

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, February 15, 1994 8:00 p.m.**

Date: 1994/02/15

### Committee of Supply

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: If we could come to order, please, we could begin.

#### head: **Supplementary Estimates 1993-94**

MR. CHAIRMAN: The committee is reminded that we're on our second evening of consideration of the supplementary estimates of the general revenue fund for 1993-94. We have left over from last day a point of order, and I'm given to understand that Edmonton-Whitemud wishes to discuss the point of order further.

Edmonton-Whitemud.

#### **Point of Order Imputing Motives**

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Last evening I raised a point of order, and you will find the exchange on pages 38 and 39 of *Hansard* February 14. In response, the Deputy Premier challenged me on a statement I'd made about appointed hospital boards. In the process of making that statement, the hon. Deputy Premier has challenged me to say where in *Hansard* that statement was made. I never said, in fact, that the statement was entered into *Hansard*. I had said that a minister of the government had argued that there should be no elected hospital boards in certain areas. I'd like to read that quote into *Hansard* tonight so it is there, because we listened to numerous quotes this afternoon from the hon. Premier. This is from the *Edmonton Journal*, February 10, 1994.

Province to call shots on hospitals

Voters in Alberta's big cities won't be able to elect a full slate of regional hospital representatives because the Klein government fears a power grab by "special-interest groups."

"It has nothing to do with whether they are Liberal or NDP," cabinet minister Dianne Mirosh explained, referring to opposition parties which have a greater foothold in the cities.

"But we want to ensure we have a good mix."

The quote then goes on, and I'll come specifically to the point that. . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, if I'm understanding you correctly, you've made your point that you were quoting a minister of the Crown from a presumed newspaper article and not from *Hansard*.

DR. PERCY: But I would like to read it in for *Hansard*.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I have no objection to you doing that, but I don't know that a point of order is the proper place to do it.

Deputy Government House Leader, you have words cogent to this debate?

MR. EVANS: I would be delighted if you would give me the opportunity to make a brief comment on the hon. member's presentation. I would refer, Mr. Chairman, to Standing Order 23(d). Clearly, the general rule of not reading from *Hansard* or other documents at length in general debate would be the rule that should apply on a point of order. With all due respect, I certainly agree with you that the hon. member opposite has made his point.

He was honestly but clearly misunderstood last evening, if he was referring in fact to a reference in a newspaper article. The point has been made. We have a number of important issues on the agenda tonight. Certainly I know the hon. member opposite wants to have an opportunity to speak about the supplementary estimates, and I would humbly suggest that we get on with it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

I think if you read a little further it does say, "but a member may quote relevant passages for the purposes of a complaint," which I assume is Edmonton-Whitemud's point "about something said or of a reply to an alleged misrepresentation." So you have made your point, have you not, Edmonton-Whitemud?

DR. PERCY: Well, there are just three sentences I would like to read, Mr. Chairman, for the record. Just three.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. We'll bear with you on this.

DR. PERCY:

"In the urban areas it can become a problem if they are all elected. There has to be accountability. The province is the one giving out the money."

As I said last night, I believe the ultimate accountability is to local voters, people who vote. That's where accountability starts.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think the point here is that we have a difference between individuals in a debate.

#### **Debate Continued**

MR. CHAIRMAN: Again a reminder to the committee that if they would address through the Chair, that may lessen the opportunities for interchanges that are other than useful for the purposes that we are assembled here tonight.

We did have Edmonton-Norwood on our list from the last session, but Edmonton-Centre, you wish to speak.

MR. HENRY: Mr. Chairman, I would like to rise and speak on supplementary estimates. It's my understanding that there are a number of issues in the supplementary estimates, one being the infrastructure program and the \$40 million required for the infrastructure program.

I wanted to perhaps give a bit of a history lesson to a few of the members in the House about the infrastructure program and where it came from. First, many, many years ago, in the early 1980s the Federation of Canadian Municipalities – and more specifically the initiative came from the big city mayors, which included the Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition and the Premier when they were the mayors of Edmonton and Calgary respectively. They indicated at that point that one way we can get this economy moving is to ensure that we look after getting people back to work and at the same time address the very, very real problem of municipal infrastructure.

The plan designed first by the big city mayors and then the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the FCM, had a three-part program whereby the federal government, the provincial governments collectively, and the municipal governments collectively would all put money into a pot to help restore municipal infrastructure back to the level it was at in the heydays. I recall that when this was first put on the table, many people in western Canada said: "Oh, this is not really ours. This must be for places like Quebec City and Halifax that are much older cities and whose

infrastructure had been decaying over time for the last 300 years." But on closer examination – and I credit the Premier and the Leader of the Official Opposition, the only opposition, for having indicated at that time that, no, this was an Edmonton, a Calgary, a western concern as well as a concern in eastern Canada.

The idea kind of filtered along, and frankly, after the election of the "Jobs, jobs, jobs" Prime Minister, the idea died. I can tell you, Mr. Chairman, I was shocked that here was a proposal that was almost complete, that had federal government, most municipal governments, and dozens of municipalities across this province ready to buy into it, and the Prime Minister in 1984, who got elected on the platform of "Jobs, jobs, jobs," said: "No, thank you. I won't participate in that program." Therefore the program died. But like a phoenix it rose from the ashes, and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities deserves a lot of credit. Also from time to time the urban municipalities of Alberta, and I suspect the rural municipalities as well, kept the idea alive and discussed it with new municipal politicians and new provincial and federal politicians as they had gotten elected. I daresay that on both sides of this House there are former municipally elected officials who are now MLAs who learned about the infrastructure program when they first became municipal politicians.

8:10

Then, Mr. Chairman, our province got into a worse and worse financial situation. Unemployment rose and rose, and the clamour for jobs, jobs, jobs came back. After the last election on June 15, the Premier promised 110,000 jobs, but then his deputy said he wasn't going to participate in any kind of federal infrastructure program. Then we entered into – I'm going very fast in history – a federal election in which we saw the famous red book. In the red book, lo and behold, was the federal/municipal/provincial infrastructure program. All the ideas in the red book – and I would recommend that for good nighttime reading for all of my colleagues on both sides of the House. These ideas were not dreamed up in some sort of boardroom. It was not a bunch of economists who sat around saying, "Here's how we're going to fix the world." It was not a bunch of MLAs or MPs who said that. This was a book of ideas, of policies, a future for Canada that was developed through a two-year long public consultation process with business, labour, small business, the financial community, as well as various levels of government. Then our at-that-point Leader of the Opposition Jean Chrétien issued his red book as a challenge, saying here's how we're going to get government back on track. Lo and behold, Canadians said, "Yes, let's get our federal government back on track, and let's pick up where Brian Mulroney left off in 1984."

So now we have the federal infrastructure program back on the table, and I want to state here categorically that I am very, very proud of my federal cousins in Ottawa who have had the guts, who have had the foresight, who have had the vision to say that the number one issue in this country right now is, jobs, jobs, jobs, let's get people back to work. One of the first moves of the Chrétien government was to put this on the table and not shove it down provincial or municipal governments' throats but to lay it out as an option and say: "As a federal government, here is what we're prepared to do. If you would like to participate in that, here's the way to go about that. We're willing to sign individual agreements with each of the 10 provincial governments."

