

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, May 9, 2000**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 00/05/09

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: Prayers

THE SPEAKER: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. O Lord, guide us so that we may use the privilege given us as elected Members of the Legislative Assembly. Give us the strength to labour diligently and the courage to think and to speak with clarity and conviction and without prejudice or pride. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: Introduction of Visitors

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly His Excellency Dr. Yuri Scherbak, ambassador of Ukraine to Canada. Accompanying him are his wife, Mrs. Maria Scherbak, and Mr. Taras Malyshevskiy, second secretary.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta has had a long relationship with Ukraine. People have come to Alberta from Ukraine for over a hundred years. They have helped build our province, making it such a great place to live. Today there are over 250,000 people in Alberta of Ukrainian descent contributing in many ways to the culture and economy of our province. This visit is an excellent opportunity for us to explore ways to build on our relationship with Ukraine and to discuss areas where we can work together.

This is the ambassador's first official visit to Alberta, and I hope the first of many. We're pleased to welcome him to our province. I would ask that our honoured guests please rise in your gallery and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: Presenting Petitions

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, we have quite a list this afternoon, so let's be a little patient.

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table petitions from several hundred residents asking for the reinstatement of front licence plates. Many of them are from Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan but from across the province as well.

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

MR. LANGEVIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to table a petition signed by 210 Albertans urging the government to reinstate front licence plates. They're from Fort Saskatchewan, Vegreville, Boyle, Athabasca, Waskatenau, Tofield, and the Edmonton and area.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

MR. THURBER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to present today a petition from over a hundred good citizens from rural Alberta, including Rocky Mountain House, Stony Plain, and Parkland county, asking the government to reinstate front licence plates.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to present a petition that calls for the reinstatement of Alberta licence plates on the front of vehicles. The petition has been signed by 280 Albertans from the town of Beaverlodge, the town of Wembley, the county of Grande Prairie, and other locations throughout Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your permission I'd like to present a petition signed by 172 committed and informed Albertans from Spruce Grove, St. Albert, Leduc, Sherwood Park, Alberta Beach, and Edmonton, and they are urging the government "to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care."

Thank you.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to be able to present this afternoon a petition signed by 140 Albertans residing in Calgary, Okotoks, De Winton, and Black Diamond urging "the government of Alberta to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care."

Thank you.

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

MR. BONNER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to present a petition this afternoon. It is signed by 141 Albertans from Spruce Grove, Gunn, St. Albert, Onoway, Morinville, Drayton Valley, Cold Lake, Sherwood Park, and Edmonton, and this petition is urging "the government to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care."

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

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure this afternoon to present a petition on behalf of 223 well-informed Albertans. They want the government "to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care." They are from Fort Saskatchewan, Spruce Grove, and Edmonton.

Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present a petition this afternoon on behalf of 49 individuals from Lethbridge. They are urging 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-Rutherford.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to table this afternoon containing 135 signatures from Albertans residing in Edmonton, Mundare, Fort Saskatchewan, Stony Plain, Tofield, Leduc, Sherwood Park, and St. Albert. They are urging the Legislative Assembly to "stop promoting private health care and undermining [the] public health care [system]."

Thank you.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon I have two petitions to present to the Assembly. The first is signed by 76 residents of Edmonton, and it reads:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to ensure that all residents requiring long term care are able to access this service in an equitable manner within the publicly funded system.

Mr. Speaker, the second petition is a petition supporting public health care in Alberta. It's signed by another 37 residents of Edmonton, and it reads:

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-Riverview.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased today to rise and table a petition signed by 136 citizens of Alberta from the communities of Sherwood Park, Stony Plain, St. Albert, Calmar, Ardrossan, Devon, and Edmonton. These citizens are petitioning "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-Calder.

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have a petition from some 216 Albertans primarily from Edmonton, Fort Saskatchewan, Beaumont, St. Albert, Spruce Grove, and Stony Plain. They "urge the government to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care," sir.

Thank you.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have a petition signed by 152 people. They are from Carvel, Spruce Grove, Sturgeon, St. Albert, Stony Plain, Devon, St. Paul, and Edmonton, and they are urging "the Government of Alberta to stop promoting private healthcare and undermining public healthcare."

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With permission I would present a petition signed by 107 citizens from Lamont, Chipman, Bruderheim, Sangudo, Mayerthorpe, and Wetaskiwin urging the "Government of Alberta to stop promoting private healthcare and undermining public healthcare."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two petitions to table with the Assembly this afternoon. The first is on behalf of 137 residents of Bruderheim, Ardrossan, Tofield, Beaumont, Leduc, Millet, Fort Saskatchewan, Sherwood Park, and Edmonton. The citizens petition "the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to protect, support, and enhance public health care in Alberta and to ban for-profit, private hospitals from receiving public dollars."

The second petition, Mr. Speaker – and I'm very proud to present this to the Assembly – is on behalf of Calgarians. The Calgarians are

asking the Assembly "to urge the government to use its legislative powers to help resolve the labour disputes" that are divisive and disruptive at the *Calgary Herald*.

Thank you.

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

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to present to the Assembly 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 is signed by 146 citizens of this province from Grande Prairie, Peace River, Grimshaw, St. Isidore, St. Paul, Elk Point, Ashmont, Glendon, Lac La Biche, Iron River, and Wembley.

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

MR. GIBBONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have a petition supporting public health care in Alberta. This petition is on behalf of 124 Albertans from Fort Saskatchewan, Bruderheim, Sedgewick, Lamont, and the metropolis of Gibbons.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:40

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table petitions from Calgary, Edmonton, Spruce Grove, Leduc, St. Albert, Bon Accord, Egremont, and Stony Plain. That brings today's total of Albertans who have signed the petition opposing the undermining of public health care and the promotion of private health care to 2,518, bringing the total to date to almost 72,000 Albertans.

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table a petition signed by 201 Albertans who are calling on the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to "disallow further development of the Spray Valley," to "maintain Kananaskis Country in natural state," and to "create a Wildland Provincial Park which protects the whole of the undeveloped parts of the Kananaskis and Spray Valleys."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: Reading and Receiving Petitions

MRS. SLOAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today and with your permission ask that the petition I tabled 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 Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd ask that the petition I had presented the other day be now read and received, please.

Thank you.

THE CLERK:

We, the undersigned, petition the [Legislative] assembly to urge the government to use its legislative powers to help resolve the labour disputes at the Calgary Herald.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that the petition standing on the Order Paper under my name concerning working night hours now be read and received.

THE CLERK:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government . . . to introduce legislation requiring a minimum of two people on shifts from dark to daylight.

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

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I request that the petition I presented on the divisive and disruptive labour dispute at the *Calgary Herald* now be read and received.

THE CLERK:

We, the undersigned, petition the [Legislative] assembly to urge the government to use its legislative powers to help resolve the labour disputes at the Calgary Herald.

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

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request that the petition I presented yesterday from 156 residents from Calgary and Cochrane requesting that the promotion of private health care and the undermining of public health care be stopped be now read and received.
Thank you.

THE CLERK:

We the undersigned citizens of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to stop promoting private healthcare and undermining public healthcare.

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

MR. GIBBONS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'd ask that the petition with respect to public health care that I presented yesterday be now 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. leader of the third party.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to request that the petition I presented yesterday 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: Notices of Motions

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 34(2)(a) to give notice that tomorrow I will move that written questions appearing on the Order Paper do stand and retain their places.

I am also giving notice that tomorrow I will move that motions for returns appearing on the Order Paper stand and retain their places with the exception of motions for returns 33, 34, 35, 40, 44, 45, 48, and 49.

Thank you.

head: Tabling Returns and Reports

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased today to table five copies of a letter and the appropriate amendments to the Prime Minister. The amendments address issues raised by Albertans over the course of discussions on the Health Care Protection Act. Among the amendments approved include a strengthening of the sections prohibiting conflict of interest and queue-jumping. Charges for enhanced services were capped, and the process for withdrawal of approval was clarified. This is a follow-up letter to the letter that was sent by the leader of the Liberal opposition.

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise and table eight copies in response to government questions to written questions 17, 18, 19 and 20.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Resource Development.

DR. WEST: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table responses to questions raised at the March 6 review of Treasury's 2000-2001 budget estimates by the Committee of Supply.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to table today a letter responding to Written Question 16.

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

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table five copies of Manifesto 2000: For a Culture of Peace and Non-violence. This is crafted by Nobel peace prize laureates on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the declaration of human rights at the United Nations.

THE SPEAKER: The leader of the third party.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to make three tablings today. These are three letters: one from former MLA, Marie Laing, opposing Bill 11; one from Red Deer resident Dorothy Corney opposing Bill 11; and a third from the Seniors' Alpine Ski Club in Calgary opposing the proposed Genesis development in the Spray Valley.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have one tabling today with the appropriate number of copies from John Olson of Camrose, who is very, very much opposed to Bill 11.

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

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got four tablings this afternoon. The first is a summary of Donna Korchinski's second installment on Calgary Lab Services, where she indicates that the Calgary regional health authority changed their accounting numbers on the lab services to reflect the increased savings that were supposedly going to occur.

The second is a news release from NetNews wherein it is stated that Calgary Lab Services have been operating since November 1, 1996, without approval.

The third is a news release from Barry Robinson, the Alberta Liberal candidate for Grande Prairie-Smoky, indicating that the health minister is shirking his responsibilities with regards to the long surgery waiting lists in the Mistahia regional health authority.

The fourth is from the *International Express* from England wherein it's indicated that doctors now have to be provided with a £60,000 bonus – that's about \$120,000 – in order to be enticed back into the public health care system from their private practices.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to first of all table a letter from a constituent of Edmonton-McClung, Ms Dorothy Almas, talking about the inhuman waits for cancer treatments because of being on the waiting list. Ms Almas' story is very poignant reading for members of this Assembly who are concerned about public health care in this province.

Secondly, I would like to table a copy of a letter to the editor of the *Edmonton Journal* from David King, a former Member of this Legislative Assembly, beginning with: "Bill #11 is bad law, bad public policy, and bad politics. It should be withdrawn or defeated."

MRS. SLOAN: Mr. Speaker, another child has died while in the care of this government. I am tabling today a letter I have written to the Ministry of Children's Services, seeking information relative to the ministry and child welfare's actions and omissions in the placement of two-year-old Corvette Crier.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have four tablings today for the Assembly. The first is a document titled Calculating Your Taxes under the 10.5% Klein Flat Tax, 2004. It refers to an Albertan named Ralph and another Albertan named Steve, both earning over \$100,000 a year and both receiving more than 20 percent tax cuts. Yet another Albertan earning half that salary would only receive a 10 percent tax cut.

1:50

Mr. Speaker, the second is a petition – unfortunately, it's not in the right form – that is signed by 20 residents of Dewberry, Clandonald, and Heinsburg. The petition is opposing privatization of health care in Alberta.

We, the undersigned citizens of Alberta, strongly oppose the privatization of health care services in Alberta. We do not wish to see for-profit services used in our health care because we believe that this will lead to a two-tier system.

Mr. Speaker, the third tabling is titled A Message to Ralph Klein. It reads, "We, as residents of Polo Park, High River, Alberta, protest the content and the intentions to legislate 'Bill 11' by the Klein Government."

And finally, Mr. Speaker, a letter from myself dated today to Mr. Carl Roy, the president of the Caritas Health Group, in which I correct the record regarding the comments made by the Member for

St. Albert at a public meeting and my comments made in *Hansard* on page 779.

Thank you.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have only four tablings this afternoon. The first one is the summary of the poll on Bill 11 at www.misterpoll.com showing 75 percent opposition.

Secondly is an e-mail from Cinda Chavich, formerly of the *Calgary Herald*, urging government action to end that nasty dispute.

The third item is a document entitled Our Chosen Land produced by the Calgary Chinese Cultural Centre talking about the 100 years of development of the Chinese community in this province.

Then the final document is a copy of the principles and policies for the protection of health information. This is an April 1999 publication produced by CIHI, the Canadian Institute for Health Information. It may assist the minister of health in drafting regulations to Bill 40.

Thank you.

MR. WHITE: I have but one tabling today, sir. It is on behalf of some 200 citizens of Edmonton-Calder in response to a questionnaire that their member put out, and it has to do with the health care system in the province of Alberta. I'll recite just one question to you, sir: should the minister of health in the province of Alberta "have the power to approve public funds for private hospitals?" The answer, sir, is 95 percent against and 5 percent for.

Thank you.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With permission I would table five copies of a Harvard study entitled Medical Errors Higher at For-Profit than Not-For-Profit Hospitals, Harvard Study Finds.

My second tabling, Mr. Speaker, is five copies of the May 2000 edition of the *Asian Times*, featuring citizens from Edmonton-Mill Creek on the steps of the Legislature saying no to Bill 11.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies of a letter from the president of the Central Alberta Women's Emergency Shelter. She's asking why, despite promises from the minister, the Alberta Mental Health Board has done nothing to assist this organization replace the funding that was cut by the Alberta Mental Health Board.

Thank you.

head: Introduction of Guests

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Airdrie-Rocky View.

MS HALEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure for me today to rise and introduce to you and through you, sir, to the Members of the Legislative Assembly on behalf of my colleague the MLA for Lesser Slave Lake 105 grade 8 students from the Roland Michener secondary school in Slave Lake. They are accompanied by two teachers, Miss Tracey Crain and Miss Karen Brace, and nine parent chaperones: Mrs. Smears, Mrs. Savage, Mrs. Olsen, Mrs. Noel, Mrs. Norberg, Mrs. St. Martin, Mrs. Properzi, Mrs. Garon, and Mr. Bohn. They are seated in both the members' gallery and the public gallery, and I would ask that they all stand and receive the very welcome of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Wainwright.

MR. FISCHER: Mr. Speaker, my guests aren't coming in until 2 o'clock, and I'd like to do it after if it's okay.

THE SPEAKER: That's fine.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly a resident of Calgary-Buffalo. In addition to his other volunteer work John Burgener has recently been named to the Calgary chapter of the United Nations as a youth co-ordinator. John is involved in promoting the Manifesto 2000: For a Culture of Peace and Non-violence in preparation for the general assembly of the United Nations this September. He is seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask my son John to rise and receive the warm recognition of this Assembly.

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

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you and to all the members of the Legislative Assembly Shannon Sampert. Shannon has just completed her master's degree in communications at the University of Calgary and has been awarded over \$53,000 in scholarships and will enter the U of A PhD program in political science this fall. She is currently the vice-president of communications for the Alberta Liberal Party and employed in the Edmonton-Norwood constituency office for the summer. If she would please rise and receive the warm welcome.

head: Oral Question Period

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

Voting on Bill 11

MRS. MacBETH: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. So let's see now. First he was a Liberal thinking about the leadership of the Alberta Liberal Party, and then he was a Progressive Conservative federally and provincially, and now he's thrown his hat behind the Canadian Reform Alliance party. Presumably he is taking his provincial party along with him. [interjections] Given the applause, I'd say they're all going along with him. But guess what? The constitution of the Alliance party reads: "We will move to restore democratic accountability in the House of Commons by measures such as allowing free votes." Will the Premier be true to the values of his new party and allow a free vote?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I've answered that question before. Again, I will ask the members of this caucus. Do you support the government's position on Bill 11?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Yes.

MR. KLEIN: Could I ask the question, Mr. Speaker? Are there any of you opposed? That is a free vote.

Mr. Speaker, we run a far different caucus than the one that was controlled by the former member of Priorities and Treasury Board in the old Conservative government. This is a free and open caucus where we have good and free and open discussions on matters. I don't run my caucus like a dictatorship like the leader of the Liberal Party. I don't stamp my foot and say: this is the way you're going to vote. That's what's happening over there in the Liberal Party.

Speaker's Ruling Questions about Party Activity

THE SPEAKER: Actually, hon. members, *Beauchesne* 410(17) says the following: "Ministers may not be questioned with respect to party responsibilities."

Hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, proceed with your next question.

2:00

Voting on Bill 11

(continued)

MRS. MacBETH: Well, then, Mr. Speaker, I guess the question is: why would the Premier be supporting democracy and free votes for Ottawa, but he appears to be treating it as if it's a nuisance here in Alberta?

MR. KLEIN: Not a nuisance, Mr. Speaker. I will explain once again. There was a caucus meeting. I didn't attend that caucus meeting. I'm very, very proud of members of the Progressive Conservative caucus who had a good discussion, as I understand it, about how they were going to vote on Bill 11. The decision was – and it was a caucus decision – that they would support the government's position.

MRS. MacBETH: Will the Premier concede that the real reason that he is not allowing his members to reflect the majority position of Albertans in opposition to this bill is that he knows that his private health care bill would go down in flames?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, first of all, there is no private health care policy.

