

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, November 13, 2001**

**1:30 p.m.**

Date: 01/11/13

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

THE SPEAKER: Good afternoon and welcome back. Would all hon. members please remain standing after the prayer and after the singing of our national anthem for the tribute to former members.

On this day, as our work in this Legislature resumes, let each of us pray for those who have been taken and those who have suffered as innocent victims of violent tragedy. We resolve to comfort the families, friends, and communities who have keenly felt the loss of loved ones through acts of violence and the disregard for the sanctity of that which is most precious: life itself. Amen.

I would now invite Mr. Paul Lorieau to lead us in the singing of our national anthem. Please join us in the language of your choice.

HON. MEMBERS:

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all thy sons command.  
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,  
The True North strong and free!  
From far and wide, O Canada,  
We stand on guard for thee.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

THE SPEAKER: As is our custom, we pay tribute on our first day of the continuation of session to former members of this Assembly who have passed on since the House last met. On this day we remember Galen Norris, who passed away on August 10, 2001; Donald Fleming, who passed away on September 12, 2001; and Elizabeth Jane "Bettie" Hewes, who passed away on November 6, 2001.

**Mr. Galen Norris**  
**November 7, 1915, to August 10, 2001**

THE SPEAKER: Mr. Norris was first elected to the Alberta Legislature in the general election of November 15, 1956, and served until August 20, 1971. During his years of service he represented the constituency of Stettler for the governing Social Credit Party.

During his years in the Legislature Mr. Norris served on the following committees: the Select Standing Committee on Agriculture, Colonization, Immigration and Education; the Select Standing Committee on Municipal Law; the Select Standing Committee on Public Affairs; the Select Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing; and the Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

**Mr. Donald Fleming**  
**March 23, 1913, to September 12, 2001**

THE SPEAKER: Mr. Donald Fleming was first elected to the Alberta Legislature in the general election of June 18, 1959, and served until May 23, 1967. During his years of service he represented the constituency of Calgary-West for the governing Social Credit Party.

During his years in the Legislature Mr. Fleming served on the following committees: the Select Standing Committee on Agriculture, Colonization, Immigration and Education; the Select Standing

Committee on Railways, Telephones and Irrigation; the Select Standing Committee on Public Affairs; the Select Standing Committee on Private Bills; the Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

**Mrs. Bettie Hewes**  
**March 12, 1924, to November 6, 2001**

THE SPEAKER: Mrs. Bettie Hewes was first elected in the general election held on May 8, 1986, and served as MLA until March 11, 1997. During her years of service she represented the constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar for the Liberal Party and also served as interim Liberal leader, Deputy House Leader, and party whip.

During her years in the Legislature Mrs. Hewes served on the following committees: the Select Standing Committee on Law and Regulations; the Select Standing Committee on Private Bills; the Select Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing; the Select Standing Committee on Public Affairs. She also served on the Select Special Committee on Parliamentary Reform.

We are honoured by the presence of Bettie Hewes' family in the Speaker's gallery today.

With our admiration and respect there is gratitude to members of their families who shared the burdens of public office. Our prayers are with them.

In a moment of silent prayer I ask you to remember Galen Norris, Don Fleming, and Bettie Hewes as you have known them.

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

Please be seated.

The hon. the Premier.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I seek the unanimous consent of the Assembly for each of the three leaders to make a brief statement regarding September 11, 2001.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**Statements by the Leaders**  
**September 11, 2001, Terrorist Attacks**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On September 11 horrific acts of violence in the United States changed the world. Today we take pause from our normal business to remember the thousands of victims who died in those violent acts and to reflect on the challenge facing humanity in the wake of September 11.

Those who died in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania were innocent people. They were accountants, secretaries, public servants, firefighters, police officers, businesspeople, tradespeople, couriers, and retail clerks. Some of them were visitors from other countries, and some were from Canada. Each of those victims, I suspect, had plans for September 11. Maybe it was lunch with friends. Maybe it was taking the kids to a movie that evening. They also had plans for the rest of their lives, plans that perhaps included a new house or a new baby or a new grandchild.

Those plans, those lives were extinguished suddenly and violently in one of the most catastrophic acts of pointless terror ever witnessed on this planet. It will perhaps take years for civilized people to truly absorb the magnitude of this tragedy. We will search for its meaning, we will strive to understand the motives of its perpetrators, and we will endeavour to help those family members left behind to patch together new and dramatically changed lives. But as we

search and strive and help, we will above all remember the faces of innocents that were murdered on September 11, and we will forever mourn their loss.