[Mr. Sohal in the Chair]

If I'm wrong, I would stand corrected by any member from the other side, but I understand that although the majority of federal

and provincial agreements have been signed, Alberta's has not been signed yet but is very, very close. In essence, it's a matter of simply going through the process now because some agreements and terms have been achieved. Therefore, we now are entering into this infrastructure program. I suspect the signing will happen in a very, very few days or weeks, and then we will have Alberta joining the national government in Ottawa as a partner with the municipalities. Again, I hope the provincial government does not shove it down municipalities' throats but instead offers it to municipalities as an option, because it may be appropriate for some and it may not be appropriate for other municipalities, the way it may be appropriate for some provinces and not for others.

I would hope that our government in Alberta follows the lead of the federal government by acting as an enabler and a facilitator, not a controller and a director of how these funds should be operated. I think it's very, very important. We all know that a party system, while it has its advantages, has disadvantages as well. One of the disadvantages is that as provincial politicians we're more vulnerable sometimes to the pressures of various special interest groups. I would hope that when we settle on the infrastructure program and allow the municipalities to participate in this program, that we allow those municipalities – the elected officials closest to the grassroots – to make the decisions as to which projects go ahead in their communities and that we, whether on the government side or the opposition side or jointly, don't try to decide what's good for Edmonton, what's good for Calgary, what's good for Taber, what's good for Fairview. I'm sure the hon. Member for Dunvegan would agree that the municipal councillors in Fairview probably know much better about what Fairview needs than I do or perhaps even he does or any of us in this House. Let's let them make that decision.

I'd like to see a commitment from this government and a commitment in this Legislature that says very clearly from the Minister of Municipal Affairs that municipalities will set the priorities and that assuming the money is going to be distributed on a per capita basis, as has been indicated by the government, that the infrastructure program is run at the local level, and we don't get a top-heavy, heavy-handed, provincial hand saying that you're going to do this and not this, because goodness knows, Mr. Chairman, that the best decisions about people and about communities are made in those communities and not in some ivory tower or under some dome. Let's spread out the authority, and let's let the people in Medicine Hat, the municipal council who are duly elected in Medicine Hat, make the decisions about what kind of infrastructure program is appropriate for Medicine Hat. Let the Edmonton council do the same for Edmonton. I may not agree, and I may not agree with what Edmonton decides.

Goodness knows, Mr. Deputy Chairman, that if I were to look at it purely from a personal point of view, you could take all of the infrastructure money and spend it all in my neighbourhood, but that would be wrong for me as a provincial politician to influence that decision. I have great faith and support very strongly the municipal government structure in our province, a credit to those who built it and many members around here on both sides of the House who participated. What municipal governments have to do, unlike what we do in the Legislature where you take a pro and a con or an opposition and a government: municipal politicians have to act in a way that I as a resident of Edmonton have to go to my alderman and say, "This is what I want for my community; this is what I believe is best for my community," and that alderman must go to the table with 11 other aldermen and the mayor and work out a compromise that gives me something of what I need for my community but also gives other parts of the city what they need for their community and also – and this is

most important – does what's best for the overall community as a whole in the long term. Municipally elected local politicians are in the position to make those kinds of decisions, not you, Mr. Chairman, not me, or not anybody in this Legislature. So the message is: let's sign the deal; let's get it in place with the federal government.

Again, congratulations. As I understand, the province is very close to an agreement. Congratulations to our government and to the government in Ottawa, even though we have two different political parties, being able to come together to work out some terms that work for both sets of objectives. Now let's sign the agreement with our municipalities, and let's give our municipalities the money they so badly need and let them make the decisions that are most appropriate for their communities.

Mr. Deputy Chairman, we all know what happens when partisan politics gets in the way of these kinds of decisions. We end up with roads getting nowhere. We end up with buildings being built, as in Brooks, Alberta – the member from Bow Island I believe is here – where we get an extension college built with no road to it when we didn't consult the local municipality.

AN HON. MEMBER: There's no extension college in Bow Island.

MR. HENRY: I'm sorry; in Brooks, I believe.

Let's start putting some faith in those people who were elected locally. Let's start saying that the people who are elected locally are responsible, that they do make quality decisions, and they do in fact reflect the wishes of their community. If we want to look at it from a totally crass, political point of view, let's be really, really clear. If we give the authority to the municipal politicians and if they muck up on this one and don't do what's right for their community, they will be facing the electorate in about 20 months from now. We've got about three or four years, according to the Premier. So let's make sure that the whole system is accountable by making sure that the municipal politicians have the authority to make the decisions that affect their communities.

I'll have other comments as well on the supplementary estimates, Mr. Deputy Chairman, but I hope that I've made my point with regard to the infrastructure program. Again, congratulations to both levels of government. Let's get on with this. This does have some history. This is not a fly-by-night scheme. It has 10 years if not 15 years of development history in it. Let's put the decision-making where it belongs and get on with the job.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Roper.

MR. CHADI: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I, too, am pleased that the infrastructure program along with the federal government and the province of Alberta are very close to signing the arrangement on the deal. I have been in favour of the fact that there will be no new money involved in this. Indeed, the funding would be coming from other parts of the budget that we've already had in place. It is my understanding that indeed these estimates that we're voting on now are nothing more than the transfer from capital to operating, and I'm in favour of that. I want to inform the members on both sides of the House that both my colleague and myself in the Treasury Department are going to be watching with hawk eyes, and we're going to be monitoring this in every respect to ensure that these funds are going to be noted as to where we've had savings in capital and where we've taken them

and put them into operating. We're going to be watching that and monitoring it very, very closely.

8:20

The infrastructure program is one that of course is a long time overdue. We're pleased to see that happening. I know that's going to go an awful long ways in creating the 110,000 jobs that we so desperately need. I don't know why 110,000. Why didn't we say 200,000 or 150,000 or 105,000? But the 110,000, since we're all using it, we might as well continue with it. It's going to go a long ways to create jobs in the province of Alberta, and I'm wondering if the Premier at the time of the announcing of the 110,000 new jobs was reading a crystal ball and knew that the new Prime Minister would be Jean Chrétien and knew full well that an infrastructure program would be put in place, because otherwise I'm not so sure how we would have created more jobs in the province. Nonetheless, we do have \$40 million that is about to be allocated, and it isn't new money. It is funds that will be taken from other parts of our budget, and it will be put towards this infrastructure program to create these jobs.

The concerns that we do have have been recorded and mentioned by our members on this side of the House. That is, of course, that we want to ensure that there will be no patronage, patronage that we feel can happen and probably will happen if we don't scrutinize it. We feel strongly that the involvement from the local levels of government and the ranking of the projects by these different local government people will be honoured.

We do have concerns. I have concerns as to why economic development is looking after this \$40 million of infrastructure money. I mean, it would only make sense that public works handle this. Public works is the right vehicle to be looking after the infrastructure program. So my concerns, Mr. Chairman, are clearly that. It ought not to be run through economic development; it ought to be run through the public works. We, myself and my colleagues, will be looking out and ensuring that all funds that we vote here today on the supplementary estimates do come from other parts of the budget and are not new money.

