

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, March 9, 2000**

**1:30 p.m.**

Date: 00/03/09

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: Prayers

THE SPEAKER: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. Lord, renew us with your strength. Focus us in our deliberations. Challenge us in our service of the people of this great province. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: Introduction of Visitors

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Mr. Aart Verdegaal, consul general of the Kingdom of Netherlands based in Vancouver. Accompanying him is Honorary Consul General Mr. Rikke Dootjes, based here in Edmonton.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta and the Netherlands have a longstanding relationship. Two-way trade between Alberta and the Netherlands totaled over \$242 million in 1998, and the Netherlands is Alberta's 11th largest export market. Many companies from our province conduct business in the Netherlands, and we have many Dutch companies active in Alberta as well.

Mr. Speaker, members would know that Dutch settlers came to Alberta in the early 1900s, and today we have over 140,000 Albertans of Dutch descent. Next year Alberta will be sending between 20 and 25 delegates, leaders from the volunteer sector, to the World Volunteer Conference in Amsterdam.

On behalf of all Albertans I want to wish our honoured guests a very productive and enjoyable stay in our province. Mr. Speaker, they are seated in your gallery. I would ask them to rise and receive the customary warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: Presenting Petitions

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

MR. BONNER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With your permission I'd like to table a petition signed by 290 Albertans from Edmonton, Sherwood Park, and St. Albert. They are urging "the government of Alberta to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care."

Thank you.

MS LEIBOVICI: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise this afternoon to present a petition signed by 238 citizens of Alberta petitioning "the Legislative Assembly to urge the government of Alberta to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care."

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

MR. GIBBONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition supporting public health care in Alberta with 151 signatures from Edmonton, Ardrossan, Fort Saskatchewan, and Lamont urging "the government of Alberta to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care" in Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood.

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have a petition that states:

We the undersigned citizens of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care.

It's signed by 250 Edmontonians.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this afternoon to table in the Assembly a petition signed by 142 Edmontonians. They are urging "the government of Alberta to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care." This brings the total signatures that have been tabled in the House to over 20,200.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table a petition containing 134 signatures of Edmontonians who are urging "the government of Alberta to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care." I wish to note that this brings the total to 20,224.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by 138 citizens of Alberta from Edmonton and Edson. The petition reads: "urge the government of Alberta to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care."

Thank you.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here signed by 384 people from Ranfurly, Holden, Innisfree, Lavoy, Two Hills, Lamont, Hilliard, Bruce, Mundare, Vegreville, Willingdon, Andrew, Viking, and Thorhild. They are petitioning the Legislative Assembly "to urge the government of Alberta to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care." I believe some of these people are in the galleries today.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table a petition signed by another 224 Albertans, for a total of 2,168 to date. They are petitioning this Assembly "to pass a Bill banning private for-profit hospitals in Alberta so that the integrity of the public, universal health care system may be maintained."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: Reading and Receiving Petitions

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that the petition I presented yesterday opposing private health care now be read and received.

THE CLERK:

We the undersigned citizens of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

MR. GIBBONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd ask that the petition with respect to support of public health care that I introduced yesterday be now read and received.

Thank you.

THE CLERK:

We the undersigned citizens of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that the petition I tabled yesterday regarding the opposition to private health care be now read and received.

THE CLERK:

We the undersigned citizens of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government of Alberta to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With permission I would request that the petition I presented on March 8 now be read and received.

THE CLERK:

We the undersigned citizens of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would request that the petition which I presented to this Assembly yesterday urging the government to stop promoting private health care and instead properly support our public health care system now be read and received.

THE CLERK:

We the undersigned citizens of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government of Alberta to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request that the petition I presented yesterday signed by 595 Albertans asking this Assembly to pass legislation banning private, for-profit hospitals be now read and received.

THE CLERK:

We the undersigned residents of the province of Alberta hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to pass a Bill banning private for-profit hospitals in Alberta so that the integrity of the public, universal health care system may be maintained.

head: Introduction of Bills

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

### Bill 17

#### Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2000

MR. DUCHARME: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 17 being the Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2000.

[Motion carried; Bill 17 read a first time]

MR. HANCOCK: Mr. Speaker, I would move that Bill 17 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

head: Tabling Returns and Reports

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table this afternoon a response to Written Question 1 from the MLA for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

Thank you.

1:40

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Resource Development.

DR. WEST: Yes. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table copies of motions for returns 5 and 9. These are the answers.

MR. DOERKSEN: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the MLA committee which is doing a service review of the Workers' Compensation Board, I wish to table copies of questionnaires that have been distributed to all members of the Legislature. We're asking them to help us in the distribution of these to injured workers. They will be receiving a covering letter in the next day or two which indicates that we'd like the questionnaires back by April 30, and an address is attached with that covering letter.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the result of a FOIP request I would like to table this letter from the hon. Member for Airdrie-Rocky View. It's a letter to a constituent regarding the government's role in the pine shakes issue.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to table this afternoon written summaries from a number of meetings held by the Calgary regional health authority in the city of Calgary. These include a town hall meeting at Glamorgan Community Association, February 19, a town hall meeting at Annie Gale junior high school on February 12, and a meeting with educational partners on February 16.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the appropriate number of copies of three separate reports prepared by the Liberal opposition, and I'd like to table them with the Assembly. The first

is a report which shows the analysis of the 11 percent flat tax and its unfair distribution and how it is really a windfall for the wealthy in this province.

The second report, Mr. Speaker, is an analysis of the impact of the federal government tax measures in Alberta. What it demonstrates is that fully 52.3 percent of tax savings under the Alberta tax plan are attributed to actions taken by the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, the final report that I have today is an analysis showing the utilization of the fiscal dividend for the years 2000-2001 through 2002-2003. What this report demonstrates is that while the provincial government has spent 12 percent of the fiscal dividend on tax cuts, in fact the federal government has spent 42 percent of its fiscal dividend on tax cuts.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

MR. BONNER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first tabling is from Lauderdale Community League, a letter to the Minister of Justice. In this letter they outline their frustrations over the number of adjournments that have occurred in a case that they are having with a former member of their executive board.

My second tabling, with your permission, Mr. Speaker, is an evidence package compiled by an Alberta injured worker. What he is mainly concerned with in this particular paper is discussion notes created by the CSRC, why these written notes are destroyed once the decision document is finalized.

Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure this afternoon to table an information package from the Canadian Union of Public Employees which indicates that there's a deadly virus on the loose, and that is for-profit health care.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have two tablings. The first are letters from Nobby Sato and Carol Hechtenthal, who are very concerned about the provincial government allowing Genesis Land Development to develop a large resort in the Spray Lakes area of Kananaskis.

The second is a copy of a petition signed by 14 people from Calgary, Water Valley, and surrounding area. The petition says that they are "against commercial development, including the Genesis/Spray Lakes project in Kananaskis Country."

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood.

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the appropriate number of copies of a letter from Charles Davison of the law firm Abbey Davies Greaves Hunter Davison reporting his concerns about the loss of court reporters in Alberta courtrooms.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of a letter that I sent to the hon. Minister of Resource Development outlining a potential policy change in the area of fuel tax that shows how the fuel tax could be reduced while still maintaining the treasury as it is presently.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table 11 letters from Albertans who are residents of the great city of Calgary, all opposing this government's policy on health care and Bill 11.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, I am pleased today to table five copies of a memo to all Members of the Legislative Assembly dated March 9, 2000, from myself regarding proclamation of amendments to the Conflicts of Interest Act.

head: Introduction of Guests

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Learning.

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you a gentleman from the constituency of Strathmore-Brooks. This gentleman goes to the University of Alberta, and he is the founding member of the first PC youth club in the high school which is in Brooks. I'd ask Kyle Franz to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray.

MR. BOUTILIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Joining Kyle today is a constituent of Fort McMurray, Blake Robert. Blake is also in PC youth here in Alberta and also is heading up the leadership at the national level for communications. He attends Grant MacEwan College. I'd like to ask Blake to rise and receive the warm welcome of all legislators.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a wonderful group of students from Brookwood elementary school in Spruce Grove. There are actually 79 visitors today. They're here with their teachers, Ray Shapka, Debbie McFarlane, Molly Benfield, Micheline Spencer, Bobbie Wandler, a student teacher; and also parent helpers Barb Kasper, Barb Baylis, Gaylene Gander, Daryl Cole, and Cathy Schoepp. They've had a wonderful tour today, and they told me that they're looking forward to coming back in the summertime. I would ask them all to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two groups that with your permission I'd like to introduce through you to all members of the Assembly today. The first is a group of senior citizens who have joined us today through the Canterbury Foundation. I believe they're residents of Canterbury Court and Canterbury Manor. I'm introducing them on behalf of my colleague from Edmonton-Riverview. I believe they are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask our guests from the Canterbury Foundation to rise and be warmly received by this Assembly.

Also, Mr. Speaker, just over the noon hour I met with a group of, I believe, 34 visitors from Vegreville, who are all here as Friends of Medicare as well as friends of the public health care system. I believe they found themselves seats in the public gallery, and I would ask all of our guests from Vegreville who are here to help

support public health care to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly some students from NorQuest College in my constituency. That's formerly Alberta Vocational College. We have four students in all, Ellie Gray, Famia Streefkerk, Shannon Hopper, and Brenda Lands borough, and they're accompanied today by their instructor, Bruce Huebener. I would ask them to please rise and accept the warm and traditional welcome of the House.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

1:50

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions to make, with your permission. The first one is two persons, Jetta Badre and Colleen Taylor, who are parents of diabetic children and are here today to express their opposition to Bill 11 in various forms. I'll ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The second group of guests that I have the pleasure of introducing today is a large group of seniors from Vegreville. I would like to put their names on record, and once I've called their names, I'll ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly: Harry Babchuk; Irvin Bablitz; Joan Bablitz; John, Bill, and Lil Czar; Lil Darling; Rosanna Decore; Pearl Decore; Ross Demkiw; Marie Dmytriw; Hilda Feschuk; John Garred; Mike Kavich; Caroline Knowles; Linda Haresevich; Albin Lukawiecki; Lil Lukawiecki; Olga Furkalo; and Alan Yaniw. I would ask them all to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly once more.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, it's totally unnecessary to introduce the same person twice.

head: Oral Question Period

THE SPEAKER: First main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

### **Private Health Services**

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are receiving their Bill 11 propaganda packages in the mail, even as we speak. The bill with the doctored notes in the margins and the accompanying public relations spin are all paid for with Albertans' own tax dollars. It is this Premier who is in fact sending out malicious information. So to the people who are watching on television, I'd ask them to turn to page 3 on the propaganda piece. My first question will be to the Premier. He says that he's going to ban private hospitals in section 1, but in section 2 he creates them. Does he actually think Albertans won't see through the trick in these two sections?

MR. KLEIN: Well, when you want to talk about untruths and misinformation, first of all, it is not a propaganda piece. There is no PR spin. It's very straightforward, Mr. Speaker. There is no malicious information contained in the report whatsoever. Again, those are just three points of the kind of misinformation that is being spewed out by the Liberals.

There is no contradiction, by the way, between part 1, section 1, "no person shall operate a private hospital in Alberta," and anything in section 2.

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So why does the Premier fail to explain truthfully that section two tier – sorry; that's a Freudian slip – section 2 will create a second tier of hospitals in this province?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the bill clearly states that "no person shall operate a private hospital." So having said that and the bill having said that quite clearly, there can be nothing else in the bill that would ever purport to having a private hospital.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, why wouldn't the Premier just tell Albertans that "an approved surgical facility" is really a private hospital? Wouldn't that be being more honest with Albertans?

MR. KLEIN: Well, the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition should know all about private surgical facilities. Mr. Speaker, 37 surgical facilities were opened and operated when she was the minister of health. Thirty-seven. So if she didn't know what a surgical clinic was then, she had no business being the minister.

THE SPEAKER: Second main question. The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MRS. MacBETH: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're not talking about surgical clinics; we're talking about private hospitals.

Last night at a town hall meeting in Calgary people wanted to know what Bill 11 will lead to. They don't trust the empty words and the vague assurances from the Premier nor from the chairman of the truth squads. So let's go to the bill itself again. I'd ask the people that are watching to turn to page 17 and the definition of private hospital in the bill. If a private hospital or a privately owned acute care facility, rather, were to deliver medical, diagnostic, and surgical facilities but not the emergency, wouldn't that be a private hospital in most people's minds?

MR. KLEIN: I go to section (q). It says a surgical facility "means a facility whose primary function is to provide a limited range of surgical services." That is happening right now in 47 surgical clinics, 37 of which were approved by the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition when she was the minister of health.

The kinds of services – I don't have the full range. I understand there are 140 different surgical procedures now being performed in surgical clinics. They range from varicose vein stripping to various ear operations, cataract surgery, therapeutic abortions. The list goes on and on. One hundred and forty different procedures are now performed in surgical clinics.

I repeat, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition was the minister of health. She was the minister of health, and under her watch some 37 surgical clinics were opened and operated.

### **Speaker's Ruling Decorum**

THE SPEAKER: I'm sure that all those wonderful people who are watching would appreciate that when one hon. member is recognized to raise a question, there are no interruptions during the question. I'm sure that all those people who are watching will also appreciate that when one hon. member chooses to respond to the question, there should be no interruptions of that hon. member. All those wonderful people watching should also know that in fact is the rule of this Assembly.

### **Private Health Services (continued)**

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, getting back to the Premier's own

definition of private hospital in his own bill on page 17, under the Premier's definition if only three of these four services are delivered, that would not be a private hospital, and therefore that kind of facility would be allowed where there were medical, surgical, and diagnostic services delivered. Isn't that true?

MR. KLEIN: Well, I don't fully understand the question, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps the Minister of Health and Wellness does, and I'll ask him to respond.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I think the Premier has focused on it very well. The fact of the matter is that a surgical facility is described in the act as dealing with a limited, targeted, defined in a contract area of service in surgery. The references that are being thrown in for diagnosis and so forth: obviously there has to be a diagnosis before a surgery takes place. It is part of the process, and the hon. Leader of the Opposition, I'm sure, can gather that in.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, you know, the visitors here from Vegreville who've done an awful lot of work to take petitions around their community understand it. Does this Premier actually believe Albertans are so gullible that they won't see the loophole in this section that allows the door to be thrown open to private hospitals?

2:00

MR. KLEIN: Well, I find it very interesting that the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition is finally admitting that Albertans are intelligent enough to read the bill. A week ago she said Albertans were not intelligent enough to read the bill and understand it.

Mr. Speaker, if anyone has any questions relative to the interpretation of any section, they're welcome to phone. That's why we have taken the unprecedented step of mailing the bill out to every household, so that Albertans, if they're not clear on any section of this particular bill, can phone the toll-free number or write to their MLA, government or opposition, and get the clarification or phone the department of health and get the clarification. That's why we mailed the bill out.

You know, the Liberals have their spin on this particular bill, and their spin is that they don't like the fact that we have asked Albertans for their input. Right. They would rather . . . [interjections] Well, no. As I understand it, what he said: the only people who are to be believed are the Liberals. Well, that is dangerous, and that is very, very scary, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Third main question. The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MRS. MacBETH: Well, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to selling this bill, it's not only the information that is missing; it's also this Premier who is missing in action. Is the real reason that the truth squad commanders are out there spinning this bill instead of the Premier because he's afraid of failing for the third time?

MR. KLEIN: The answer to that is no, Mr. Speaker. This bill is a government bill, and every member of this caucus is part of the bill. I'm doing my share every day in this Legislature. Well, today I got a note from, I guess, the question co-ordinator over there, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, saying, "Will you stay around? We have seven sets of questions for you." Right. Yesterday it was five sets. The day before that it was seven sets. The day before that it was seven sets of questions. I think I'm doing more than my job in speaking to this bill, because all of those questions are related to health care.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, given that the Premier couldn't be bothered to show up at two town hall meetings in Calgary and Edmonton this week, if this bill is going to supposedly protect public health care, why isn't he out there leading the charge instead of his truth squad commanders?