Since September 11 countries around the world have joined with the United States in the grim task of eradicating terrorism from the Earth. As American President George Bush said so eloquently: this is a war we did not seek, but it is a war we will win. As this war is waged and with the stakes so high, I urge all Albertans to remember that the attacks of September 11 were not perpetrated by a culture or a faith. They were perpetrated by individuals of murderous intent. As the world comes together to eliminate terrorism, let's work together at home to ensure that no culture, no faith in this province is singled out for discrimination or reprisal.

I have been very proud of Albertans in the way they have responded to the events arising from September 11. The province's reputation for tolerance and harmony was challenged, and it responded to that challenge with great, great dignity.

1:40

Mr. Speaker, all members of the government caucus and I are also very proud of the Canadian men and women of the armed forces who are serving in support of this noble cause. Canada's troops are respected worldwide because of their courage and their dedication to achieving peace. Nowhere is this respect more widespread and evident than it is right here in Alberta, and not since the great conflicts of the 20th century has that respect been so deserved. Two days ago Albertans remembered the lost and fallen of earlier conflicts. Today I know that all Albertans join with me in wishing Canadian troops well as they serve abroad. Our prayers are with them, and we wish them a speedy and safe return to their loved ones at home.

September 11 was a sad and tragic day in human history. History shows us, however, that the resilience of the human spirit and the creativity of the human mind can overcome the greatest of tragedies. The people of the United States and their friends around the world will overcome this tragedy in just the same manner. But overcoming does not mean forgetting. I know that I for one will never forget the horror of September 11 and the thousands of bright, radiant lights that were extinguished by the darkness of hatred. I will remember and I will mourn, as I'm sure all of us will.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just over two months ago everyone throughout the world was reminded of the fragility of life, of plans, and of the freedoms that we have. In the period of a single morning the security that we have taken for granted was shattered by vengeful acts of terrorism. In the immediate aftermath of the destruction of the World Trade Center, the attack on the Pentagon, and the crash of an airliner in Pennsylvania, many of us struggled to come to terms with what had happened, just how far the threat would spread, and the implications for our community and our freedoms and our friends.

As we contemplate the shape of a very different world, the families and friends of those killed mourn the loss of their loved ones. For these people their lives have been indelibly scarred. The tragedy we now know as September 11 has had a very real impact on the thousands of families that have lost a son, a daughter, a mother, a father, an aunt, an uncle, or even for those that have lost friends. Their loss is profound, and I join with my caucus in extending our deepest sympathy to all affected by this senseless act of terrorism.

As most of the world watched in horror as the events of September 11 unfolded, thousands of men and women sprang into action to lend whatever assistance they could to the victims of this disaster. They are the true heroes of September 11. Many, in fact, lost their lives while trying to render help to the victims and to their fellow workers. This good citizenship and concern for fellow citizens is the foundation of a free society that will overcome any terrorist plot.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to live under a veil of uncertainty because of September 11 and the subsequent actions. It is ever more important in this circumstance to be vigilant in protecting the freedoms and values that are our way of life. Unjustified acts of terrorism will not destroy the spirit of people. Albertans and Canadians will stand strong in defense of our values and of our way of life. We will continue to support our multicultural activities, and we will not allow anyone to be singled out.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would again like to express my condolences and those of my caucus to the families and friends of the people killed in that unjustified act of terrorism on September 11, and to the people who so willingly have worked to dampen the pain and assist in the recovery of the victims, I commend your service to your neighbours.

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank this House and the Premier for this opportunity to reflect on the horrific events of September 11. On behalf of the Alberta New Democrat opposition and along with the other leaders, who have just spoken, I offer my sincere condolences to the families and friends of the thousands of innocent people who perished in New York, in Washington, and in Pennsylvania. We salute the dedication and courage of those engaged in the ongoing rescue efforts at the World Trade Center.

I also want to take this opportunity to pass along my sincere condolences to those affected by yesterday's tragic crash of the American Airlines flight in Brooklyn. It has indeed been a few rough and difficult months for the residents of New York City, and our hearts go out to them.

No cause or grievance can justify the horrific terrorist attacks of September 11, Mr. Speaker. These attacks must be condemned in the strongest possible terms, yet we must ensure that a response to these tragic events is rooted in the need for justice and the respect for the rule of law, not the lust for vengeance. In order to avert future similar tragedies, our response must be in keeping with international law and serve to strengthen the role of multilateral bodies like the United Nations and the International Criminal Court.

These events test many aspects of our shared humanity. They are a test of our tolerance and respect for fellow Albertans of Arab descent and for those who follow the Islamic faith. Because Albertans of Arab descent look visibly different, since September 11 they have been subjected by some to increased ridicule and abuse. As elected politicians we must set a positive example of tolerance and respect, especially for Albertans who are from minority communities. The media, as well, has a responsibility for equitable reporting, recognizing that no one is exempt from getting caught up in racial stereotyping in the rush to judgment.