So having said that, Mr. Chairman, I will allow my other colleagues to speak on this matter. Thank you.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Last evening in committee the Minister of Health asked me to review *Hansard* and see whether or not I had appropriately quoted her, and I stand in the Assembly to say that I didn't appropriately quote her but I did in fact quote the Treasurer. I should have said that the government was trying to pass off these changes in the health care budget as mere bookkeeping. It wasn't the minister herself. I'll read from the government's Background released February 14 where it says in part:

As noted in the Second Quarter Report released on November 24, the Department of Health is reducing capital equipment purchases and the Department of Public Works, Supply and Services is reducing spending on hospital construction. A Supplementary Estimate is required to appropriate \$60 million to the Health operating budget. This is offset by the unexpended capital dollars in the health and public works departments.

That is just bookkeeping, according to the Treasurer.

Now, while I'm standing in the Assembly, though, I will ask that the Minister of Health check *Hansard*, and maybe she can properly now reply to my question when I asked about her statement that all capital spending would be frozen. Reading from page 36 of yesterday's *Hansard*, Mr. Chairman, the minister said:

The one recommendation in particular is the one that we will deal with tonight, and it was a very strong recommendation from the participants at that roundtable to freeze, to delay any capital expenditures in health pending the continued roundtable discussions on the restructuring of health. That occurred, and we are appropriating from the Public Works . . . estimates on capital projects some \$31,800,000 and from Health's capital area some \$28,200,000.

She certainly gave the Assembly the impression that all capital funding was frozen, and we know that that's not the case as somehow some 17 capital projects managed to go ahead. I would like the minister to be able to let us know in this Assembly on what basis those decisions were made that some capital projects would be frozen and others allowed.

Thank you.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I would like to inform our visitors in the gallery that this is the Committee of Supply, an informal session of the Legislature. The members are not sitting in their seats. At this time they can take their jackets off, they can have soft drinks.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Last night one of the members opposite – from Edmonton-Ellerslie I believe it is – went on at some length with regard to the mismanagement of the dollars with which we have been presented in these supplementary estimates, the lack of faith, the overspending. It went on and on and on somewhat in contrast to some of the other speakers from the Liberal opposition last night and again tonight who generally are saying, "Well, yes, we do agree with some of them and particularly with regards to the infrastructure." Quite clearly there was an accusation, very direct. I can make all the quotes out of it, but on the basis of time I'm not going to.

What I do have a question on is with regard to legislative services, which in there has a total of \$128,000 which is required for capital. I'm at a difficulty because I'm not sure which minister is responsible for that; hence I'm having some difficulty whom I can address the question to. So with the permission of the chair, I would ask perhaps if the deputy leader could . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: No, he couldn't.

MR. JACQUES: He can't do that.

I will pose the question, then, to the deputy leader, to the minister of economic development. Could he please respond with regard to the spending of \$128,000, as to where those moneys are being spent, or where they had been spent?

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

AN HON. MEMBER: This is highly unusual.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It is.

Hon. Deputy Premier, in summation.

MR. KOWALSKI: In summation, sir, did you say? [interjections] How long are we staying here tonight?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Through the Chair, please.

MR. KOWALSKI: Through the Chair, okay.

Mr. Chairman, the document before us is the supplementary estimates, 1993-94. The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti asked a question with respect to the estimate of the Legislative

Assembly. It's not really been the tradition that the Speaker, who is the chairman of the Members' Services Committee, would appear before the House or to answer questions with respect to what estimates would be in Members' Services and arising out of that in support of the Legislative Assembly. Also, it has neither been the tradition of this Assembly, in fact, that there's to be a debate on the estimates of the Legislative Assembly. However, the question was raised, and the question does beg an answer.

In essence, if all members would remember that if you looked on page 13 of these estimates, there are two segments to a department's budget, and the Legislative Assembly is no different from that. One section deals with the operating expenditure, and the other section deals with the capital side of it. My understanding is, as we're coming close to March 31 of 1994, and this matter's been reviewed by Members' Services, that in fact there was an inability to transfer funds out of the operating side into the capital side, so you had a request of the 1993-94 supplementary estimates for some \$128,815. Essentially my understanding is, if my memory serves me correctly – and perhaps members of the Members' Services Committee, including the Member for Edmonton-Centre and others might want to certainly supplement my answer, because this is all part of the same arrangement – that in essence these were for some capital expenditures which arose as a result of the election of 1993. Certain bits of capital equipment I gather had run their life, were declared obsolete, and other bits of capital equipment had to be purchased for a variety of offices: constituency offices and offices associated with the various caucuses, both the government caucus and the opposition caucus.

8:30

That, sir, is the short, sweet answer to the question with respect to that. It's required, necessitated by the fact. I'm informed that the Legislative Assembly had hoped that they would be able to take care of that under the operating side. They couldn't because of the rules, so now you have to deal with it. There's no bottom-line difference for the whole estimate of the Legislative Assembly. It's not additional dollars.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the Deputy Premier for clarifying the application of \$128,815 to capital expenditure and for underlining that those were expenses that were initiated as a result of an election that saw the configuration of this House changed and applied to purchases required by members on all parts of this House.

My second point I would just like to make quickly is with respect to the infrastructural support program. In our caucus we want to emphasize that it is very, very important that of course the level of job creation that will be involved in any given infrastructural support program be of the highest priority in determining and choosing between and amongst possible projects.

One area we would not want to have excluded from consideration: I would like to establish in the government's mind that cultural projects should be considered in this program in particular because they can be labour intensive in their construction but also because they have an ongoing job creation component within communities across this province potentially. So for the record I'd just like to make that point clear.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question has been called. Are you ready for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

Agreed to:

Support to the Legislative Assembly

Total Capital Investment	\$128,815
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#### **Economic Development and Tourism**

Total Operating Expenditure	\$39,980,000
Total Capital Investment	\$20,000
Department Total	\$40,000,000

#### **Health**

Total Operating Expenditure	\$60,000,000
Department Total	\$60,000,000

MR. EVANS: Mr. Chairman, I move that the committee now rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

MR. TANNAS: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports the approval of the following estimates of the 1993 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund, and requests leave to sit again.

Legislative Assembly: \$128,815.

Economic Development and Tourism: \$39,980,000 for operating expenditure, \$20,000 for capital investment, for a total of \$40 million.

Health: \$60 million, operating expenditure.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member.  
All in favour of the report?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Carried. [interjections]  
Opposed? There's nobody opposed.  
The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. EVANS: Mr. Speaker, in order that we may proceed briskly with government business, I would now ask the Assembly to consider a motion to give unanimous support to introduce Bill 7.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: May we have unanimous consent to revert to the introduction of Bill 7?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed, if any? Carried.  
Hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

#### **head: Introduction of Bills**

#### **Bill 7**

#### **Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 1994**

MR. EVANS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce on behalf of my colleague, the Provincial Treasurer, Bill 7, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 1994.

Mr. Speaker, this being a money Bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this Bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

[Leave granted; Bill 7 read a first time]

#### **head: Government Motions**

#### **Adjournment for Family Day Weekend**

4. Moved by Mr. Evans on behalf of Mr. Day:  
Be it resolved that when the Assembly adjourns at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, February 17, 1994, it shall stand adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, February 22, 1994.