MR. KLEIN: Well, it's not a matter of leading the charge. The people who will lead the charge, Mr. Speaker, are the 3 million people of this province. They will lead the charge. They will be the final adjudicators of what is right and what is wrong.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberals can't stand the thought of Albertans, in an unprecedented move, having meaningful and wise input into a very important piece of legislation. They can't stand the thought, even to the point where the leader of the Liberal opposition said that Albertans aren't intelligent enough to understand the bill. I find that an insult.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, Albertans are tired of this Premier's doublespeak, and they're tired of him missing in action on this bill. Will he come out to a town hall meeting with me in Calgary? He can pick the place. He can pick the time. Will he call an election or will he just keep hiding behind the people he promised to represent in this province?

MR. KLEIN: To answer the last question first: yes, I will call an election in the fullness of time, Mr. Speaker.

Relative to a debate, Mr. Speaker, I have said that when second reading of this bill is introduced, I will stand up in this Chamber – we have arranged to have the debate televised – and debate the bill in this Chamber.

I read back from *Hansard* the words spoken by the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo. It says:

Mr. Speaker, the point I'm making is simply this. In this Assembly, as rough as it may be around the edges, as tumultuous as it may be for 50 minutes four days a week, as unsatisfactory as it may be to those of us looking for concrete answers to specific questions, it's still the . . . best forum Albertans have.

And this is the forum I choose to use.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. interim leader of the third party.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Next to the definition of enhanced services on page 15 of the government's million dollar householder is a liner note which says, "People could not be charged extra for them." This liner note is either a deliberate attempt to mislead Albertans or a big time typo. In either case, it's a million dollar boondoggle. My questions are to the Premier. Is the government deliberately trying to mislead Albertans into believing that they won't pay extra for so-called enhanced services, or is this a big time typo that nevertheless misleads Albertans?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the member is quite correct in that the line, not the text of the bill or the explanation, should be pointing to section (g) in the legislation. This, Mr. Speaker – and I think it's important to point this out – is one of the many very strong protections that there are in this legislation. The statement says, "These services would be part of delivering an insured service and people could not be charged extra for them," and that is correct when we talk about facility fees.

The facility fee section is another of the very important protections in this legislation, because it goes on to make very clear that in addition to the actual surgical services that people would be provided, they would not be charged for standard ward

accommodation; they would not be charged for meals; they would not be charged for nursing services, laboratory, radiology services. The list goes on for another eight items, Mr. Speaker. So that is a very specific clause which outlines in black and white in the legislation what people will not have to pay extra for but will be provided with as part of the insured services.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Speaker, my next question is again to the Premier. I hope he will answer this one. Since this is not the only piece of misinformation in this householder – section 23, again, has a similar and even more misleading part to it – I ask the Premier: why doesn't the government recall this inaccurate householder, apologize to Albertans for the misinformation contained in it, and just withdraw it? What's wrong with that, Mr. Premier? Why won't you go ahead and do it?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. leader of the third party shows a total and absolute disrespect for this Assembly. A bill is the most important document that can ever be introduced in the Assembly. A bill. I remind the hon. member that a bill purports to become law, and there is nothing more paramount than the law. We have taken the unprecedented step of not only tabling the bill in this Legislature but mailing it out to every household to seek the guidance, the wisdom, the talent, and the education of Albertans to help us with this particular bill. To construe the most important document that can be tabled in this Legislature as a piece of propaganda is nothing more than an insult to this Assembly, and he should apologize.

2:10

DR. PANNU: Mr. Speaker, this is a rare occasion on which I will agree with the Premier: this bill is one of the most important pieces of legislation. But misinformation about it is also the most important precedent being set here. My question to the Premier: if the government can't be trusted to send out an accurate householder, how can Albertans trust the Premier and this government on anything he says about Bill 11?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the question that really wasn't asked in the second supplementary dealt with section 23, and I will ask the hon. Justice minister and Attorney General to respond.

MR. HANCOCK: Mr. Speaker, the householder is entirely accurate. Section 23, which the hon. member refers to, is colloquially known as a privative clause, and that's what the liner note says. The comment that he disputes in the margin note says that "recourse to the courts continues to be available." That is entirely accurate. You can always challenge a decision that's made by any member of government if the decision is made outside the law, if it's not constitutional, if it breaks the rules of natural justice, if it's based on irrelevant considerations, if it fails to consider relevant considerations, or if it's done on the basis of bias.

What this section, the privative clause, does is make sure that a decision of the minister not to grant a licence to a private operator cannot be overturned by that private operator just because they didn't like the decision.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

#### **Advanced Education Tuition Fees**

MR. CAO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my constituency work I have met with student leaders given that higher education is a key investment for society. The issue for them is tuition fees. According to their numbers Alberta students pay higher rising tuition

fees than other provinces. My question is to the Minister of Learning. Can the minister explain to Albertans government policy on student fees?

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, the tuition fees are set by the individual postsecondary institution. A couple of years ago we passed a law that stated that tuition fees could not rise higher than 30 percent of the expense level of that institution. As well, there is a maximum amount that tuition fees can be raised each year. This year that amount is \$243.50. I must stress that that is an average among the different faculties of the institution. So one faculty could go up \$300; another faculty could only go up \$220. So the \$243.50 is an average.

Mr. Speaker, the average tuition around the province varies considerably. In universities it's roughly \$3,600, \$3,700. At the numerous colleges and technical institutes the average is actually around \$2,100.

I must remind people that when we talk about a tuition cap of up to a maximum of 30 percent, it still means that 70 percent is paid by the taxpayers of this province.

MR. CAO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Tuition fees are just one aspect of postsecondary education costs. The cost of study materials and the cost of living, especially for married students, are rising and heavy on students. Could the minister explain what government programs help students in this regard?

DR. OBERG: Certainly, Mr. Speaker. I think the hon. member has hit upon the absolute key point to this whole discussion, and that is that net debt is the issue. Tuition fees are not the issue; net debt is the issue.

When we put forward the tuition fee program, what we are aiming at is decreasing the net debt of the student as he comes out of university. Mr. Speaker, last year the net debt dropped from \$12,500 to \$11,500, making tuition and university one of the cheapest in Canada.

We just saw a 22 percent increase in the student loan program in this budget. Mr. Speaker, over the next three years the student loan program will be increased 50 percent. Last night I had the opportunity of talking to some student leaders, and they were absolutely ecstatic about the changes that we've done to the student loan program.

MR. CAO: Thank you. My last supplementary question is to the same minister. Can the minister explain to Alberta's students: what is the Alberta government involvement with the federal student assistance program?

DR. OBERG: Well, Mr. Speaker, Alberta administers the millennium scholarship. I must say again that I find myself in the rather uncomfortable position of praising the federal government. The millennium scholarship has been great for students in Alberta. There have been problems in other areas of the country, but there have not been any problems in Alberta. That millennium scholarship goes directly to the student.

We work very well together. We are currently looking at harmonizing the two student loan programs.

One thing that I will say, though, Mr. Speaker, is that today we had a little bit of a blow to that with the decision by the banks of Canada not to take over the Canada student loan portfolio. So the federal government will still be continuing to operate that program. I believe that is unfortunate. However, we will certainly persevere and make sure that the students don't suffer.

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

### Private Health Services

(continued)

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, this Bill 11 brochure is nothing more than a thinly veiled attempt to convince Albertans to support private hospitals. Well, Albertans are smarter than that, and when they see through this Premier's propaganda, they'll uncover the truth about Bill 11. And you know what? They're not going to like it. So my question – and it's very simply put – is to the Premier. Can you tell us the difference between a hospital and an approved surgical facility?

MR. KLEIN: Yes. Absolutely. Yes, I can. You know, what I would do is challenge the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert that if she wants to know the difference, Mr. Speaker . . .

MRS. SOETAERT: So you don't have an answer; is that it?

MR. KLEIN: Well, yes, I do have an answer. The answer is this. I would challenge the hon. member to go down to the Royal Alex hospital and have a good look at the Royal Alex hospital. That is a hospital. Then I would ask her to go to the Morgentaler abortion clinic. That is a surgical clinic.

MRS. SOETAERT: Well, he never answers a question, but I'll try another one. Mr. Premier, how many rural hospitals are going to become approved surgical facilities under your definition of surgical facilities?

MR. KLEIN: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. If a rural hospital has an operating theatre, then it will be a surgical facility, or if it has an emergency. Most acute care hospitals, whether they're in rural areas or urban areas, have emergencies and have backup systems. Some rural hospitals do not have systems as exotic and as sophisticated as, say, the University hospital in Edmonton or the Foothills hospital in Calgary. There are different levels of hospitals, but all of them have the basics.

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question: if Bill 11 is supposed to protect public health care, why does it not include a requirement for a detailed cost-benefit analysis for every one of those new private facilities, not just some vague requirements for the minister's approval?

MR. KLEIN: Obviously, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has not read the bill. If she has, she cannot understand it. Most Albertans can understand it.

I will have the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness respond.

2:20

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, it's another of those cases where actually the legislation is much stronger than the member across the way is interpreting it to be. If you look at the legislation, it indicates that the information on the contracts, when they are arrived at, will be made public. That is the whole ball of wax, far beyond the specific item they are focusing on. The whole contract would be available.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

### Income Tax

MR. DUCHARME: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The federal Minister of Finance has been critical of Alberta's new tax plan, claiming that it will hurt middle-income earners. Can the Provincial Treasurer tell us what kind of tax breaks Alberta's middle-income earners will receive under the new plan?

MR. DAY: Yes, I certainly can, Mr. Speaker. We've done comparisons to, if people are interested, the federal tax reduction, which we give some credit to the federal Liberals for bringing into play even though it's much more reduced than ours is. If you take a look at a family income of \$55,000, two-income family, two dependants – now, it could vary with the type of other credits or refunds they may have coming. That particular family will receive next year when our plan is fully in place a reduction of about 18 percent on their tax bill. We think that's fairly significant.

It's something that people have been asking for, something that they've been expecting. We would have liked to move it along even more rapidly than we have. We have to give the federal government a year of notice as we are becoming the first province to unhook from the federal structure. We think it's pretty exciting and the people talking to us are pretty excited about it too.

MR. DUCHARME: Mr. Speaker, my next question is also to the Treasurer. Given that the federal government has announced a five-year plan for reducing taxes, would Albertans have seen lower taxes if we had remained hooked to the federal tax system with these federal reductions flowing through to them as it was in the past?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, some of the work we've done in analyzing that shows some interesting things. First of all, it should be clear that we are not going to wait for four years, as the federal government is, to flow these tax benefits through. These benefits flow through to Albertans next year.

We remind people that low-income Albertans already enjoy the family tax credit, and they've been doing that for over two years now. A hundred and sixty thousand families in this province have been receiving a direct credit, directly into their bank account, depending on what their income level is, of up to \$1,000 per year, 160,000 families receiving that. That's along with a tax deduction that went to all families in 1997, when we moved our provincial rate downwards.

Now that we're moving the full package into play, next year Albertans will receive the full benefit of that plan. We are not going to wait four years for the federal government to flow their reductions through.

If we do the analysis – there are a couple of assumptions that have to be made here. The first one is that the same federal government is still going to be there in four years. We're not convinced of that. The second assumption, Mr. Speaker, is that they will maintain a commitment to flow those through. If, however, the tax structure commitment, regardless of which federal government is in place, is still in place in four years and if you run the numbers from ours, you would see that by year 4 or year 5 in some income tax ranges some Albertans would be paying slightly more in provincial income tax than if we have left the old plan in place. Some would be paying slightly more.

But it is not our intention in this government to maintain our structure even where it is. We will be entering it at 11 percent, but our plan, of course, as the Premier says, is to continue to see taxes going down. You will see over time the 11 percent rate move perhaps to 10 and a half, perhaps to 10 percent, and you'll see the

basic exemption rates rise. It's good news for Albertans. I don't know why the opposition doesn't like good news. This is great news for Albertans.

MR. DUCHARME: Mr. Speaker, my final question is also to the Provincial Treasurer. As both the Premier and the Treasurer have praised Ottawa for its tax-cutting proposals in last week's federal budget, am I and are the people of Alberta led to understand that Alberta is satisfied that Ottawa has gone far enough with tax cuts?

MR. DAY: Well the word "praise" is a strong word, Mr. Speaker. The Premier gave credit, as members of our caucus have given some credit, some small credit, to the federal Liberal government for following our example. We acknowledge that it is possible for other governments to do good things. We're not just blindly critical, as members opposite are, as the Liberals provincially, so we have acknowledged that there will be a reduction on personal income taxes because of what the federal government has done. We acknowledge that, and we say: good for you on those narrow points.

But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that we would have preferred to see a more rapid reduction; we would have preferred to see deeper reductions. We're not going to be overly critical. We'll continue to remind the federal government that they have a way to go to catch up to us. Next year we will take from Albertans as a result of our tax reduction plan \$852 million less than we are taking now. The federal government will take approximately \$450 million less. They take from Albertans a bigger portion; they're giving back a smaller portion. We take a smaller portion; we're giving back a much bigger portion.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

#### **Private Health Services** (continued)

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On February 6 of 1996 Alberta's then deputy minister of health told an Edmonton meeting of the Canadian Bar Association, health law subsection, that the principles of the Canada Health Act should be replaced with five new principles: efficiency, effectiveness, choice, consumerism, and pragmatism. Well, here we are four years later, and what is this Premier using to flog his Trojan horse bill but the very same buzz words that the failed deputy used in her sales pitch. Dr. Fulton has gone missing, but the Premier and the special interests behind him remain, using new spin doctors and advertising agencies to sell what has been their agenda all along: commercialization of public health care and the establishment of private hospitals. My questions are to the Premier. Isn't it true that his plan is to introduce private hospitals, that this has been the plan all along from the start, and that his crippling cuts to our precious public health care system were necessary to create the impression, the illusion that the public health system couldn't deliver the service to Albertans?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, there was a restructuring that took place, much of it, by the way, in accordance and based on the recommendations of The Rainbow Report, which was commissioned by the then minister of health, who now happens to be the leader of the Liberal opposition.

Relative to the comments of Ms Fulton, those comments are irrelevant. What is relevant is what is in the bill and the bill . . .

MR. SAPERS: What is in it?

MR. KLEIN: Fine. The hon. member asked. It says:

Whereas it is the responsibility of the Government of Alberta to provide leadership and support the delivery of quality health services in order to maintain and improve the health of Albertans;

Whereas Albertans cherish Alberta's publicly funded and publicly administered health system;

Whereas the Government of Alberta is committed to the preservation of the principles of universality, comprehensiveness, accessibility, portability and public administration, as described in the Canada Health Act (Canada), as the foundation of the health system in Alberta . . .

Mr. Speaker, if this hon. member is opposed to those principles – I don't know if he was here or not for the vote on the motion upholding the principles of the Canada Health Act, but if he is saying today that he wants to change his vote, then stand up and say so.