Before September 11 it was fashionable in some circles to belittle the role of governments and their ability to act for the public good. The events of September 11 remind us of the important role governments play in ensuring our common well-being and safeguarding our public security. They remind us of the contributions of emergency response personnel like firefighters, police officers, and paramedics. September 11 reminds us of the important obligations that governments have in fully respecting and safeguarding our civil

liberties, including the rights of freedom of association, freedom of expression, and peaceful dissent. Our response to terrorism must not be allowed to undermine these civil liberties. Bill C-36 as currently proposed in my judgment does just that.

September 11 reminds us of the pressing need to build strong bonds of citizenship among us all. These events raise profound questions about how to build a more tolerant and inclusive society within our own province. They remind us of the value of an inclusive public school system, reflecting the religious, ethnic, and racial diversity of Alberta society. The inclusive and integrating function of Alberta's education system is gradually being eroded ostensibly in response to demands from parents and some community groups. I submit that we must re-examine the policy allowing this, especially its potential for unintended consequences, Mr. Speaker.

I hope that the lessons we draw from September 11 include how to build a more inclusive Alberta. This should be an Alberta where children are taught to value each other's beliefs and backgrounds, not taught to believe that only one world view is the right one. This should be an Alberta where differences are celebrated and respected and not used to promote social division.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I ask Albertans to mourn with those who suffered such a catastrophic loss on September 11. The events of September 11 challenge us in many ways. May the lessons we learn from this tragedy strengthen our resolve to build a more secure, peaceful, and just world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### head: **Introduction of Visitors**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce six very special young women, who are seated in the members' gallery today as special visitors. These girls, like so many other people across Alberta, were deeply touched by the events of September 11 in the U.S. and decided to reach out to their neighbours south of the border. These young ladies came up with a simple and heartfelt idea to make red, white, and blue ribbons, which are being worn by all members in the House today. The girls intended to sell those ribbons at the St. Albert farmers' market in the hopes of raising \$50 for the relief efforts in the U.S.

Well, Mr. Speaker, these young ladies' ribbons and their cause were so popular, they ended up making 5,000 ribbons and raising an astounding \$21,000. That project earned them a lot of local media coverage and even a congratulations call from President George Bush's White House secretary.

I know that these young Albertans didn't undertake this project for praise or publicity. They took on this job out of a sense of duty and a sense of caring. In this regard they represent the very best of the human spirit, and we are all very proud of them.

1:50

They were not alone in their work. They received tremendous help and encouragement from their parents, their families, their teachers, and their neighbours, and I thank those people as well. Across Alberta others have done similar work in order to help our American neighbours. We are fortunate to have these six St. Albert teens with us today, but we acknowledge with thanks the efforts of the many Albertans who have contributed to the relief effort.

Earlier today I had the pleasure of joining Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, the Member for St. Albert, and the Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert in presenting certificates of

accomplishment to these girls. Now I have the honour of introducing them to you and through you to all members of this Assembly. The St. Albert girls are here today with their parents; with Mr. Buccini, the vice-principal of the school they attend, which is William D. Cuts junior high school; and one of their teachers, Melissa Brown. I would ask Nicole Attwell, Allison Edwards, Kayla Fyffe, Holly Gray, Danelle Hancock, and Tara Joshi to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon it gives me great pleasure to introduce the family of Bettie Hewes. I would like to extend sincere condolences to the family on behalf of everyone in the Legislature. Members of Bettie Hewes' family are with us today, and I would like to introduce to you her husband, Henk VanDroffelaar, from Brockville, Ontario; her children, Larry Hewes from Hawaii, Jane Hewes and her husband, Michael Henry, and their children, Ella, Jamie, and Micah Henry; Rob Hewes, his wife, Lorraine, and their children, Erin Mooney and Robin Hewes and his wife, Amanda; Sally Nikolaj and her husband, Wilf, and their children, Elise and Evan; and three members of Bettie's extended family, including June Birch, Fabian Henry, and Karen Henry. I would ask that they all rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

#### head: **Presenting Petitions**

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With your permission I would like to present a petition signed by over 400 individuals from Edmonton and area who are very concerned and looking for the government to condemn the Chinese government's crackdown on Falun Gong and Alberta's sister province, Heilongjiang, government's dealings with the Falun Gong practitioners.

Thank you.