MR. EVANS: This of course, Mr. Speaker, is to allow members of the Assembly to participate in Family Day, a government initiative which certainly is of benefit to many Albertans, giving Assembly members and other Albertans an opportunity to spend some time in the cold, cold doldrums of February with their families; It's a particularly positive day in my constituency, which has a very substantial tourism base, and is welcomed by many of my constituents.

[Motion carried]

#### **8:40 head: Consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech**

Moved by Mr. Friedel:

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.

Moved by Mr. Decore that the motion be amended by the addition of the following words: Since the Klein government has embarked on an education restructuring program without the input or approval of Albertans, it is our duty to respectfully submit to Your Honour that Your Honour's present government does not have the confidence of this House.

[Adjourned debate February 15: Mr. Hlady]

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HLADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will try and sum up my speech of this afternoon. I've been consulting with the constituents in my riding as we've gone through the processes of the past few months. I've spoken with the seniors. I've spoken with the people concerned re the hospitals in my riding, and as I've gone through this process, they have all echoed the concerns that we have. [interjections] We like the numbers the way they are. It's Tuesday night.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Now that the Deputy Government House Leader has left the House, I think we can have order, hon. member.

MR. HLADY: Thank you. Do I get more time on that? No? Okay.

Anyhow, my constituents do understand the concerns we have, and they understand that we need to balance this budget and make

things happen. They understand the individual areas as we're going through this process. They wish communication. We've been giving communication, and the time that I've been spending in the riding they've appreciated and understand better. I would encourage and urge everyone in this Assembly to get out and speak to the people in their ridings and assure them that as we go through this process, they will understand and will feel better about the things as we go through them.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your time in hearing my speech on the throne speech and the amendments to the throne speech. I think I'd better sit down at this point.

Thank you.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: No other speakers on the amendment to the Speech from the Throne?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in favour of the amendment, which is essentially a vote of nonconfidence in the government. Let me start out by saying that on the issue of fiscal responsibility this side of the House in fact had initiated the debate during the dark days of the Getty years. As we piled up debt after debt, loan guarantee after loan guarantee, there was a lone voice in the wilderness, and that was Laurence Decore speaking about debt and debt management, speaking about his record as mayor of the city of Edmonton. In the context he in fact managed to convert an entire party, the other side, to actually believe that fiscal management was a good idea, that fiscal responsibility was a good idea. Although they learned something about the principle, they learned nothing about implementation or process. It's very easy to cut, cut, cut, to use a chain saw to hack program after program, but do we see any sense of priorities, of focus on programs that yield an investment to all Albertans? Do we see a focus on programs that generate opportunities for Albertans? The answer is no. If you read the throne speech in detail, as I did very quickly, you will see that there's not a very strong, cogent outline of what ought to be done. Well, let me go into this in some detail in the time that I have. [interjections] I have at least 17 minutes.

If you look at the throne speech and ask, "Can we see, then, what is the fiscal plan of the province?" we see reference, for example, to the Deficit Elimination Act, again a Bill which this side of the House supported. The one party that did not support it is in fact represented in the Speaker's gallery during question period. So there's not an issue here of fiscal responsibility and whether or not the debt and the deficit are our problem. I remember, in fact, in 1984 when I wrote for the Fraser Institute a critique of Peter Lougheed's white paper. We set out very clearly what the pitfalls were of throwing money at business. So we were on record early, Mr. Speaker, that there were problems, were in print early that there were problems, yet they chose to ignore it. I just stopped for a second to see if people were listening.

With regards to the Deficit Elimination Act, what I want to discuss now in some detail is in fact the targets that are set out therein. The legislation sets out clearly by how much the deficit is going to be reduced until in fact we are running a slight surplus at the end of the next three-year period. It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, when you actually go through the numbers that are set out in the spending targets that were released by the hon. Provincial Treasurer last month. Would you believe that when you go through those in some detail, the cuts that are imposed are actually deeper than required to achieve the targets set out under the Deficit Elimination Act? Now, we suggested that in fact what we were looking at was a revenue cushion that was being set out by

this government in order to offset the possible vagaries of the market: oil revenues, natural gas revenues, and the like. On the other hand, what easily could be done is that they're setting out a cushion by which they can run a large surplus just as we come to election time so they can say, "Boy, not only did we reduce the deficit, but we have money left over." Let me, though, talk about the human misery that they're going to then inflict as a result of imposing far deeper cuts than are required over the next three years.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: You can't prove that.

DR. PERCY: The numbers are there. If you look at the spending targets, if you look at the projections required by the Deficit Elimination Act, years two and three, there are deeper cuts than are required. Either you can be benign in your interpretation and say that it's a revenue cushion or you can say that what they're doing is padding it in that third year so they can look good.

If you look at some of the other spending targets, Mr. Speaker, in education, lo and behold, the year before an election what do you see? A half-percent increase. Coincidence, you ask. I think not. What we see in terms of the targets set out here is an effort to inflict the maximum pain very early in the mandate and then at the end of the mandate have a big pile of goodies to hand out, additional spending in education, a surplus that will exist there which could possibly be applied to the debt. They're going to say that it was good, prudent management. The reality will be that in the interim of getting from here to there three years down the road, they will have inflicted far more pain in terms of the reduction of opportunities, in terms of foreclosing the opportunities that are available to our children. We'll have larger class sizes. We'll have lower retention rates. We'll have less access to NAIT, SAIT, and other technical schools, Olds College, Fairview College up north. There is going to be an array of problems that could have been at least mitigated were not the cuts as deep as is being proposed. It's being done out of expediency. It's being done out of crass political cynicism. It's the New Zealand way.

The next issue I'd like to talk about is in fact the ability to set out spending targets in the absence of performance measures. Normally you set out performance measures and say, "We're going to allocate our funds to achieve this set of targets." The targets came out first. There's still debate over what the performance targets would be, but we're promised the three-year business plans in the budget. Well, that's not really how you budget. What you do is you set out: "This is what we want to achieve with the \$11.3 billion, \$11.5 billion that we're going to spend. These are the types of targets we want to achieve. These are the performance measures that we want to look at over the next three years. This is how we're going to assess whether or not we're spending efficiently those dollars that we're spending." But we don't see that. We see targets, but we don't see any criteria to assess whether they're reasonable spending targets.

8:50

The government members say: "Oh, we have priorities. We're only going to hack education by 12 percent; we're only going to hack advanced education by 17 or 18 percent." That isn't setting out a very realistic set of opportunities. If you look, Mr. Speaker, at where economic opportunities in this province are being generated, it's in small businesses. It's in those types of businesses that use human skills that allow us to assess whether or not we are managing our resources more efficiently, whether we're employing those skills and enhancing the recovery of our reserves: enhanced oil recovery, horizontal drilling, seismology, remote

sensing, software, reservoir simulation. All of those job prospects, growth in the oil industry that the government spoke about so eloquently, today require skills. They require education. They've made us a leader in North America, in the global economy. We're exporting those services. In forestry we're exporting all of the services required for turnkey operations. So the skills are there, but they're not going to be there unless we continue to invest in our educational system. From primary to junior high, secondary, postsecondary, technical, apprenticeship programs: that's where our opportunities are. That's how we're going to be able to capitalize on the growth that's going to emerge over the next five to seven years. That is what we have to invest in.