Perhaps it's time to take a closer look at the opposition leader's stand on health care, because she's questioned my motives so many times. This hon. leader of the Liberal opposition is on record many times as saying that she supports privately owned, privately operated private hospitals that are opted out of medicare; in other words, a classic for-profit, two-tier health care system.

When this member was a Conservative at one particular time, or a suspected Conservative at least, she did nothing to stop the expansion of private surgical clinics when she was the minister of health. In fact, she allowed them to charge patients a facility fee, something that is against the Canada Health Act. She did absolutely nothing to stop it.

So, Mr. Speaker, one could ask her the same question she has often posed of me: which of her friends or relatives would stand to benefit from a policy that allowed opted-out, for-profit private hospitals that could charge people directly whatever they like and service clients from the U.S. and other jurisdictions?

Limiting Debate on Bill 11

MRS. MacBETH: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's not just about freedom of voting. This government's flagrant use of closure has set a new low for parliamentary behaviour in Canada. The Premier's reliance on closure betrays his true feelings about this Legislature. For him the Legislature has become an inconvenience and democracy a nuisance. My questions are to the Premier. Why did the Premier break his word that closure would not be used on third reading?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, closure is not being used on third reading. If we were to invoke closure on third reading, the debate would end at midnight tonight. We have introduced a motion, Standing Order 47, which allows every Member of this Legislative

Assembly to debate the bill one more time. That is not closure. That is part of the democratic process.

Now, relative to reaching new lows, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the Liberals have reached a new filibustering low. They have cost the taxpayers thousands and thousands and thousands of dollars through their delaying tactics, and if they want to be critical of closure, then I would ask them to look to their Liberal cousins in Ottawa. This article in the *Calgary Herald* dated May 4 says:

By next Monday, Prime Minister Jean Chretien's Liberals will have stifled parliamentary exchanges on government bills 67 times since January 1994, when the Liberals convened the 35th Parliament.

THE SPEAKER: It would be helpful, hon. the Premier, if you'd table that document as well.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, why did this Premier mislead Albertans yesterday afternoon when he promised in his news conference that he wouldn't resort to closing off this debate, yet moments later the Member for Leduc was rising to do just that?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the question was asked: would we use closure? The answer was: no, we would not use closure. And we didn't use closure. The hon. Member for Leduc introduced a Standing Order 47, which basically says that the bill can be debated by all members of the Legislature at third reading. What could be more democratic than that?

I refer, Mr. Speaker, to *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms* relative to closure, and basically I don't know what the fuss is about, because when I refer to section 518, "The House has adopted a number of procedures to limit debate, or to preclude the moving of amendments, and to provide for the wise management of its time." The Liberals have no concept whatsoever of the wise management of time. All they can think about is wasting taxpayer dollars.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, will the Premier admit that he has had to resort to shutting off debate at every single step of the debate on this legislation because he's afraid that the majority of Albertans oppose him?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, the majority of Albertans do not oppose me. As a matter of fact, the latest poll shows that we have about 66, 67 percent support. That's slightly more, if not a significant amount more, than the Liberals have right now or than they will ever have.

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

Representing the Public

MRS. MacBETH: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. I want to quote something that I read, and it says:

The little dictator in Edmonton has ignored Albertans' collective cry not to tear the heart out of our health care system and replace it with one that most of us are opposed to and afraid of.

Actually, not my words but the words of the *Fairview Post*. Now, opposition to the Premier's health care policy has also been voiced in the *Coronation Review*, the *Drayton Valley Western Review*, the *Canmore Leader*, the *Lac La Biche Post*, the *Ponoka News*, the *Eckville Echo*, the *Lethbridge Herald*, the *Red Deer Advocate*, the *Grande Prairie Herald-Tribune*, the *Cold Lake Sun*, the *Cochrane Times*, the *Brooks Bulletin*, the *High River Times*, the *Edson Leader*, the *Lloydminster Meridian Booster*, and more. My questions are to the Premier. Why is the Premier ignoring the views and the voices

of these local papers who so accurately reflect the views of their communities?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, there has been editorial comment on this issue on both sides of the issue. I just happened to pick up something from May 3, the *Calgary Herald*. It says . . . [interjections] I hear a lot of yipping and yapping over there. Are they saying that the *Calgary Herald* is not a reputable newspaper? [interjections] Will they stand up and say that the *Calgary Herald* is not a reputable newspaper?

The *Calgary Herald* says with Bill 11,

Klein has done something far more important than simply pen a new law. He's activated a national debate on health care that is long overdue. . . . If Klein lost his nerve and killed his health care bill, the national debate would continue but it's doubtful the political will would exist in this province to fully participate.

2:10

I mean, there have been all kinds of comments in all kinds of different newspapers relative to this issue, some against, yes. Right. You know, the Liberals go to great pains to bring out the negative in everything in this province, but there has been a lot of positive comment in editorials in weekly newspapers and in major daily newspapers. I would allude to some of the comments that have been published by Neil Waugh, the columnist for the *Edmonton Sun*. I could table column after column after column. He makes a lot of sense.

Speaker's Ruling Questions about Media Reports

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, *Beauchesne* 428 says that a question must not "inquire whether statements made in a newspaper are true." So what we've really got here is a debate over "My article says this and somebody else's article says that." Let's deal with policy.

The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Representing the Public (continued)

MRS. MacBETH: Well, Mr. Speaker, first Gerry Amerongen and now Dave King. Is this Premier so arrogant and so out of touch that he doesn't realize that his own party members are opposed to his private health care legislation?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that the leader of the Liberal opposition asked that question and alluded to Dave King, because I understand that Dave King said yesterday that Bill 11 shows that the government does not know how to run the public service properly and that it has failed to address the real issues facing health care, such as staff shortages and rising drug costs. He also said that the bill would foster a two-tier health system.

The point I want to make is that, first of all, he has insulted a very strong and very proud public service. The Alberta public service leads the nation in efficiency. In recent years the government's administration has won numerous awards for public service. For instance, they won the silver award for innovative management from the Institute of Public Administration of Canada last fall.

Now, Mr. Speaker, compare that to the time when Dave King was the minister of education, when Alberta had 181 different school jurisdictions and 40 of them didn't even have a school. And he wants to talk about public administration.

Our six-point health plan addresses all of the concerns that were raised by Mr. King, by the way a suspected Liberal now, not a Conservative.

Speaker's Ruling Seeking Opinions

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. The purpose of question period is to basically deal with government policy. If someone wants to introduce a person and then someone else wants to respond regarding the person, this violates all the rules of the question period.

Representing the Public (continued)

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, will the Premier finally come clean and tell Albertans who or what is so important that he has turned a deaf ear to ordinary Albertans, even to members of his own party?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I'll turn that question around. Why is the leader of the Liberal opposition so intent on defeating a bill that protects public health care? Is it because she wants private, for-profit opted-out hospitals? Again, she has stated on numerous occasions that she supports privately owned, privately operated private hospitals that are opted out of medicare; in other words, a classic two-tiered, for-profit health care system. Who is she trying to protect in terms of the doctors and other medical practitioners or businesspeople who'd really want to profit from medicare? I think that's her real agenda.

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

Court Referral of Bill 11

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the government's private, for-profit hospitals scheme lurches toward third reading approval aided by the use of closure at all three stages, many questions remain unanswered. Among the most serious are whether the government's approach violates the Canada Health Act and its ramifications under the North American free trade agreement. A referral of Bill 11 to the Alberta Court of Appeal would be a cost-effective, timely, and prudent way to address these outstanding questions. My questions are to the Premier. As president of Executive Council why doesn't the Premier, prior to seeking royal assent and prior to proclamation, use his powers under the Judicature Act to refer Bill 11 to the Court of Appeal to settle once and for all whether it violates the Canada Health Act?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, this policy statement and the bill have been sent to the federal Minister of Health – I think they have a bevy of lawyers there in Ottawa, thousands, lots of lawyers – to pore over, and we have received no indication whatsoever from the federal minister or the Prime Minister or any of his officials that the bill in any way, shape, or form violates the Canada Health Act or violates the rules of NAFTA. Nothing.

DR. PANNU: Why is the Premier unwilling to or afraid of letting the Court of Appeal of this province address the ramifications of Bill 11 under NAFTA even in the face of two eminent legal opinions which say that the government is courting NAFTA disaster?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, if there is something in Bill 11 or any other act of this Legislature that is deemed to be unconstitutional, there is recourse to the courts. Once the law is passed, if someone

feels that it violates the Canada Health Act or it violates NAFTA or that in some way it violates the principles of health care, then they're free to challenge that act just as any citizen is free to challenge any act of this Legislature or any act of Parliament.

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Why doesn't the Premier exercise prudence and refer Bill 11 to the Court of Appeal for a determination of its vulnerability to costly challenges under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms?

MR. KLEIN: I don't see how there could be a challenge under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, especially since the preamble to the bill upholds without question the fundamental principles of the Canada Health Act. What I find amazing is that this hon. member would like the referral now, after voting against upholding the principles of the Canada Health Act, voting against, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to emphasize that. This hon. member along with his Liberal bedmates voted against upholding the principles of the Canada Health Act.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-West, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Summer Temporary Employment Program

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday's labour force statistics for April 2000 indicated that the number of youth job seekers was higher than the number of new jobs created for youth. My questions today are to the Minister to the Minister of HR and Employment. With the end of the school year at hand what is this government doing to help unemployed Albertans gain some work experience during the summer months?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment.

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, of course, we continue to help Albertans with our Youth Connections program all year round, but we also have what is called the summer temporary employment program. It's referred to as STEP. We have this in place to offer work experience to unemployed Albertans, primarily students, from the end of April to the beginning of September. We're contributing 9 and a quarter million dollars to nonprofit and publicly funded community organizations to help them hire students to develop skills and enhance long-term employability.

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

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, can the same minister please explain how the process works when an organization applies for the funding under STEP?

MR. DUNFORD: Yes, Mr. Speaker. STEP employment applications are of course sent out at the beginning of the year. They're completed, and then they're returned to our department. We look for those by the end of February. The applications are reviewed, and the employers notified when they're approved.

In this regard, our STEP program is similar to a federal program that is called SKIP. Basically, employers apply, and then of course they're notified if it is approved. Once the employer has been approved for the STEP program, they hire, they pay the employee,

and then they submit a claim to the STEP or SKIP co-ordinator for reimbursement once a month.

2:20

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

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is to the same minister. With this process in place can you tell us how many Albertans will be able to participate in the STEP program this year?

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

MR. DUNFORD: Mr. Speaker, 2,479 community groups actually applied for the STEP program. With the placements through the provincial government partnership we think this will translate into 3,540 full-time equivalent positions for unemployed Albertans between April 25 and September 1 of this year.

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

Bill 11 Publicity

MR. DICKSON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I take the Premier in earlier answers today as indicating that he thinks it's important that Albertans have accurate information. Well, the Premier's \$8 million Public Affairs Bureau seems to be under strict instructions to deliberately underestimate the cost of the government's propaganda campaign to sell its private health care policy. Now, despite the government's misguided decision to ram its health care policy through this Legislature, Albertans aren't buying the policy nor the Premier's attempts to minimize the costs of propaganda. My questions are, of course, to the Premier this afternoon. Will the Premier keep his previous promise to release today, before we make a final vote on Bill 11, all the invoices, all the receipts, all the contracts from his \$2.7 million taxpayer-backed propaganda campaign to sell the government's private hospital policy?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. member is anticipating a question that is related to Bill 11, which is up for debate this evening, so it's inappropriate.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the answer to that silly, dumb, question is quite simple. It is very hard to provide intelligent answers to stupid questions. To exemplify the stupidity of the question, there is no propaganda campaign; there is no private health care policy; therefore, there are no invoices related to what the hon. member alleges. Nothing. Because there's no propaganda campaign, and there is no private health care policy.

[The Speaker in the chair]

MR. DICKSON: Speaking to the policy and certainly not to the bill and speaking to government practices as well, Mr. Speaker, how much of the true cost of the Premier's private health care propaganda campaign is hidden away in the vault of the Public Affairs Bureau, buried in the Ministry of Health and Wellness, or perhaps incinerated in the Premier's \$440 million waste treatment plant?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, there is, first of all, nothing in any vault anywhere related to a private health care policy or a propaganda campaign. It simply doesn't exist, because this government hasn't been involved in any kind of activity. The only person who has been involved in the promotion of private, for-profit, opted-out, two-tiered health care is the leader of the Liberal opposition.

MR. DICKSON: This is more and more like Alice in Wonderland, Mr. Speaker.

Before the Premier rams his health care policy through the Legislature, will the Premier confirm right now, this afternoon, that the Official Opposition estimate of \$2.7 million is in fact the true cost of the taxpayer-funded propaganda campaign? Will he do that?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, there is no cost associated with a propaganda campaign. There will be some costs associated with a program to mail out a bill that purports to become law, and there's nothing more truthful than the law. There will be some costs associated with that, and there will be some costs associated with telling the truth about a piece of legislation that is now before this Legislative Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Beer Marketing

MR. CAO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituency of Calgary-Fort includes a large industrial park. Alberta's midsize and small brewers have recently expressed concerns to me. According to these brewers, the Gaming and Liquor Commissions's new policy allowing buy/sell agreements and product promotion will benefit the big brewers who already have almost 90 percent of the draft beer market in Alberta. My question is to the Minister of Gaming. Can the minister explain why this new buy/sell policy is not harmful to Alberta's smaller brewers?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Gaming.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the new policy that includes the use of buy/sell agreements is a creation of the industry themselves. It was a group of brewers, distillers, merchants, and liquor store owners that came up with the buy/sell agreements, so it includes all the breweries.

The buy/sell agreements, Mr. Speaker, provide for the normal trade and commerce to take place in an above-the-table, open, transparent manner and one that can be fully disclosed. What has happened in the past we have found to be in violation of regulations at the time. We took actions. Fines were levied. The new policy, if the industry decides to comply – and the onus of responsibility of compliance lies completely with them – will allow all of them to participate in this marketplace that is growing because of population, because of increase in disposable income, because of a healthy growing economy.

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

MR. CAO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental question is to the same minister. Can the minister explain why the product promotion aspect of the commission's new policy is not harmful to small brewers?

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, we have a competitive marketplace – that's been the foundation of the marketing of spirits and alcohol in this province – and also privatization. Suppliers and manufacturers need to be able to promote their products. It's taught in every business school. It's taught to everybody who goes through the great institutions like SAIT and the University of Calgary and the University of Alberta. Clearly it is not government's role to prevent those types of activities as long as product promotion benefits the

consumer and does not exclude artificially some competitors from the marketplace.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that a smaller brewer, like a small person in the oil industry, as my own experience indicates, always has challenges in the marketplace when we take on the large employers.

I know from experience that for a company with the reputation of Big Rock in Alberta its quality of product, its quality of service and consumer choice will prevail. After all, Mr. Speaker, the quality of good taste lingers long after the price is forgotten.

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

MR. CAO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is also to the same minister. What can the minister do to ensure that small brewers continue to have a fair opportunity in the Alberta market?

MR. SMITH: Well, Mr. Speaker, I know the member is concerned and interested because he is in a constituency where Big Rock Brewery is located. In fact, there's one building where they started out as Big Rock, and then a second building that expansion of the marketplace caused, and it became known as Bigger Rock.

Mr. Speaker, the government recognizes that these 84 to 100 jobs are critical to the marketplace, critical to this member's constituency, and in fact over a year ago the government took action and reduced its markup by \$15 million on beer. That reduced annual cost was primarily aimed at benefiting the small and mid-sized brewers.

Remember, Mr. Speaker, that the job of government in the liquor industry is to control the product. We're not there to control the marketplace. We know that all of us are committed to a level playing field. All brewers have equal access to the market, and success or failure is the result of consumer choice, not government intervention.

2:30

Private Health Services

MRS. SLOAN: The greatest legacy of private health care in Alberta, Mr. Speaker, will be the accompanying legacy of deception and deceit. The Premier risks contributing to such a legacy by continuing to withhold the contents of 30 blank pages outlining his government's beliefs on private health care. My questions today are to the Premier. When does the Premier plan to permit Albertans to see the private health care document their tax dollars paid for?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness indicated on a number of occasions in this Legislative Assembly, that information is being prepared as we speak.

But speaking of missing documents, why has the opposition leader put a 15-year prohibition on the public release of 150 boxes of her documents from her time as minister of health?

MR. DICKSON: Point of order.

MR. KLEIN: What has she got to hide, Mr. Speaker? Is she afraid of something? Is there something in those documents that alludes to her promotion of private, for-profit health care? I wonder.

MRS. SLOAN: Let me amend that. A legacy of deception, deceit, and desperation, Mr. Speaker.