#### head: **Notices of Motions**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

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'm also giving notice that tomorrow I will move that motions for returns appearing on that day's Order Paper do also stand and retain their places.

Thank you.

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

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand now to give notice that after Oral Question Period I will be introducing a motion under Standing Order 40.

Thank you.

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

##### **Bill 22**

##### **Builders' Lien Amendment Act, 2001**

MR. DUCHARME: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 22, Builders' Lien Amendment Act, 2001.

The proposed legislation will extend the time for the filing of liens from 45 days to 90 days for sectors specifically relating to oil and gas drilling and services.

[Motion carried; Bill 22 read a first time]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that Bill 22, the Builders' Lien Amendment Act, 2001, be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

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

### **Bill 27 Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2001**

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce Bill 27, the Provincial Court Amendment Act.

The bill provides a mechanism through which judges in the Provincial Court who are of retirement age and with long-term and proven track records may be eligible for reappointment for one-year terms up to the age of 75. The act also makes other minor amendments to clarify existing wording as it relates to civil proceedings in our Provincial Court.

[Motion carried; Bill 27 read a first time]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Leduc.

### **Bill 28 Agricultural Operation Practices Amendment Act, 2001**

MR. KLAPSTEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 28, the Agricultural Operation Practices Amendment Act, 2001.

This bill establishes science-based technical standards and procedures to approve, monitor, enforce, and site all new and expanding confined feeding operations through amendments to the Agricultural Operation Practices Act. The legislation will also establish standards for the management of manure.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 28 read a first time]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd move that Bill 28 be placed on the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

### **head: Tabling Returns and Reports**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. BOUTILIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to table with the Clerk the appropriate number of copies in response to questions asked in this House on May 9 and in keeping with the principles of open, honest, transparent government. This is dealing with underground petroleum storage tank remediation.

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

MS GRAHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon as chair of the Alberta Research Council I'm very pleased to table five copies of the document entitled Accelerating Innovation. This is the annual report for 2001 of the Alberta Research Council, which is this year celebrating its 80th anniversary, and I believe all members have previously received this report. Of course, the report shows how the Alberta Research Council is advancing the economy and well-being of Alberta through technology and innovation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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 document produced by Edmonton Working Women and released in September of 2001 entitled Women Working: A Survey of Edmonton Women's Experiences in the Workplace, Home and Community.

Thank you.

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

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table for all Members of the Legislative Assembly this afternoon the official program from the province of Saskatchewan on Monday, June 18, 2001, for the unveiling of the busts of the hon. Walter Scott, the first Premier of Saskatchewan; the hon. T.C. Douglas, the Premier of Saskatchewan between 1944 and 1961; and the restored bust of the Rt. Hon. John G. Diefenbaker. They are located in the rotunda of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly.

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

MR. BONNER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With your permission I would like to make two tablings today. The first is to table five copies of an e-mail from Barry and Lana Love on behalf of the County of Flagstaff Family Farm Promotional Society. They would like the siting of intensive livestock operations left at the municipal level and urge the government to talk to more people other than ILO owners and operators.

For my second tabling, Mr. Speaker, I have the appropriate number of copies of a letter from Gail Horner, chair of the board of trustees, Sturgeon school division, in which they feel proposed government amendments to Bill 16 would substantially change that bill, and they urge the government to leave the amendments in the committee stage for at least 10 days before completing consideration of the bill.

Thank you.

2:00

DR. PANNU: Mr. Speaker, I have four different tablings. The first tabling is a letter, from hundreds of letters that my office has received over the summer, addressed to the Premier from an Edmonton teacher, Carolyn Benedik, urging the Premier to listen to Alberta teachers' concerns regarding their unsatisfactory working conditions and low wages. That's the first one.

Mr. Speaker, the other tablings that I have all deal with the position that the government took during the debate on Bill 11 with respect to its determination to respect the Canada Health Act. The second tabling is some press clippings again restating the government's commitment to the Canada Health Act during the election. The third one is quotes from the Premier with respect to his

determination to respect the spirit and letter of the Canada Health Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. MASON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have one tabling today, a letter addressed to the Premier from a teacher, Mark Samuel, concerning the continuing devaluation of teachers' professional status and their contributions to society.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, I have a number of tablings today. First of all, I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of a memorandum from the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort requesting that Bill 208, the Alberta Official Song Act, be given early consideration for debate in Committee of the Whole.

I also have the appropriate number of copies of a memorandum from the hon. Member for Calgary-Cross requesting that Bill 209, the Highway Traffic (Bicycle Safety Helmet) Amendment Act, be given early consideration for debate in Committee of the Whole.