Yet we hear discussions about the Alberta advantage. Well, we know that the level of tax in this province is already the lowest in Canada. In fact, what this government seems to be striving for is getting a level of tax advantage equivalent to what you'd find in a Third World country. There's more than just taxes required to induce footloose firms to come here, particularly those that are going to be on the cutting edge, Mr. Speaker. It requires a quality of life. It requires access to education. It requires a health care system. The type of people that are going to lead Alberta into the future are people that are footloose. Their skills are tied up in their brains and their ability to innovate, to find niches in the market. What's going to attract them to Alberta is not going to be our climate; it's going to be the quality of life that they have here. It's going to be the stability of government.

Part of the very important role that we assign government is to provide a stable environment, a stable set of rules. The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs, for example, doesn't believe in such stability. He makes up the rules as he goes along. If we look at the privatization of ALCB, for example, is that a model you would want to emulate? Is that a model that really provides the right signals to small business, to make up the rules as you go along? "We'll figure out the pricing regime in one month, two months down the road; then we'll tell you. We believe in competition, but for small stores. When we talk about markets, we don't mean real markets; we mean these isolated things that we think are good." They talk about markets, but do they believe it? I haven't seen the evidence. No.

What are they going to do to help promote small business in Alberta? They're going to have a lot of firms start up. They're going to have them in place for the next year, and then they're going to allow Safeway to come in. Safeway is going to be a low-cost producer. It's going to in fact impoverish many of the small firms that have just eked out an existence over the last year. Let the market work. Let all firms come in. Don't just pick the segment of the market you think is right. If you believe in the market, let the market work. That's what we believe in. We supported privatization. We supported the operation of market forces. We didn't have our fingers crossed like the Minister of Municipal Affairs: "Well, I meant competition but only a little bit." No, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about markets, when we talk about competition, we actually believe it. We practise what we preach.

The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is that when you talk about the Alberta advantage, it requires you then to have a level playing field to allow competitive market forces to work. It requires you then to set an educational system in place that will allow us to be competitive in the 21st century. The members across the way have their eyes clearly fixed in the 1950s. They're out there actively soliciting and trying to attract smokestack industries, that inevitably are going to be moving to Mexico or to Taiwan. If you look where the job growth is, it's in small businesses that are exporting skills, human skills. It's the skills related to our

resource base. It's the skills related to information technology. Do we hear them talking about electronic highways? No. In fact, they're not even going to participate in one of these joint . . . [interjection] They can't find the money. This is a project that the federal government, Ontario, New Brunswick, and British Columbia are involved in. But will this government invest in it? No. What would that do? It would provide small business access to the global economy; it would offset the costs of being small and isolated. But, no, they won't invest in that.

When I read the throne speech and then I look at the motion that's been brought forward by the Leader of the Opposition, I can only say that I wholeheartedly support that motion of nonconfidence.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. EVANS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've tried to listen attentively to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud and other members of the Liberal opposition who have been arguing the merits of the motion by their hon. leader. Quite frankly, I hearken back to the Speech from the Throne. I hearken back to commentary that was made in this House in previous days arguing that we should in a Speech from the Throne not wax eloquent and waste the taxpayers' time and energy on a long Speech from the Throne but rather get to the meat of the matter. That's precisely what this government did with the Speech from the Throne that was read by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor a very short time ago.

Notwithstanding that very conscious endeavour to be brief, to be to the point, there's a tremendous focus on education in this Speech from the Throne. I would refer hon. members to page 9 and the commentary about amendments that will be brought forward by the Minister of Education amending the School Act to make our schools in this province more productive, better suited to deal with the new needs, the expanding needs, the changing needs of students in our schools today so that they can be competitive in the world of Alberta, Canada, and this globe in 1994 and as we reach towards the 21st century.

Now, the motion that has been presented by the Leader of the Opposition talks about confidence. It talks about the confidence of the people of Alberta. It alleges a lack of interaction with Albertans, in fact even suggests that Albertans have not been given the opportunity to have input into our education strategy. Earlier today in debate on this motion, this amendment, we were told by the Liberal members opposite that members from the government side of this House were not communicating, were not consulting with their constituents. Well, Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. In my own constituency, which is a vast constituency, incredibly varied, west of the city of Calgary all the way to the British Columbia border, there has been tremendous discussion and debate on the future of education in this province and in our constituency alone. In the fall I spent a considerable period of time, just as colleagues on both sides of the House have done, going to our schools, talking to young people who had been by some strange means put into almost a state of frenzy with concern about the future of their education. I assured them when I went to their schools that education was a priority of this government, was the number one priority. It wasn't that we reached into a crystal ball and pulled this out or rubbed a crystal ball and all of a sudden it became evident. It was because we, the government members, spent the time from the time of the election

campaign through the election and into the fall visiting with, consulting with, asking our constituents what their priorities were.

9:00

Mr. Speaker, unquestionably our platform in the election was that we were going to concentrate on education and health and social services, our people services, which for quite some time have been making up 70 percent of our annual budget, that we were going to continue to focus on those very important parts of our government budget but that we were going to do so in a responsible and reasonable manner, given the very important financial decisions we would have to make were we re-elected to remain the government of the province of Alberta. That's precisely why the Minister of Education undertook to communicate with and give opportunity for Albertans, through the roundtable process and other meetings, to give their views on the future of education.

Now, again going back to my own discussions with the students in my constituency, the comments that I made everywhere I went were that our government was committed to education but that we had to recognize that there would be some reductions in the budget of the Department of Education. At that time we were talking about perhaps even as high as a 20 percent reduction, Mr. Speaker; but there were a number of components of where that 20 percent was going to be made up, and certainly the last place we wanted to have the reduction was in the classroom.

There was great opportunity, as I indicated to the students in my constituency, to reduce the administrative costs of education throughout my constituency and the other 82 constituencies in the province of Alberta. There was, because of a very obvious analysis of the cost of education, an opportunity to reduce the cost of salaries and benefits, which made up in excess of 70 percent of the total \$1.9 billion or so that we currently spend in kindergarten to grade 12 education in this province. At the very last resolve, if we had not realized the kinds of reductions that we needed to realize in the Department of Education, then there would be some reductions in the classroom, but that was the very last place that we would look for reductions. Clearly in this process we would redefine, with public consultation with parents, teachers, superintendents, and students, what a core education was all about, and that core education would remain sacrosanct. There is nothing that the Minister of Education has moved on, that this government had stood for that moves off that principle. The sanctity of the classroom is a principle of this government, and that's the last place we want to impact with any education spending reductions.

Let's face it, Mr. Speaker. A 12.4 percent reduction in the Education budget would by my calculation bring us down to something in the neighbourhood of \$1.665 billion in spending. This is hardly an amount that anyone rationally could argue would create a catastrophe in education in the province of Alberta. This is a very considerable amount of money. Again when I was speaking to my students in Banff-Cochrane constituency, I mentioned to them the very free-spending days of the late '70s and the early '80s when, as a result of very substantial oil and gas revenues, our energy sector in particular, we were able as a government to put substantial amounts of money into the heritage savings trust fund but also to deal with the day-by-day issues that were faced in the breadth of our province. That amounted to, over probably a four- or five-year period of time, on average 18 percent increases per year in program spending. Compound that over a five-year period of time, and you're looking at a 100 percent or better additional funding over that very short period of time.