Why enact closure, Mr. Premier, before you release your government's own position on private health care policy? Why enact closure before the public has had an opportunity to read those 30 blank pages?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, again I allude to the 150 boxes of documents that have been secreted away, squirreled away someplace under lock and key because the leader of the Liberal opposition is afraid there might be something in those documents that might put her in contradiction of her position today.

Relative to the question, this government has not invoked closure on third reading. We introduced a motion under Standing Order 47, which allows full and complete debate on third reading. That is not closure. But this is typical of the kind of malicious misinformation that is being spread by the Liberal Party.

MRS. SLOAN: Mr. Speaker, when will the Premier stop his desperation antics and table the documents in this Assembly: pages 31, 34, 41, 44, and 47, all speaking about private health care? When will those documents be tabled in this Assembly so Albertans can read them for themselves?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, they will be tabled in due course, as soon as the documents are prepared. I understand that that work is under way right now.

You know, you might have to wait days or weeks, but the rest of us are going to have to wait 15 years – 15 years – to see the documents that have been secreted away under lock and key by the former minister of health, who is now the leader of the Liberal opposition. What has she got to hide, Mr. Speaker? I thought she said that she would stand up to her record on health any day. Well, we are waiting. What has she got to hide?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Computer Viruses

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week a virus dubbed the Love Bug spread across computers around the world causing many companies and governments to shut down e-mail systems and networks. The virus traveled by e-mail with the subject line I Love You. My question is to the Minister of Innovation and Science. Can the minister please tell us the effect of the I Love You virus on government systems?

DR. TAYLOR: Well, Mr. Speaker, let me say that government takes IT security very seriously. All ministries were affected by the I Love You virus, but it was isolated to the e-mail systems by 9:30 a.m. In spite of what Dave King might say, this was isolated by our excellent public service professionals. We have assessed the impact and cleaned the e-mail system to ensure that the viruses have been removed and any data that was lost has been repaired.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. minister, the reference to an individual outside this House was absolutely inappropriate.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you. To the same minister, Mr. Speaker: while the media have reported that several copycat viruses have been released since the I Love You virus first hit, what is the government doing to protect systems from other similar viruses?

DR. TAYLOR: Well, we've been taking proactive steps, Mr. Speaker. Last winter we improved our e-mail security status. We rolled out some antivirus security issues last winter, and we now have the availability of screening incoming e-mail for viruses. With that availability and with that ability we can look at viruses that

might be similar to the I Love You virus, and they will automatically be screened out.

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

MRS. O'NEILL: No, Mr. Speaker. It's been answered.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Private Health Services

(continued)

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A report on a recent Harvard study reaches the conclusion that

patients at for-profit hospitals are two to four times more likely than patients at not-for-profit hospitals to suffer adverse events such as complications following surgery or delays in diagnosing and treating an ailment.

My questions are the Minister of Health and Wellness. Given the Harvard study, why is the government pursuing a policy of health care privatization and placing Albertans at increased medical risk?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the government is not pursuing a policy of private hospitals. We have stated that very clearly. The legislation is very clear with respect to that. Therefore, although I'm not familiar with respect to the Harvard study, it may be very interesting, but it is not relevant to our particular legislation or policy.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that the study also speculates that adverse medical events may increase as money is redirected to facility shareholders, why has the government chosen private profit over the health of Albertans?

MR. JONSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, I assume that if the study is from the Harvard source, it must be a credible one. I do note that the questioner is referring to it as speculating, which is hardly scientific basis on which to place a question.

I repeat that we are not promoting private hospitals. We have banned them in the legislation. The research may be quite interesting and quite thorough – I don't know – but it is not in my view relevant to the particular initiative we're taking.

DR. MASSEY: To the same minister, Mr. Speaker: what liability will the government assume when things go wrong at for-profit surgical clinics?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I have to repeat something that is a fact but that the opposition can't seem to acknowledge, and that is that within our health care system right now we have in various roles a very important private sector, whether we're talking about doctors' offices and clinics or we're talking about, yes, laboratory companies or we're talking about some of the maintenance firms that repair and maintain the equipment in the health care system. I think that overall the record of the whole health care system in terms of major mistakes and faults and liabilities has been very, very good in this province.

If there is something that occurs to which liability can be assigned, there is a judicial process in this country to sue, to recover money, and that does occasionally regrettably happen in the health care system. The process is there.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

2:40

Pigeon Lake Fishery

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've received a number of calls from constituents regarding the opening of the fishing season a month ago, particularly in relation to Pigeon Lake and its commercial fishery. Within the fishing regulations this year there are a number of Alberta lakes that are under pressure related to fish population and that have been closed to fishing during spawning. Since this is the case, can the Minister of Environment tell my constituents why the commercial fishery on Pigeon Lake is allowed to continue once the lake is open to recreational fishing?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, I have certainly heard of the piscatory concerns of not only the constituents of this hon. member but of others throughout the province, and I can assure the hon. member that the concerns that are expressed are taken seriously. The decision to close a number of lakes during the spawning season is not one that is lightly taken. I'd like to point out that when we do make such decisions, we work with the best science available. We work with biologists, but we also work with the various advisory committees with lakes to make determinations as to how management plans can be put in place for various lakes throughout the province to manage this valuable resource. I'd like to emphasize that we look at each lake on a lake-by-lake basis to take into account the unique situation in each lake and the pressures that are on those lakes.

In the case of Pigeon Lake, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of different user groups that we had to listen to and work with. It not only supports commercial fishing but also domestic fishing and also, of course, recreational fishing. I wish to assure this House that I am monitoring issues related to the commercial fishing industry, and I want to assure members of this Assembly that immediate steps will be taken by the department if the health of Alberta fisheries is ever threatened.

MR. JOHNSON: More specifically, to the same minister: what is the amount of fish allocated for the commercial fishery on Pigeon Lake, and what is being harvested?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, the quota for whitefish for Pigeon Lake is 100,000 kilograms. Over the last 10 years the average harvest of whitefish from that particular lake has been 88,000 kilograms. I would note, though, that for the species of walleye and pike, their tolerance limits were reached before the quota for whitefish was reached. Just to be clear, the fishery is closed whenever the tolerance on any particular species is reached or the quota is met. So the lake is closed to commercial fisherfolk when either the tolerance on a species is reached or the quota is reached.

MR. JOHNSON: My final question is to the same minister. What is the status of the environmental and commercial viability of Pigeon Lake's fishery?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to emphasize that our main priority is to devise mechanisms and strategies to ensure that this valuable resource continues not only for those who are involved in commercial fishing now or for domestic use or for recreational reasons but for the benefit of those in the future as well. Based on public input and sound science, we will make decisions that are necessary to conserve Alberta's fishery.

With respect to Pigeon Lake, Mr. Speaker, that lake has whitefish resources that will support a very important commercial fishery here in this province, but I want to point out that the challenge will be to find the mechanisms and the strategies to sustain this commercial fishery without harming the interests of other users of the lake, specifically recreational and domestic use. We will continue to work on those strategies for Pigeon Lake but also for a great number of other lakes throughout the province for the benefit of all users of Alberta's lakes.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, followed by the hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Calgary Laboratory Services

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 1996 the Calgary regional health authority began a partnership with a private laboratory service with the goal of decreasing the cost of lab services by 40 percent in the Calgary area. While this government claims that the new partnership has meant big savings to taxpayers, Albertans deserve to know what the numbers really are and how the money was spent. My questions are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Can the minister provide a public explanation as to why the amount spent on laboratory services before the creation of Calgary Laboratory Services was reported as being \$80 million but then later changed to \$97 million?

MR. JONSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the increase in the overall contractual payment to the laboratory company in Calgary, I think it is reasonable to expect that the number of tests, the amount of work that is being done – there's actually been the addition of a new spectrum of tests as well as an increase in the volume. It is quite logical to expect that the overall contracted amount according to the volume of work done would increase.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, again, to the same Minister of Health and Wellness. In reality, was this an attempt to create the illusion for Alberta taxpayers that the savings from the Calgary Laboratory Services were greater than they really are?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that the overall contract between the Calgary regional health authority and the laboratory firm is a very comprehensive one. As I've indicated, the contract would, I think, logically provide for the accommodation of an increased volume and increased variation or variety or new tests that come onstream.

In fact, Calgary Laboratory Services, as I understand it, is very sophisticated. It does a very, very wide range of tests, which would compare to any large centre, certainly in Calgary. Mr. Speaker, I think it is unrealistic to think that a contract would not have a provision to be adjusted in terms of payment for increases in volume and in the nature of the tests that are done.

MR. WICKMAN: My final question, Mr. Speaker, is to the same minister. Will the minister provide evidence to Albertans as to why there was a \$17 million discrepancy in the budget prior to the contract being awarded?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I do not accept the implication of the question in terms of a discrepancy. I've provided the description of the overall way that the contracts operate. I think there has to be an understanding that contracts will be adjusted according to factors which develop in terms of the nature of the services to be provided,

the breadth of the services to be provided, the volume of the services to be provided, and that will occur. Those things will occur.

head: Members' Statements

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, three members today will participate in Members' Statements. We'll call on the first of these in about 30 seconds.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

International Year for the Culture of Peace

MRS. BURGNER: The year 2000 has been proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations as the International Year for the Culture of Peace. On the 50th anniversary of the UN universal declaration of human rights a group of Nobel prize laureates drafted a document they call Manifesto 2000. This manifesto will be presented to the General Assembly in September 2000 as part of the International Day of Peace.

It is not an ordinary petition, Mr. Speaker. It is expected that 100 million people from around the world will sign this manifesto. It will represent their personal commitment to the values, attitudes, and behaviour that inspire the culture of peace. So many will sign because they know that a culture of peace is required to permit sustainable development around the world and to enhance environmental protection and the well-being of every person.

2:50

What are the values that so many individuals will be pledging their support to? They're pledging to respect all life and the dignity and worth of every human being. They are pledging to reject violence in all its manifestations, particularly against children, who are the most vulnerable, to share with others their time and resources, to listen and understand without defaming and rejecting others, and to preserve the planet by respecting all life and preserving the balance of nature. They're pledging to rediscover solidarity by contributing to their communities.

Mr. Speaker, it is my hope and the hope of my son, who is here today, and the hope of this Assembly that this manifesto will help transform the culture of war and violence where it exists to a culture of peace and nonviolence, that will benefit all of us.

In order to give us a wide scope of the possibilities of this campaign, the organizers are hoping to spread the word and collect signatures through the Internet. Anyone who wishes to sign on can reach the Internet through www.unesco.org/manifesto2000. By signing your name to the peace manifesto, you will be included with the citizens of the world who are devoted to sharing the culture of peace with others, and you will be participating in an historic and worldwide celebration of peace.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Democracy in Alberta

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to speak about democracy in Alberta. Alberta's democracy has been compared to corporate statism. This government has become, to quote a former columnist at the *Herald*: a government by CEO. The Premier with his business cronies for MLAs believes all Albertans should support legislation like Bill 11, even though it will only help the wealthy in the province. In this province it appears that anyone who dares to question the CEO is in line to be fired or at best derided, branded as a left-wing nut, and personally attacked for not buying the latest of the so-called advantage.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's not how democracy is supposed to work. Democracy is supposed to do what's best for all citizens, not just the wealthy elites. Democracy understands that opposition is important and supports alternative points of view. Democracy does not cut off debate, does not artificially invoke closure, and does not denounce people's concerns. Democracy does not paint the oppositional voice in this province with red menace overtones, insulting the people who have worked so hard to build this province.

I've watched every night as people gather at the Legislature to speak out against Bill 11. This government just isn't interested. It has ignored these protests with a top-down managerial view of the world. With a Premier as chairman at the helm this government sneers at the underlings, those who dare to just say no to Bill 11. You know, he should be careful. CEOs have been known to topple, and the people you stepped on on your way up will be waiting for you on your way down.

You can legislate until you're blue in the face, but people have memories, and they're going to remember how this government ignored them, how this government insulted their intelligence and patronized the opposition. They will remember. One day Albertans will stop the Premier and his company and once again embrace democracy in this province.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to recognize this year's inductees to Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame, located in Wetaskiwin. The induction ceremony will be held at the Reynolds-Alberta Museum in Wetaskiwin on Saturday, May 13. [interjections]

Speaker's Ruling Interrupting Members' Statements

THE SPEAKER: One of the great traditions in this House is this opportunity for free speech that was brought in a number of years ago, when major amendments were made to the Standing Orders. This section of the Routine is called Members' Statements, and members should have the right to express themselves on any subject they want regardless of the content. The content is their own content, and they may choose to say what it is they want to say. There should be no interjections, and we've ruled out points of order and points of privilege and everything else with respect to this in the past. Those who don't like the message today, well, get ready because there'll be another opportunity in the next number of days for additional members' statements, and it can go back the other way.

Now, hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose, I invite you to start at the beginning.

Aviation Hall of Fame

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to recognize this year's inductees to Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame, located in Wetaskiwin. The induction ceremony will be held at the Reynolds-Alberta Museum in Wetaskiwin on Saturday, May 13. Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame was founded in 1973 and pays tribute to men and women who pioneered and advanced aviation in Canada. The hall of fame has 160 members, including this year's five inductees.

Mr. James Tocher Bain will be posthumously inducted at this year's ceremony. Mr. Bain is widely known as the man responsible for the development of the Canadair North Star, and he oversaw

construction of the Air Canada jet base in Dorval, Quebec.

Another inductee, Mr. Albert Baker, earned his pilot's and engineer's licences at the Moose Jaw Flying Club. He's credited with turning around the troubled Fleet Manufacturing Company in Fort Erie, Ontario.

Mr. Paul Bernard Dilworth studied jet engine technologies in the U.K. He went on to set up the cold-weather ground test facility in Winnipeg and conducted the first ever test on a jet engine in Canada in 1943.

Mr. Reginald John Lane joined the RCAF in 1940 and became a distinguished wartime Pathfinder and bomber pilot with three tours of duty over Europe. In 1943 Mr. Lane flew the first Canadian-built Lancaster KB-700, the Ruhr Express, to England.

I'm particularly proud to mention the induction of Ms Vera Elsie Strodl Dowling of Edmonton. Ms Dowling worked extensively in the area of test flying, and after World War II she was a flight instructor with the RAF. She was also the first female flight instructor in Alberta.

This year's Belt of Orion award of excellence will be awarded to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police air division. For over 60 years the air division has performed essential support for the RCMP and service to Canadian citizens.

Congratulations to the air division and the five inductees into Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, earlier today in the routine the chair called on the hon. Member for Wainwright for an introduction, and the hon. Member for Wainwright indicated he wanted to do it a little later. Now is the time, sir.

head: Introduction of Guests (reversion)

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce for the record a group from the Provost school in the Buffalo Trail school division. This group consisted of 36 grade 6 students and 10 adults. They were accompanied by teachers Sherri Smith, Julie Bouma, Vern Tessman, Roxy Reinhart. They were here to visit the Legislature and observe our government in action. Unfortunately they have left now.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Opposition House Leader on a point of order.

Point of Order Provoking Debate

MR. DICKSON: Actually, Mr. Speaker, I raised two points of order, but they relate to exactly the same comment made twice by the hon. Premier. My authority would be *Beauchesne* 408(2) about the enjoiner against answers "should not provoke debate." I've had some Blues delivered to me, but they haven't caught the question-and-answer exchange in question.

The Premier on two different occasions referenced documents that had been in the possession of the Leader of the Official Opposition when she was minister of health and at the end of her time as minister. What I heard was a clear indication that the Leader of the Opposition was in some fashion trying to withhold documents, delay their publication, their availability to members of the public.

Now, this is nonsense, Mr. Speaker. We have a provincial archivist in this province. Members will appreciate that under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, section 3, the act

- (b) does not affect access to records
 - (i) deposited in the Provincial Archives, or
 - (ii) deposited in the archives . . .
 that were unrestricted before the coming into force of this Act.

The act came into force on October 1, 1995.

Then, further, the act

- (e) does not prohibit the transfer, storage or destruction of a record
 - (i) in accordance with [any other] enactment of Alberta or Canada, or

a bylaw of a local government body. In this province we do have, in fact, a regulation that deals with the destruction of public documents. You will be well familiar with it, all ministers, because those records that a minister has with respect to ministerial function are public property, not personal property.

3:00

Well, we can argue the law, but the point is this. I'm talking about papers that a minister had in the execution of a ministerial function, that those records have been turned over by the Leader of the Official Opposition. She received advice from the provincial archivist in terms of the policy of the provincial government, and she has neither sought nor obtained any special protection, remedy, or treatment with respect to those records. They have been treated, as I understand, no differently than the records when the Member for Wainwright left cabinet or the Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne left cabinet. Those records were treated the same way.