Pursuant to section 36(1) of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act, I'm pleased to table with the Assembly a list of the registered candidates of the general election of the 25th Legislative Assembly, March 12, 2001, together with their chief financial officers who failed to file a candidate's campaign financial statement with the office of the Chief Electoral Officer on or before July 12, 2001. This is required by section 35(1)(1.1) of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act.

As well, the following Members' Services Committee orders: 1/01, the constituency services amendment order (No. 8); 2/01, the transportation amendment order (No. 4). [interjection] Hon. Minister of Energy, I could recognize you if you want to participate.

MR. SMITH: No, thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Order 3/01, the members' allowances amendment order (No. 6); 4/01, the members' committee allowances amendment order (No. 3); 5/01, the members' allowances amendment order (No. 7); and 6/01 the members' allowances amendment order (No. 8).

Pursuant to section 44(1) of the Conflicts of Interest Act, chapter C-22.1 of the 1991 Statutes of Alberta, I'm pleased to table with the Assembly the annual report of the Ethics Commissioner. This report covers the period April 1, 2000, to March 31, 2001.

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

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Premier.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a very accomplished young lady who is with us today in the members' gallery. Shawna Wallace is an 18-year-old University of Lethbridge student and is this year's recipient of the 4-H Premier's award, the highest honour the 4-H program bestows. She received this honour in recognition of her outstanding efforts and achievements during her eight-year membership in the Byemoor 4-H beef club. She has proven abilities in leadership and effective communications as well as a strong record of accomplishment in school and her community.

During her year as the 4-H Premier's award recipient Shawna will travel the province extensively, serving as a 4-H ambassador and promoting the 4-H program. Mr. Speaker, the province of Alberta has the largest 4-H membership in Canada.

Accompanying Shawna today are her father, Lorne, her mother, Marlene, and her brother Jeff, all of Endiang. I now invite Shawna and her family to rise and receive the very warm welcome of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, we have a long list, so please be patient.

The hon. Minister of Seniors.

MR. WOLOSCHYN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask Laurie Hawley, the president of Parkland local 10 of the Alberta Teachers' Association to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MR. McCLELLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you to all members of the House it is my pleasure to introduce Patricia Clancy-Novosel, the president of the Edmonton local of the separate school teachers' association, a person very, very committed to our next generation and to teaching and education in general. I would ask her to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

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

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two sets of introductions to make. First I'd like to introduce Aaron Roth. Aaron worked for two summers as my summer student at the Lethbridge-East constituency, and in the winter in between while he was attending the University of Lethbridge, he worked part-time in my office. He is now a political science master's student at the University of Alberta. Aaron, would you please stand and receive the warm welcome of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to introduce Bruna Genereux and Kieran Leblanc, who worked for us in our party office. Please stand and receive our welcome.

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

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure this afternoon to introduce through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly 14 students, a teacher, and a parent from the Suzuki school, the charter school in Ottewell in the Gold Bar neighbourhood. Mr. Ian Gray has been teaching in this school for seven continuous years, and he's doing a very good job. Mrs. Carolyn Readman is volunteering her time this afternoon to accompany the group, and they're in the public gallery. I would now ask them to rise and receive the warm traditional welcome from all members of this Assembly.

Thank you.

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

MR. HORNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all hon. members of the Assembly a great group of 52 students from the Bertha Kennedy Catholic community school of St. Albert. They are accompanied by teachers Mrs. Debra Kaplar, Ms. Fiona McManus, and volunteer parent helpers Mrs. Kathy Zubick, Mrs. Kelly Emmerton, and Mr. Irwin Forsythe. They are in the members' gallery, and I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. BRODA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions this afternoon. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you 35 students from H.A. Kostash school out of Smoky Lake. They are accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Harris; parent teacher helpers Sharon Boychuk, Curtis Boychuk, Ed Zenko, and Leanna Schoepgens. I believe they're seated in the public gallery, and I would ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

For my second introduction, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly Mr. Kevin Hubick, who is a teacher at the Sturgeon composite high school and also the ATA rep for Sturgeon comp. He's seated in the members' gallery. I'd ask him to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

2:10

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

MR. MAR: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Mr. Ronnie Miller, president and chief executive officer of Hoffmann-La Roche Ltd. Hoffmann-La Roche is one of Canada's leading research-based pharmaceutical companies, and the company has a vitamins and fine chemicals facility in High River. He is seated in the public gallery, and I would ask him to rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

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

MR. MASKELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two guests to introduce today. It gives me great pleasure to welcome Mrs. Karen Beaton, president of the Edmonton public teachers local, a longtime friend and constituent of the hon. Member for Sherwood Park and a longtime teacher, principal, and colleague of mine. By the way, this is her third term as president of the Edmonton local.