2:30

MR. MacDONALD: My second question is also to the Premier. Exactly how do the choice, efficiency, and effectiveness of Dr. Fulton's private health scheme differ from the choice, efficiency, and effectiveness in the Premier's private hospital plan or scam?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, again the question is absolutely irrelevant because there is no private hospital scheme. The question is irrelevant. All we have before us is a bill called the Health Care Protection Act. Any question relative to private hospitals is irrelevant.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My third question is also to the Premier. Will the Premier finally come clean and admit that his private hospital bill, Bill 11, the Trojan horse bill, only pays lip service to the principles of the Canada Health Act and that what's missing in this propaganda package are his real principles of privatization and commercialism so clearly laid out by Dr. Fulton four years ago?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I will repeat that there is no bill by the name of the private hospital bill. There is no bill by the name of the Trojan horse bill. There is the Alberta health protection act, the bill before this House. So any bill that is imagined by the hon. member – a Trojan horse bill? I don't know of any Trojan horse bills. Are there any Trojan horse bills? I don't know. Could the hon. member cite the number of that bill? The Trojan horse bill? He alluded to it, and I want to know the number of the bill, the private hospitals bill. They might be considering such a bill, but there is no consideration of any such bill by the government or by this caucus. The only bill under consideration is Bill 11 – that's the number – and the name is the Alberta health protection act, now in its bill stage.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

#### **Aboriginal Policy Framework**

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Associate Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. On September 17, 1999, you released Alberta's proposed aboriginal policy framework for consultation with stakeholders. This is of interest to many constituents of Calgary-West and to Calgarians because the Paskapoo Slopes area in Calgary contains approximately 50 archeological sites with historical aboriginal artifacts. I would appreciate the minister providing an update on the status of this proposed aboriginal policy framework.

MS CALAHASEN: Mr. Speaker, since it has been released, I've sort of taken an Alberta break and toured Alberta, and I've gone to places



where most people wouldn't go. In fact, I've had a little bit of bannock, a little bit of deer venison. I've had a little bit of moose stew. In fact, I've had a little bit of moose nose soup. We've had 52 public meetings with over 1,200 attendees, and we've sent out more than 2,000 copies of the proposed policy framework. Since that time, we've received more than 40 written responses. We've also logged about 120 Internet requests a month since that time.

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplementary is to the same minister. What was the content, generally speaking, in your preliminary responses to date?

MS OLSEN: She doesn't know.

MS CALAHASEN: Well, Mr. Speaker, despite what my critic says over there, I have an idea in terms of what we've been doing. In fact, not everybody agrees with what we've got in the proposed policy framework. However, generally what we're hearing is that there is a great deal of support to establish partnerships and relationships with aboriginal people. People are telling us that it's time to do something concrete. Words have to be turned into action and into results. We also need to build on successes. There is general agreement among aboriginal people, industry, and government groups that this is a worthwhile cross-government initiative.

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplementary is to the same minister. When can we expect to see this framework rolled out; that is, publicly released?

MS CALAHASEN: We are presently incorporating all the responses that we are receiving, Mr. Speaker. It's very, very important when we look at what it is that we want to put forward. We have, in fact, just recently sent out the information on what we heard from people so that they can respond to us and indicate whether all the information we've received is basically what they've told us. They will respond within the next few weeks or within a month. By then, we'll have a draft that we'll be taking forward through the regular processes, which are SPC, cabinet, and of course caucus.

### **Private Health Services**

*(continued)*

MS CARLSON: Mr. Speaker, we've seen this government pull some fast ones before, but this one is over the top. They've become so arrogant that they believe they can bring in private hospitals simply by changing the name. This Trojan horse tactic will simply not work. Albertans will not be fooled. Can the Premier tell us: what is the exact mechanism for removing private hospitals from the public trough once they prove to be inefficient and costly?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, again the question is absolutely irrelevant. There is no question, no hint, nothing in this bill that is related to private hospitals. As a matter of fact, section 1 clearly says, "No person shall operate a private hospital in Alberta." So the question is irrelevant.

MS CARLSON: Maybe he can answer this one. Given that the CEO of the Calgary regional health authority has called contracting out an experiment, why is there no sunset clause in Bill 11 to limit this experiment?

MR. KLEIN: I don't recall the chief executive officer of the Calgary regional health authority making that statement, Mr. Speaker.

MS CARLSON: Mr. Speaker, will the Premier make a commitment to repeal Bill 11, also known as the private hospitals act, when it becomes clear that it is eroding medicare?

MR. HANCOCK: Point of order.

MR. KLEIN: Sir, the hon. member alluded to Bill 11. The proper name for Bill 11 is the Health Care Protection Act, Mr. Speaker. Again, I would remind the hon. member that unless she knows of a bill called the private hospitals act – if they have a number for that act, please stand up and introduce the bill.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberals keep talking about a private hospitals bill. We're not talking about a private hospitals bill. If they are contemplating such a bill, if they have a number for such a bill, then stand up and say so.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler.

### **Liquor Sales**

MRS. GORDON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are to the Minister of Gaming. The privatization of the liquor industry in Alberta is often referred to as the crown jewel of privatization, creating a thousand new independent businesses, 500-plus jobs, longer hours of operation, better customer selection, lower prices. Regulations under the act currently prohibit liquor licensees from accepting inducements favouring the sale of one particular brand or product. Those in noncompliance are fined. Now my independents feel threatened, and they are worried. They say that these rules could change and want to know why. Why are you considering different regulations for different classes of licences? Shouldn't all classes, A, B, C, D, and E, be governed by one set of rules?

MR. SMITH: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to answer the three questions that are put in the first question. Indeed, this jurisdiction is the only administration in Canada that retails beverages and spirits in a private, competitive, free enterprise environment, something I think all of us Conservatives are proud of: to be Conservatives, free enterprise, regulation-oriented, to make sure that we deregulate when we can, that we have malice for none and charity for all.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, we have through regulation created an exceedingly competitive environment. Just as Allan Rock has said: the status quo is not acceptable. The status quo is never acceptable in a market where there are changing dynamic conditions. So what we've done is clearly gone out to those involved in the industry. We've had a good process of consultation, of public presentations in Calgary and Edmonton inviting people from throughout this fine land to talk about what happens when a marketplace changes.

2:40

Right now I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, there are no plans in progress to change regulations with respect to placement of a liquor store or the retailing of spirits inside a liquor store. What is being discussed is a competitive environment that allows for the marketplace to function in an efficient fashion and also for this government to be able to detect when regulations are violated and then be able to enforce those regulations as they pertain to the specific violation.

MRS. GORDON: Why, Mr. Minister, would the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission not want to retain its mandate and authority for ensuring total compliance with the regulations by strengthening the severity of penalties for infractions and making public the full extent of the said violation and subsequent fine imposed?

MR. SMITH: Well, those are another batch of good questions, Mr. Speaker, that I'm pleased to address.

In fact, one thing that you do in a marketplace is ensure compliance as it pertains to the regulations. I know that members here check [www.AGLC.gov.ab.ca](http://www.AGLC.gov.ab.ca) daily. There is a complete list of all activities of the Department of Gaming, what they do with respect to alcohol and to gaming. In fact, in many places the market has a wonderful way of taking care of itself in a competitive environment. However, what we want to ensure is that we have a mechanism to detect when a regulation is violated, when enforcement can take place, and to in fact see that the enforcement is of a sufficient level to discourage that activity from continuing, because when people from a private-sector marketplace disobey or break regulations, they are tilting the level playing field of competition.

MRS. GORDON: My independents ask: why is the enforcement of this regulation deemed so extremely difficult when realistically fines collected from contravention could be applied exclusively to costs related to ongoing compliance? They say that is a good business decision.

MR. SMITH: Well, in fact, Mr. Speaker, the financial statements of the AGLC are very clear and they're very open. In fact, what we are assessing are clear ways to determine when these regulations have been violated and then take the enforcement measures. What we can report to you is that even if there may or may not be a rule or a policy change, when there are infractions at the time that these rules are in place and they're found out, there will be enforcement and there will be prosecution.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the member's constituents who are in this business are responding to her with information that is inaccurate and is creating unwarranted fears. In fact, we see it not only in the business of alcohol and the business of alcohol distribution. We see it in the matter of health, in the misinformation campaign that's occurring on the other side. If I can just wrap up by saying that it's important that we have a marketplace that functions, because it is truly competition that allocates scarce resources in the most optimum fashion.

#### head: Members' Statements

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, in 30 seconds from now I'll call upon the first of three members. Before doing that and sitting down, I'd also like to acknowledge that this Saturday, March 11, will be the election anniversary of 25 of our Members of this Legislative Assembly, who were elected in the general election of March 11, 1997. Twenty-five members.

The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

#### Radio France Isere/Radio-Canada Alberta

MR. DUCHARME: Merci, M. le President. Je suis heureux d'annoncer que le Secretariat francophone de l'Alberta était l'hôte d'une signature d'un protocole d'entente entre Radio France Isere et CHFA Radio-Canada Alberta, Mercredi, le 8 Mars.

Cette entente vise a etabli des liens entre les deux services regionaux de radio publique afin de porter un regard approfondi sur l'Alberta et la region de Grenoble, leurs habitants, ce qui les rapproche et ce qui les distingue. Les partenaires esperent egalement que cette entente servira de catalyseur a d'autres partenariats entre nos deux regions, qu'ils soient economiques, scientifiques, ou culturels.

Le protocole d'entente entre Radio France Isere et Radio-Canada Alberta s'etaye sur quatre axes principaux: information, animation,

jeu-concours, et multimedia. Ces axes serviront a couvrir trois champs d'interet: la culture de montagne, la recherche scientifique, et l'actualite, autant politique que culturelle. Ce protocole d'entente entre Radio France Isere et Radio-Canada Alberta entre en vigueur Lundi, le 20 Mars, et s'acheve le 24 Juin, 2002.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to announce that on Wednesday, March 8, the Alberta Francophone Secretariat hosted the signing of a memorandum of understanding between Radio France Isere and Radio-Canada Alberta, the French radio station.

The purpose of this memorandum is to establish a relationship between two public radio regional services in order to create a deeper understanding of Alberta and the Grenoble region: their inhabitants, their similarities, and their distinctive characters. The two partners also hope this memorandum will be a catalyst to other partnerships between the two regions, whether economically, scientifically, or culturally.

The memorandum of understanding between Radio France Isere and Radio-Canada Alberta targets four main areas: information, animation, radio quiz game, and multimedia. These areas will cover three fields of interest: mountain culture, scientific research, and current events, political as well as cultural. This memorandum of understanding between Radio France Isere and Radio-Canada Alberta comes into effect on Monday, March 20, 2000, and ends on June 24, 2002.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

#### Private Health Services

MR. DICKSON: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this afternoon I tabled copies of written summaries from a number of meetings held by the Calgary regional health authority in the city of Calgary, and these included a town hall meeting at Glamorgan Community Association on February 19, a town hall meeting at Annie Gale junior high school on February 12, and a meeting with educational partners such as the U of C on February 16.

At Glamorgan most of the questions dealt with the \$250 million paid in contracted services, particulars of which are totally, completely a big secret, unavailable to Calgarians. The concerns and suggestions to the CRHA included a question about why health care is moving to for-profit care; a question in terms of since public care can deliver cheaper health care than private care, why are we pursuing the new option; questions about why details of CRHA contracts are not made public; questions about conflicts of interest.

Now, those Calgarians who participated in the exercises had lots of good advice for the CRHA, but most of the answers required must come not from the appointed CRHA board but from the elected Minister of Health and Wellness. We heard many similar concerns last night when some 800 concerned Calgarians showed up at the Red & White Club at McMahon Stadium to find out more about Bill 11 and questionable decisions by this government, including broken promises like the election of regional health authority boards.

The question, though, Mr. Speaker, is whether anyone is listening. The Premier says that he's 99.9 percent sure his Bill 11 will be passed. What is that but disdain for all of the Albertans who are raising questions and issues with the content of Bill 11 and, more significantly, what is not in Bill 11? Why won't the Premier host a town hall meeting in Calgary? Why won't he debate the Leader of the Opposition at public forums? Why won't the Premier come and answer the legitimate, serious questions that people in the city of Calgary have with the dismantling of their public health care system? Those are questions that deserve an answer.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

2:50

### Support for Seniors

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to speak today in support of Alberta seniors. During the past three years as MLA for Calgary-West, as chair of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta, and as chair of the aging population study for one and a half years, I've constantly met with seniors in small to large-size groups or organizations and individually, and the total would be in the tens of thousands. Met with means talked to, as in giving information, and listened to means as in acquiring information.

I met all kinds of seniors, from rural/urban, very active and aware, to those with Alzheimer's and from those with very high incomes and assets to those with very low incomes. All these meetings have been accurately documented to government, to the Minister of Community Development, to the Seniors Advisory Council quarterly reports, the annual year-in-review reports, and the forthcoming aging population study report. These reports say what is important to seniors, and I list them.

Housing: appropriate choices; aging in place as long as possible with the help of community supports and caregivers. Home may be of necessity a long-term care facility, but they prefer to not be there.

Health: if they have to be in an acute care hospital, seniors want short stays and caring staff trained in geriatrics.

Transportation: being mobile means being independent.

Income: lower income seniors want to be reassured of government assistance when they need it.

Abuse of seniors: seniors want to be treated, as we all wish, with due dignity and respect by all those they come in contact with.

My point, Mr. Speaker, is that these things are most important to today's seniors, and the government is aware of them and is addressing them. Seniors deserve the right to live in peace and dignity, not to be used as pawns being told misinformation in this philosophical debate on how to deliver health care in Alberta more effectively and efficiently. This playing around with seniors' mental health is unacceptable, and it should end today.

Thank you.

head: Projected Government Business

THE SPEAKER: The hon. House leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. DICKSON: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'd ask the government to outline now the course of business we might anticipate next week.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday, March 13, in the afternoon under Government Bills and Orders we would anticipate dealing with second reading of Bill 6, the Special Payment Act; Bill 4, the Surveys Amendment Act; Bill 5, the Land Titles Amendment Act; Bill 1, Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and Engineering Research Act; and Bill 3, the Statute Revision Act. If time permits, Committee of the Whole on Bill 2, First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Act.

Monday at 8 p.m. under Government Bills and Orders of course we'll be in Committee of Supply: in subcommittee C, in the Assembly, dealing with the main estimates of Municipal Affairs; and in subcommittee D, in room 512, dealing with Resource Development's main estimates. Time permitting, we may deal with Committee of the Whole on Bill 2, First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Act, and as per the Order Paper.

On Tuesday, March 14, at 4:30 p.m. under Government Bills and Orders we anticipate the attendance of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor to give royal assent to bills 9 and 12; then second reading on Bill 7, the Alberta Science, Research and Technology Authority Amendment Act, and Bill 1, the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and Engineering Research Act.

On Tuesday at 8 p.m. under Government Bills and Orders in Committee of Supply we anticipate the reporting of the estimates for Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and Community Development; under Government Bills and Orders for second reading Bill 1, Bill 6, Bill 3, Bill 4, Bill 5, Bill 7, and as per the Order Paper.

On Wednesday, March 15, at 8 p.m. under Government Bills and Orders in Committee of Supply: reporting the estimates of the departments of Innovation and Science, Economic Development, Government Services, Resource Development; and if time permits, second reading of bills 1, 6, 3, 4, 5, 7, and as per the Order Paper.

On Thursday, March 16, in the afternoon under Government Bills and Orders: estimates as may be designated by the Official Opposition on Monday and as per the Order Paper based on progress Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, prior to dealing with the first of our six points of order, might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: Introduction of Guests

(reversion)

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the House's indulgence. This is a rare opportunity to introduce in particular three little guests that will not, I know, have an opportunity to attend our Legislature often. I want you to know that I'm very proud of these little guests. I'd like to first introduce Stevie Cox, sitting on my husband, Lloyd McClellan's, knee. Next to her is Tami Cox holding Maverick James, and next to her is Shelby T Cox. I'm very proud of this little family, and we're looking forward to going to the Shrine Circus in Edmonton and seeing zebras.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope you'll give them a warm welcome.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, one of the unique matters of our Routine that we have in this Assembly is an opportunity for the Official Opposition to designate estimates for consideration on Thursday afternoon. The Official Opposition has that right to choose which estimates it wants to deal with. The chair has indicated on previous occasions, particularly on private members' day, that he did not want to see the Assembly get into a situation whereby many points of order might in fact have the tendency of reducing a private member's opportunity to participate. Today we have six points of order that we will deal with. The chair's hesitation is much the same. However, in this case four of the points of order are being raised by members of the Official Opposition. If we go on with points of order for an hour, an hour and a half, it will not be the chair's dilemma in terms of inability, then, for the Assembly to deal with one of the designated estimates for this week.