For the Premier to suggest, as I heard him do, that in some fashion the Leader of the Opposition was trying to have those records that had been in her possession treated in some different way is more than mischievous. It's inaccurate, and it's just plain wrong. I trust I've not distorted the meaning of the words I heard from the Premier, but it's clearly a concern.

If we have an existing set of policies in terms of the way we deal with ministerial records, let's recognize that that is, in effect, uniform treatment and not something that in this case somebody has tried to have records protected for a longer time period.

You might recognize, sir, if you look at the amendments to the FOIP Act, that there are specific provisions in terms of records like this from this point forward, but I think the insinuation and implication, if not the express comment made by the Premier, is inflammatory as well as inaccurate and in my view offends 408(2). I'd ask the Premier to withdraw the remarks he made and in fact apologize in the House for the insinuation that he made.

Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate what the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo is rising on, that being a procedural issue under item 408(2), where it says that "answers to questions should be as brief as possible, should deal with the matter raised, and should not provoke debate." However, if he reads a little further, he will also see under *Beauchesne* 409, where the issue of question period is discussed in greater detail, that *Beauchesne* also says:

A brief question seeking information about an important matter of some urgency which falls within the administrative responsibility of the government or of the specific Minister to whom it is addressed, is in order.

It goes on to say in section 409(2): "The question must be brief." Then the real crux of the matter is 409(8), where it says: "A question that has previously been answered ought not to be asked again."

Now, on this issue of a certain page of documents that is being

sought by the Official Opposition, the Premier has answered this question numerous times in this House and has very openly said that he would bring that forward as soon as it was ready, and he has directed the minister of health to research it and bring it forward. Not only has he said that to the hon. Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, but he has answered that same question or questions to that same effect, seeking the same information, from other members opposite. Therefore, I would say that there is an issue of redundancy here under 409(8), which may well be another point of order.

Nonetheless, the issue of what the Premier has been asked to provide will be dealt with. There is an undertaking to do that, and that work is in motion as we speak. In view of the openness with which that particular question had first been asked and the openness with which it had been responded, I don't think there is any point of order here, but I'll leave it up to the valuable judgment of the chair to decide.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations on the point of order.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I will be brief on the point of order. I would like to clarify my understanding of the issue of ministerial documents. It is my understanding that ministerial documents are the property of the minister and that it is in the minister's purview as to the handling of those documents. Those documents are different from departmental documents or documents that the department of health might hold during a minister's time.

On the issue of the disposal of those documents. You may hold those documents for any period of time as a minister. You may dispose of them as you wish. However, if you choose to dispose of them by providing them to the Provincial Archives, then the rule of closed documents for 15 years comes into effect. In effect, Mr. Speaker, the time when you put those documents in the hands of the Provincial Archives dictates the time and length of closure.

I do want it on the record and I want it clearly understood by members of this Legislature that ministerial documents are the property of the minister, and it is the minister's responsibility as to how he or she wishes those documents handled.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. Opposition House Leader, do I take it that the two points of order were then wrapped into one? So this is it, and we're not going to do this again?

MR. DICKSON: That would be my intention, sir. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: There was a concern raised by the hon. Opposition House Leader under *Beauchesne* 408(2): "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, should deal with the matter raised, and should not provoke debate." Then we went on to discuss the ministerial documents.

What the Hansard Blues say is the following: the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview:

The greatest legacy of private health care in Alberta, Mr. Speaker, will be the accompanying legacy of deception and deceit. The Premier risks contributing to such a legacy by continuing to withhold the contents, 30 blank pages, outlining his government's beliefs on private health care. My questions today are to the Premier. When does the Premier plan to permit Albertans to see the private health care document their tax dollars paid for?

Then the hon. the Premier:

Mr. Speaker, as the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness indicated on a number of occasions in this Legislative Assembly, that information is being prepared as we speak.

But speaking of missing documents, why has the opposition leader put a 15-year prohibition on the public release of 150 boxes of her documents from her time as minister of health?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo: "Point of order."

The hon. the Premier:

What has she got to hide, Mr. Speaker? Is she afraid of something? Is there something in those documents that alludes to her promotion of private, for-profit health care? I wonder.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview:

Let me amend that. A legacy of deception, deceit, and desperation, Mr. Speaker. Why enact closure, Mr. Premier, before you release your government's own positions on private health care policy? Why enact closure before the public has had an opportunity to read those 30 blank pages?

The hon. leader of the government:

Mr. Speaker, again I allude to the 150 boxes of documents that have been secreted away, squirreled away someplace under lock and key because the leader of the Liberal opposition is afraid there might be something in those documents that might put her in contradiction of her position today.

Relative to the question, this government has not invoked closure on third reading. We introduced a motion, Standing Order 47, which allows full and complete debate on third reading. That is not closure. But this is typical of the kind of malicious misinformation that is being spread by the Liberal Party.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview:

Mr. Speaker, when will the Premier stop his desperation antics and table the documents in this Assembly: pages 31, 34, 41, 44, and 47, all speaking about private health care? When will those documents be tabled in this Assembly so Albertans can read them for themselves?

Then the leader of the government goes on:

Mr. Speaker, they will be tabled in due course as soon as the documents are prepared. I understand that that work is under way right now.

You know, you might have to wait days or weeks, but the rest of us are going to have to wait 15 years - 15 years - to see the documents that have been secreted away under lock and key by the former minister of health, who is now the leader of the Liberal opposition. What has she got to hide, Mr. Speaker? I thought she said that she would stand up to her record on health any day. Well, we are waiting. What has she got to hide?

So under *Beauchesne* 408: "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, should deal with the matter raised, and should not provoke debate." And then 428 says:

A question . . . must not:

- (a) be ironical, rhetorical, offensive, or contain epithet, innuendo, satire, or ridicule.
- (b) be trivial, vague, or meaningless . . .
- (f) contain an expression of opinion . . .
- (h) contain inferences.
- (i) contain imputations.

Then the Deputy Government House Leader basically said to refer to 409, a series of things with respect to this.

3:10

The whole subject matter of the boxes is a rather interesting one, and the hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations certainly gave her views with respect to this matter. The fact of the matter is that the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition was a member of Executive Council at, interestingly enough, the same period of time in which the Speaker was a member of Executive Council. The Speaker has had particular experience with respect to documents, and it is exactly as the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations has said: such records are the property of the minister in question, to be released, disposed of, reviewed, made public in any way or form that the minister of Executive Council at the time so chose to do.

Since that time there have been some modifications to that, but in the time frame which we have at hand, these documents could be made available to anyone at any time, and they are the total responsibility of the minister in question. Quite frankly, that should not be the basis of any point of order or discussion thereof.

The use of inflammatory language from one will bring back inflammatory language from another, and if someone wants to throw out "legacy of deception and deceit" and "withhold," then I guess it comes back: "But speaking of missing documents," why would somebody put a "prohibition on," and what have you. It violates all the rules that we've just talked about under 408 and 409 as much in the question as in the answer, as much in the answer as in the question.

I'm not sure where this comes in on government policy. These are debatable questions that just go on on a daily basis. I guess everybody looks for the bite on TV and is hoping to get it. That's what it's down to. What is that expression, hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo? The pot calling the kettle black? Is that what it is?

head: Orders of the Day

head: Public Bills and Orders Other than
Government Bills and Orders

head: Second Reading

Bill 208

Gaming and Liquor Amendment Act, 2000

[Adjourned debate May 3: Mr. Zwozdesky]

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

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to make some comments on the private member's bill that was brought forward by the Leader of the Official Opposition.

[Mrs. Gordon in the chair]

Now, I want to relate this bill in terms of the key recommendations of the report that had been prepared by the Member for Lacombe-Stettler. Madam Speaker, I have to be very careful in my language, I guess, as you're now wearing two hats. In that particular report that I refer to - and I want to talk about the highlights - it proposes the establishment of a gaming secretariat to advise the minister on gaming policy. It requires that all gaming supplies purchased by the gaming commission be purchased via public tender. It creates an all-party standing committee on gaming to review the gaming act on a regular basis, to report the separation of the administrative enforcement functions of the commission, to review and report on funding the police with lottery money to prevent and fight organized crime, to review and report on funding gambling addiction and treatment with gambling revenues, and requires municipal approval for new or the expansion of existing gaming operations. Those highlights relate very, very specifically to the report that was done by the Member for Lacombe-Stettler called *Gaming in Review*.

Let me just say in my opening comments that it surprises me - and I don't want to put you in an awkward position, Madam Speaker - that we have a Member of the Legislative Assembly who takes it upon herself to work very hard and to develop expertise in a particular area, even to the point where the Premier will say: I want you to head up a special task force or a commission to review gambling throughout the province and come forward with recommendations. I go back to the first report that was done by the

Member for Lacombe-Stettler. Many of those recommendations were in fact acted upon. That particular member has a better understanding than I think anybody else on the government side in terms of gambling in this province, the implications of gambling and steps that could be taken to minimize the negative impact of gambling. We accept the fact that gambling is now a part of life in Alberta and throughout Canada, but it doesn't have to escalate out of control.

In the particular report that the member came forward with, Madam Speaker, the government chose to ignore it completely, which really, really surprises me. Every recommendation was ignored. There was no discussion. Nothing came forward, even though the Canada West Foundation in their report that was tabled a few weeks later more or less concurred with the recommendations of the report *Gaming in Review*.

Madam Speaker, the first point I would make is that government has a responsibility to heed advice, to heed advice when it comes from opposition but particularly when it comes from their own members that are asked to create a certain task and then are shut out when that task is completed because, for whatever reason, it interferes with the objectives of the government or the minister, which may very well be to use gambling as a cash cow and forget about the implications, the negative effects that gambling throughout the province may have.

In that report that came down from the Member for Lacombe-Stettler – I want to refer to some of them, because they're directly related to Bill 208. There's no question about that. I don't make any bones about it. It's unusual for opposition to be trying to assist a member of government in implementing recommendations, but in this particular case there is every rationale in the world as to why it should be done. The government has refused to do it. We have a member that has done something good, and the government refuses to act upon it, so the Official Opposition then has a responsibility to try and push government in the proper direction.

Now the recommendations just briefly. The first recommendation in that report was that the Ontario gaming model be studied with emphasis on implementation; secondly, a gaming policy secretariat should be re-established in Alberta; thirdly, a national gaming presence or direction should be considered; fourthly, the province of Ontario did not reinvent the wheel when it came to implementing new strategies on gaming; Alberta did some and so on and so forth; fifth, net lottery dollars should be appropriated to two key priority areas; sixth, gaming is an extremely lucrative industry, it points out; seventh, if serious consideration is given to large destination casinos, many factors must be taken into account. In Ontario it relates to the policy decisions that were made and later rescinded following public discord.

Now, in the actual bill itself, Madam Speaker, when I look through the specific sections, first of all section 2, clause (i.1), the amendment is: "'Gaming Secretariat' means the Alberta Gaming Secretariat established under section 42.01." Then we go to section 3(2), where we would add:

37.1 Prior to the board issuing a gaming licence or a facility licence under section 37,

- (a) the board must, within 30 days of receiving an application, forward the application to the municipality in which the activity prescribed in the licence would occur, and
- (b) that municipality must pass a resolution approving the new facility licence or gaming licence.

The reason that is done, Madam Speaker, is that municipalities know what's best in their particular area. We've seen municipalities throughout this province that have said, "We do not want VLTs," for example, "in the hotels." We've had other municipalities that say that they don't object to them, and they've voted in favour of

allowing them in the bars, as that was one of two options that was given at that particular time. Nevertheless, the municipality must have the right to be part of the decision-making process as to what's good for their community.

Then we go into the next section, where we would add: "All acquisitions of gaming supplies by the Commission must be made by public tender." I think that's self-explanatory. To ensure that we get the best goods at the best price, a public tender is the only way to go.

3:20

Now, the purposes of the Alberta gaming secretariat itself. It would be established

- (a) to advise, report to and to make recommendations to the Minister on matters relating to [gambling],
- (b) to conduct research and public consultation on the social and economic effects of gaming,
- (c) to foster awareness and to encourage public discussion on matters relating to
 - (i) gaming addiction,
 - (ii) organized crime and [gambling],
 - (iii) the effects of gaming on children and families.

- (3) The Gaming Secretariat shall make its recommendations to the Government through the Minister.

We look at those purposes, "gaming addiction" for example. We've had \$1.5 million allocated towards the research institute on addictions. What has come of that \$1.5 million? What has come of this research institute? I know there is a board of directors in place. I know that they've had at least one meeting. I don't know how many after that, and I don't know what's come out of that. We've seen no reports. We've seen absolutely nothing that would justify that \$1.5 million being allocated. Maybe it hasn't been spent yet. But if it hasn't, what is the holdup? Why isn't the government reporting back to this Legislative Assembly as to what activity is going on, if any activity is going on?

We talk in terms of "organized crime and gaming." Now, government has denied any fear of organized crime in gaming. However, again the Canada West Foundation report, the report from the Member for Lacombe-Stettler, numerous reports throughout the United States, throughout Canada, throughout the world state that widespread gambling can encourage organized crime. There is absolutely no question. The potential is there.

What do we have? I think we have one-fifth of a police officer's time that is allocated towards crime that may be associated to gaming in this particular province. [Two members rose] Are they standing for me? Oh, I thought maybe it was a point of order.

Then the third was "the effects of gaming on children and families." Madam Speaker, we've all heard stories – at least we should have heard stories – about the effects of gaming on children and families. As the critic of Gaming in the Liberal caucus, the Official Opposition, I've heard countless ones. I've heard ones where people have felt that suicides were committed because of a gaming addiction, a gambling addiction. Now, there's no way of proving that certainly, but the evidence was there, that the gambling addiction led them to actually take their own life. We've heard about broken marriages. We've heard about people going to jail, stealing money from their employers because they had this gambling addiction and they had to feed these machines. We've heard of people losing their homes, their jobs, their businesses. We've heard of, I think in the Lethbridge area, a businessman losing \$800,000.

The member that was appointed by the minister to the Gaming Research Institute board of directors is himself now a member of the Canada foundation on gambling addiction. He himself is one that was worth \$1 million at one time, who opened up a restaurant in Fort Saskatchewan. He's gone on TV – I'm not saying anything that

hasn't been said publicly before – and he's told his story about how it's cost him virtually everything in life. He's fought that addiction fortunately, but it's cost him everything in life.

But of all the stories I heard, the one that touched me the most was this mother, a grandmother, that phoned me and said that her daughter was so addicted to the VLTs that she would do virtually anything to get money to put into those machines. One Christmas, when the grandmother bought the grandchildren a bunch of gifts and went over to the house and put them under the Christmas tree, the children never got those gifts because the mother, who was addicted to the VLTs, took those gifts down to a pawnshop, pawned them off, took the money and blew it on the VLTs. The grandmother then applied for court action to take custody of those children. The family is in turmoil now. They're not speaking to each other. It has just totally destroyed that family.

So the rationale for an Alberta gaming secretariat to fulfill those purposes outlined speaks for itself.

Now, we talk in terms of this gaming secretariat and how it would function.

42.02(2) At least one member of the Gaming Secretariat shall be . . .

- (a) Members of the Legislative Assembly who are members of the governing party;
- (b) Members of the Legislative Assembly who are members of the Official Opposition;
- (c) [a member of] the general public;
- (d) the Royal Canadian Mounted Police;
- (e) the Alberta Gaming Research Institute;
- (f) the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission;
- (g) the Child and Family Services Secretariat.

Then we talk in terms of how the appointments would take place and such.

We talk in terms of the standing committee on gaming which is recommended in Bill 208. Now, the standing committee on gaming would be

a standing committee of the Legislative Assembly called the "Standing Committee on Gaming" consisting of 9 Members of the Legislative Assembly.

(3) The membership of the Standing Committee shall include 3 Members of the Legislative Assembly who are not members of the governing party, but if there is

- (a) an insufficient number of non-government members to fill the 3 positions on the Standing Committee, or
- (b) an insufficient number of non-government members who are willing to fill the 3 positions on the Standing Committee,

the resulting vacant positions on the Standing Committee may be filled by Members of the Legislative Assembly who are members of the [party in government].

The purposes of that are

- (a) to hold public meetings . . .
- (b) to complete a comprehensive review of this Act within 1 year after the coming into force . . . and every 3 years after that . . .
- (c) to study and make recommendations regarding
 - (i) the separation of the administrative and enforcement functions of the Commission and the creation of an independent body . . .
 - (ii) the introduction of a statutory requirement to provide a proportion of revenues from the Commission or Lottery Fund for the prevention and treatment of gaming addiction.

Again, that gaming addiction. We recognize that there is roughly \$3 million that goes to AADAC, but there is still a very, very serious problem out there.