I'm also pleased to introduce 64 people from Aldergrove elementary school: 52 students and six adults including their principal, Mr. Duxbury; Mrs. Down, teacher; Mrs. Colquhoun, teacher; and three parents, Mrs. McCaskill, Ms Tweddle, and Mr. Weber. Would they please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly, along with Mrs. Beaton.

Thank you.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly six individuals studying at Grant MacEwan College, which is in my riding of Edmonton-Centre. They are accompanied today by their instructor, Celest Nygaard, and I would ask that they please rise and accept the warm and traditional welcome of the Assembly.

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

MR. HUTTON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me today to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly a special constituent and a proud mother. Mrs. Marie Gordon is the mother of Maya Gordon, who is one of the new pages that has started this session. She was also an enthusiastic member of your Youth Parliament this spring. I would ask Mrs. Marie Gordon to please stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly two teachers from St. Albert. One is Mr. Patrick Collins, the president of the local ATA for St. Albert protestant schools, and Ms Viviane Pezer, who is the president of the local ATA for the greater St. Albert school division No. 29. They are seated, I believe, in both galleries, and I would ask them both to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you today two very special constituents of mine from Calgary-West seated in the members' gallery. He was first an educator, but he's now a speaker, filmmaker, and writer and for excellent reason: he is the only Canadian to summit Mount Everest twice, in May '99 and in May '01. She is his wife and strong supporter. I would ask Dave and Jennifer Rodney to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members here a constituent of mine, Mr. Harold Neth. He's a very effective advocate for teachers, for teacher- and student-related issues, and frequently provides me with very insightful and helpful information that I can share with members of my caucus. He teaches at Holy Trinity Catholic school and is an effective zone representative for that area. I would ask everyone to please welcome Mr. Neth as he rises to receive this applause.

Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly four of my constituents from Millet including Mayor Laurie Linaker; community services co-ordinator, Arlene Swedberg; and Communities in Bloom co-chairpersons, Carrie Jepsen and Carol Sadorosznay. Later I will be giving a members' statement on Millet's success in the Communities in Bloom program. The guests are seated in the visitors' gallery, and I'd like to ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MR. DANYLUK: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly three members of the Alberta Snowmobile Association. Today we have with us the president, Mr. Trent Law; the executive director, Louise Sherren; and member Jerry Bidulock, who's also the president of the Riverland Recreational Trail Society. If I could ask them to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to reintroduce to you and to members of the Assembly a former friend and colleague of ours from the only Calgary constituency that has an

elevator. His name is Mr. Jon Havelock, former minister, former MLA for Calgary-Shaw, and a good friend. Would you please rise.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Economic Development.

MR. NORRIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on this glorious Alberta day to introduce to you and through you a former page of ours and a constituent of mine, Mr. Tim Jolly. Tim is in the gallery today. Would everybody please join me in welcoming Tim. Thank you for returning to us, Tim, and for being in Edmonton-McClung. We appreciate it.

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to the House two very hardworking young Albertans, Tracey Biehn and Tanya Woodruff, both of whom are seated in the public gallery. Tracey and Tanya are carrying out the practicum portion of their social work program at Grant MacEwan College by taking on casework in my constituency office of Edmonton-Strathcona. I take this opportunity to thank them for their hard work and wish them well in their studies. I will now ask Tanya and Tracey to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill.

MR. MAGNUS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this Legislature another ex-colleague of ours in the Legislature, Peter Sekulic, who sat in the Liberal benches here for many years. I'd ask him to stand and receive the warm applause of this Assembly.

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

MR. MASON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly two very special young people who are seated in the public gallery. Ms Cynthia Tupper is a student with the social work program at Grant MacEwan Community College and as part of her practicum is working in my office assisting with the casework taken on by my constituency office of Edmonton-Highlands. I thank her for her hard work and ask that she rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, my second guest is my son Alex Mason. He's from Highlands junior high school, in grade 9, and we got a postponement of several days of the Take Our Kids to Work Day so that he could be with us today for the opening of the fall session. I'm very proud of him, and I'd ask him to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

2:20

head: **Oral Question Period**

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

### Health Care Innovation

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is constantly discussing major changes to the public health care system. They've talked about user fees, increased health care premiums, medical savings accounts, tax credits for health expenses, and also delisting of services. My question is to the Premier. Why are you not considering cost efficiency in health care delivery innovation to

save tax dollars rather than just working with the revenue side of the health care system?