Just prior to sitting down, one other item. It also seems that we are coming to a situation where an hon. member will rise on a point of order and then not be here to participate on that point of order. While we have accepted the fact that one of the House leaders might undertake that point of order, the difficulty the chair has is in actually knowing if that argument put forward by one of the House leaders is in fact the point of order that the hon. member would have

wanted to address. While the chair will accept the honoured tradition that an hon. member in fact is to be completely truthful in everything one does say and in dealing with the actual issue, it is a concern. It is a concern. It would seem to me that if an hon. member wants to deal with a point of order, really the best, the highest form of parliamentary practice would be for the hon. member to address it. However, I just raise that as a consideration and a concern today. We're still going to proceed with the points of order that we do have.

The hon. Opposition House Leader on the first point of order, I believe now on behalf of the Leader of the Official Opposition.

#### **Point of Order Provoking Debate**

MR. DICKSON: It is indeed, Mr. Speaker, and I want to assure you that it's my understanding that I have the full authority to make representations on behalf of those colleagues. They're going to be stuck with my limited efforts on their behalf. Actually, it sounds like more fun going to watch the zebras at the Shrine Circus also, but I'll go through this as quickly as I can.

The authority I'd cite would be *Beauchesne* 417, that answers ought not to provoke debate. What I reference is in the second set of questions from the Leader of the Opposition to the Premier. The Premier came back and said words to the effect – I don't have *Hansard* in front of me – that the leader of the Liberal opposition has said that Albertans couldn't understand or aren't smart enough to understand what's in Bill 11. Well, Mr. Speaker, the short answer to that is that it's not the Leader of the Opposition who put the marginal notes and the little editorial comments on the copy of the bill that was sent out. It's not the Leader of the Opposition who has refused or failed to appear at major, major public events to hear Albertans' concerns, to discuss the bill with them.

Mr. Speaker, I may be one of the few Albertans that enjoys reading back issues of *Hansard*. Most importantly, I've gone through it with reasonable care, and you know, as hard as I've looked, I can't find the Leader of the Opposition ever saying words to the effect that Albertans weren't smart enough to be able to understand and read Bill 11. For the Premier to make that kind of assertion, more than once – we've also seen this on March 7 of 2000, and it's an attempt to raise the same message – it does nothing other than provoke debate, and I wish you'd caution the Premier against ever doing that again in this Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

3:00

MR. HANCOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, where to start? First, the hon. member admits that he reads back issues of *Hansard*, and therefore anything he says must be suspect. Nobody could possibly enjoy reading back issues of *Hansard*.

However, Mr. Speaker, I believe there was – and I stand to be corrected – a tabling on the first day that the hon. Premier referred to the remarks made by the hon. Leader of the Opposition relating to her comments from, I think, the transcript of a radio show in which she did in fact say – I'm not quoting her, and I'm not pretending to quote her – something to the effect that legislation was complex and couldn't be understood by average Albertans. I think there is no point of order, simply on the basis that the transcript was tabled and the remark was said.

The hon. member, however, goes on to talk about provoking debate. You've commented on this extensively in the last few days, but again we witnessed in the House today that every single question that was raised by the opposition had a preamble that was far too long and provoked debate and was argumentative. There were

questions specifically relating to sections of a bill that will be debated before the House, and the questions themselves provoked debate because they asked questions about the sections of the bill and the interpretation of the sections and the interpretation which they were suggesting the government was putting on the sections and the interpretation which they believed should be on the sections. I heard references on innumerable occasions today to the term "private hospital bill." There is no private hospital bill, and that in itself provokes debate.

Mr. Speaker, I could say worse things about what was said in the House today than that it provoked debate, although I think the rules of the House might call me out of order if I did. But if I did say them, they would be true statements. There is no point of order here.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, good temper and moderation in the usage of the words of the language are always expected. That hasn't been the case in the last number of days. This is not a point of order. I've said before that if someone wants to throw it out, then one has to expect to get it back.

Hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, your second point of order.

#### **Point of Order Provoking Debate**

MR. DICKSON: I'd repeat and incorporate everything I said with respect to the first point of order. It's virtually the same issue. It simply occurred in the third set of questions of the Leader of the Official Opposition. The same comments would apply and, presumably, the same direction from the Speaker.

MR. HANCOCK: Mr. Speaker, I would give the same response except to commend the hon. member for not using the opportunity of standing on the point of order, as he did on the first one, to engage in debate again on the subject.

THE SPEAKER: Ditto.

The hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler.

#### **Point of Order Provocative Language**

MRS. GORDON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The sections in *Beauchesne* I'm referring to are 289(3) and 489. I'm very concerned. The Leader of the Official Opposition made reference to the fact that the hon. Premier wasn't out last evening at health forums but in fact decided to send the "truth squad commanders" I think were her words. I really believe that possibly these points should be done in public, because I think there is a terrible public perception that comes from that. The hon. Premier was in this Legislature last night as he was giving the main estimates for Executive Council and the Public Affairs Bureau. I guess the hon. Leader of the Opposition should be quite thankful that the Premier didn't stand up here and ask where the hon. member was last night while the Premier was in this Assembly.

I really think that we have stooped to an all-time low when it is necessary to stand up here – if she had talked to her caucus members, to her people in the opposition, she would have known that he was in here last night trying to answer their questions and do his duty in the Assembly as the Premier of the province. I don't know how in good conscience, regardless of what political party you're with, you can lead Albertans astray to that extent.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, the short answer to this point of order. The authorities cited refer to commenting about the absence of a member from this Assembly, which has absolutely nothing to do

with the issue that I think the member has raised and is talking about. I think what she's talking about is the concern that's been expressed in this House that when large numbers of Albertans gather in a public forum to get information on the single most important issue for them and their neighbours, they expect to see leadership, they expect to see responsiveness from the men and women who've been elected to represent them.

It is the Premier of this province and his powerful 64-member majority that decides but for a short time on Thursday afternoon what's coming up, when it's coming up, and what sequence it's coming up in. So it's bogus, Mr. Speaker, to suggest that somehow the Premier's hands are tied. He can determine when any particular issue is going to come up in this House, and I assume he does it in close conjunction with his very competent House leader.

The point is this. The authorities cited have absolutely no application, and the Member for Lacombe-Stettler I think completely misapprehends what has been said. There has clearly been criticism that the Premier of this province hasn't been out listening to Albertans when they gather to talk about an important issue, and that criticism will continue to be made again and again until in fact it's addressed by the Premier getting out and not just managing his little phone-in campaign, where he can screen the calls that come in on a Saturday afternoon. He's got to be able to take the heat that the Member for Calgary-Glenmore bravely did last night and the Associate Minister of Health and Wellness did on Tuesday night. When he's prepared to take the heat that he's sending out his emissaries to take, then the Member for Lacombe-Stettler is entitled to stand and say, "We're being unfair to the Premier," but not until.

Thank you.

MR. HANCOCK: Mr. Speaker, it is disappointing that the hon. Opposition House Leader didn't take your admonition not to use up the time of estimates this afternoon in – I'm sorry; did I say obnoxious arguments?

Last night the Premier was in the House defending his estimates. That's a matter of record. The schedule for the record, as the Opposition House Leader well knows, is set well in advance. They've had the schedule of those estimates for a long period of time. They took a slippery, obnoxious, inappropriate attempt to besmirch the reputation of the Premier and to say that he wasn't out defending Bill 11 and talking to the people of Alberta about Bill 11 and hearing from the people of Alberta about Bill 11, when they full well knew he was scheduled to be here. They used that today at a most inappropriate time. It probably was a slip on their part. The Leader of the Opposition probably didn't know that the Premier was up defending his estimates last night. But it's totally inappropriate – totally inappropriate, Mr. Speaker – regardless of the citation in *Beauchesne*.

It's even more obnoxious that he's trying to get off this point of order on a technicality by saying that the wrong citation was made. It's totally inappropriate for these people . . .

MR. SAPERS: You've said that four times now.

MR. HANCOCK: And I'm going to say it again. It's totally inappropriate and obnoxious and misrepresenting to the people of Alberta what this government caucus is doing and what this Premier of Alberta is doing.

Bill 11 was put on the Order Paper. Bill 11 was introduced. They didn't want the public to hear about Bill 11. They don't like the fact that Bill 11 was mailed out to all Albertans. They don't like the fact that we on this side of the House and on that side of the House over there, where the other members of government caucus sit, are out

listening to Albertans, talking with Albertans about the bill but not inflaming Albertans, not bringing empty rhetoric to Albertans, not trying to scare Albertans but listening to good input from Albertans.

Because he doesn't find that we attend the types of forums that they like to set up and manage, he thinks we're not listening to Albertans. Well, he's absolutely wrong. The opposition leader is absolutely wrong. All of their minions are absolutely wrong. Under Standing Orders they should be called to order for the fact that they have made a malicious statement about the Premier today.

3:10

THE SPEAKER: Do you want to be involved in this point of order?

MS LEIBOVICI: Yes, I do, Mr. Speaker. Just for a little bit of clarification. I heard the House leader indicate that the schedule was set far in advance for the estimates, and that's true, but the other reality is that the schedule for the CBC town halls was also set far in advance. The reality is also that there was a town hall meeting on Tuesday night in Edmonton at which the Premier, I'm sure, had he decided he would want to attend, could have attended as well. There were no Executive Council estimates on Tuesday night either.

The reality is that the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition has said and has reiterated even today that a town hall could be arranged by the Premier on his home ground of Calgary, at his choosing, whenever he wishes, at whatever time, and she will be there. She has asked for an open debate, where the people of Alberta could participate in that debate as well, and the Premier has consistently refused. So the reality is, as I heard the House leader for the Official Opposition indicate, that in accordance with *Beauchesne* there is no point of order. We need to get the facts out on the table, and those are the facts.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Quite frankly, hon. members, if one wants to read *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms*, the sixth edition, and wants to go to point 289, which I believe was raised, there is at least one parliament which has a Standing Order which states: "Every Member is bound to attend the service of the House unless leave of absence has been given him or her by the House". This is another one of those fascinating discussions that we've just heard. Quite frankly, everyone in this Chamber is bound to be here. Bound to be here. When the chair looks out, the chair even right at this moment sees a variety of empty seats.

In section 289 of *Beauchesne* it also goes on to say:

(3) The duties of Members have become extremely varied and Members must travel frequently. The discharge of those responsibilities will sometimes take a Member away from the House. This absence from the chamber should not be the subject of comment.

Interestingly enough, there's nothing in the Standing Orders that says that presence of the hon. member in the Chamber should be a subject of comment, but the chair will make it. When did it ever evolve to the fact that people should not be discharging their duties in this Assembly? We're hon. members elected to serve in this Assembly. It would seem to me that we sit from 1:30 in the afternoon to 5:30 in the afternoon, and then oftentimes we sit in the evening again from 8 o'clock to heaven knows what time. The prime responsibility is to in fact be in this Assembly.

Now, we'll just reiterate all that again. I gather that the feeling of this Assembly is that from time to time an hon. member must be away, and the Speaker in fact has been quite open with respect to even attendance. Under the Legislative Assembly Act any hon. member who in fact absents himself or herself from this Assembly for more than 10 days is subject to severe penalties. I guess that was a point of clarification.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora on a point of order.

## Point of Order

### Oral Question Period Rules

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will start off by referring you to *Beauchesne* 408(1)(e) and (f). Of course, 408 generally speaks about oral questions, and sub (1) begins:

Such questions should . . .

- (e) not be of a nature requiring a lengthy and detailed answer.
- (f) not raise a matter of policy too large to be dealt with as an answer to a question.

I'm referring to the exchange between the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake and the Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Speaker, I'll also draw your attention to 408(2), which says that "answers to questions should be as brief as possible, should deal with the matter raised, and should not provoke debate," and then *Beauchesne* 409(11), "a question which seeks an opinion about government policy is probably out of order," et cetera, et cetera. I won't take the time to read the rest of that lengthy paragraph into the record. I could also go on to quote other authorities that have to do with providing factual information in the Assembly and not doing anything that would be misleading the Assembly.

Now, the exchange of questions I refer to, Mr. Speaker, had to do with the impact of federal tax policy on Albertans. The Treasurer made the representation that Albertans would be receiving an 18 percent tax cut. What he failed to mention is that that only relates to the top 1 percent of Alberta tax filers with an income of over \$150,000 per year. In fact, the middle 39 percent of Alberta tax filers, those with an income between \$30,000 and \$70,000 per year, will only receive an average of 9 percent on their provincial taxes.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the question, as I understood it, related to: what would be the impact? Would taxpayers in this province be better off if we had the existing tax-on-tax regime instead of moving to this so-called flat tax? Of course, there has been an analysis that shows that at income levels of \$35,000, \$50,000, and \$65,000, in fact there is a net cost to taxpayers in every one of those categories of between \$322 and \$436.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would say that in the first instance the member should have been called to order because his question violated sections 408 and 409 of *Beauchesne*. In the second instance the Treasurer should have been called to order because his answers were neither complete nor factual.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is probably the most spurious point of order I've heard in this House yet, and I want to be clear on the word "spurious" because the last time I used it, *Hansard* recorded it as "serious." It was quite appropriate to record it as serious on that occasion, but on this occasion I mean spurious.

The reason I say that it's a spurious point of order is because clearly the hon. member opposite has used the occasion of a point of order, has raised a point of order so that he could try and put on the record the answer he would like to have received rather than the actual, factual answer that the Provincial Treasurer gave.

I would like to point out, first of all, that points of order should not, in my humble opinion, be allowed to go on at length so that members can add their own interpretation of the facts. They should be dealing actually with the issue in the point of order, which is whether the question and answer were appropriate or whether there was inappropriate usage.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora put some inappropriate comments on the record, and I'm sure that when he clearly reads the tax policy, he'll understand what the truth is, or he can go back, as

his seatmate suggested, and read back issues of *Hansard* from time to time and read the hon. Member for Red Deer-North's answers so that he can get it clear.

However, on the points of order which were in fact points of order, the question that was raised was *Beauchesne* 408, "not be of a nature requiring a lengthy and detailed answer." In fact, I would suggest that the question did not require "a lengthy and detailed answer" and did "not raise a matter of policy too large to be dealt with as an answer to a question." The fact that the Provincial Treasurer, in giving his answer, elected to give a very detailed and complete answer so that the members opposite could really understand what tax policy is was at the election of the Provincial Treasurer and, I think, also dealt with the concept that answers should be of a sufficient length to give the detail that's required. In this case the Provincial Treasurer, in giving the answer, obviously anticipated from the tablings earlier in the House that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, not the person asking the questions, needed to have some factual responses.

THE SPEAKER: Sometimes I really wonder why hon. members deal with some of these points of order. If the chair used the logic of the argument put forward by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, the chair would have ruled out the tabling that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora gave today when he in fact violated the rule by giving an interpretation with respect to a report that he gave and provided a comment with respect to it, which violated tabling policy.

Secondly, the length of time utilized by the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake in the raising of his three questions was just a few seconds less than six minutes, which was a few seconds less than the time that was allocated in the second set of questions between the Leader of the Official Opposition and the leader of the government and the amount of time taken up by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar in his several questions.

The chair has indicated before that the chair attempts to try and find a balance, and one can never be sure, in terms of the length of a question or the length of the answer, what they will be. In terms of the time taken for it, it certainly sat with the tone that was set today. There were 11 sets of questions, and that essentially is the target the chair tries to arrive at.

Thirdly, the argument provided to rule out the question would simply have ruled out virtually every other question in the last 12 days in this session. So once again another point of something.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

3:20

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, I think we're almost at the end.

THE SPEAKER: Not quite.

## Point of Order

### Factual Accuracy

MR. DICKSON: In the exchange between the Premier and my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar I heard the Premier say that the government is simply following The Rainbow Report, that had been prepared under the direction of the then minister of health, who is the current leader of the Liberal opposition. I cite again *Beauchesne* 417.