- (iv) the economic, social, regulatory, enforcement and addictive implications of Internet gaming,

which is spreading and continues to spread and which is very, very difficult to control.

Now, when we look at the rationale for this bill coming forward, for the members of this caucus supporting this type of legislation, let's keep in mind that revenues from gambling businesses are approaching \$1 billion in this province. That's a far cry from 1989, when I was first elected. I think it was in fact a year or two later when the first dollars sort of spit themselves out of VLTs, I believe down in the Medicine Hat or Lethbridge area. When the former minister responsible for gaming, who is now the Speaker of the House, shifted \$25 million into general revenues, that was considered a big, big deal.

Now, that's chicken feed in terms of what the province produces in terms of its cash cow, close to \$1 billion, and there's no indication to believe that figure is going to decrease. There is a freeze under way, yes, until this summer sometime, to review gaming totally, but we don't know what the outcome of that review is going to be. We don't know what direction it's taking. Is it a review to see if electronic gaming should be allowed in the bingo halls, for example? Is the review going to look at the minicasinos that the Hotel Association would like to see? Is it going to allow for what we call the creation of destination casinos in areas possibly like Banff in an attempt to lure dollars from the United States from tourists that may come up and want to gamble in some nice country like Kananaskis? So we don't know the purpose of the review, if it's to better the lives of Albertans in terms of gambling or if it's to look at ways to create more revenue; in other words, to enlarge upon that cash cow.

When we look at the revenue streams being created by gambling, we then have to recognize the possibility that we've got to make a commitment to fight any organized crime or potential organized crime and addiction associated with gambling. That has to be done, and as gambling escalates, as the amount of revenue escalates, of course the addictions and the potential for crime are going to also escalate accordingly. I think that's a given.

I've talked in terms of gaming addiction in the past, about how devastating it is to families, to individuals, to communities. We've seen that happen, and that's why a number of communities who had plebiscites and asked for those machines to be removed don't want the widespread gambling that we see in some of the municipalities at the present time.

We now see \$3.6 million, a rough figure, that goes towards addiction, but when we look in terms of the percentage, that's less than one-half of 1 percent of total net revenues going to addiction. When I studied the model in Texas . . .

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, I hesitate to interrupt you, but the time limit for consideration of this item of business has expired for today.

3:30

head: Motions Other than Government Motions

Vehicle Front Licence Plates

509. Mr. Lougheed moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to reinstate the requirement to display front licence plates on all vehicles registered in the province.

Mr. Tannas moved that the motion be amended by adding "in conjunction with a licence plate reissue" after "province".

[Debate adjourned May 2: Mr. Fischer speaking]

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Wainwright.

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to complete my remarks on the amendment to Motion 509, as last

Tuesday we did run out of time, but my position has not changed any, and I'm still strongly in favour of the amendment and the motion.

It is important to note that many of the petitions that have been filed in the Leg. on this issue are from rural residents from Small Town, Alberta. Many of these residents are good people who work with Rural Crime Watch, Neighbourhood Watch, Citizens on Patrol, and other groups, and these people have experienced firsthand the disappointment of not being able to identify a vehicle because of no front licence plate. Madam Speaker, these people volunteer their time. They expose themselves to substantial danger, sometimes even risking their lives to help keep our communities safe, and I believe we should give them all of the tools that we can to make their job easier.

Passing Motion 509 is something that this Legislature can do to improve the safety and the well-being of our communities, and reverting to the two licence plates concept is a very, very positive step for us here in Alberta. I want to urge all of the members to support this amendment and Motion 509.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Ready for the question?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood.

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to add a few comments. I'd like to congratulate the Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan for bringing forward this issue.

I remember when licence plates on the front of vehicles were lost. Sometimes policemen are not very complimentary of governments, and it doesn't matter what government. Sometimes they're a little cynical, and I remember a comment, somebody saying: whose stupid idea is this anyway? It really did impede the law enforcement efforts of police officers.

Criminals are not very bright, and sometimes, you know, they'll do things, and they think they're going to get away with something. I recall many times when I apprehended a thug for stealing a vehicle. He would exchange the rear plate on a car, but he forgot about exchanging the front plate on the car, and the front plate was how we were able to determine that the vehicle was stolen as it drove by you or if you found a vehicle in an alley or someplace with two different plates. Of course, it was obvious to you that if the front and rear plates didn't match, there was a problem here.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I know that the removal of the plate was an effort to save about \$700,000 or \$750,000 to the government on a yearly basis. Well, I would suspect that that amount of money was spent investigating crimes that did not likely have a good conclusion as a result of removing the front plate and on insurance costs and insurance investigations as a result of that.

The initiative, I know, came out of Rural Crime Watch groups. I have spoken with them in the past couple of years in relation to this. I think it's a great initiative. I think it's important to bring back the front licence plate. Certainly, with the advent of technology, for those who don't like photo radar, I think this is maybe another way, of course, of getting the most out of your cameras. I suppose we could look at that as well, intersections with red-light cameras, photo radar. Those are just by-products of having a front licence plate, but I think the more pressing issue is the issue of being able to identify vehicles that may or may not be involved in crimes in rural areas and

certainly, as well, in the city. I think it will help police officers and those folks who are on community patrols trying to help police members out in communities.

I urge all members of this Assembly to support this motion. Hopefully we'll see it come back, and we'll have front licence plates back on our vehicles soon.

Thank you.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 509 as amended carried]

Urban Renewal

510. Ms Olsen moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to establish a special task force in conjunction with federal and municipal authorities to examine ways to preserve neighbourhoods affected by school closures and business relocations.

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

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One might ask: why does this belong here in the Alberta Legislature, and why would one want the federal authorities involved in this as well? My thought is that we need to be looking at the big picture when it comes to communities, and that doesn't take just one level of government. It takes all three working co-operatively and moving forward. The intent of the motion is to get people thinking about the big picture of neighbourhood denigration and moving forward to some solutions.

We have all of these little pockets of things happening. We have, you know, the policy framework on homelessness. That might be one issue. We have the Safer Cities Task Force and the safer cities initiative, and we have changes that the hon. Minister of Children's Services worked out with myself when she was the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and that's another piece of legislation that's helpful. We have business revitalization zones that council is working on, but we need to bring it all together. Then there's the National Crime Prevention Council, that looks at the big picture and says: well, what can we do here? Let's not see crime prevention just as target-hardening programs, those programs such as Neighbourhood Watch or Stop Thief or Block Parent. It's much bigger than that.

Crime prevention is a very big picture perspective. We talk about safe and affordable housing and the homelessness issue, and we talk about health issues and education issues and safe communities. You know, we've heard lots of that discussion in here. I guess what I'm looking for is some way to have all of those groups that are working together from the municipal, provincial, and federal levels get together and look at how we can preserve some of the neighbourhoods that exist.

Some of the highlights. Schools, in my view, are the heart of a neighbourhood, and once a neighbourhood in a large city such as Edmonton or Calgary or in a smaller rural area starts to lose the schools in older neighbourhoods, it becomes harder if not impossible to retain and attract young people and families and businesses to that area. We've had a number of those things happen in Alberta. We've seen downloading at all levels of government. We now see that it's very difficult for any municipality or any one government on its own to deal with some of these issues. So I think there's a shared responsibility.

I think about a school in my own neighbourhood. You know, part of my constituency is inner city. It's a great community, and it's got great community action, if you will. Those folks really love their community and are trying to make it a better place. Again, I go back

to the Municipal Government Act change that the hon. Member for Sherwood Park assisted to usher in.

3:40

You know, we've had a number of houses, I think somewhere near 40, that were boarded up, declared unsafe, and those kinds of things. They have been knocked down as a result of – I think it was more the threat of the city being able to do something through that new legislation, not because the city actually went out and did something, that finally all these homeowners who had these buildings that needed to either be restored or bulldozed did in fact get rid of them. Now there's a lot there where a new home can be built that new people can move into. So you start to regenerate your community and gentrify that community, and that's okay. Gentrification of a neighbourhood isn't a bad thing, and there are lots of communities that could certainly use that kind of change. So there are those issues.

Businesses don't want to locate in areas without schools, especially in the rural centres. I think that's an issue as well. If your kids are on a school bus ride for, you know, an hour or an hour and a half a day, that's not only a long ride for the kids. But how do you build up your community? How do you attract businesses when they know that there is no school and there are no services in the area?

I think we have to also pay attention to the notion of suburban decay. We've seen that happening. The U.S. is going through that phenomenon right now. What's happening is that all of these areas that people moved out of – they moved out of the inner city because they thought that was denigrated. Then they moved out to the suburban areas. Now they're getting farther and farther out. So what's happening in the suburban areas that they moved out to to offer them sort of the middle-class life is that those areas are now becoming decayed. Those are the areas losing their schools. We haven't paid enough attention to those kinds of issues as well.

We know that construction and servicing costs for new subdivisions are very high, and the infrastructure exists in the inner city in those cities that could make a comeback. One of the things that I am concerned about, I guess, is that we have areas within our constituencies, in the downtown core of, say, Calgary or Edmonton – even Lethbridge and Grande Prairie will experience some of this, some of the growing cities – where we'll see people moving out, as I talked about, sort of that suburban growth. Then what happens is that we only have a few people in the inner city, and oftentimes those people that are living in the inner city don't have a lot of money. They may be people on assistance. They're not always. In fact, I would suggest that my constituency has a number of people who have been there for many, many years and a number of people who have moved to the area because housing is affordable. We also have a group of people who have some high needs or are transitional. They're transient. They're moving more often than others.

What happens is that if you close a school that's offering specific needs to a child whose family is suffering in some way, be it poverty or dysfunction, and the child needs some specific care and is getting it at a school, well, because the utilization rate at that school isn't what the government wants it to be, then the threat of closing down that school becomes a problem. So now where does that kid go? Where does that child go who's already suffering maybe some serious issues at home, suffering from poverty and maybe some other serious behavioral problems or learning disabilities? Now we're going to put that child on a bus – and we see that happen all the time – and the child is now bused to some other school, creating a little more stress for the family and a little more stress for the child. I have some difficulties with that when we have these existing spaces in inner cities. We should be looking at rebuilding those spaces. It

is far more cost-effective to do that than it is to keep on with urban sprawl.

I've visited some great communities throughout North America and, in fact, England. They've gone through these transitions. I remember one community in London. They built these huge, tall 40-storey housing complexes. You know, they built two or three of them side by side. This was all low-income housing. Then they built this great, huge park in the centre. They expected the mom who was 20 storeys up to be watching her kids in the park that was 20 storeys down. This whole concept just didn't work, you know, the stacking. There's this whole notion of public private space, and that whole idea was to feed it in this particular project. So they blew up those buildings. They redesigned the area, and they built it on a crime prevention model. It's a pretty active area now, and it's a pretty vibrant area.

We've seen those in communities in Louisville, Kentucky; Savannah, Georgia; Atlanta; Toronto. Toronto and Vancouver have some great communities and some great co-operation with all three levels of governments, that we should be looking at, tapping into the resources that exist but also having an overall community as well and an overall plan that all three levels of government are involved in.

Edmonton's safer cities initiative is one of the best initiatives in this country, to be quite honest. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora was one of the founding members on that particular committee, and in fact that's where we came to know each other. He's done some tremendous work, and so have all the other players involved in that, but we can't let all of that just die.

I'm looking for at least some thought to examining, as I said, ways to preserve these neighbourhoods. It doesn't come from just this city. It needs to have a big focus. The federal government was in a housing co-op plan at some point. Should we be re-evaluating that? There are all sorts of other initiatives that we could look at. In fact, I think the development community has a role to play and would like to develop safe neighbourhoods and preserve the existing communities. I'm looking for some sort of support in that respect. We have to accept the fact that bigger is not always better. So moving out, just expanding the walls of the cities, isn't always the best thing. Is that sustainable development happening? As I suggested, you know, the whole notion of suburban decay is something that we have to focus on.

We do know that there are programs out there. We do know that all levels of government are working in some way. The National Crime Prevention Council is looking at community projects and safe communities. The business revitalization zones are established in order for business strips to become more sustainable, so it's not just as 118th Avenue – there's some frustration in relation to the prostitution issue and the businesses that tend to pop up on 118th Avenue. They tend to be pawnshops. Let's see; I think there are some triple X movie places up there and all sorts of liquor stores. In order to rebuild, we need goodwill at all levels of government. That doesn't necessarily mean that I'm asking all levels of government to throw a whole pot of money at this. I'm looking at ways to ensure that our neighbourhoods remain active and vital. The communities are generally fighting to keep their neighbourhoods alive, and I'm hoping that we have that kind of will to put together an overall plan as well and look at what we can do.

3:50

I think there are steps, as I say, that have been taken, but there doesn't seem to be one overall strategy. You know, we would even want to look at the whole notion of not just development in terms of housing but certainly in terms of schools and community plans. I know that the city of Edmonton has community plans and ARPs, but how do they feed into what the provincial government is doing, and

how does the provincial government feed into what the federal government is doing? Is there a happy medium in relation to that?

I put together an initiative in relation to prostitution and put it forward to the Minister of Infrastructure and the Justice minister. You know, it was a bylaw within the municipalities at one point that we now figure is just not workable at that level and needs to be moved up to the provincial level. If we can get that bylaw moved to the provincial level, then that's great. However, because it has to do with prostitution, maybe we should find out what the feds are doing in relation to that.

So there are all sorts of things that need to happen, and I feel that it's better to work co-operatively than it is for everybody to just go their own different way. We know that that doesn't work. We know that we need to look at the big picture.

I guess the other thing I look at is that when there's political will and there's an overall strategy that's developed out of that political will, we're doing a couple of things. We are providing safe communities, and we are providing for new development. We are looking at safe housing initiatives, and we are looking at the crime and safety issues. I think that's critical. We've seen at this stage in many communities that it can't happen with just one level of government trying to deal with the issues, so I would like to see the kind of good work that all levels can do.

I know that there are ministers in here who are willing to work towards this type of initiative, and it's a matter of co-operation. It's not a matter of "Well, we can't get involved because we don't have the money," or "We don't want to get involved because we don't want to work with that level of government." We're not very productive when we do those kinds of things, and the people who lose are the citizens of the province.

Mr. Speaker, I'm hoping that we can see some support for this. This is not something that's going to cost money. It's just great to have a number of different-thinking views around a table to come up with a plan.

With that I take my seat. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm grateful for this opportunity to speak to Motion 510. This motion proposes to set up a special task force to consider the decline of neighbourhoods resulting from business relocations and school closures.

I would like to consider, first of all, what Alberta statutes currently say with respect to business relocations and school closures. Under the Municipal Government Act, part 1, section 3(c), one of the purposes of municipalities is "to develop and maintain safe and viable communities."

Furthermore, under section 7 of the act municipalities are given jurisdiction to pass bylaws in matters respecting "businesses, business activities and persons engaged in business." Business relocations, as outlined in Motion 510, are very much within the jurisdiction of our capable municipal governments. For the province to pass this motion and get involved in directing where businesses are to locate would be a violation of not only the statute but also the jurisdiction of our municipal counterparts.

The role of the Alberta government has been to work diligently to ensure a hands-off approach to business activity in the province and to create an economic climate that facilitates the growth and success of businesses. This policy has worked very effectively to foster viable businesses within our local communities and attract new business investment to our province. This government's new

economic development strategy, *Get Ready Alberta: Strengthening the Alberta Advantage*, released in February this year, outlines very specifically the direction of this government in ensuring sustainable economic development and prosperity within our province while promoting the success of our businesses nationally and internationally.

While supporting our businesses through fiscal responsibility, balanced budgets, low taxes, good transportation systems, and balanced economic growth, this government has also determined to get out of the business of being in business. This means that no financial incentives are offered to specific businesses in Alberta. One of the Alberta government's goals is in its business plan, and that is to promote sustainable communities. One of the initiatives that the government indicates will help fulfill this goal is working in partnership with local governments to promote healthy and sustainable communities throughout Alberta.

In order to do this, the government aims to foster self-reliance and self-sufficiency among businesses and municipalities. This is consistent with the fiscal agenda of the Alberta government, which has been to ensure that departments and government agencies live within their means and that the government moves out of the private sector. The Alberta government has maintained this position since 1993 and over the years has worked diligently to create a positive business climate to attract investment and ensure the viability and self-sufficiency of Alberta businesses, making them strong competitors and world leaders in the global economy.

Currently the government is doing a number of things to preserve Alberta communities adversely affected by school closures and business relocations, making the objective of this motion rather redundant. These programs include Alberta Community Development's Alberta Mainstreet program, which helps communities facing challenges resulting from business relocations or closures, and Alberta Economic Development's business counseling and advice services offered through their eight regional offices around the province.