MR. KLEIN: It goes without saying that certainly we want to challenge the various regional health authorities and all people connected with the delivery of health care services to bring about new and better ways of doing things to achieve efficiencies, to become effective. Mr. Speaker, that goes without saying. Publicly I've stated generally to the regional health authorities and all people involved in the delivery of health care: before we even look at frontline services, examine the administration of the system and see what we can achieve there.

DR. NICOL: Mr. Speaker, the Premier says that that goes without saying. Why isn't he talking to the regional health authorities, telling them about innovative systems like the Capital Health Link to make it available across the province, like the proposal for long-term care in the Chinook health region to make that available all over the province? Why is it that we never hear of those kinds of innovative things from this Premier?

MR. KLEIN: There are many innovative things going on throughout the province, and indeed, Mr. Speaker, many of those innovative measures are being undertaken by some of the so-called smaller regional health districts. The majority of the problem, I think, is commensurate with the population of this province. One-third of the population is in Calgary. One-third of the population is in Edmonton. The other third is scattered around the province. So two-thirds of the problem in this province can justifiably be related to the two major regional health authorities. We are and have been bringing and plan to continue to bring the CEOs and the chairs of those two major health authorities into Treasury Board to discuss precisely what the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition wants us to discuss. That discussion centres around achieving efficiencies, finding new and better and more effective ways of doing things.

DR. NICOL: Mr. Speaker, the Premier still didn't answer the question. Why isn't he in his public statements making those kinds of recommendations to the health authorities so that the other health authorities are aware of those innovative things? All he's talking about is: we've got to penalize the consumers; we've got to penalize Albertans.

MR. KLEIN: No, Mr. Speaker. Relative to the mechanism for sharing information – and basically the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness will respond to this – there is a mechanism set up, and indeed there is tremendous encouragement for all health districts, all health authorities to share information on better ways of delivering services.

I'll have the hon. minister supplement.

MR. MAR: Well, I note that the Leader of the Opposition himself has cited as being innovative ideas programs like the Crowfoot centre in Calgary, the Northeast health clinic here in Edmonton. He's talked about the Health Link line. I should note that recently the Mistahia health region linked up with the Capital regional health authority. Mr. Speaker, those types of innovations, while new, are being shared in venues throughout this province. There is a sharing of best practices among and between regional health authorities. They do have, of course, a Council of Chairs of regional health authorities that meets on a regular basis. We recently had an orientation session for both newly appointed and newly elected and also reappointed regional health authority members.

Mr. Speaker, you know, these types of programs like Capital health's Health Link line have demonstrably reduced the demand upon the acute care system. In an appropriate way people are getting the right service at the right time by the right person, and I can assure you that there is no shortage of people with the Capital health authority here that are willing to brag about that. It's an excellent program, and it gets the accolades that it deserves, and the information is shared throughout the province.

Of course, we have to look at both aspects of it. There is no one fix to our health care system, Mr. Speaker. We have to look at ways of delivering our service better, cheaper, more effectively, more efficiently, and we also have to look at the financing side of it.

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

### Health Care Delivery

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier. When you talk about the health care sector and health care delivery, we basically have three systems in Alberta: the insurance system, the wallet system, and the public system. When you cut back on the public system, does this not just transfer the health care delivery costs of Albertans from the public system to the insurance system or their wallets? And some of them can't afford it.

MR. KLEIN: I really don't know what the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition is talking about when he talks about cutbacks. There are no cutbacks. Mr. Speaker, we are very concerned about a doubling of health care costs since 1994-1995. That can hardly be construed as a cutback. That is a doubling of the spending on health care, and if this hon. member thinks that's the way to go, then his values are a lot different than mine.

DR. NICOL: Mr. Speaker, as these cutbacks and changes in the delivery system are put in place, what will happen to Albertans who can't afford insurance or don't have the cash? Will they be left out of health care?

MR. KLEIN: No, Mr. Speaker. Nobody will be left out of health care. What we are trying to do and what every Premier and what every minister of health, including the federal Minister of Health and the Prime Minister, is trying to do is to achieve sustainability in the health care system and find those new and effective and better ways of delivering services and, at the same time, to make sure that those who are truly sick or are injured in society get the medical help that they need and require without losing their livelihoods and without losing their dignity. That's what health care is all about.

DR. NICOL: Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier. Mr. Premier, when you deal with changes to access to health care, if someone can no longer get a service through the public system, they have to get it somewhere else. Is that not effectively changing the delivery of the system or access to the system for those Albertans?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I would strongly advise the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition to wait until Mr. Mazankowski and his group of experts, top physicians from around the world and health care economists, bring their report together. Certainly there is the preliminary report, which outlines some fundamental and basic recommendations without putting the flesh on the bones. The final report I think should be out around November 16, at which time it will be reviewed by government, and in the fullness of time, of

course, and when we're satisfied with the recommendations we can accept and/or reject, then we will make that public, and we'll get on with the job of leading this country in reforming health care.