I defy anyone to stand and declare that all of those moneys were for essential services. They just were not. They were not. There were a lot of very nice to have programs that were funded as a

result of that financial ability. It was the people of Alberta who were saying during that time frame, "Government, we need these kinds of services." Again, Mr. Speaker, at that time we as a government were spending about 70 percent, just as we are today, on those people services: health, education, and social services. So to lose sight of that and to fear monger by saying that our system is somehow at a crisis point in terms of financing, that any reductions will create problems that we will not be able to escape from, that we will not be able to overcome, I think is almost dishonest. I don't want to impute motives, so I will not say that it's dishonest, but it defies logic. It defies good common sense.

Now, we as a government have taken the position again that if we are to prioritize the services that we provide as government, we have to look at the most important parts of this province, the most important components of this province. Our Premier has said on numerous occasions that children are our future, that the importance of education to this government is paramount. [interjections] Some of the opposition members don't seem to believe that, Mr. Speaker, and the argument is being made across the House that I should defend public education. Well, indeed.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. We are not in committee. Seeing that I did have to call order, I wonder if we could have unanimous consent to revert to Introduction of Guests. I don't see anybody, but somebody wanted to introduce somebody. All in favour of giving unanimous consent?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Carried.

Hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

#### head: **Introduction of Guests**

MS CALAHASEN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm terribly insulted by the fact that you don't see anybody. There is definitely someone sitting over there, and I rise to introduce to you and the members of the Assembly a gentleman who has traveled many, many miles to come and listen to the eloquence of all my colleagues in here. Sometimes I'm sure he wonders whether or not it's eloquent or just rambling. Mr. Jerry Noskiye is a councillor from the Loon River band, from Loon Lake, Alberta, approximately 500 kilometres north of here. He's sitting in the members' gallery. Maybe I need to give you glasses, Mr. Speaker. I'd ask that he rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, I certainly didn't see anybody in the galleries.

Hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

#### head: **Consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech** (continued)

MR. EVANS: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. I trust that my colleague from Lesser Slave Lake was not referring to me specifically when she made a reference to "rambling."

However, to get back to the point, we are talking about the motion from the Leader of the Opposition, and I have been encouraged to defend public education. Well, certainly this government is very much in favour of and a supporter of public education in this province. Public education is extremely important, as is the constitutional right for Catholics in this province to have Catholic schools. Having gone through the Catholic system from grades 1 to 12, I realize full well the very important religious



and life-style instruction that comes from that system. I would like to think, Mr. Speaker, that in these times of financial strain we would have new and creative ways of dealing with education and a closer link between our public and separate systems. I think our separate system could be a good example in many ways to our public system in terms of discipline, but both are very important components of the public system, and I'm very supportive of that, as is our Premier and as is, of course, our Minister of Education, our minister of advanced education, and our entire government.

9:10

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, because again I don't want to be accused of being rambling, I just want to remind all hon. members that within the past year we have had a tremendous opportunity as members of this Assembly to communicate with our constituents on this important matter of education. There are a number of issues that require more clarification with respect to the Minister of Education's initiative regarding education. I firmly believe that his initiative is based on one principle, and that is that all children in this province deserve a quality education; they deserve a basic education. No child in this province should be denied that. That is something that will be a principle in all of the discussions that will be ongoing.

I will be meeting, Mr. Speaker, with a number of my constituents in Banff on Friday. I know some members of this House think that I just go back to my constituency and enjoy my constituency in the times away from this House. I do, in fact, but I do a fair bit of work as well with my constituents, and on Friday I will be in Banff meeting with them to talk about this very issue of education. It's an important issue in Banff; it's an important issue in Canmore, in Exshaw, in Cochrane, the Morley reserve, the municipal districts, in all of the areas of my constituency. It is something that I must spend time on with my constituents. They deserve that kind of attention.

All members here in this House I believe are dedicated to that same type of public input and ability for our constituents to participate in the decision-making process. I believe firmly that the amendment that is proposed by the hon. Leader of the Opposition is without merit, because we will continue through this restructuring negotiating with, speaking with, communicating with our constituents to arrive at a new education policy, a new education regime in this province that will suit us well through the rest of this decade and into the 21st century.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am speaking against – no. I beg your pardon. I'm just a little ahead of myself. I was going to say that I speak against the government. What I'm trying to say is that I'm speaking for the amendment, very simply because I don't have any confidence in this government and its policies.

Before I launch into my discourse, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say a few things here to the Minister of Environmental Protection, who kind of skirted the issue of calling us dishonest. I was most grateful that he didn't come right out and say so. He skirted it. He hinted at it. Then what he did do, in fact, was to say that our stance defies logic. I must say that hurts me to the quick. To be accused of defying logic when we think that in fact our arguments are sound, that hurts. I know the Member for Stony Plain laughs uproariously at this, but he wouldn't recognize sound logic if he fell over it, I think.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne was extremely well read by His Honour. However, it lacked precision. It generated an awful lot of questions by my constituents. My constituents are very concerned, and they've asked me convey this concern to the Legislature, so I'm doing that. They've said that the speech talks about the creation of jobs, but it doesn't really say how it is going to be done. There are no specifics as to programs, and of course I said to them that I would find out. Thus far I haven't had an answer, but maybe it'll come one of these days.

They also asked about the major structural changes in education that serve the purpose of streamlining education and increasing the efficiency and the quality. They would like to know how that's going to work when about 12.4 percent is going to be lopped off. They also did not realize that their superintendent needed to be appointed by Alberta Ed for the sake of efficiency and to save money. Those are questions that they've asked me to pass on, and of course I do this gladly.

In fact, again the Minister of Environmental Protection referred to the 12.4 percent cut as being very modest. That, of course, is only a cut in the grant funding. We don't know about that other half, almost, of the money that used to go to the school jurisdictions. We don't know how much will actually come back. After all, this government has shown itself to be very adept at juggling accounts, and who knows where it's going to go? Let's just look at the supplementary estimates that we dealt with tonight. Money was freely moved back and forth from operating expenses to capital, up and down like the proverbial yo-yo.

Major cuts and structural changes in health: again my constituents are very fearful of that. They hear it's not affecting quality, but increasingly longer waiting periods are being encountered by them when they're applying for surgery or diagnostic procedures, unless of course you're powerful enough to get yourself jumped up to the front of the line. No; they foresee a two-tier system, actually two two-tier systems: one for the rich and one for the poor and another one for the powerful and for the rest of us. My people have all these questions, and as I said, I can't provide the answers, but hopefully I will hear them from the other side.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker, they would also like to know when the hospital in Grande Cache is finally going to hear whether it will receive extra funds. They have been promised that for a while, at least the judgment. In Hinton the seniors are recognizing that the extended care facility that has been promised before every election since 1982 and promptly frozen afterwards – they're giving up on it pretty well. They realize that it is merely a political football rather than people in need being served. In Edson and Jasper people are concerned about regionalization of health and education systems. They suspect that it will be jammed down their throats.