In addition, the Business Link Business Service Centre is the first of its kind in Canada. Located in Edmonton, the centre services clients across the province on a wide range of issues facing businesses including start-up, loan programs, exporting, private- and public-sector programs and services, as well as others. This centre is a tripartite initiative between the federal government through the department of western economic diversification, the provincial government through Alberta Economic Development, and Economic Development Edmonton. The Business Link serves all Albertans both directly and through alliances with other municipal, provincial, and federal networks.

The city of Vancouver also has a tripartite agreement in place between the federal, provincial, and municipal levels of government that focuses on encouraging economic development, addressing housing issues, and reducing crime. With respect to neighbourhood decline specifically, the B.C. government has a unique approach to this issue. They advocate that bureaucracy will never solve the problems facing declining neighbourhoods as it is too inflexible and that therefore private industry must indeed take the lead. In particular, they stress that flexibility is needed in zoning bylaws.

4:00

In Alberta, Alberta Community Development along with Alberta Economic Development and Alberta Municipal Affairs are partners in an initiative with the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, or AUMA, called the viable communities initiative. In October 1999 the AUMA passed the viable communities resolution and subsequently resolved to present a proposal that would effectively move

Alberta municipalities in a collaborative manner towards achieving the objectives of the resolution.

Utilizing the definition that a viable municipality is a community which has the will and resources to sustain itself both economically and socially, the intent is to develop a template that will assist communities in self-assessment and identify tools and resources that could be applied in addressing gaps. Alberta Community Development has been approached and has agreed, based on their understanding of the skills needed to strengthen groups and organizations, to assume the co-ordinating role within government. A formal meeting of partners will take place in the very near future.

Alberta Economic Development, or AED, oversees a number of different initiatives that contribute to the preservation of neighbourhoods by facilitating the viability and competitiveness of community businesses and local economic development. These initiatives include the following. By supporting regional partnerships, community economic development is encouraged. AED supports communities in their economic growth through the regional development branch. This branch implements regional initiatives that disseminate information, encourage development opportunities, and facilitate networking within a community.

The regional development branch has played a proactive role in recent months by facilitating a number of regional economic development initiatives focused on communities working together to address economic issues. Examples of regional co-operation include the central Alberta economic partnership, the Peace region economic development alliance, and the emerging northeastern Alberta information hub. These three initiatives represent over 90 Alberta municipalities working together in a regional context. In addition, the Self-Reliant Communities Committee of Alberta Economic Development Authority, or AEDA, has also placed a high priority on supporting and encouraging regional co-operation as a major policy recommendation to the provincial government.

Alberta Economic Development offers a number of business seminars throughout Alberta to provide information to business on current topics. Two seminar series are currently running within the province. Selling Business to Business offers Alberta's small manufacturers and producers an insider's look at how stores make decisions regarding the products they sell. E-commerce information sessions provide information on how to use the Internet as a tool for conducting business.

Finally, Alberta Economic Development is a part of the Business Link. The Business Link Business Service Centre is a joint initiative between the governments of Canada and Alberta and Economic Development Edmonton. The Business Link provides special products and services that help businesses to network, provide better customer focus and service, and develop and implement successful business plans. As part of its new economic strategy, Get Ready Alberta, it is providing every home, business, classroom, library, and municipality in Alberta with access to a high-speed Internet connection. High-speed Internet access can deliver university or college educational programs at home and will open up new business opportunities in the community.

AED also assists communities by promoting the establishment and expansion of businesses in the province. This is accomplished with promotion and advertising activities through networking, publications, studies, seminars, and trade shows. Alberta communities are partners in promoting the Alberta advantage, and AED maintains a full range of community profiles on the department web site. These profiles describe the amenities of each community and include statistics that provide valuable market and business data.

Mr. Speaker, this motion has not been well thought out when we consider the vast number of initiatives that this government is

already doing to foster viable and growing communities in Alberta. The initiatives I have mentioned are only a few that deal specifically with the business relocation issue in the motion.

In addition, the motion states that the task force could be a tripartite initiative between the federal, provincial, and municipal levels of government. First, Mr. Speaker, we already have a very effective tripartite agreement in place to service the business community. Second, as I stated earlier, under the Municipal Government Act it is the jurisdiction of municipalities to pass bylaws regarding businesses. The Alberta government would therefore oppose any initiative to involve the federal government in an area of municipal jurisdiction. In addition, the government could not support a proposal to have a federal presence on a task force examining local issues in areas within exclusive provincial constitutional authority; namely, schools, municipalities, and local economic development.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, duplicating the mechanisms currently in place "to examine ways to preserve neighbourhoods affected by school closures and business relocations" by Alberta government ministries may offset the benefit that might be derived from the establishment of a special task force. Provincially there are currently systems in place to provide a co-ordinated approach to departmental planning. These include the standing policy committee on health and safe communities, the standing policy committee on economic sustainability, the deputy ministers' committee, and the business planning structure. It would be helpful to know what role this proposed task force would fulfill that is not being addressed by the systems that currently exist provincially, municipally, and federally.

All in all, Mr. Speaker, this motion is poorly worded and lacks an understanding of legislated jurisdictional powers of different levels of government. I would encourage all members to vote against this motion.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, we've heard an interesting catalogue of a range of government programs, some targeted to businesses and other areas, but I think the last speaker misses the point of Motion 510. The essence of it, I understand, is one of trying to co-ordinate so that you don't simply deal with businesses over here in this corner and deal with schools over in that corner. It's the idea of trying to integrate things and recognizing that the key building block is really the neighbourhood, a unit smaller than the community.

I just look at this from the perspective of Calgary-Buffalo, and I think of the nine different communities I represent. I think how different they are. There is the Downtown Business Association, which is huge. It represents the largest number of businesses, I expect, of any business association I can imagine in the province. Then you've got a small number of businesses along 11th Street between 11th Avenue and 17th Avenue. There's not even a formal BRZ – they wouldn't have the budget for that – but there's some community identification or some neighbourhood identification, and I think that's really what the mover of the motion was trying to speak to with the motion.

4:10

In Calgary-Buffalo you've got a very active business revitalization zone along 4th Street, another very active one on 17th Avenue east/west, and then you've got the downtown one. Chinatown has got a whole set of different kinds of issues. So if you were to deal with this, as the last speaker suggested, on a community basis, you wouldn't be recognizing the differences and the different kind of challenges that exist in Chinatown or the Downtown Business Association or 17th Avenue and 4th Street. There are certainly some similarities, but they also have some particular challenges and uniqueness.

When I was looking at this motion, I thought of what we'd gone through when the Victoria community used to be part of Calgary-Buffalo. That was before the 1997 election. I remember the concern when they closed the Victoria community school. That was one of the 60 schools that closed. Victoria Park has been a neighbourhood and a community that's had a tough time for a very long time. As the members in the Chamber who've served on Calgary city council will recall, it's a community that has struggled in the shadow of the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede board. They've tried to make that an attractive place to live and a place for people to make homes and raise families, and it's tough. I remember that the loss of the community school was seen by many as a devastating blow, though you still have an active Victoria Community Association.

They say that all politics is local. In seeing the kind of impact on that community when the Victoria school was closed, I think what that certainly taught me is that it was a huge body blow to the community. What was tough was that these decisions were all sort of being made independently. There wasn't a sort of linkage, and what I applaud the mover of this motion, the Member for Edmonton-Norwood, for attempting to do is to link together schools, because that's such an important part of our community, and also what's happening with local businesses. You know, reasonable men and women may think of a host of different ways you might configure this, but all this is is a motion, members. I'd be disappointed if any member thought to vote against this. This isn't about spending money. It's just trying to do a better job in terms of co-ordinating those things.

I take some heart from something done in the city of Calgary, the learning environmental action plan, or LEAP, that's just completed its first year in Calgary communities. It's a program that was created by the Calgary public school board having to do with school closures, and this was after the minister of education at the time said: we're not building any more new schools in Calgary because there are too many schools that aren't currently being utilized. What the Calgary board at the time did was come up with a major process to find ways of involving people in neighbourhoods and communities in that discussion, and I expect that some of my Calgary colleagues here have had the benefit of seeing some of those LEAP projects. You know, the people who are involved in them feel empowered. I mean, I haven't talked to everybody involved in all the LEAP projects, but the people I talked to signal that they think it's a very worthwhile kind of process.

It's a question of looking not just at what classrooms you close but whether there are other uses the school facility can be put to for the benefit of the community. I mean, what would possibly be the matter with that? It's creative, it's resourceful, and I think there's some potential. I don't know how familiar our colleagues outside of Calgary are with LEAP, but I think it has some real potential. I use the example that in the 1999-2000 school year they had what were called pathfinding teams in 10 different Calgary communities, and the focus was on creating quality learning environments for children. Part of it was a recognition that it isn't just the physical facility, Mr. Speaker. There may be alternatives with some creativity that we could find to provide quality learning environments for children that may be outside what we'd thought of before.

I look at the school consolidation in communities like Acadia, Forest Lawn, Forest Heights, Ramsay, and at the French immersion programs south of the Bow River. Pathfinding teams have been working on the concept of minischools in Hidden Valley, Martindale, Taradale, Monterey Park, Signal Hill, and Richmond, all areas where people came together to do a lot of what this motion calls for and suggests, and that is: can we be creative in our communities? It's useful.

Members may say: "Well, why would you need a federal government perspective? Why would you need a provincial government perspective?" You know, it could be done in ways where it would be a more remote kind of involvement, but it seems to me that it starts to look at ways we can look at our neighbourhoods, which is where we live and where we raise our families and where we carry on our businesses and where we do our work. Are there ways of trying to ensure that we just don't treat it as a school closing problem or that we just don't treat it as a business shutting down problem? Can we look to find ways to see how they can reinforce each other so that we don't end up in a situation like in Victoria Park, where the school closed and the businesses are going to take a hit? It makes sense to me to try and do some integration of those kinds of services.

If you look at what the pathfinding teams have done in Calgary, in Renfrew and at the Viscount Bennett Centre, they're continuing to work into the next school year, and there are 12 new teams. What you'll find is that the pathfinding teams have gone beyond a narrow school utilization formula, one that hopefully the Learning minister is going to find a way to change because it's too rigid, too narrow. We have to find a way to take the creativity we're finding in communities. This is the reason I'm supporting this motion.

What's the point in having these good citizens putting all of this energy into trying to find ways to revitalize their community, to ensure a quality learning environment for their children, if you have one level of government or another – and it is not just a question of the municipal government doing something or the provincial government doing something. If any of the three levels of government are doing things that are counterproductive to a strong local community, I think that's a bad thing. I would hope that all members in the Assembly would feel that would be a bad thing and something we'd want to avoid.

I look at the sort of impact that the proposal in terms of minischools has had. That's one of the things that's come out of LEAP in Calgary, the notion of relocatable classrooms, such as a new starter elementary school in the Hidden Valley area in I guess it would probably be the Calgary-Nose Creek constituency. I think that shows us why this motion could work and work very well.

My perspective may be a little different than some because parts of Calgary-Buffalo are very old. You know, my mother, who is 81 now, went to elementary school in the Connaught school, behind my constituency office. The same building is still standing. It's one of those old sandstone treasures. I heard the Member for Calgary-Currie the other day doing a recognition or a private member's statement and talking about some of the great old historical buildings in Calgary. Well, that's a dimension of the problem too. How do you find a win/win, potentially more wins, by looking to protect some of those heritage buildings, and provide quality learning spaces for children where they are?

I can't help but think that the old community school program, when we had 60 of those, was arguably one of the best things we could have done to involve communities and educators and parents and so on in trying to provide services in one place and do some planning in a centralized way. Well, the government, as part of the cost-cutting regime – I never heard a criticism of the model, but I think it was a cost-cutting regime – eliminated that program and eliminated the 60 community schools, and they lost the worker they had to help co-ordinate those things. I lament the loss of that, and I think we all recognize there is a need for something like that. When I see a motion like this come forward, it's a question of trying to do again some of that co-ordinating facility that we lost before.

So I'd say to the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview that this is not a question that's solved with provincial government

programs that are targeted at cities or provincewide. It's trying to get beyond that to provide some more co-ordinated local response.

4:20

As I say, I think that in Calgary-Buffalo you could find some very good examples where people are, as a matter of need, starting to do informally some of what the motion calls for in perhaps a formal way. I remember that in the communities of Connaught and also Cliff Bungalow and Mission, where my office is involved, we meet with people representing different agencies – the community association and the business revitalization zone board are represented – and we talk about common problems. In the 4th Street BRZ it was panhandling. It was a significant issue. So what happened was that my office and the community association and the BRZ and some other agencies came up with an idea. Instead of just ranting about the problem, why don't we arrange to hire somebody to work with people on the street to let them know where they can go to find a meal or to see if there are some job opportunities?

This actually came out of an initiative initiated by the Calgary Downtown Business Association. Panhandling was a problem, and as a community they tried to find solutions to that. You know, as with a lot of social problems, we haven't fixed the problem, but I think what you saw were some really creative ideas to try and reduce panhandling so that people weren't uncomfortable in some of the prime shopping areas and pedestrian areas in downtown Calgary.

That's the sort of thing that this motion speaks to, at least as I understand it. I think whether you are an MLA in northeast Calgary or downtown Calgary or someplace in Edmonton or in any other community in this province, you'd say: this is something that we can work with. The great thing about a motion is that there's not ever a lot of detail. You talk about or you tease out concepts and general ideas. Why would it not make sense, if you have three levels of government, to have varying levels of involvement? Would it not make sense that they would all have some role? Obviously, the municipal role would be the biggest, because they have the biggest legislative mandate, the biggest area of legislative responsibility. The province's role might be a little smaller, the federal role smaller yet. I think this is worth a try. Why wouldn't we attempt to see if this kind of a focus would pay off? It does go back and speak to some of those things we tried to do around community schools a number of years ago.

Those are the observations I wanted to make. I hope that members would support it. I certainly hope the Calgary members who have seen those communities in action would support it. I suspect that their constituents would like to see this sort of co-ordination promoted at every possible opportunity. So for all those reasons, I'm going to support this motion, Mr. Speaker.

Thanks very much.

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

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with pleasure that I rise this afternoon to speak in support of Motion 510. I believe that this motion is very timely and concerns an issue that's worthy of this Assembly's consideration and support. In my constituency I have been contacted by constituents concerned with this very issue. Schools in particular are a vital part of any community, and concerns surrounding the closure of our schools need to be addressed.

Mr. Speaker, why I will be voting in support of this motion is simply because of the principle behind it. I would like to state that it could benefit from more precise wording and a greater clarification of what this task force would accomplish and to whom it would report.

Mr. Speaker, it is important, as mentioned by my colleague from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, to recognize the jurisdictional lines between different levels of government and ensure that municipalities take the lead. If the sponsoring member is proposing, as I think she is, that the federal government provide some sort of financial assistance in addressing these issues, then that should be taken into account and the motion worded accordingly.

Other jurisdictions have developed initiatives involving all three levels of government to address community-based concerns, and I would like to discuss what Manitoba is doing to meet these challenges. In Manitoba a capital region review panel was created by the government in 1998 to study a variety of issues shared by Winnipeg and its 50 surrounding municipalities. The panel was given a mandate to review the effectiveness of existing legislation, policies, and procedures guiding land use, planning, and development as well as the provision of services to municipalities in the capital region. The panel dealt with neighbourhood decline in the context of urban sprawl, similar to what Calgary is facing now, and completed and presented its report in December of 1999. Overall, Mr. Speaker, Manitoba is experiencing a low rate of growth. However, the problem facing the urban centres is that people are abandoning older neighbourhoods in favour of new ones.

While Calgary has seen a very fast rate of growth, the problem faced is similar. Schools are located in the older ring of the city, while the school-age children are located in the newer outlying areas and are having to be bused in or are opting to attend private and charter schools rather than public schools.

Mr. Speaker, the Manitoba government has many strategies in place to address inner-city revitalization and community development. The Winnipeg community revitalization program involves a number of agreements between the city of Winnipeg and the province and is concerned with shoulder communities. These are older communities that are beginning to decline but are not inner-city neighbourhoods. This program has been in place since the 1970s and involves a series of five- to six-year agreements between the city and the province involving expenditures of about \$10 million, with each party contributing matching shares.

Mr. Speaker, there is also a tripartite agreement in place between all three levels of government called the core initiative, which targets the inner-city and downtown areas of Winnipeg. There are two programs as part of this initiative, each involving about \$100 million split equally between the three levels of government.

Another agreement, Mr. Speaker, is the Winnipeg development agreement, which is broader than the core initiative, with its focus reaching beyond the city's central core. Each level of government has committed \$25 million. There are about 25 programs in effect under this agreement, and each level of government is able to pick the programs which they are the most interested in funding. Programs have included storefront improvements, small business grants, and the building of an aboriginal centre.