Mr. Speaker, this is so preposterous, it needs to be corrected. It was not the Leader of the Opposition who recommended slashing \$700 million from the budget of the department of health. It was not the Leader of the Opposition who recommended chopping the jobs of 10,000 highly skilled registered nurses and health care workers. It was not the Leader of the Opposition and The Rainbow Report

that recommended blowing up the General hospital and selling the Holy Cross hospital for a song after spending \$32 million on renovations. It was not the recommendation of the Leader of the Opposition to do anything other than look at innovative health reform in terms of primary care delivery but doing it on the basis of stable funding, doing it within the context of the public health care system.

So the absolutely provocative and baseless allegation perpetuated and republished again and again by this Premier shows contempt for the facts as well as it shows contempt for the Assembly.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Mr. Speaker, I think I'm going to have to do some research. There's got to be something in this book which suggests that you can raise points of order on points of order.

The Member for Calgary-Buffalo has again used a point of order to engage in debate. If anything it may be a point of clarification in his mind, although what the Premier said needed no clarification. What he did was take the opportunity of a point of order under our Standing Orders, rather than raising an appropriate point of order, to bring forth some sort of spurious health care debate that was not appropriate in the context of the point of order and was not an accurate reflection of anything that happened in the last seven years and was inappropriate in referring to the comments that were raised by the Premier during question period.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, those sections of *Beauchesne* dealing with points of order are from 317 on, if that will help the interpretation of the reading of all of this.

The chair will do this last intervention and rejection by the two hon. House leaders as simply a point of clarification having been done and now dealt with.

The hon. Government House Leader.

#### Point of Order

#### Oral Question Period Rules

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My point of order is under Standing Order 23(c) and Standing Order 23(j) as well as *Beauchesne* 409(7) and 410(12). Standing Order 23(c) refers to a member being called to order if he "persists in needless repetition"; 23(j), "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder"; 409(7), "a question must adhere to the proprieties of the House, in terms of inferences, imputing motives or casting aspersions upon persons within the House or out of it"; and 410(12), "questions should not be hypothetical."

It's my contention that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie referred in one of her questions to "Bill 11, also known as the private hospitals act." It was a reference that was made on a number of occasions today, but on that particular occasion the hon. member specifically referred to a bill in this House, which has a proper name, by a name which is totally improper, inappropriate, misleading, and wrong and used it for the purpose of misleading not only the House but members of the public who might have been watching during question period. The reference was used repetitively throughout the question period today, but it was used in this specific instance quite inappropriately in addressing and specifically talking about the title of a bill which is before the House, and I believe the hon. member should be admonished.

No matter in what way they wish to characterize the government's proposed legislation with respect to the protection of public health care, the strongest piece of health care protection legislation in this

country today being proposed or in place, which puts the principles of the Canada Health Act clearly into our law in this province, if it's passed, which clearly outlaws private hospitals, which clearly puts strict regulation on the use of private surgical facilities, which clearly protects public health care – if they want to characterize that in some other way, it may be to them to do so, but they shouldn't, in referring to the title of the bill, use the title of the bill in an inappropriate manner to mislead Albertans.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm tempted to read back to the Government House Leader the comments he made a few moments ago when he was trying to instruct all members on how to conduct themselves in raising points of order. If he chooses not to heed his own admonishment, let me make this observation. This government has taken a bill title, and they've elevated it to a pre-election campaign slogan. This has nothing to do with the title of a bill. This is a means by which a government, with their \$8 million Public Affairs Bureau budget, is trying to pull the wool over Albertans. As my colleague just said a moment ago, there is not a single person, I daresay, in the 3 million people that live in this province who, upon opening their mailbox and receiving this bill, have any question that when questions are asked by elected members in this House, they all know what bill we're talking about. If it would help the Government House Leader, we'll also refer to it as Bill 11 so that there's absolutely no uncertainty.

There have been references on both sides of the House to private hospitals in discussion around Bill 11, and indeed I'm one who thinks Albertans are smart enough to be able to understand what bill we're talking about. I don't think that they're going to be misled in any fashion by what has been suggested.

Those are my observations, Mr. Speaker, with respect to this last point of order.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you to both hon. gentlemen, who are well practised in the law and who are now in a parliament. There is only a bill, Bill 11. It has a proper title, and it has a proper name. Okay. Thank you very much for that clarification as well.

Now, it may very well be that we have overlooked another point of order. I just want to make sure.

The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: We did, Mr. Speaker, but now withdraw it.

THE SPEAKER: Just for clarification to the hon. Government House Leader. In fact, a point of order cannot be raised on a point of order.

Secondly, several members alluded to the fact that it may very well be that it is unfortunate that we are not on television. Well, the fact of the matter is that we are.

3:30

head: Orders of the Day

#### head: Committee of Supply

[Mrs. Gordon in the chair]

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

#### Community Development

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We'll start by having the hon. Minister of Community Development give us an overview.

Hon. minister.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. I'm very, very pleased to be here to follow up on the previous estimates that we had back on February 29.

AN HON. MEMBER: It's exciting; isn't it?

MR. WOLOSHYN: It's extremely exciting.

I'd like to start by addressing a number of questions regarding the EPCOR Rosedale power plant and the associated site, which has attracted some degree of public and media attention. The member raised some questions about this in regards to the government's actions in protecting the site and what is underneath it and how the province is working with the city on the issue.

I'd like to point out that the Historical Resources Act has already been used several times to protect the heritage resources of the Rosedale power plant site. Last fall EPCOR was asked to provide historical resource impact assessments, known as HRIAs, for both the archaeological aspects of the site and an early building on the property. I'm pleased to say that EPCOR has and continues to provide full co-operation with the department on this particular site.

Next I'd like to address comments on the changes in funding to the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation. First of all, I'd like to make it very, very clear that adjustments in funding for the foundation will have no adverse effect on the annual operating funds provided to provincial sport and recreation associations. In fact, as a result of the reallocation of funds from the quarterly grant program, additional funding has been provided to provincial – and I stress provincial – sport and recreation associations to assist them in carrying out the delivery of programs and services to Albertans.

It's important to note that the funding provided under the quarterly grant program was directed to specific projects. Funding was provided through an application process on a project-by-project basis. Associations did not rely on this program as a source for continuous funding. The ASRPW Foundation reviewed the quarterly grant program to determine the possibility of duplication relative to other grant programs offered by the provincial government such as the community lottery boards program.

Recommendations from this review have resulted in the implementation of the new development initiatives program. This program is designed to meet the needs of applicants not eligible for funding from other funding agencies and programs. Consideration will be given to projects not accepted through other funding agencies yet within the parameters of the program. An applicant may not apply to more than one granting agency and/or program for the same identified project. However, different aspects of the same program may be funded by different agencies, organizations, or foundations provided that total funds do not equal or exceed the total cost of the project. Good examples of projects which were eligible for funding through the quarterly grant program as well as the CLB program are playgrounds and climbing walls and so on.

The elimination of possible duplicated funding has also allowed the ASRPW Foundation to maintain the municipal recreation/tourism areas program at its current level.

I'd like to add that I agree that the Wild Rose Foundation does great work with and for volunteers, and their grant program will continue to serve this important sector. It is important to note that they are also a part of the new criteria.

I'll conclude my remarks by addressing a number of questions that were raised about the department's support for seniors when asked about why there is no funding of seniors' centres included under the budget. While there are no direct operating funds for seniors' centres, there are a number of sources of financial support available,

and it varies in each community depending upon local needs, interests, and resources. Project funding may be available to seniors' centres for recreation activities through the Wild Rose Foundation and resources such as family and community support services, community lottery boards, and Health Canada's population health fund may also offer support.

Now I'll address the question about seniors qualifying for a subsidy of full or partial payment of health care premiums and any increase in seniors qualifying for these benefits. Further to the answer I provided in the Committee of Supply, the Alberta seniors' benefit program determines whether seniors are eligible for Alberta health care premium subsidies. There are about 130,000 seniors in Alberta who receive full-premium subsidies and a further 50,000 who receive partial subsidies. The transfer of funds from Community Development to Health and Wellness for these subsidies no longer takes place. It should be noted, though, that it does not alter the actual benefits received by seniors.

In response to concerns raised by the office of the Auditor General, significant change has been made to the Alberta seniors' benefit budget during the third-quarter budget review process, which will become effective on April 1, 2000. This is a change to the budgeting and reporting process of the ministries of Community Development and Health and Wellness only. Also, this change has no financial impact on the government's bottom line.

The net number of additional seniors that qualify for the ASB program, including the Alberta health care insurance premium subsidies, will vary each year. This is influenced by a number of factors: the number of Albertans who turn 65 years of age in a given year, the number of seniors who pass away, and the income of those who have applied to the program. In general, the number has been increasing. In the last fiscal year it increased from 178,289 seniors in March of 1998 to 180,553 seniors in March of 1999.

I now turn to the question raised about increasing funds for lodges and special consideration for assistance to the Greater Edmonton Foundation and its lodges to be renovated or rebuilt. The lodge assistance program grant was not increased in this budget year. Community Development is currently reviewing existing funding formulas to determine if changes to the lodge assistance program are required to provide a more equitable distribution of the funding. This, I must stress, is simply a review. I'm not implying that any changes will in fact be made. [A cell phone rang] Should we answer the phone, or should I continue?

The current lodge assistance program grant formula, which came into effect in 1995, was developed by a joint committee of provincial government officials and members of the Alberta Senior Citizens Housing Association. The committee determined that there were economies of scale for larger management bodies. Therefore, it was decided to pay \$3.60 per resident-day for management bodies with 350 or more lodge units – these were all located in Edmonton, Calgary, and Lethbridge – and \$4.80 per day for those with less than 350 lodge units. Consequently, this new grant formula resulted in some management bodies experiencing a reduction in their grant funding while others received an increase. The Greater Edmonton Foundation's grant was increased from \$789,643 in 1994 to \$1,209,192 in 1995, using the \$3.60 per resident-day formula.

AN HON. MEMBER: They got more because of inflation.

MR. WOLOSHYN: The only thing that's inflating is the inappropriate comments from across the floor, I would point out.

In regards to the timing for the tabling of the government's response to the impact of the aging population study, I'd like to indicate that the steering committee will complete its report



sometime this spring. Along with report A, it will provide the government with recommendations for action. That report I obviously haven't received yet, so it'll be some time after that before I'll be able to respond, and that's part B of a bigger report. Part A came out earlier this year, and we'll be looking at that in conjunction with all the other reports we have on this whole area.

As I stated at the beginning of my remarks, there were questions raised about the department's performance measures, including those to do with customer satisfaction and whatnot, and we'll get you some of those in writing.

I'd like to thank you for your time, and I would be pleased to listen to your questions and comments and either give you some answers today or hopefully get you answers to questions that are appropriate to be answered in writing.

Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

3:40

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. DICKSON: Thanks very much, Madam Chairman. Good afternoon, Mr. Minister. I've got a number of questions to put to you. Let me start with some statistical requests. I'm going to focus most of my questions on the work of the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission. I know that that's an area in your department that you take a great deal of personal interest and pride in, and I know it's something you're familiar with.

Perhaps you could give me some information relative to the number of cases opened in the last fiscal year, at least up to this point. We're not quite at the end of March, but I'd like to know at this stage the number of cases opened in terms of the type of discrimination. So if you could go through and identify the number of complaints for gender, race, colour, physical disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, religious beliefs, mental disability, family status, source of income, and sexual orientation. The analysis was interesting before, when it had been broken out from '95-96 through '97-98. I would like updated statistics, Mr. Minister, on that.

Would you tell me how many human rights panels we've had in the 1999-2000 fiscal year? How many of those were referred by the director of the Human Rights Secretariat? How many were referred after an appeal to the chief commissioner? I'm always interested in terms of the body of decisions and orders from the commission in that area.

If you go back and look at my correspondence with you, on March 29, 1999, if this assists you, you wrote me a letter giving me some response to questions I'd asked a year ago, so if you could have somebody in your office pull that letter, I'm going to go through and refer to some of the same items. I'm looking for updates.

One of the responsibilities that the Human Rights Commission has is to provide advice to the minister. I know that you had consulted the commission last year on a number of issues – that was 1998-1999 – on things like the UN declaration on the rights of the child, the compatibility of government caucus decisions on same-sex legislation with human rights legislation, federal/provincial initiatives, gender equity, family violence. I note that the commission director worked closely with government, communicating to Albertans the ramifications of the Vriend decision. Perhaps you can outline for me the areas in which the commission has been providing advice and recommendations to you, Mr. Minister.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

Let me be more specific in one area. We saw earlier in 1999 Bill 12, the Domestic Relations Act. You've certainly seen now the

benefit of the so-called fences committee, chaired, I think, by the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations. I think she chaired the fences committee. You know the committee I'm talking about. It was set up after the Vriend decision. You saw the recommendations. You've seen the Liberal alternative, if you'll recall, on Bill 12 in terms of recognizing people who enter into long-term, mutually supportive relationships. I'd like to know what advice you've received from the commission relative to this issue. This is really an extension of what the commission's been advising you on in 1998 and 1999 around the Vriend decision.

We've now progressed, I think, to a different level of sophistication, and in terms of how we make Alberta legislation Charter-proof, I'm assuming that our Human Rights Commission is instrumental in providing advice to the government around those issues. So I'd like to know, Mr. Minister, what concrete proposals have been put forward by the commission to deal with making Alberta legislation Charter-proof, to ensure that we have equal protection for all Albertans, whether it's a question of looking at the Alberta Liberal model for domestic partnerships or what other models are being put forward by the commission.

Mr. Minister, through the chair, you and your predecessor have always told me that the commission is independent. Well, if it's genuinely independent of government, I'd expect that the good advice that they're providing would be shared with all members of the Assembly and not with the political section of the government of the province of Alberta. They haven't sent that to me directly, but I'm sure they'd be happy that you would share that with those MLAs who happen not to be part of the government caucus. So we'd sure look forward to that.

Mr. Minister, I'd be interested in what specific recommendations have been made by the commission in the last year, in the 1999-2000 year, in terms of legislative change. This is broader than what I asked a moment ago, because I'm not now talking about the sort of same-sex partner situation. I'm interested in what other kinds of recommendations for legislative change across the board of provincial government activity within the areas provided to the province, sort of the division of powers.

Mr. Minister, I had an interesting chat with the executive director of the Cultural Diversity Institute. I've been following that closely, I guess, for a couple of reasons, not just because it's headquartered in the city of Calgary, but it seemed to me that last year they got about \$250,000 of public money to assist them in their work, so there are substantial dollars going in there. There were proposals to create a board of directors for the Cultural Diversity Institute, and the director of the institute was telling me about some different models that they're looking at. Can you give me an up-to-date status report on the governance of the Cultural Diversity Institute? That information would be important. As well, because of the size of the money that your department is giving the Cultural Diversity Institute, I'd be interested in some of the detailed plans.

You told me last March, Mr. Minister – and I appreciated your candour then – that there would be a research agenda for the institute in place by September 1999. Please provide me with a copy of that. The summer institute was planned for August 1999. I'd like the most current plan on that summer institute being run under the Cultural Diversity Institute.

The resource centre at the University of Calgary run by the Cultural Diversity Institute: can you give me information that I can share with my colleagues, who I think would like to be able to share the information through their . . . [interjections] Oh, no, Mr. Minister, I didn't want you to apprehend that I was close to the end. I've got lots more questions. I just thought my colleagues would like an update on what that Cultural Diversity Institute is doing, so

I'm hoping we can get information that can be provided by constituency offices to constituents.