9:20

Back to education specifically. The Minister of Education – I think it was yesterday – accused us of not wanting to make innovations, favouring the status quo ante. Well, I'd like to point out that merely by looking at Bill 202, he realizes that that is essentially – I'm not allowed to say nonsense – a nincompoopian remark, because Bill 202 will in fact prepare us for the future. It provides us with the means to do that rather than just making these changes without knowing where we're going. Also the Deputy Premier, I think, talked about having had the mandate since the last election of making all these profound changes. I once again submit that this government did not run on changing the way in which superintendents are appointed, in grabbing 1 and a quarter

billion dollars in taxes, in starting charter schools, in cutting kindergarten by 56 percent I think it is, and on and on. Mr. Speaker, this government would not have made it. I wish they had run on that kind of a platform. I would have liked it. They say that they're concerned about people services, but they sure show that in very strange ways.

Now, Mr. Speaker, recently several of my colleagues and I traveled around the province, and we encountered a feeling of alienation on the part of many Albertans. I know I'm going to be accused of fear mongering and things of that kind, but we encountered people who said, "Now, why is it that these changes are being made?" We said, "Well, we don't really know, other than they like the power and they like to centralize the education system and I guess they don't like you running your own, more or less." But after all, we were just giving answers that we thought were right. They haven't heard it from the government, and I don't think they will, because there aren't any good answers.

#### **Point of Order Relevance**

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, do you have a point of order?

DR. L. TAYLOR: Yes.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Would you cite it?

DR. L. TAYLOR: *Beauchesne* 459 relating to relevance. What I'm hearing is totally and completely irrelevant to the throne speech, which I think is what we're supposed to be debating. I would think that if you would rule him . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat has made the point of relevance to the Speech from the Throne. However, the hon. member would be reminded that we are in fact on the amendment to the Speech from the Throne, and relevance has perhaps been honoured as much in the breaches as in the keeping.

The Member for West Yellowhead.

#### **Debate Continued**

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat is at the best of times not known for being relevant, but he did disturb my concentration here for a minute.

AN HON. MEMBER: Start at the beginning again.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Perhaps I should start all over, yes.

Mr. Speaker, I was trying to point out that this government does not have any mandate . . .

#### **Point of Order Explanation of Speaker's Ruling**

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, do you have another point of order?

DR. L. TAYLOR: No, Mr. Speaker. Under Standing Order 13(2) I'm wondering if you could just explain your ruling a little bit, please. [interjections]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. members, I don't need additional help, thank you.

Section 13(2) states that "the Speaker shall explain the reasons for any decision upon the request of a member." I thought, hon. member, that I had explained that, but I'll elaborate. In the Speech from the Throne members of the Assembly are given wide latitude to discuss almost anything, and indeed I think that if you follow them for the past few days, you'll find that such liberties have indeed been indulged in by the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, the Deputy Chairman of Committees, and the Acting Deputy Chairman of Committees in this regard. So relevance is not really as important an item as if we are dealing with a specific clause, a specific motion, or a specific Bill that has some circumscribed nature to its being. So as tempted as you are to repeat the thing, that is why I as Chair have made the ruling that relevance in this matter is not relevant.

The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

#### **Debate Continued**

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat for giving me a little break here. In my passionate oratory I need that at times, you see.

Mr. Speaker, I got stuck, I think, on questioning the mandate that this government thinks it had, and I spoke that the election certainly wasn't fought on those particular drastic measures. I also submit that the roundtable discussions, the vaunted roundtable discussions, did not at all authorize the government to take these profound measures. In fact, the only measure that the roundtable discussions recommend is the amalgamation of different regions. It did not at all speak to cutting kindergarten. There was only one person at the two conferences together who favoured the establishment of charter schools, and it seemed that his way finally found its way into the recommendations by the government. Certainly nobody said, "Let's have the superintendents being appointed by Alberta Ed." No. It is those kinds of steps that don't seem to be founded at all on consultation or talks in any way, shape, or form that have created the sense of alienation, and in traveling around the province, I found that.

Mr. Speaker, this afternoon the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti was talking about a school in Wembley. I visited that school, and the parents there were indeed very concerned, not just about the renovation of the school. Money wasn't forthcoming; that might be one thing. They were in fact very fearful of actually losing their school. Of course after the school is gone, then the rest of the village goes pretty soon too. That particular theme we heard time and time again, up north especially. The Member for Dunvegan – he's not around at the moment. Strike that from the record. He is around. We found the same thing in his riding. People asked us to do something about it, and we said to them, "You know, the best way for you to get any action is to speak to your member and make sure that he knows where you stand."

The question I think that everybody asks is: what is Alberta going to look like; let's say, in 1997, by the time this government is through with supposedly balancing the books? What will the education system look like, Mr. Speaker? Those are the questions we have. What will the health system look like? It is very scary because we don't see a vision of any kind. This government seems to just govern by ad hockery. It lurches. Education: the superintendents are going to be appointed one day, and the next day the local boards will get a list out of which they can select. The trustees are going to be appointed one day, and they're not going to be appointed the next day. Public education's monopoly needs to be broken, says the Treasurer on the radio, and the next day he says that he didn't quite mean that. Of course, the ALCB is another good point. It was going to be privatized, and it was,

with some very drastic results. Safeway was going to get a licence one day, and the next day it wasn't.

9:30

SOME HON. MEMBERS: The same day.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: The same day. I beg your pardon.

That, Mr. Speaker, is the essence of ad hockery or lurchership. I think this government governs by lurchership, and that's bad. I think the motto for this government should be "on we lurch."

[Mr. Sohal in the Chair]

I really hope, though, that this government will suspend any major changes and will first formulate a good plan that is sound and that is being bought into by everybody. I'd like this government to include some post '97 plans. The Minister of Municipal Affairs particularly should be involved in this. He is, after all, the priest of privatization, and that kind of stuff needs to be thought out a little better. I would like this government to think beyond 1997. I would like us all to realize that hopefully the deficit will be eliminated. Certainly a good part of me wishes that that were the case, but then what is going to happen after 1997? We still have an enormous debt staring us in the face. Are we going to start chipping away at it, and what kind of cuts does that mean? Have we heard of that? No. Is there a plan? No. I would like to see a plan, Mr. Speaker, that stretches from here down to 2050 or so, with a very moderately established plan to take down the debt. I think that is the kind of stuff we need. I don't want to see that everything that moves is being privatized, because I don't think that actually will do the trick.

Mr. Speaker, I have a great many more comments, but I'm almost in need of a break again. I wish that the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat would once again try to interfere, but I'll just sit down. We might know I'll vote in favour of the amendment.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. minister without portfolio.

MRS. MIROSH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just rising to respond to the Member for West Yellowhead and some of his comments only because he has come before this Assembly and has delivered a message that is totally opposite to what the message was that I heard when I was in his constituency only a few months ago. I'm really quite appalled by that member across the way, because when the Member for Bow Valley and I were in the constituency of West Yellowhead, we listened very carefully to that member's constituents. Obviously, he has not been in his own constituency, and obviously he has not been listening to his own members. [interjections] We visited several towns in that constituency, and when we were there on the health roundtables, we were very attentive. We had an open, public town hall meeting in Jasper.