Mr. Speaker, the government of Manitoba is currently developing a Neighbourhoods Alive program, which is a provincial initiative involving the departments of Health, Justice, Housing, Family Services, and Government Services. This is, again, a tripartite initiative involving a bottom-up approach, where the local communities decide what their priorities are and government directs them as to the options available to address these priorities.

Mr. Speaker, Winnipeg has a long history of community development programs.

THE SPEAKER: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Calgary-East, but the time limit for consideration of this item of business has now lapsed for today.

4:30

head: Government Bills and Orders

head: Third Reading

Bill 11
Health Care Protection Act

Mr. Klapstein moved that pursuant to Standing Order 47 the previous question be now put.

[Adjourned debate May 9: Mr. Renner]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Medicine Hat.

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is the first opportunity that I've had to speak on Bill 11 since early in the debate at the committee stage. At that point I talked about some of the specifics of the bill. I'm not going to get into a lot of the detail on the bill because I think it has more than adequately been discussed by various members in the House.

What I would like to do is talk about the discussions that I've had with constituents from my constituency, the constituency of Medicine Hat. That's the key, frankly, Mr. Speaker, because in the time since I've been an elected official, which is now approaching seven years – time goes very quickly – I've never had to deal with a bill that had so much emotion attached to it. The discussion went far beyond discussion of the specifics of the issue related to what is in the bill, and for the first time I find myself discussing not what's in the bill but what might happen someday, maybe, if. It's the most frustrating discussion I've ever had, and I blame that type of discussion on the malicious misinformation campaign that has been engaged in by the opponents of this bill.

I'll give you a very good example of the type of misinformation that my constituents have. During the Easter break I had occasion to be in my constituency office one morning, and I had a group of Raging Grannies come to visit me at my office. They did their Raging Grannies thing. They sang a number of songs and called me outside. Unfortunately, they didn't tell me that they were coming, and I had already booked appointments for the entire morning, so I had to wait until the constituent who had made arrangements to meet with me had completed the business that we were dealing with. Then I went out onto the sidewalk to talk to the group that had assembled.

Well, my office, Mr. Speaker, is a very small office. It's probably not much wider than this row of four desks that we have here, so the sidewalk in front of my office is not very big. By the time I went outside, there were probably about 25 people who had assembled in front of the office. A number of them were standing on the sidewalk, but some of them were standing on the road. When I walked out, the first thing I said to the group was: "If you could please come in off the road. The last thing we would like is for someone to be hit by a car while we're having this conversation outside of my office." One of the ladies responded: you would like that to happen, because then you could put me into one of your private hospitals, if I got hit by a car.

Well, Mr. Speaker, here we have a group of informed people coming, presumably wanting to have some informed discussion with me about this bill, and one of the spokespersons for this group is saying: if I get hit by a car in front of your office, as a result of Bill 11 I'll have to go to a private hospital and pay for it. She added: I'll have to go to a private hospital and pay. Well, it gets very difficult to have conversations with people when they have that kind of information available to them.

So I've been dealing with a lot of that kind of misinformation, and what concerns me the most, Mr. Speaker, is that when you have an opportunity to sit down with them one on one and actually go

through the bill, except for people who have philosophical differences, the vast majority of the people recognize that the bill is very specific in what it says.

I recognize and I respect people who have a philosophical difference, and frankly, Mr. Speaker, it is their right to have that difference. If we can agree on what the facts are and we can still disagree on whether the bill is the right thing or not, that's fine and dandy. I think that is a legitimate discussion that all of us should engage in. But when people want to engage in the discussion with a bunch of false assumptions that have been fed to them not only by members of the opposition here in the Legislature but by the Friends of Medicare, by all the various unions that have been organized in ensuring that this misinformation goes out to all Albertans, it makes it very difficult to have frank discussions with people.

On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, I have had numerous contacts, letters, phone calls as late as noon today from constituents of mine who have called specifically to say: Rob, when are you going to get on with it and pass this bill? I talked with a gentleman today. He said: you know, I have read the bill cover to cover, backwards and frontwards, and I cannot figure out what the commotion is all about. This individual is not a longtime Conservative. This individual is someone who has not necessarily been of any political stripe, but he wanted to read the bill. He took the time to read the bill, he called me up, and he said: "Why don't you just get on with it? There must be more things that you can spend your time on in the Legislature of Alberta other than dealing with this bill that has been rehashed and rehashed over and over again." Well, I think that individual speaks for a large number of people in Medicine Hat.

We've heard repeatedly that members in this House should be given the opportunity for a free vote. Mr. Speaker, I want it on the record in black and white: I am supporting this bill, and I am supporting this bill because I truly believe it's the right thing to do. No one told me what to do on this bill. I am supporting this bill because I believe it's the right thing to do, and beyond that, I believe that the majority of my constituents also believe it's the right thing to do; not all of them, by any means, but the majority of them. So when the debate at third reading comes to a conclusion sometime in the next few days, I will be here, standing in my place, supporting this bill and voting yes to this bill.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

MS PAUL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think it's important to stand and address the bill at third reading, which reflects on the principles of the bill, which in turn is something that gives you a quick overview as to the intent of the bill.

Mr. Speaker, you can imagine that sitting here as a Member of this Legislative Assembly, as a newly independent member and the one and only, of course in my caucus I've had hot and heavy debate. I'm not sure who's winning, whether I'm for the bill or whether I'm against the bill.

I think, Mr. Speaker, what it all comes down to is that health care is a very emotional issue. There are emotions involved on both sides, and there is merit in the case put forward by either opposition members or government members.

I think, Mr. Speaker, we have to recognize that the government did send the bill out to all the residents in the province of Alberta, and the residents in their wisdom – their interpretation of the intent of the bill has been exemplified by what they interpret the bill to mean.

Mr. Speaker, when I am speaking to the bill as an independent, I have to reflect on what my constituents in Edmonton-Castle Downs

have told me. I tabled in the Legislative Assembly quite a few weeks ago the survey I conducted in my riding. It was the Health Care Protection Act survey. It asked three questions, and for the record I'm going to indicate what the questions were.

Question 1:

Have you read Bill 11 since it has been delivered to your [address]?

Yes or No (please circle your response)

Question 2:

Do you favour the passing of this legislation? Yes or No (please circle your response)

If you responded no to question #2 please feel free to express your reasons.

Question 3:

Are you prepared to pay higher taxes for health care? Yes or No (please circle your response)

Then, obviously, a thank you for people that responded.

As well, the survey was conducted with people phoning into the constituency office, and we did contact 200 or 300 people on our own initiative.

4:40

Mr. Speaker, for the record, I have to say that the results of the survey on Bill 11 in the constituency of Edmonton-Castle Downs go as follows as of yesterday. The number of people that read the bill, as of yesterday, was 68 percent; 26 people had read the bill. The number of people that have not read the bill was 32 percent, which indicated 12. The number of people in favour of Bill 11: 21 percent, which was 9. The number of people against Bill 11: 79 percent, which in total was 34 people. The number of people that would pay higher taxes for health care: 63 percent said yes. The number of people who would not pay higher taxes for health care: 37 said no.

Mr. Speaker, when you do a survey, of course you incite some sort of conversation, obviously, and a little feedback with respect to the questions that you've asked. One of the reasons that constituents who are opposed to the bill gave to the staff that were doing the survey was that there was no indication that the bill would, in fact, save money to the health care system as it sits now. They were not clear on, did not understand how a private clinic would save money in the public health care system. So that's very simply put; they just don't understand it.

Number two, they had a fear that the passing of the legislation would lead to two-tier health care, and we've heard that. That's been regurgitated many, many times in this Legislative Assembly, that it's going to lead to a two-tier, U.S. health care system. Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that's necessarily the way you interpret the bill, but this is what the constituents of Edmonton-Castle Downs have said. Also, they do not want U.S. involvement in any aspect of the health care system.

Another point, another reason why they do not support the bill: they don't want to pay more for services. They've paid enough for services. They don't feel that there should be any more money put into it. They want the public system to stay the way it is, and, maybe with their heads in the sand, they're saying that it would not cost any more to have the public system the way it is, when in fact that is not the way it's going to work out.

They also have the impression that the bill would leave seniors without health care. I've had a number of seniors who have phoned and said: "Ms Paul, the Alberta health care card is no longer going to be viable. We cannot use our health care card when we go to the hospital. What are we going to do? What are we going to use?" Well, many, many times in this Assembly the Premier has stood up and said that the health care card, the Alberta health care card, is all you need in this province to get attention when you need health care, period, whether that be in the public system or whether that be in a private clinic. That is the key.

Also, Mr. Speaker, in the survey people that opposed the bill were not convinced that it would shorten waiting lists. I'm not sure, in the debates that have gone on in this Legislative Assembly, that it has been proven that yes, it's going to shorten, or has been proven that no, it's not. But I think it's a recommendation and an accomplishment of this government to bring forward a bill that is in fact looking at that solution. Perhaps it is not timely at this point. Maybe the bill is a little premature before we get our house in order. Perhaps in the long run, when the bill is enacted, we will see five years down the road that we do have shorter waiting lists and that we are using our Alberta health care card in our private clinics and in our hospitals.

Also, Mr. Speaker, my constituents felt that they did not want to pay higher taxes for services that are already there or to pay for the extra technology that is required in our health care system. The technology is outpricing our capabilities to pay for what it is we need. Take, for example, the MRI machinery. It's costly. I think a few years ago technology advanced such that we had the bone scan machine. I know a lot of women – and myself in particular, I now have to go for my second bone scan. That machinery is also very expensive, and it is in a private clinic. It is done privately; it is not done through the hospitals. I think we have to be realistic and less emotional about what the intent of the bill is: that perhaps it's going to do this, that perhaps the U.S. is going to come down and swoop us all up in a big umbrella and carry us all off to private hospital land. I, in fact, don't believe that for one minute.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I also have to point out that when the bill was introduced, I think on March 2, there was a flurry of activity in terms of media attention, and a constituent of mine came walking by the office and saw me sitting at the desk. He popped in, shook my hand, and he said: Ms Paul, I want to come in here and talk to you about Bill 11. He had a very heavy British accent. So I said: "Well, by all means. Do sit down, and we'll discuss the bill." He said: you're going to be very surprised as to what I have to say about the bill. Normally you get people in your office that are opposed, rather than people that support, I'm finding out. He said: I wholeheartedly support the bill. I tabled his letter in the Legislative Assembly.

He gave me six good reasons why. His family is still in Great Britain. There is a public system, and there is a private system. He's had three family members who needed health care. They needed it quickly and it was there, and he said that it was in the private system. Now, whether that was a clinic or a hospital, he didn't say. I think that speaks volumes. He said, "Please table my letter," which I did.

He is in full support of the bill, but he has reservations. He thinks perhaps the bill has not gone far enough in defining or maybe in bringing a private hospital fully and completely into Alberta. He fully believes that a private hospital is the way to go. I tried to point out to him in the bill that a private hospital is not going to be allowed in this province. All the bill addresses is private clinics, which will do minor surgeries encompassing overnight stays, which are needed if you have minor surgery. I don't care how you cut the apple; you have to stay in the hospital if you have minor surgery.

Mr. Speaker, getting back to the principle of the bill, I also have to speak about the need for change and the need for the clinics. I think the need for change comes from, as I've alluded to earlier, the costs that are involved in running a hospital. Many times in this Leg. the question has been raised, has been yelled back and forth: what is a private clinic as opposed to a hospital? Well, I asked my neighbours and I asked some people that walked into my office: what do you envision as a private clinic as opposed to a hospital? What is a public hospital? A public hospital is a place where you go for a number of services. You go because you have an emergency. You have a heart attack. You have kidney failure. You have an aneu-

rysm. You have encompassed in that building, in that public building, all the machinery, all the equipment, all the staff to deal with all the emergencies.

When you go to a private clinic, you go for perhaps foot surgery, minor foot surgery that you need to stay overnight for. That private clinic, in my view, will be specialized to do and to address the needs of whatever the clinic has been set up to do. In fact what you have is an alleviation of time and room in a public hospital that can be left for the emergencies while you're dealing with an issue or a health care problem in a clinic. So I think it's rather simple, and to use the KISS philosophy, please keep it simple. I mean, that's how I view the bill. That's how I view the intent of the bill.

4:50

I don't think it takes a rocket scientist to figure out that the bill itself on its merit, if it's going to be carried through the way it is written, with the amendments that have come before the Legislative Assembly – the amendments enhanced the principle of the bill. The amendments I think talk to the concerns that a lot of Albertans have had with respect to the bill. The amendments were absolutely necessary. I know that members of the opposition had a number of excellent amendments they were ready to bring forward, and it's unfortunate that time was not allotted to everybody to bring forward what they felt was needed for a good, fair, democratic debate. I do believe though, Mr. Speaker, that anybody wishing to speak to the bill in the process we went through certainly was given ample opportunity.

The hon. Member for Medicine Hat spoke before I did, and I can attest to the comments that he made. I was at a conference in Medicine Hat for two days, a poverty conference, and I was sitting beside a minister at lunchtime. Of course, the famous bill came up because I asked questions. How do your parishioners feel about the bill? Is there any debate going on? Have you heard any rumblings pro or con? He said: "In fairness, I have to tell you that I've heard nothing. I've read a little bit about it in the paper." He said that he's not swayed by party politics. He's not swayed by "I am a Liberal" or "I am a government member." I'm an independent. It made no difference to me what his comments were. In fact, I did ask a few other people, and I got the same response.

Then I went to Camrose to speak at a banquet on Saturday, and I asked the same questions. Now, there were concerns. There were concerns from people at the banquet, and the concerns expressed were exactly what I've addressed about the health care card. They did not understand that your Alberta health care card is what you need to get services still in the province of Alberta. I think, Mr. Speaker, that that really needs to be stressed and really pointed out.

But, and as an independent is allowed to say, there is the good side and there is the bad side. You can imagine, Mr. Speaker, how I've been surveying this bill. I've been wrestling with when and how to approach speaking to the bill. I waited, because I wanted the survey done in my riding to be open and fair. I've left my constituents enough time to phone in if they're in agreement with the principles of the bill or if they're opposed to the principles of the bill.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those comments, with my reading of the results of what has been found in the survey, and in all fairness to the constituents of Edmonton-Castle Downs, I will not be supporting the bill, because it is their wish. It is their wish that I do not support the bill. As I pointed out, 79 percent of them have said that they oppose the bill, and it is not up to me and my personal opinion to stand in the way of how the constituents want me to vote. I'm not going to be swayed by political agendas. I'm not being swayed by party politics. I am going to do what the constituents of Edmonton-Castle

Downs have told me to do. They have asked me to not support the bill, and in fact that's what I will be doing.

Thank you.

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

MRS. GORDON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I represent a rural constituency. I'm proud to represent a rural constituency. I'm also a fiscal conservative and proud to be one.

I think before I begin today, because this debate and what I'm going to say today is for the benefit of my constituents, I want to go back a few years to 1966, when the Medical Care Act of 1966 was proposed. It was an arrangement in which the federal government would pay 50 percent of the national per capita cost of insured services. So 50 percent would be paid by the provinces and 50 percent paid by the federal government.

Today we are certainly not anywhere near that original commitment of 50 percent. We're representing something like 13 percent. Back in 1966, \$34 was spent per person, and today that equates to \$1,600. It's been said in this House before that that's a 47 percent increase in 34 years. If this rate of increase were to continue for the next 34 years – and at this point we have no reason to doubt that it wouldn't, that the demand on the system will be there – we could see this increase come in at approximately \$75,000 per person. So for every man, woman, and child in this province, to cover their health care costs as needed, as required, as exists today, that would be the cost. Can we afford that? I don't think so.

We need to sustain in the long term our health care system. In today's world we have new technologies that are rapidly changing as we speak. More doctors are using new technologies – MRIs, CAT scans, et cetera – for diagnosis. People are living longer. People are requiring more help to do with prevention and the curing of diseases, and of course we want to continue what we're doing with research. All this costs money, lots and lots of money. Today we're spending \$15.5 million a day on health care. I don't say that begrudgingly; it's necessary. But we also have to look at new and innovative approaches to managing and to ensuring that our health care in the long term is sustainable, not just for me when I turn 65 and require more help and care than I do today but for my children and possibly grandchildren, if I ever have any.

I want to talk a little bit about why I will support Bill 11 and about a lot of the confusion regarding it. Bill 11 is about one option and one option only: allowing regional health authorities to contract out certain surgeries to private surgical clinics. The goal is straightforward. It's to reduce waiting times and increase overall efficiencies; nothing more, nothing less. If we can achieve this, it will go a long way to helping people move very quickly through procedures and through the system, alleviating a lot of stress on them, on their families, and on their health practitioners.