Mr. Minister, something you can help me with. We're going back and forth. On the one hand, I see that you're doing some work – Mr. Minister, I see from your smile that you're going to have responses for me probably before the end of the afternoon, and I'm delighted to have that sort of quick response.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: You haven't asked a direct question yet.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Minister, you haven't heard any questions in what I've been asking? If you wish, I'd be happy to review them. I was looking for specific recommendations that you've offered to the government of the province of Alberta on legislative reform. I was asking for specific areas in which the Human Rights Commission has provided advice to the government of the province of Alberta on policy matters independent of legislative reform. I had asked you for information in terms of the current status of the summer institute under the auspices of the Cultural Diversity Institute, an up-to-date status report on the resource centre at the Cultural Diversity Institute and the other items I've identified. Then, Mr. Minister, I'm disappointed you didn't hear me ask for how many human rights panels in the 1999-2000 year to date. How many were referred by the director of the Human Rights Secretariat? How many were referred after an appeal to the chief commissioner? Those are the questions that I was asking.

3:50

Now, I said a moment ago, Mr. Minister, through the chair, that we'd been moving to a different level of public debate around same-sex benefits, but there's one holdover that I'd like you to address, and it's the fact that our Alberta Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act still does not explicitly include the words sexual orientation. If you take that statute and you shake it and you look upside down and you look between the lines and you look in the footnotes and you look in the margin notes, nowhere do the words sexual orientation appear. I know that you wouldn't agree that Albertans would have to pick up a 100-plus page Supreme Court of Canada decision from *Vriend and King's* college and have to go through all of that dense legal text to find out what their rights are.

So I'm wondering what your plans are for bringing forward an amendment so that every one of the 3 million people in this province who happen to pick up that statute will know that sexual orientation is covered. And if they're discriminated against in the areas of accommodation, in the areas of employment, in the areas of access to services customarily available to the public or advertising in one of those areas covered by the act, they want to be able to know, Mr. Minister, that that's a prescribed area of discrimination. Will you make that change? Will you make that change in the spring session? [interjection] Mr. Minister, *Hansard* has to record your voice, so would you please respond to that when you take to your feet after I'm finished.

Now, Mr. Minister, there have been three interesting studies done which have done some analysis and assessment on the work of the commission. I'm referring to the Human Rights Commission, and what I'm talking about, of course, is the communications, research, and assessment project. I had written you on this matter on February 3, 2000 – your office will have my correspondence – and you responded on March 2. I appreciate the response before we got to this stage. You said, and I quote: I do not involve myself in the operations of the commission; however, I know the commission is very interested in improving its business practices; the commission will be finalizing its business planning activities by April 1, 2000;

we'll be able to respond to your questions soon after that date. Well, I don't want to wait until after we've voted the estimates for the Department of Community Development to find out what changes are being made by the commission.

Now, the commission has been advised of needs in a number of different areas, and I'm just going to locate my notes in terms of what those changes are. But, Mr. Minister, there were a number of things that represented some problems. I'll just find that report here momentarily. Aah, here it is.

Mr. Minister, here are some of the concerns that were identified in that report. These are the people who did the communications assessment of your commission. They discovered that

members of complainant groups identified on the basis of race . . . gender, disability, age, marital status, source of income, family status, and sexual orientation, are not aware of, nor accessing the Commission in a way which is appropriately representative of the discrimination faced by these groups.

In other words, we're doing a lousy job in this province of being able to provide people who've experienced discrimination, particularly on the basis of colour or racial origin, with access to remedies. This is a serious problem.

Mr. Minister, I know you saw the same CBC investigative report that I did that identified problems with shortcomings in the work of the Alberta Human Rights Commission. When you saw this report, the communications needs assessment project, I would have thought you would have cleared that great big desk of yours off, taken that arm of yours and swept those things off the desk, put this foursquare in the middle of the desk and said: "There are vulnerable people in this province that are being denied access to the remedies under our human rights legislation. That's my first priority. There's nothing more important than making sure that people who are being denied access to accommodation or a job or access to a place customarily available to the public are able to get that access." I know you're sending me some signals that you don't want me to take literally, but I want you to tell me that you're assigning the kind of importance to it that I think Albertans would want to see assigned to it.

Mr. Minister, through the chair, the commission was found to have "some qualities and practices that appear to deter access, at the levels of service provision and information delivery." How can we have a Human Rights Commission that's deterring access? [interjection] Well, that was the assessment that was done.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: I don't accept it.

MR. DICKSON: Well, Mr. Minister, you told me in your letter of March 2 that you don't involve yourself in the commission, that you're waiting for the report of the Human Rights Commission sometime after April 1, 2000. Now you tell me you don't agree with the submissions in the communications needs assessment. I'd like you to go through the three reports that make up the communications needs assessment and tell me which recommendations you do not accept and which recommendations you do accept. For those recommendations you accept, tell me in concrete terms what remedial action you'll take in the year 2000-2001. Will you do that before we have to vote on your budget estimates?

There were other recommendations that were brought forward. There's a need to

raise the profile of the Commission, with the intent of supporting the message that discrimination is wrong and that human rights are important to all Albertans, by:

- a) improving the Commission's . . . well-received publications . . .
- b) better promoting the Commission, and
- c) disseminating information.

Now, there were findings by that communications needs assessment that many of the interviewees and focus group participants were "not aware of the Commission." They didn't know what the jurisdiction of the commission was, if they were aware of it, and if they were aware of it and they had some idea of jurisdiction, they didn't know what the complaints process was. Once again, Mr. Minister, I would have thought that if I'd seen this report, I'd be hopping to some remedial action.

4:00

You've been advised by the communications needs assessment that a lot of the people who were asked about the commission thought

many people interviewed and focus group participants would like the Commission to be more proactive in addressing and dealing with discrimination, particularly systemic discrimination, and human rights issues.

Where was the Human Rights Commission while this Legislature was debating Bill 12? Where was our Human Rights Commission when we were debating changes to the Insurance Act? I didn't hear the commission on the issue of foster parents, adoptions to same-sex couples. [Mr. Dickson's speaking time expired]

Mr. Chairman, so many more questions, but I'll be back. Thank you.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thought I'd start off with a couple of questions about the key performance measures. I was comparing the charts that appeared in last year's budget estimates with the charts that appear in this year's. The first chart on page 98 of the government and lottery fund estimates has a performance indicator that asks about "customer satisfaction with community development assistance provided." In last year's estimates the figures for 1996-97 indicated a satisfaction level of 97.5 percent, yet in this year's budget it says that the information is "not available." [interjection] Pardon me? Page 98: the top chart, the key performance measures, the client satisfaction. Similarly, for 1997-98 last year's book says that the satisfaction level was 95 percent and this year's budget book says that the information is "not available."

I wonder, Mr. Minister, if all of the figures are suspect in those performance measures, because in the next chart, Support to Sport and Recreation Activities and Impact of Support to Arts and Cultural Industries, the first measure, "percentage of the population participating in sport, recreation and physical activity" – and again there's 1996. I'm sorry; I've got the wrong one. It's the third one down, the second diamond, where you're looking at "the economic impact of the arts and cultural industries" in millions of dollars. In last year's it's indicated at \$300 million, and in this year's report for the same year it's indicated as \$285 million.

My question, Mr. Minister, would be: has there been some difficulty in transcribing the entries from one year to the other? Should we be checking them all to make sure that they have been appropriately entered? I suspect it's just a table that's been updated and the slip has occurred that way. Those are technical matters.

What I really wanted to dwell on this afternoon are the budget lines and the estimates that are concerned with seniors. The Alberta Council on Aging in their news for March and April of 2000, this month, reports on the recommendations that they brought forward through consultation that involved Community Development, members of your department, and there are a number of recommendations there. If my memory serves me correctly, some of these recommendations have been put forward in the past.

I would ask about the notion of what is a senior and how you define a senior. The suggestion from the Seniors' Shelter Cost Study was that a senior-specific market basket of basic needs, which reflects differences in rural and urban settings in terms of shelter costs and services and which would be reviewed regularly, would include things like yard maintenance and security and home insurance and transportation and other support services that seniors need, that that market basket be established and then used as a measure in determining income levels for seniors in terms of their access to the Alberta seniors' benefit and special-needs assistance for seniors.

So what they're asking for is a flexible measure that reflects the actual conditions that seniors are experiencing, and I think they would understand and we'd all understand that determining that market basket would be a useful exercise and, again, would probably result in seniors more likely getting the kinds of assistance they need and reflect the situations in which they live.

As you go through the performance objectives, I wonder if there are really performance objectives that you can hold your department responsible for. How realistic is it to hold the department responsible for the "economic impact of the arts and cultural industries" and the "cultural and economic impact of the new Alberta Film Development Program"? It seems to me that there are so many factors other than the action of your department that actually go into the success of those ventures. Is it really a true performance measure that should appear in budget documents?

Maybe we could consider some other measures that might be more meaningful to seniors. For instance, measures in the budget, the third chart on the bottom of page 98, talk about the

satisfaction of seniors with information provided by:

- Seniors Information Line
- Seniors Services Centres
- Programs for Seniors booklets.

The numbers there are very high. For 1998-99 they're all very high. They're 90-plus percent. Some of them approach the 100 percent level, and the 2000-01 targets are even higher.

Yet if you look at the recommendations that appear from the Seniors' Shelter Cost Study, seniors indicate that they're not getting "the right information at the right time." The recommendation they put forward is to

explore ways of simplifying programs and informing seniors about the services and benefits available, including ways to address language and cultural barriers and alternatives to written materials.

In order to ensure that seniors get the right information at the right time . . .

As I said, these glowing performances here, up in the 90s, don't seem to match what seniors are saying about the kinds of information they're receiving.

Now, maybe these specific items, when they are questioned about them, are reflected in these measures, but it would seem to me that a more important measure is the one that the seniors are carrying forward in their recommendation, and that's asking broad ranges of seniors: are you receiving the right information at the right time? Because evidently this study indicates there's grave concern that that's not happening.

With respect to that, I wonder if the minister might comment on the provision of materials that help remove cultural and language barriers. For those seniors in Mill Woods this is a particular problem. We have, for instance, cultural groups where the females have not been outside the home, something happens to the male member of the family, and these females are faced with not knowing the language, often not really having any idea of where to turn for assistance, and it's a very large problem for some families. I know that a number of cultural groups have put in place programs of their

own to try to alleviate the problem, but again the material has to be in a format and in a language that is available to groups that are living in these situations.

4:10

One other recommendation is that there be increased support to “community-based programs such as Family and Community Support Services and non-profit groups that supply Meals on Wheels” and the need by a number of seniors in lower income groups for handyman and housework services and the need for home care services to be expanded to include personal care and home support. Again, the notion is trying to keep seniors in their own apartments or their own homes as long as possible and not forcing them out to centres where it certainly costs more to keep them and where they’re certainly, and most importantly, not as happy as they are living independently. So I would ask: how do you determine that what you are providing is appropriate for those seniors?

One of the most disturbing parts of the report is one that was referenced earlier this afternoon by the Member for Calgary-West. In the Member for Calgary-West’s statement she made reference to fear among seniors in particular. I don’t have a copy of the statement in front of me, Mr. Chairman, but if I recall what she said, there was a great deal of fear among seniors about health care and the concern that the debate over the private hospitals act was raising that fear.

If you look at the recommendations brought forward from the study group, they specifically talk about fear among seniors, and they indicated that it’s “a significant theme.” Emerging from the study was that there’s fear among seniors about the future. They were fearful that although they were coping today, increasing utility rates – that is, the cost of telephones, gas, water, and electricity – increasing taxes, having to pay more and more user fees and increasing health care services “would erode their savings and place them in a vulnerable position.”

So the Member for Calgary-West was right, according to this study. Seniors are living in fear. They’re concerned about what’s happening to them. They feel powerless in many cases to control what’s happening to the revenues they have and the expenses they must pay.

I know it would be very difficult, but if it’s a significant theme among seniors, I wonder if that’s not something the department should address and that somehow or other it should be reflected in either a performance measure or some indication in these materials that seniors are worried. That’s not all a result of the work of the opposition in the Legislature. This reflects the kinds of conditions under which they live.

I didn’t want to conclude my remarks without talking about seniors’ centres and their need for operational funding. I’ve had some experience with this with my mother-in-law and the centre in Wetaskiwin and how valuable that centre is and how difficult it is, not particularly in that centre but in all of the centres, to have operational funding or raise operational funds. So the suggestion that the ministry supply \$100 per senior per year or some specific financing plan so that seniors can stay in their home . . .

I know that my mother-in-law looked forward to going down to the centre, talking to the people there. The services out of the centre were those that she drew upon, and she stayed in her own home until she was in her early 90s, 92 before she was moved out. That was in part because there were those support services, and certainly the seniors’ centre was part of those services that she could draw upon. It’s much more expensive, we know as a family, to pay for her now that she’s no longer in her home, to house her in a facility that is paid for by the government. I think that’s a serious concern that has to be addressed.

The study brings forward a lot of good ideas, and there are going

to be further recommendations in the future. You get quite a different picture of seniors from the study and the things they recommend than from the kinds of glowing performance measures that we see in the ministry’s budget estimates. I wouldn’t mind the minister being able to comment on that.

Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: The hon. minister.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I’ll address some of the comments made by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods first off. I would say that all of us in this House, on both sides, have an obligation to seniors to ensure that they do not live in fear, because quite frankly they need not live in fear. What the Member for Calgary-West I think was referring to in a way was the fear mongering that comes out of this place for the crass purpose of political points that are extremely inappropriate. I would say to the hon. member that his observations I would have to agree more or less with.

Now, one of the first questions was: what is a senior? Well, I guess we’ll have variable things depending upon who defines it. If you have a private seniors’ condominium complex, they will have one age level, and if you have people who give discounts, if you will, they will have maybe another age level. For the purposes of the seniors’ benefit program a senior that is eligible for the program per se is somebody who has turned 65 and the income level is such that they qualify. So that’s one definition that we have to use for this.

The market basket of needs concept I quite frankly do have a lot of empathy for. If you take the cost of living, let’s say, in Fort McMurray and compare it to Edmonton or compare it to another community, it varies. The problem that we have is: how do you take and start administering the number of variables? Currently we’re working on streamlining a number of variables within the existing program to get it forward first.

4:20

However, having said that, I think we should be very, very aware that the special-needs program is just what it says. The intent, like you have indicated and that we certainly on this side and I as minister subscribe to, is the aging-in-place concept. That program covers a host of items. It’s been, if you will, virtually anything that could be identified that is essential for that senior’s well-being. I’m very pleased with the program, and I get a continued positive response on it. It’s one that I’m sure you would support.

If you look in the budget, we’ve virtually doubled it from one year to the next. That doesn’t indicate anything other than the fact that our communication with seniors has improved to the point where people are becoming more and more aware. That’s where the demand is. It’s not a sudden decline in their economic status. It is an awareness of the program being there and their accessing it more and more. Quite frankly, that’s there to help the people on the bottom line. We aren’t totally impervious to the fact that there are different ethnic groups and seniors out there, and because of an inability to communicate for whatever reason, we certainly wouldn’t want those kinds of folks to drop through the cracks.

One of the things that we’ve found – and you alluded to this in your own personal situation – is that the best advocates for seniors are usually their family members. If they don’t have any, then usually it goes to the seniors’ groups. I’ll point out a letter I received from – I don’t know if you are familiar with the Seniors Outreach Network Society in Edmonton. Their mandate goes on to say:

The Seniors Outreach Network Society provides in-home services to isolated seniors residing within the City of Edmonton. These services include information, referral and advocacy, together with

crisis intervention. In addition, when appropriate and available, volunteers visit isolated seniors on a weekly basis to socialize and provide support.

This is a very good organization. They go one step further. I'll leave the name out. "On behalf of . . . please accept our grateful thanks for the funding received under the Seniors Special Needs Benefit."

Now, this wasn't an MLA. This wasn't a family member. This was this group that guided this senior forward to the department to get support. I obviously wasn't even aware of it until such time as this letter came. It goes on to state how wonderful the support was in terms of improving the particular individual's quality of life. Those are good things, and those are the kinds of organizations that we want to work with.