#### **Point of Order Imputing Motives**

MR. MITCHELL: A point of order, Mr. Speaker. It comes as a surprise to me that the member would now refer to . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Citation. Citation.

MR. MITCHELL: You know that.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. Order.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Citation.

MR. MITCHELL: Well, 23(i): imputing the member's motives.

It comes as a surprise to me, Mr. Speaker, that the member across the way would impugn the Member for West Yellowhead's motives on the basis of what she calls a public meeting, what she heard in a public meeting. I was at such a public meeting in this constituency.

MRS. MIROSH: You weren't there; Mr. Speaker, that's not . . .

MR. MITCHELL: I'm not finished.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Sit down.

MR. MITCHELL: I'm not finished.

I will point out that while there was a two and a half hour public meeting scheduled, the chairman took about three-quarters of an hour of that to explain in rudimentary terms economics, one slide of which was a public relations exercise for his pipeline firm. For the member to then say that she knows what the people of West Yellowhead think when she's listened to them for an hour . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Sit down.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order. Order.

The hon. minister without portfolio.

MRS. MIROSH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member wasn't even there. There were many meetings, many public meetings.

The Member for West Yellowhead was in attendance. What we put into that roundtable was from people from that constituency.

MR. MITCHELL: Is this relevant to the point of order?

MRS. MIROSH: They indicated with open arms that they want to see regionalization on health. What was really ironic about that member's comments is . . .

MR. HENRY: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: 459 *Beauchesne*. We're talking about health care roundtables that happened several months ago and didn't mean anything. I'm wondering what they have to do with the vote of nonconfidence. As I understand it – please correct me if I'm wrong . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: You're wrong.

MR. HENRY: We're debating the motion. [interjections] He doesn't need your help.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: We have the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung's point of order. You can't have a point of order on a point of order. The minister without portfolio has the floor.

#### **Debate Continued**

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, I listened to the members opposite harangue, and I think it's important that the fact is set straight. That's what I'm trying to do here, and keeping those members opposite – I have listened to their constituents across the way. They have given us open-arm input about what they want this

government to do and the direction they want this government to take. There are hospitals in that constituency with empty beds that they want to see utilized. I am absolutely appalled by what the members opposite are saying, because they have not had a public debate. The Member for West Yellowhead opposite talks about job creation. He talks about job creation. [interjections] I have given them respect. I have sat here and listened. You know, Phyllis Diller over there keeps yakking away, and we have the member over there who stands up out of order, and then we have this other member over here that will not respect. [interjections]

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

**Point of Order  
Questioning a Member**

MR. MITCHELL: Point of order.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, I believe I still have the floor.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: There was a point of order by Edmonton-McClung.

Would you quote the citation, please.

MR. MITCHELL: I just wondered whether the member will entertain a question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No, no.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Whoa. This is a question that has been asked by an hon. member of another hon. member. I don't need 81 other people giving advice as to what this member may say.

Hon. minister, you have been asked if you would entertain a question. It's been declined?

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, I have a right to speak just as the members opposite do, and I'm correcting them in what they're bringing forward in this House and this government's agenda.

MR. HENRY: I wonder if the hon. member would entertain a question from me rather than from the Member for Edmonton-McClung.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Perhaps we could forestall each one in turn asking if they could ask the hon. member. Hon. member, would you entertain a question from Edmonton-Centre or any other member of the House at this time?

MRS. MIROSH: No.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you.

MRS. MIROSH: This is not question period.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: We're quite aware of that, hon. minister. We just asked you the question: would you entertain a question from Edmonton-Centre or indeed any other member of the Legislature at this time?

MRS. MIROSH: No.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Do I take that as a yes or a no?

MRS. MIROSH: No.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Okay; no.

9:40

MRS. MIROSH: I'll tell you why.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: No. I don't need a reason. You don't need to give a reason.

**Debate Continued**

MRS. MIROSH: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm here to present the point of view of the government based on the Member for West Yellowhead's accusations of this government and this government's plan and how we've laid out our plan and what the process has been. They've always accused this government of not having a process and a plan, and I really am appalled by the comments that have been made by all the members opposite. As we have gone through thorough consultation processes, which some of those members have participated in . . .

**Point of Order  
Questioning a Member**

MR. HENRY: Mr. Speaker, point of order. We're just a little bit confused here. I understand that there's a point of order . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Citation.

MR. HENRY: Number 1. Look it up. I understand that we have a point of order. I just have a question of the Chair.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: We had before us the point of order from Edmonton-McClung, which was in fact a question, and that has been responded to.

MR. MITCHELL: But you haven't ruled on it.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Then we had a point of order question from Edmonton-Centre, and that was responded to. There are in fact no points of order.

We now have a member who wishes to speak once the minister without portfolio has completed her brief speech.

**Debate Continued**

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, I think in light of the hour I would like to move to adjourn debate.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. minister without portfolio has moved that the House do now adjourn. All those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: With your indulgence, the Chair has misspoken himself. The hon. minister without portfolio has moved that debate adjourn. All those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Carried.

MS. LEBOVICI: Fort McMurray has another point of order.

**Point of Order**

**Reflections on a Member**

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Well, hon. member, I thought you were trying to speak to the issue. [interjections] Just a minute, please.

Hon. Member for Fort McMurray, do you wish to make a point of order on the vote?

MR. GERMAIN: No.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Okay.

MR. GERMAIN: Mr. Speaker, if it please you, I'd like to explain the situation that developed here as I see it.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: If you have a specific point of order that you are wishing to make. I thought you were wanting to speak next, and I took your standing there as wishing to speak following the minister without portfolio. That is why I've asked you again for a point of order, not for a general explanation. Do you have a specific citation?

MR. GERMAIN: Yes, sir. If it please you, 23(j): "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." That was what I stood for, not to ask this minister any questions. I knew she would say that she wouldn't answer any questions. She referred to an hon. Member of this Legislative Assembly as a Phyllis Diller, and that was my point of order.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray has risen on a point of order, 23(j), and referred to a speech recently given by the minister without portfolio wherein she referred to someone as looking like Phyllis Diller. Is that what

MR. HENRY: No. She called her Phyllis Diller.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Okay. Was that specifically intended for someone opposite?

MRS. MIROSH: General. Well, certainly it's not one of our members.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Would the minister care to withdraw that characterization then, please?

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn. I'll withdraw, whatever it takes, but I don't believe that the adjournment can be debated.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: We're not debating the adjournment.

MRS. MIROSH: Well, we're debating after adjournment.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, it really should be withdrawn, and if she withdraws it, then we'll let it rest.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. Opposition House Leader.

Was that a withdrawal? Okay. The Chair takes it that the minister has withdrawn the remark.

With regard to the debate on whether the point of order is taken, I took it upon myself as Chair because I had not recognized the person before the motion was made. The point of order is not on the adjournment; the point of order is on words that were uttered in haste. They've been retracted, so the apology is there.

Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. EVANS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I hope that hon. members will study *Hansard*, at least the last five minutes of tonight's debate. I think up to the last five minutes there was a fairly high level of debate, but I'm not sure that that can describe the last five minutes.

[At 9:48 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.]