I am not a professional so that I would know what surgeries could in fact be done in these facilities. I would want to leave those decisions to the people in the know. The people in the know in this province are physicians, are medical practitioners. They will be the people that will decide, and they will be the people that will make sure that the criteria and standards are in place for these facilities. If they say that a procedure isn't minor but is major and shouldn't be done, I'm not going to argue with that nor, I think, would any Albertan or any politician. I'm sure that in today's world, with all the technology and all the expertise they have, they can make a determination on what can be done safely in that type of environment.

We have said that there will be no private hospitals or a parallel health system. One of the biggest concerns of my constituents is the

possibility of a two-tiered health care system. Part of this has come from a lot of debate that has taken place over the last several months. I recall when the discussion paper first came out, and the opposition and the media were making sure that this hit the airwaves and was certainly on the front pages of newspapers. American style health care was talked about. Nothing could be further from the truth. If you take a look at what American health care is, under the American there are two separate routes in which you can go. One is the public system, and one is the private system. We are not suggesting that.

For the sake of argument, quite simply, I see that what we're trying to do is have someone else provide the bricks and mortar. In today's world, in the accounting world, as changed over the last several years, accountants now are telling prospective business entrepreneurs to lease or rent buildings: do not put up the bricks and mortar; over the long term it will be best if you lease or rent space. This is a complete about-turn from the last 20 years, when everyone was encouraged to build a building and possibly to even take leased people into their working partnership.

5:00

But no. This is about contracting for certain surgeries: minor surgeries. We have talked recently in this Legislature about several people that have had a very difficult time getting into the hospital for cancer treatments. I believe that if this bill were put in place and implemented, we would see a number of beds freed up, beds that would allow people that are terminally ill, acutely ill, to utilize those beds and allow those people that need an overnight stay to have that procedure done quickly, efficiently, and effectively by a team of doctors in a private facility that understands and every day does those procedures and does them well.

I just find it rather difficult that we cannot see that competition in the health care field is good and necessary. We already in this province are contracting out a number of procedures in a number of areas within health, and private providers are doing an excellent job. This would just be one more area where they could excel. This does not mean we will have a two-tiered, American style health care system. That is not the Alberta solution. It is not one that I would want. It is not one my family would want, my friends would want, my colleagues would want, or my constituents would want.

Another area we have to look at is that we have to give credit where credit is due. For many, many months and for many, many hours I have sat in this House and listened to negativity. We can be very, very proud in this province of what we've achieved to date as far as our fiscal house, what we want to achieve in the future. We have so many, many exciting things happening in this province. My community, namely my hometown of Lacombe, is growing rapidly. We have several, several new housing starts, and we have so many things that we can look forward to with anticipation, with anticipated growth.

I think we need to put this bill behind us and move on. I believe the proof will be in the pudding. If this bill is passed, which it will be, and it is implemented, I can tell my constituents that they will not be impacted negatively by this bill. They will not be. When I go to the doctor, and if he says he wants me to see a specialist and I don't particularly want to see that individual – because we all know there are some people that you can relate well to, and I'm talking about specialists. If I were to say to my family doctor, "I do not wish to see that doctor," he doesn't send me there. We find a doctor that I will agree to go to. If a patient goes to the doctor and he says, "I'm going to send you to this medical facility that only does hernias," if you need a hernia operation, for instance – if you as the patient and as the consumer do not want to go there, you do not have to. So there is a choice.

Another thing that I think I need to say for the benefit of my constituents, for those people that have a hard time grasping this concept – one confusing word in all of this is insured services. Insured services are strictly medically necessary services that your doctor says you must have, and these services will be paid for by Alberta health care. They're medically necessary; thus, they are covered. When people talk about insured services, some of the elderly believe you have to go out and purchase private health care insurance. This is not so. We have said through this bill that if you're deemed to have this procedure done, in fact it will be paid for through the public system, under the single-payer system.

Also, we talk about queue-jumping. Now, there's some confusion on that too. There's queue-jumping, and then there's a medical doctor prioritizing his patients' needs, and often – often – doctors will prioritize what procedure and when they need it done. Often in emergency situations their patients get priority. That's very, very different than someone jumping the queue.

I think something to consider is that we will see competition in the health care system, and imagine what we can improve in Canadian health care through private competition. Is that a dirty word? Competition where I come from, my background being accounting, has always been healthy. It makes businesses work harder, and it makes people work harder.

Also something else that hasn't been said. I know there are a number of doctors in this province that due to lack of operating rooms are not able to operate. These doctors could well find a place in this type of facility doing something they do well, a procedure they do very, very well.

As well, wages in these facilities will be reduced. We don't need studies, whether they be U.S. studies or anyone else's studies, to know that unionized wages versus non-unionized wages are very, very different. There's no reason why a facility would need to hire doctors on a fee for service. They could well be paid a salary. As well, nurses don't necessarily need to be unionized, nor support staff. These are things that would certainly have to be considered in conjunction with the facility.

Is there proof that using the surgical facilities will save money? I'm asked that time and time again. No, there is no proof. The proof will have to be implementation. The proof will have to be in the evaluation, and time will be the proof.

The key objective of this proposal is to reduce waiting lists, to reduce waiting times. If contracting out certain surgeries remains under the control and within the budgets of the regional health authorities, they will be the people that will decide if it makes good sense to contract this out. Obviously, there's a lot of criteria and some standards that will be put in place that way so that they will have to look at each and every proposal on its own merit.

In speaking with a number of regional health authorities and some of their CEOs around the province, I can't say that we will see a lot of movement in this direction over the next little while. I know that in my own community of Lacombe there's one wing in the hospital that has been sitting vacant for some time, and with our amendments we talked about using some of this unutilized space first. I don't want to see that space in Lacombe hospital go to one of these facilities, because at the rate Lacombe is growing, we will in fact very, very shortly need that as an acute care wing. So I think there are a lot of things that will have to be taken into consideration in the final analysis. However, I think we have to be optimistic as an Assembly. I think we have to be optimistic as Albertans. Health care, if we are to continue with the status quo, is not – not – sustainable in the long term.

Something I found rather strange throughout this entire debate: the many, many hours in this House, with media, forums, et cetera. Two

things: one, some people did not want to talk about this at all. They had their minds made up. That was evident to me in a forum that was held in Lacombe about two and a half months ago. The Minister of Health and Wellness is my nearest MLA colleague neighbour north of me and had volunteered to come down and sit in on that particular forum. There were four of us on the panel, one being the Leader of the Official Opposition. The Minister of Health and Wellness was refused comment. He was not allowed to assist whatsoever in that forum or that debate. It was unbelievable. People came in there with closed minds, and I think that's very, very unfortunate, because if nothing's ventured, nothing's gained.

5:10

Something else I find very, very strange is that all the talk in this Assembly has been no, no, no, but not one solution, nothing that would add to: if we don't do this, what can we do to sustain health care in the long term? Amendments coming forward from the Official Opposition were talked about. Your amendments could have been tabled in the Assembly. Your amendments could have been tabled at second reading. Your amendments could have been tabled very early on in this discussion. Then we could have looked at them, the government could have considered them, and maybe we could have worked together for some type of compromise. But there were no amendments.

I want to say before I sit down that I am a believer in Canada. I'm a believer in Alberta. I believe in medicare, and I thank Tommy Douglas for his insight and for the goal that he achieved. But my understanding is that when Tommy Douglas brought this in, there was a great deal of opposition, and people said that it wouldn't work. I hope, Tommy, that you are watching today and can see what's transpiring in this House, because I believe that a couple of years from now people will say, "I don't know what all that hullabaloo was about. This is working. It hasn't impacted my life a great deal." We will have at that point in time, I hope, come to terms along with the federal government and the other provinces, put together a national debate on health care, and we have in this province committed to paper a long-term plan that the people of this province can see and work with, because that's what my constituents are telling me. This is something that I'm saying here publicly and I stand behind. We don't need short-term solutions; we need a solution in the long term. We need people to put aside their hostilities. We need stakeholders to sit down at the table and address for the future of this province and the future of Canada health care and how it's going to be delivered efficiently, effectively, and with some financial responsibility.

Also, another area that I would like to say publicly: some of my constituents that are against this bill would like to see conflict of interest guidelines put together by the province so they are uniform and so each and every regional health authority is singing from the same songbook. I can go along with that.

I also want to tell my constituents, as a final note, that this is not the slippery slope. It can't be the slippery slope because we are only going to do this one small area, and as we go ahead and implement this, we will have to evaluate it and make sure it is working in accordance with what we wanted. But in the long term I want a commitment from this government and all governments in Canada and Allan Rock and Prime Minister Chretien that we get on with a national debate on health care and put in place something that is sustainable.

I would ask my constituents to keep me informed as to their concerns regarding this even after it's passed, and together we will try to ensure that some of their concerns are looked at. Not all of their concerns with health care have to do with Bill 11. We also

have a long way to go with an exciting and an excellent report by my hon. colleague here from Redwater, the Broda report. Long-term care is something we must address, but for now we need to vote and implement Bill 11.

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

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a privilege and a pleasure to speak to this bill at third reading. This bill was cut short in committee, and being unable to be in attendance, I was not allowed to speak to some of the many, many amendments that should have and could have been made.

However, this bill is perhaps the most important bill that this Legislature has seen in my time, since 1993, certainly by the response from the public. The public should be our guide, in fact. Those that pooh-pooh that from the other side should take note that they are our masters and we the servants and not the other way about.

All of Canada is looking at and reviewing that which is happening in this Legislature and how it will fall out over the rest of Canada. In fact, it's true that changes must occur, as they always must occur in every piece of legislation as time does evolve. There are changes in society that must be reflected in legislation. Unfortunately, these changes have many, many people in this part of our world very concerned, and rightly so.

The ones that are most concerned are those in this society who have spent a great deal of time on this Earth. I'm talking of people that we normally call seniors, any of those that are over 60 and have had some health problems and had some concerns. Those people will tell you that there are only two really important things in their lives: their family and their health. Everything else is secondary. All the money, all the material goods, all the holidays, all the wonderful things and gadgets and gizmos that they have in their kitchens and their cars and their RVs and all of the rest of that matters very, very little when your family is threatened or your health is threatened.

So this is a piece of legislation that concerns those people, and rightly so. All across Canada, from sea to sea to the Arctic Ocean, these people are concerned and are watching. There is no second-guessing these people. Some of them have made up their minds, and others have not. Most are hoping that this Legislature and other Legislatures deal with this in a reasonable manner and deal with the facts.

The question is always: why this kind of change and this kind of bill? The first argument that is always presented is that health care as we know it in Canada cannot be sustained; we can't afford it; we cannot afford the status quo. Well, if that was the case, then why was the last solution of this government to chop health care? In 1994-95 those funds that were allocated for health care in the budget were cut and cut drastically. Was that a solution? If that was a solution, then the status quo would certainly not be adequate at that point. It was decimated, decimated to the point that it had a great deal of difficulty coming back from where we were on that date.

You recognize that one of the original studies in 1964 by now Justice Emmett Hall, then, I believe, a cabinet minister, estimated the cost relative to the gross domestic product to be considerably greater than it is today, and it would be then still sustainable. He reckoned that it would be 20 percent more than it is actually today. In fact, currently health care expenditures are 10.2 percent of Canada's GDP, gross domestic product, which some may consider high, but certainly not near what the United States is at 14.1 percent. I'll say that the health care delivery in that country is roundly condemned in this. To those that would say that it is better, it is only better if you have the cash and certainly not better for the citizenry.

Canadians are different in that respect. I have personal knowledge of that having a brother and a sister living in the United States, and we compare notes all the time. As a matter of fact, we just did it last week. They concur that the Canadian system is far superior to what they have to deal with even though they're relatively wealthy and have their health care providers and insurance corporations. They seem to do reasonably well for them but certainly don't do well for their neighbours and their staff.

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The second argument that's always put is that health care expenses are out of control. The facts are that health care expenses have never been out of control. They've always, always been relatively well controlled by the relative governments. Yes, the expenses are rising and are drug related. Doctors' salaries are up perhaps as much as 15 percent. The main causes are the salary of professionals and the management of professional systems, which in this province has not dropped one iota and in fact has increased in percentage over the course of the last four years, much to the chagrin of the government, I'm sure. In fact, the prices of the 10 most frequently used drugs are the cause of a great deal of the increased costs in health care.

The third argument that is always put is that the public health care system must be privatized to reduce cost and shorten waiting lists and create a healthier competition. Well, that is the exact definition of the American system, and if that were the case, then the argument would absolutely hold true that the American system is a better system. I think that it's pretty well universally understood inside and outside this Legislature that that is certainly not the case. In fact, the mortality rate for newborns in the United States is considerably higher than it is in Canada and, in fact, a great deal higher than it is in northern Europe, which has a fully functioning and public health care system and has banned private health care systems.

The fourth argument that is always presented, too, is that Canadians are now willing to accept the partial privatization of their health care system. Well, that may be so, but that's a matter of political will. Certainly it's influenced by the first two arguments, which say that we can't afford to pay and that the costs are out of control. The counterargument to that, of course, is that when surveyed, Canadians are willing to spend considerably more. Seventy-three percent in Canada and I think about 65 percent in Alberta are willing to pay more for their health care system, and they're willing to pay more in the way of tax.

The fifth argument that is always being put is that our governments can never achieve efficiency, that government by its very nature is not as efficient as the private sector. That is not the case in all instances. Certainly in a great deal it is. There are a number of areas, contracting and service cleaning and that sort of thing, where the private sector does and should be allowed to compete. In fact, in most of those kinds of service areas the government really has no place being in that business.

But here we're dealing with the deliverance of health care. By and large, there is no more vulnerable time – perhaps there is in the death of a family member and dealing with the funeral services – to have your pocket picked or to have a service rendered that is more expensive than you would normally negotiate than in health care. Health care is the one area that does elicit that response of some immediacy. If you're dealing with the illness of a child and the like, that certainly does require that kind of immediate response, and the wallet falls open.

It's also an area in government-paid health care where there is no point-of-sale contract or transaction that can be made. If you go in to a doctor in a public health care system, the average soul does not

know what the billing is from that private practitioner to the system. In fact, they should not know. That is the wrong place to be dealing with the vagaries of negotiating contracts at that time. That is not the place to do it.

So when you come down to it, that argument holds some water, agreed, but the alternative is a private health care system such as has been experimented with in England, which is an absolute disaster if you ask any of those that are there. New Zealand certainly has had a disaster, and any of the relevant studies by any Canadian or American universities in the health care field will tell you that there is no basis of evidence that public and private health care systems can work side by side efficiently.

The last argument is that we should follow the European experience. Well, that does not hold any water whatever in that the successful operation of a publicly paid for health care system in northern Europe is in fact the example that Canada is using today, and in fact it is most, most efficient. The argument falls short.

Now, the argument that we hear in Alberta is the need to control the current facilities. Well, that is absolute balderdash. This is a contractual arrangement between a health authority and a provider. It is a contract. When you negotiate a contract, you negotiate the terms. If you do have the cash and if those that you're contracting with do not agree with the terms, you don't sign the contract. All of that does not need legislation and should never have needed legislation.

Let's finish with that argument, the need for control. If that were the case, then in the seven years that this member has been here, why was that control not instituted? That's regulation. It needn't have the weight of a bill and certainly not at this late date.

The same can be said for waiting lists. We hear the great hue and cry that waiting lists must be reduced. Well, the fact is that there is a shortage of doctors in this province primarily because of this government's ill-fated attempt to reduce costs by just closing their eyes and chopping budgets. In fact, the same personnel is expected to be used for the operations to reduce those waiting lists, whether it be in the public or the private system.

So how do you reduce waiting lists if you still have the same number of practitioners? In fact, it'll be the same operating theatres. You're not going to invent operating theatres when they are available in the public system now because they are not fully utilized. So the bricks and mortar argument may work some 10 years down the road, but the fact is that there are more hospital beds, more operating theatres in this province that are underutilized than in any province and certainly in any state in the United States.

Queue-jumping. We're saying that this will reduce queue-jumping. Absolute nonsense. Absolutely. When you have two systems working, my personal experience, having my brother in Kentucky, will tell you exactly what it is. When you have a private health care system that you can go to and say, "I want to have this kind of special service," because it's either not insured or a little is added for its service, you don't think that's not going to occur? That's competition. That's the way private enterprise does work and does work in many, many areas exceedingly well, but this particular case is not one of those areas.

There is one argument that does in fact hold water, and that is the reduced costs by way of reducing union staff.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, I must regrettably inform you that the time allocated for this matter of business for this afternoon has now elapsed.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:30 p.m.]