The Alberta Council on Aging has been a rather vocal advocacy group over the years, and quite frankly I've met with them on quite a few occasions and will continue to do so. They do have some good observations, but you know as well as anybody that we can't just automatically implement every recommendation that comes. There are some that we may want to but are not able to.

The bottom line quite simply is that we have taken the initiative to address the seniors on the lower end of the scale. We are doing that very, very well, not just through the programs. We keep referring to the special needs and the seniors' benefit. We have a lot of other programs. I'll just refer to, for example, the senior citizens' lodge program. That one in its own right is fairly pricey in terms of cost to the government, but then it's there for the people who, if you will, can't afford accommodation at an acceptable level, so we somehow or other try to provide it. I don't think that's being irresponsible. These are low-end seniors in these lodges.

We have another program called the unique homes assistance program, which we are going to be looking at to see if we can expand that somehow to ensure that aging in place remains or, if it can, expands, if you will. We work with a good number of housing authorities that have the social housing. A good number of these people are independent seniors who are subsidized through that category. So when people come and they just finger a particular aspect and say, "Bingo; you're all terrible," I really have difficulty accepting that.

With respect to access to the health care system, I think you know as well as I that there is unimpeded access for everybody to the health care system, period. I will repeat that. There is unimpeded access to the health care system, period. That is a fact of life. Maybe when we get into elective surgeries and whatnot, there may in fact be waiting lists. There are waiting lists; I am personally aware of that. However, to sit and say that any person, let alone a senior, in this province won't get medical care when they need it is an absolute falsehood and unacceptable, period. [interjections]

You can wave whatever book you want, but you bring to me one person who's a citizen of this province, whether or not they have a health care card, who can't get health care service and you and I will be very, very surprised. [interjections] Bring them in here. To my office, anywhere. I would like some of this nonsense to stop. Let's get on the same wavelength and start working together to promote the programs we have.

MS LEIBOVICI: A point of order.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: A point of order has been called.

#### **Point of Order Questioning a Member**

MS LEIBOVICI: Will the member answer a question, please?

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: There's no citation.

MS LEIBOVICI: What is a question under? *Beauchesne* something or other.

MR. WOLOSHYN: No. When your turn comes, which we have lots of time for, I'm sure you'll have not one but many for me.

#### **Debate Continued**

MR. WOLOSHYN: But I really mean that, and as I indicated in previous estimates, we have an obligation in this House as MLAs and as individuals to help

DR. MASSEY: You have an obligation to listen.

MR. WOLOSHYN: I am listening and I am doing, and if you look at the track record in the last few months that I've been minister, the ASB has gone up, the special-needs have gone up, the housing has gone up. [interjections] Hey. And I trust you'll support us.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister, could we please go through the chair. Will you please go through the chair.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Oh, I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman. I had my fixation over there for some strange reason.

For the edification of all members, Mr. Chairman, we will in due course circulate an accurate, factual comparison of the benefits that seniors receive in this province compared to the rest of the country. I hope they will read and respect that also, and if there's any way that we can improve it, we will.

Mr. Chairman, I trust I've addressed some of the concerns of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Getting on to a few of the comments from the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, I rather enjoyed your dissertation and your floating all over the place. It was rather neat, and I expect some more floating around.

[Mrs. Gordon in the chair]

However, I will say this to you, hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo. Alberta has equal protection for all Albertans, period, and it's accessible, period. [interjections] You want me to write it on the wall? Give me a piece of chalk. If you need that to understand it, I'll even do that for you.

MS BLAKEMAN: Do it in the legislation. If you want to write it on the wall, put it on paper.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Heaven help me. What more can we do? On one hand you say: go at arm's length. On the other hand you say: do this. Well, what do you want me to do? We have good legislation. It's appropriate. It's used. It's accessed. It's supported. I don't know what you're beefing about.

Now, the Member for Calgary-Buffalo was going on about advice to the minister and my advice to the government on the legislation and so on and so forth. There's a process wherein these things come out in due course if and when it's needed.

I'll answer one question that was very specific to this – and I'll go on to a couple more – with reference to a \$250,000 five-year program grant, I think it was, to the University of Calgary. Quite frankly, we don't get into the governance of that, so you'd have to talk to them about it.

With respect to the summer institute, we'll get back to you when we get details on that, because quite frankly I don't know.

Going on a little bit more with the human rights per se, if you look at some of the documents you have in your possession, you will see that the percentage of Albertans who believe human rights are fairly well or very well protected in Alberta is up around the 80-plus percentage mark, and that's pretty darn good.

MS BLAKEMAN: That's a telephone poll. What about people who went there?

MR. WOLOSHYN: The people that went there are happier than ever, because most of them got their concerns addressed.

4:30

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister and Edmonton-Centre, please, through the chair.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Well, tell her to move over there. Madam Chairman, my apologies again.

I would say that we are very conscious of the human rights issue. We're very supportive of fairness for all. We're going to continue on that route, and I think you will find that as time goes on, the view of the commission by Albertans and the acceptability of the level of their performance will continue to rise. We're hoping to get that as close to the 90 to 100 percent category as possible.

As you pointed out in the budget, we do support the Cultural Diversity Institute in Calgary, and we're doing that through meaningful dollars and no interference. We will be working on it to see if there are kinds of things, strategies, we can do with the commission, and in due course, if and when it's appropriate, that will be brought forward. We do want to continue with the education component on the human rights end of things. Quite frankly, we want to collaborate with other jurisdictions to support the initiatives by the various ministers there. So we're working on it, and I think that if you stepped back and weren't looking for questions to the ministry, you would be quite proud of the way the Human Rights Commission in Alberta functions and operates.

With that, I'll take my place and let the members have some more shots – I mean questions.

MR. DICKSON: Madam Chairman, Mr. Minister, thank you for your comments, but there are a couple of things I'd just say. Let me start off by saying . . . [interjections]

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has the floor.

MR. DICKSON: I'm sorry, Madam Chairman. I have a lot of colleagues who are anxious to make some comment.

As the critic for the Human Rights Commission there are just a couple of points I wanted to make. Firstly, the key performance measure on page 99, "Satisfaction of Albertans with Human Rights Protection," is next to worthless. It is absolutely next to worthless. Most of the 3 million people that live in this province will never have occasion to require redress and a remedy through the human rights machinery.

The more important thing, Mr. Minister, is if you will look at what's been done with your own focus groups. If you look at the focus groups when they have done surveys – and that's been done as part of the communications needs assessment – the people who routinely experience discrimination are telling you that they don't know about the commission, they don't know how to access the

commission, they don't know what the jurisdiction is of the commission. So that tells me there's a problem. That tells me there's a problem, and this nonsense on page 99, "Percentage of Albertans who believe human rights are fairly well . . . protected," probably for the most part are part of a comfortable majority that may never have experienced firsthand discrimination. So that doesn't cut it.

Mr. Minister, would you tell us this. Every time Canada is a signatory to an international convention – for example, the U.N. convention on the rights of the child – there is a requirement that states: have to file compliance documentation. I'd like to know what the province of Alberta has done in the last 12-month period in terms of what advice, input, reports you've given the government of Canada for them to be able to file their compliance documentation. Whether it's the U.N. convention against racial discrimination, the U.N. convention on the rights of the child, or the U.N. convention on gender equality, those things, I'd like to know what input has come from the province to deal with those.

Now, Mr. Minister, I had asked you last year about what happened to that study that had been done, a survey of children in grade 8 and grade 11 to assess tolerance in this province. You had said to me last March:

This is an excellent suggestion. I have reviewed the original 1993 survey, which was undertaken by Alberta Education. I am quite interested in possibly pursuing an update, as you suggest. I will explore the idea further with the Minister of Education.

MR. WOLOSHYN: I wasn't in there in March.

MR. DICKSON: I'm sorry. It was the then minister. I'm sorry, Mr. Minister.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Right. Don't even listen to him. I didn't do it.

MR. DICKSON: I've taken the position that this is successor rights, Madam Chairman.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Oh, okay. Fair enough.

MR. DICKSON: When I get a representation from the minister . . .

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Excuse me, hon. member. Through the chair, please.

MR. DICKSON: Yes. Madam Chairman, to the minister through the chair, I assume that when a representation is made by a previous minister, that indication is going to be followed up by the successor minister unless there's some good reason. So, Mr. Minister, when you look at that letter, tell me if you agree with your predecessor that there's some merit in looking at that survey. It's important that we know what we're dealing with, and that would be far, far more useful than doing this kind of a vacuous survey of people generally in the province. If you can tell us about that, I'd be grateful.

The other item, sir, is just if you would go through each of the recommendations in the communications needs assessment and advise me now, as I said, which ones you accept, which ones you reject, and for the ones you accept, what you're going to do about it and when you're going to do it.

Mr. Minister, the other observation I wanted to make had to do with the housing. You're talking about putting \$3 million into homelessness. You're the lead ministry in terms of dealing with homelessness. I haven't heard what your concrete plans are. You're going to provide \$3 million for community-based homeless initiatives. Well, when I talk to people with the Calgary housing

authority, the Calgary homeless authority, there's still some considerable degree of frustration. You provided the digs at McDougall Centre for use of the Calgary Homeless Foundation; thank you. You've provided some nonpecuniary kinds of supports, but I'd like for you to outline the terms of reference. What's the matrix you're going to use when you receive those applications for funding from Calgary groups dealing with an acute homeless and affordable housing problem?

Mr. Minister, I might just ask this. I think we have another \$1.2 million going into the human rights, citizenship, and multiculturalism education fund. I think that's the number. Before we have to vote on these estimates, will you provide me with a list of those groups that have received funding in the last 12 months under that fund? Would you also provide me with the list that have formally applied for funding and been declined funding?

I know there are many other colleagues that wish to speak, so I look forward to your responses. Thank you very much.

MR. WOLOSCHYN: Just a couple of comments that I want to make in return. I think in fairness all surveys have merit. Very few surveys can be accepted in total. Certainly I don't care who the author is of reports, surveys, whatever you have. If you present them, we do have a look at them, because very frequently we get some very good ideas. Even from time to time from the Member for Calgary-Buffalo we get some good ideas.

You made some references to tolerance and understanding and human rights, and I think you should know my background a little bit better before you take that shot at me, hon. member. Because when the Ghitter commission, the Committee on Tolerance and Understanding, was going around with your former colleague in the House, I was the principal of a school called Kitaskinaw on the Enoch Indian reserve that was written up in that report as an exemplary example of tolerance and understanding. So when you come at me personally on that bent, boy, you're heading down the wrong rail, so I'd switch real quick.

MS BLAKEMAN: Well, you can understand then.

MR. WOLOSCHYN: You bet I understand. Been there, done that, and will continue doing it, and it's not a problem for me to address it. There are a lot of ways, in schools, outside of schools, and that is a very fundamental thing. We should have more of that in here, and we'd have more fruitful debates.

With respect to your request for the groups that have received money from that fund, the answer I can tell you is that, yes, I'll give you that list. The ones who were declined, I may not give you that one. I'll have to give some thought to that, but I think you want an honest answer as opposed to an empty promise. So part A you will get; part B I'll have to think about.

With respect to the homeless issue, I know that's one that has a very high priority. I think one of the things you missed on that is that I believe this is the first budget since you've been in this House and since I've been in this House where there is an actual budget line directed at homelessness. That was by no accident. That was done through the hard work of the people that we have in the department now, and I'll let you know there was some rearranging. We came through with a policy on it regarding that. We feel that figure is a good starting point.

4:40

Your question as to how it is going to be spent I think is a very good one. We're working on some mechanisms where it will hopefully be easy to access and administer and the money will go

straight to where it's needed. Our hope is to work in collaboration with people like the Calgary Homeless Foundation, because they're the ones who have had the hands-on and they would be the ones who would be making the decisions on how and where this money would be going, with an accountability back to us that in fact it was used for the intended purpose. We'll do that in Edmonton, we'll do that in Calgary, and we'll look at the rest of the province. That question I think is a very good one, and whether the \$3 million will be adequate or not I have no idea, but certainly if we can get something going there.

The other part that I think we should really identify here is the Hon. Claudette Bradshaw, federal Minister of Labour. I did have a very, very good meeting with her. I think you're going to find as time goes on that there is going to be a very positive and close working relationship between the federal government, the local folks involved with the issue, and the provincial government. We've got our officials on the two governments levels. They have been communicating for quite some time now. I've got assurances from the minister that she is going to work with us in terms of the communication. We decided on this in the meeting I had, and I certainly have no reason to doubt her.

The programs that we are going to work on are going to be complementary. They may or may not be hitting at the same groups, but they're going to be complementary, and we're not going to get intertwined into these trigger programs where you give 50 cents, I give 50 cents, and we try and figure out what to do with it. So I'm quite enthused over what can be coming out of there. As you well know, there were figures announced, and we'll see what happens when they come out. I certainly won't make any negative comments about it because I'm quite hopeful – and I believe in her sincerity – that when some time passes and we're able to address the problem properly, there will be hopefully a good, significant amount of money coming out of the federal coffers to complement what we're doing here.

As you are well aware, the definition of the homeless – most people look at homeless folk as just the so-called mat people, the overnights. Well, that problem goes far beyond that. What we're trying to do within Community Development is get involved with other ministries who are involved with these folks also. Our goal is not only to provide appropriate shelter on an interim basis but to provide them with the tools to become, if you will, self-sufficient and able to provide for themselves. So it's a broader program than just a roof over their head. That doesn't happen like that. We've just got some good starts on it, and if you are interested, I could forward the policy to you at some point, and if you have some observations on how to improve it, I certainly would be more than willing to look at that. Those are the kinds of things that we're trying to get going there, and as you can appreciate, there's also a lot of other stuff.

With respect to your comments on the performance measures, you know, it's very difficult. You have to be careful that you don't spend more time measuring a program than you do delivering it. With the comments that you're making here today, my staff will be going through *Hansard* and picking out – and if there are areas where we can look to adjust how we do this performance measure, certainly we're going to. But again I stress to you that I would rather be a little bit off on my measure, if you will, than exhaust so much time doing it that you forget about what you're there for in the first place. It's trying to do the balancing act of having the accountability, and certainly as minister I'm extremely concerned that the lines we have in the budget are accounted for properly.

As you and some of your colleagues indicated, it is extremely difficult. How much of an impact does the budget of the Foundation for the Arts have? The best we can have is a pretty good guess, largely derived from a lot of those folks.

We implemented, as you know, the support program for the motion picture industry, putting it partially back in. That industry tells me that it's levered out fantastic numbers of dollars. I quite frankly don't know how accurate that is, but I would say: okay; fair enough; I'll accept your word on it. I'm certainly not going to expend resources to try and verify it, because you know how long that would take and what we'd have out of it.

So with that, I'll take my place again and let some of your colleagues or my colleagues who have questions to pursue.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I want to take a few minutes and leave some time for the Member for Edmonton-Centre to add some remarks on the Community Development budget. First of all, I want to go to the document and ask some specific questions. If the minister can't answer me today, that's fine. I'm sure he'll send me the response in writing, because they are specific questions. If they've been asked before, I apologize ahead of time. I may have missed certain aspects because this is a carryover from a previous evening.

Now, when I look at page 87, under ministry support services I see an increase from \$7,515,000 last year to \$8,669,000. That's a vast, vast increase. In community services I see a decrease from \$39,376,000 to \$32,731,000, which is a decrease of \$7 million. When I look at cultural facilities and historical resources, I see a bump there of close to \$4 million. Those are the types of questions that I'm asking for specific answers to at an appropriate time.

What I find very, very distressing is when I go to down to program 5. Special purpose housing previously, in the prior year, spent \$83,140,000. There's a decline in this fiscal period to \$82,557,000 – a decline – in the area of special purpose housing, which is so dramatically needed at this particular time, a view shared by other levels of government.

