne* quote that simply says, once again, "to protect a minority" and protect against "the improvidence or tyranny of a majority."

With that, Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to take my seat, and I thank you all for listening so attentively.

Speaker's Ruling Admissibility of Amendment

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The Chair, for the benefit of all members, thinks it should say something about the point of order with regard to the amendment. The Chair finds that the point of order is not there. The amendment is not a direct negative. The motion is to congratulate the Lieutenant Governor. The amendment does not detract from that. It does condemn the government for certain policies, and this has happened many times before. It's always been the tradition of parliaments and this Assembly in particular to allow great latitude to people who wish to participate in the throne speech debate following such an amendment. Members will also remember that governments have been defeated on a nonconfidence basis by the moving of such an amendment. So this is not really a direct negative to the motion but is a condemnation of government policies, which has been found in order before.

With that, the Chair will recognize the hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Debate Continued

MR. WOLOSHYN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the latitude that you have extended to the participants, since had you not been that generous, there wouldn't have been any participation.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity first of all to congratulate you on your election as Speaker of the Assembly. It is a historic underlining of some of the positive changes that this government is bringing forth. I believe this is the first Speaker elected by secret ballot, and I think you can be proud of that. You'll be going down in history for that achievement.

I would also like to commend the Lieutenant Governor for an excellent Speech from the Throne and take this opportunity, too, to welcome to the House the people who initiated themselves with their maiden speeches today: the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, whom we happen to be neighbours with and have had the privilege of attending some functions with; my fellow colleague from Edmonton-Avonmore, who has given the

teaching profession a new definition; my colleague from Three Hills-Airdrie, for seconding the motion; and last but not least the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, the renamed constituency, for moving the Speech from the Throne.

Much has been said about this. Speaking to the amendment, Mr. Speaker, I find the amendment to be rather despicable. If you look through that amendment, it states

the Assembly condemns the government for failing to develop a comprehensive fiscal plan which presents proper budgetary and human service priorities, since the most severe budget cuts made by this government have been extracted from Albertans who form the most unfortunate and vulnerable sectors of society, such as children, the poor, and the disabled.

This is nothing more than a blatant attempt at crass emotionalism. The latest budget has not been presented yet. We had a spring budget that this government went to an election on which was endorsed by the majority of Albertans for us. There was reference made by one of the speakers to tyranny of the majority and protection of the minority. I would like to point out that this government is a majority, and its mandate is to represent and protect all Albertans, which it has been doing and will continue to do.

One of the speakers, as a matter of fact the seconder, the hon. Member for Three Hills-Airdrie, made reference to: are we having 95 percent of a previous level of funding or a 3 percent cut? I would respectfully submit to the members of this Legislature that if you had indeed read the throne speech, as you should have, and if you followed what you are proposing from across the way, to continue even at the current level of spending, within a very, very short number of years the only expenditures that would be available to this government would be for health care, social services, and education.

We know that the spiraling costs of maintaining these very important programs cannot continue. There's no doubt in anyone's mind that we have to maintain a realistic level of funding for these programs. That is what this government is endeavouring to do. It is not easy to look at and say to and present to people levels of expenditure, because it would be very, very nice to be able to just write a blank cheque and say go for it. In fact, had it not been for a federal Liberal government that introduced something called the national energy policy – according to the Fraser Institute, Alberta lost some \$60 billion. Sixty billion dollars. This, even through the simple mathematics from across the way, Mr. Speaker, would translate into a \$40 billion surplus plus interest accrued. We would then have more than sufficient funds to do whatever we wanted to. So I would suggest, I would respectfully submit, that when the federal Liberals extracted some \$23,218.92 from Albertans, that's where the problem began. Let's make it very clear.

Point of Order Questioning a Member

MR. N. TAYLOR: A point of order, Mr. Speaker. Would the hon. member entertain a question?

5:20

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The Hon. Member for Redwater inquires whether the hon. Member for Stony Plain will entertain a question.

MR. WOLOSHYN: No, not at this point, Mr. Speaker. However, just so that we know where we're at, because I can see where the question is going, what I will do is quote from *Hansard*, April 8, 1992.

I think if the oil companies and gas companies are really looking at overhauling things . . . bring back the NEP; you have to have a national energy policy. You can put different initials on it or whatever you want . . . You can't sit back there and let the so-called marketplace take place.

This was recorded in *Alberta Hansard* April 8, 1992, Nick Taylor, Liberal energy critic.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member is rising on a point of order?

MR. N. TAYLOR: The point of order I wanted to make, Mr. Speaker, was . . . [interjections] I wanted the hon. member to read it correctly. I put a heckle in there. That was a heckle to the Tories: bring back the NEP. He has read it without . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess I am just guilty of anticipation on the question that I didn't permit the hon. member to ask, since I am sure that he wanted me to point out to all Albertans that he wants the NEP back so we can suffer more under the program.

Debate Continued

MR. WOLOSHYN: Mr. Speaker, I find it very interesting . . .

MR. N. TAYLOR: You were behind me in those days, Stan.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Some of us get wiser with age and change, and some of us just get old and wait to wither away.

Mr. Speaker, I also find it interesting that there have been references made to the motions of the hon. Treasurer brought in today, motions that are necessary for the continued operation of the government, the government that serves the people, the very people that this amendment refers to: children, poor, and disabled. So on the one hand, we have a request to go forth and spend without wisdom. On the other hand, no, we can't get the money appropriated in order to maintain the programs that are there. Now, I find this quite a contradiction, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to say that the throne speech, if it's looked at with any amount of sincerity, will show that this is a blueprint for the future, a commitment made by a government that is cognizant of the financial dilemma that this province is in, a government that has taken the time, has got the courage and the will to follow through and is going to address all the programs in such a way that the needy of this province will in fact continue to get the highest possible care of any province in all of Canada.

I think that the members across the way may well have the odd good suggestion, which the government would be more than pleased to listen to. [interjection] Well, we're waiting.

I've been pleased to see some of the members from across the way attending our standing policy committee meetings; very few, but they were there. If they want to continue to become enlightened, their participation there should continue.

Mr. Speaker, in view of the hour, I would move to adjourn debate and beg leave to continue with my comments at another date.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the motion of the hon. Member for Stony Plain, do you all agree?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

[At 5:29 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Thursday at 2:30 p.m.]