I flip the page. I look at program 1.0.3, finance and administration, operating expense. An increase from a little over \$6 million to over \$7 million. An increase of over \$1 million, which represents – what? – an 18 percent increase in operating expense for finance and administration.

I flip over to the next page: program 2.1.2, arts and libraries. Again, a very, very valued service throughout the communities in Alberta. I've always maintained myself that if one utilizes the libraries properly, from a family point of view you can almost get your municipal tax dollars back. Yet we see a decrease, a decrease in that very, very valued category of programs within the budget.

Then I flip the page, and I see in program 3.0.1, program support – now, there has to be some rationale to this one – from \$449,000 to \$2,195,000 in program support. Does that mean direct support for the programs, or is that the administrative costs involved in directing programs? Possibly that one is legitimate in that those dollars may be all going to community programs. If so, then that's a different story.

Again I look at the next page, and I see 4.1.1, program support, operating expenses: from \$807,000 to \$1,084,000, an increase of over \$200,000, which would reflect roughly a 26, 27 percent increase. That to me appears to be an administrative cost, when we talk in terms of operating expense for program support.

I go to the next page, program 5, special purpose housing, where some of these areas are broken down. Special purpose housing operations: a decrease from \$4.5 million to \$3.8 million. I go down further. The special purpose housing registries grants: frozen, no increase. Home adaptation, the HAP: no increase. Possibly the

demand isn't there to justify an increase, but I hope there are sufficient dollars there to keep up with the demand because that's a program that is needed. Rent supplement: down from \$13 million to a little over \$11 million, a decrease of \$2 million. I look at assistance to the Alberta Social Housing Corporation: again an instance of a decrease of a million dollars. So it appears to me that it's fairly consistent.

When I look through the budget, we see increases, vast increases in programs that seem to identify with administrative costs, the ministry administration and so on and so forth, yet those valued programs like arts, libraries, and special housing are being decreased, and that I have a very, very difficult time with. I myself have been involved in some affordable housing, flex-housing, barrier-free and such projects with my son, who's an architect, and I kind of realize from a firsthand point of view just how desperately that type of housing is needed out there.

4:50

I want to now make some general comments, Madam Chairman. Last night you were in the chair when we were quizzing the budget of the Premier's office, Executive Council to be exact. One of the areas I brought up was that in less than five years we will initiate the beginning of the celebrations of the year 2005, the centennial of the province of Alberta, recognizing the century since the province was legitimized from a legal point of view. I quizzed the Premier, reminded him that 50 years ago we built two auditoriums as a legacy to the 50 years. Now this is a hundred years. The Premier at that time indicated that you were involved in this and you would be coming forward with recommendations in the next short period of time outlining what areas of legacies would be left behind.

I could maybe suggest the extension of the LRT to Heritage Mall. That would serve my constituency, but I'm not sure that's an appropriate use. It has to be something that benefits the province as a whole, and it has to be something that is a legacy, that people will remember, just like I'm making reference to something that happened 50 years ago. Even though I was a fairly young pup back then, I can recall when I came to Alberta that facility in Edmonton in particular and numbers of people telling me why it was built. It was remembered for years and years why that auditorium and the one in Calgary were built, because of the 50 years, so I would hope the minister would come up with something really, really appropriate.

Under seniors the budget made reference, of course, to the 10 percent increase in the seniors' benefit cash benefit. The average amount per month is \$100, so the increase works out to a very, very insignificant amount of dollars in terms of the expenditures that seniors face in terms of increased utilities, transportation costs, gas costs for those that are fortunate enough to drive their own vehicles, food, et cetera, et cetera.

Special-needs benefits, emergency funding. Now, the former minister stood here in the House one day and she told us this story about some person in one of the rural communities needing a new furnace because the furnace had gone out. And within two hours – I found this difficult to comprehend, but I have a lot of respect for the former minister, and I'm sure she would not intentionally mislead the House. This must have been an exceptional case, but a new furnace was installed within two hours. It was all functional, the senior was happy, and it was done in the middle of winter. If that's the case, if that's the way we're responding with this emergency funding, I think that is absolutely great, but that's not what I'm hearing from my constituents in terms of their applications, at least some of them. I'm hearing that a good portion of them are denied and that it doesn't happen in a matter of two hours that you're approved or disapproved.



So I'd like the minister to explain exactly how that emergency funding program is now working, what percentage of applicants are being approved, how long the process is from the time of initiation or receipt of the application to resolving the concern, fixing the problem in other words, and how that one could have taken place in two hours. Again, I don't know if a phone call was made and then somebody there made another phone call and just accepted the person's word on the phone. Again, I just have some problems with that. I know the intent is good, and it sounds marvelous. If that's the case, I applaud the ministry for conducting affairs in that manner.

Multiculturalism. I'm not going to dwell on multiculturalism. I just recognize it as one of the most important functions of the province of Alberta and throughout Canada. It's a symbol of the diversity of the country, a recognition of the contributions made by multiculturalism in terms of immigrants coming to this country and building Canada, building Alberta, and we can never lose sight of that.

Last fall when we debated Bill 38, that would have allowed for the – what's it called in the Constitution? That to me was a negative reflection on multiculturalism as well as on other minorities. Anything like that I find extremely distasteful, and I am really, really glad to see that that bill died on the Order Paper. So I don't want to see the government getting into areas where they're casting a negative light on multiculturalism. It's too important an aspect in the way of life in Alberta and Canada.

I've spoken for libraries, so I'm not going to stress any more requirements for libraries except reinforce what I said earlier. Libraries are greatly valued throughout the province.

The 2001 games is referred to under the minister's portfolio. Events like the 2001 games and the same with the Universiade games, which I participated in as a spectator, being involved and being a councillor at the time, and also the Commonwealth Games – the two were held during my terms of office at city hall. They left behind legacies in terms of the Commonwealth Stadium, in terms of other facilities throughout the city, the improvement to the Kinsmen field house, and so on and so forth. That's the benefit of major events, international events like the 2001 track and field, and the fact that the three levels of government are participating in terms of funding and such is great.

Arts and culture. The former speakers have touched on it. The Member for Edmonton-Centre has spoken many times and filed countless letters from those involved in the arts community requesting additional funding. We always have to bear in mind – I learned this at city hall – that arts is not an expenditure. Arts is an investment when we look at the major arts events, the Fringe and the various festivals that are held during the summer in particular, at what they do to the economy, the benefits they bring in terms of increased capacity in the hotels, visitors to the city, the international reputation that Edmonton has now gotten as the cultural centre of Canada. The base funding for these arts and cultural groups unfortunately has been frozen since the late '80s, and that is very, very unfortunate.

Now, just one more area and then I'm going to turn it over to my colleague from Edmonton-Centre. Just one more area, and that's the reference to lottery funds being used for programs like the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, the Wild Rose Foundation, and the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation. Let me just say that the lottery dollars that are there – and even prior to the dreaded VLTs we always had sufficient lottery dollars to support those types of programs, and that's a good expenditure of those types of lottery dollars from the scratch-and-win, the 6/49, and such. Even with the VLTs we could continue to financially support those programs. They are beneficial to the community because they do comply with

the recommendation from the gaming summit to put that money directly into the community in terms of community services and community support groups.

The Wild Rose Foundation, for example, is one that I have repeatedly heard good comments about. Under the chairmanship of Krishan Joshee it fills an opportunity where groups fall between the cracks. They can't get funding here, they can't get funding there, but they can go to the Wild Rose Foundation. So that's great.

So, Mr. Minister, on that note I'm going to conclude. I would ask that for those questions he doesn't respond to today, he would respond to in writing. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Thank you. I will follow your suggestion, hon. member, and try and get you written answers to a lot of the specific budget lines. That would probably be a better way of doing it.

You made reference to the centennial coming up in 2005. Your information is correct. This minister and ministry is responsible for putting that activity together. You'll notice, I believe, that we have some \$600,000 in the budget to get started on it. We will be coming forward fairly soon with guidelines and criteria and our views of how the event should be going. I think that when you see that, hopefully you will be quite pleased with what you have there.

5:00

You identified the concern of time with respect to having special-needs applications processed. Your observations are correct. They were taking too long. I believe by April or May we will be properly caught up. We're working on that, have more staff in place. There are a variety of reasons why that happened, which I won't go into. One of the major ones was a sudden surge of applications. However, they're not all the same, as you observe, too. If there is an emergency, as you indicated, yes, a phone call could get it done. We're talking about your furnace going down; that is an emergency. There is no other way around it.

The other aspect. For example, when people apply for various things, sometimes you want, if you will, estimates on work; for example, dental work and things of that sort. That could take some time. Very frequently there is insufficient information. There is turnaround, and the staff in that particular end do a very, very good job. But I hope that by April, May, in there somewhere, we will have a quicker turnaround time. That's our goal, in any event. So that one I do have to say that you've observed that quite accurately.

The reference to the 2001 games. Yes, as I represent the government on that particular committee and our department does dispense the funds with it, you'll see a \$9 million variation on one of the programs because of the way it's being paid out. It's not flying out the window or a big windfall. It's the payment schedule on it. As you know or may not know, there is \$40 million that the province contributed to the process. The federal government has contributed \$35 million plus \$5 million to make a total of \$80 million. The rest: a large amount of that is goods in kind from the city and then whatever the games committee feels they can take in revenues, for some, let's say, \$115 to \$120 million overall budget.

I think you're very right: the spin-off of that to the city and the area and to the province and to the country indeed is going to be quite remarkable. There are I don't know exactly how many countries involved, but it's probably around the 150 mark. It'll be worldwide. It's a class event. Edmonton will be put on the map in a very, very positive light, and something that I think not enough people in this area appreciate is that there's a \$40 million grant to do

it. That has a real good spin-off, and hopefully when we get past some of the little disagreements, nuances – whether the track should be here, there, or elsewhere – there will be some form of legacy that we can be proud of at the end of the day that's left there. Those, as I understand it, are coming along well.

The library funding. There are variations there why it went up and down, whatnot. One of the areas that we will be addressing this coming year is the method of calculating the basis of the funding on a per capita, and we're going to be taking that through the process.

With respect to your comments on the lottery funding and more money for the foundations, I appreciate that support. We want that, I think, as you do. We know that all the four foundations we have do rather an exemplary job within their guidelines, and I'm very pleased with the outcomes of them. You're absolutely right: the comments coming back from all of those foundations are very, very positive. Would I like more money in them? Yes. Could we use more money in them? Yes. Will we get more money in them? I don't know. On that and the rest we'll sort of pick up and try and give you the specific answers to your questions, hon. member.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I just wanted to make a few comments. I heard the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford talk about the importance of the arts, and I just want to share with you an experience. In fact, I think the Minister of Community Development and perhaps even the Minister of Economic Development might have an interest in this.

I had the honour of spending six days at our jewel in the Rockies, the Banff school of fine arts, which is truly a United Nations of culture and art. The conference that I attended there was on multimedia, the development of multimedia content for education and for games and for all of the computer multimedia things.

There were people there from all over the world: people from Australia, from Europe, from the United States, and from Canada. One of the things I discovered is that there were people there that manufacture games, you know, that kids play on their computers. They discovered that if they had nothing but programmers building these games, the kids were not all that interested, but if they had artists, musicians, graphic artists, painters, and so on involved in the development of this thing, then the kids really enjoyed the games and played them, and it involved their soul.

So I think the importance that the hon. member has spoken of with respect to the arts is going much beyond what we have expected it to be, because now we're finding that in the area of the knowledge industry, the content industry the role of artists is becoming much, much larger.

I just wanted to share that with you and support what the hon. member was saying about the arts. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. I hope I don't run out of time. I've certainly got a number of other things I'd like to bring up. The first, actually, is following on the comments raised by the members for Edmonton-Rutherford and Calgary-Egmont about funding for the arts. I'd actually received an e-mail asking me to enquire whether the minister had received any request or advice from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts board requesting more money on behalf of grants for arts organizations.

I guess I would also ask if the minister had seen the numbers of letters that I have tabled here in the House from citizens in both Edmonton and Calgary writing to their local members urging the government to increase the funding to the arts.

As well, I'm aware that the Edmonton Arts Council, a very respected group here, has met with both the capital regional caucus and with the minister himself, I think, asking for an increase in that funding. So there's lots of support for the increase in funding. I'm encouraging the minister to please follow through on this. We have not seen any substantive increase in funding to the arts for a considerably long time, and there's been a lot of moving money around back and forth between different departments. There's been FTEs lost through the arts sector to other areas in Community Development.

As I've pointed out before, there's been programs added into that and money brought in with it, but that was not an increase to the rest of that sector. Essentially, those groups are operating on the funding from the late '80s, and it's been frozen more or less at that amount. When you take into account inflation, they are very far behind.

In conjunction with that and around the conversations around funding for the games, once again I encourage the minister that if the government is putting in money for the games and there is a significant cultural component, there should also be money going in to support that cultural component and not just sort of chipping off a couple of grand off of what's going into the games themselves, but there should be support for the cultural component of those games. As the Member for Calgary-Egmont has pointed out, that's a big draw for people, and being involved with the way arts and culture and festivals are presented, it's a big draw for people coming to those games. It's a big draw on educational components now, and they need the support.

I note that in a document produced by the government itself – and I don't think it needs tabling; I'm sure it's been tabled – Alberta Economic Development: Highlights of the Alberta Economy, there's an entire page devoted to arts and culture, in which the wonderfulness of the sector is being extolled to all. So the government is aware of the value of the arts and cultural sector not only in its economic rejuvenation but the vibrancy it creates in a community, the reduction that we've seen in vandalism and crime in areas that have high cultural components. There's a lot to be said there.

5:10

On to a couple of other things. The key performance indicators. I'll refer you to page 98. One of my colleagues, the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, has already raised some inconsistencies between numbers that were presented for past years in last year's budget estimates and those numbers not appearing or being different when they are brought forward into this year's estimate books. I won't go over all of that again, but I will question the minister about the usefulness of the key performance measures. Once again I encourage the minister, as I have before, to work with the staff from the Auditor General's department to develop key performance measurements that are more useful in actually measuring what we're trying to achieve here.

I look at things like: "Percentage of funding to arts and cultural groups provided by the private sector." That's a key performance measurement for arts and cultural development in Alberta. How much money they raise through the private sector doesn't tell us a darned thing about whether we're being successful in supporting the arts. It says how good they are at raising private funds but nothing about the government's involvement and support for the arts.

In a couple of other areas I think the same sort of questions can be raised. The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo raised questions about

the KPI for human rights. I look at the KPI about Alberta's diverse natural, historical, and cultural resources, and we've got "visitation at provincial historic sites" and whether they're satisfied.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I hesitate to interrupt you, but under Standing Order 19(1)(c) I must ask that we now adjourn debate and rise and report so that we can deal with the Speech from the Throne.

MS BLAKEMAN: I understand, Madam Chairman, and I shall submit the rest of my remarks to the minister in writing.

Thank you.

I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. HAVELOCK: Thank you. I'd like to move that the committee do now rise and report progress, Madam Chairman.

[Motion carried]

[Mrs. Gordon in the chair]

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions of the Department of Community Development for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2001, reports progress thereon, and requests leave to sit again.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Opposed? So ordered.

head: Consideration of Her Honour  
the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Under Standing Order 19(1)(c) I must now put the question on the following motion relative to consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's speech on the motion as proposed by the hon. Member for Airdrie-Rocky View and seconded by the hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan.

Ms Haley moved:

That an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

To Her Honour the Honourable Lois E. Hole, CM, 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 you, Your Honour, for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

[Adjourned debate March 1: Ms Leibovici]

[Motion carried]

head: Government Motions

#### **Address in Reply to Throne Speech**

16. Mr. Havelock moved on behalf of Mr. Klein:

Be it resolved that the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne be engrossed and presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor by such members of the Assembly as are members of Executive Council.

[Government Motion 16 carried]

[At 5:16 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