THE SPEAKER: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

2:30

DR. TAFT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Premier. According to a workbook for delegates at the provincial Tory conference this past weekend, quote, the health care system could soon consume Alberta's entire budget. On the other hand, the TD Bank's report on Canadian government finances last month projected that Alberta's health care spending would be 33 to 35 percent of the provincial budget five years from now. Does the Premier take as a serious policy idea the notion that health care spending could soon consume Alberta's entire budget?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, no one ever assumed that health care would consume the province's entire budget, but if spending continues the way it is, it could consume 50 percent of this budget to the detriment of other services. Here are the facts. According to an October study by the Canadian Institute of Health Information, health spending in Canada has risen by 40 percent over the last four years. When inflation is factored in, the net increase has been 28 percent over the last four years. Those are factual figures, unlike the figures quoted by the hon. member in the newspaper yesterday. Those figures clearly did come out of the sky. They couldn't have come out of his head, because he's purported to be an educated and intelligent person.

The same study, Mr. Speaker, shows that across Canada health spending has gone from being 29 percent of total government spending in 1981 to 37 percent of total government spending today. In constant 1992 dollars health spending in Canada has grown from about \$1,700 per person in 1992 to about \$2,200 per person today, and that's roughly a 30 percent increase in constant dollars.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. Premier, we look forward to receiving a tabling of such a document.

The hon. member.

DR. TAFT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting when we look at the information from the Canadian Institute of Health Information. Will the Premier acknowledge, using information from CIHI, that health care spending per person in Alberta, adjusting for inflation, is at about the same level today as it was eight, 10, 12, or even 15 years ago?

THE SPEAKER: Well, let's not have multiple questions. It's either one or the other. It's not eight, 10, 12, 14. Let's just specifically go to the question. This is not a point for debate.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, since the hon. member doesn't seem to or doesn't want to or doesn't have the ability to comprehend what I am saying, perhaps the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness can put it more succinctly.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. minister, to the point.

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, it appears to me that a person who reads nothing is better educated than a person who only reads Liberal policy documents. The fact of the matter is that health care costs have increased dramatically, and this is not an issue unique to the



province of Alberta. It is an issue that exists across Canada. Every minister of health across this country, every minister of finance across this country, and the Prime Minister himself is concerned about the issue of costs in health care.

We understand some of the drivers of health care costs, Mr. Speaker. It is matters relating to our aging population, technology, pharmaceuticals, and we are all looking at various efforts across this country and around the world as to how we can deal with ensuring that our health care system, which must be focused on patients, is sustainable. Sustainability is the ability for us to look after our needs today without impairing the ability of future generations of Albertans to do the same thing.

Mr. Speaker, it has been well acknowledged by the federal government and provinces across this country that, in the words of a federal Liberal Senator, tinkering is not enough. We do have to look at fundamental changes to how we deliver and finance our health care system.

DR. TAFT: While speaking of sustainability, would the Premier admit that his government's spending on health care last year as a percent of the province's GDP is almost exactly the average it has been for the past 15 years?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I allude to the relevance of that question, to which, I suggest, there is no relevance.

The simple fact is that health care spending has doubled – he should understand that: doubled – from a little over \$3 billion to something over \$6 billion in five years. That is relevant. Mr. Speaker, the population of this province over that same period of time has not doubled, the number of sick and injured people in this province has not doubled, but health care costs have doubled. Even the hon. member should be able to understand that.

Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, I would like to table the sufficient number of copies of the study to which I alluded earlier. Thank you.

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

### Health Care Reform

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before the last provincial election and even during it the Premier said nothing – absolutely nothing – about delisting services, challenging the Canada Health Act, or introducing user fees. Instead he said things like, and I quote: without hesitation we fully commit ourselves to the fundamental principles of the Canada Health Act. The Premier has no mandate from the people to attack public health care now. My question to the Premier: why did the Premier conceal from the public his plans to deinsure health care services, increase health care premiums, and introduce user fees during the last Assembly, before the election?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, we did not have in hand even the essence of the Premier's Advisory Council on Health, chaired by Mr. Mazankowski. We do have the preliminary recommendations, and they allude not to specifically the way the hon. leader of the third party makes out, but they allude to some fairly dramatic reforms, reforms that, if adopted by this government, could and probably will – I will make that more definite: will – represent a challenge not to the Canada Health Act itself but the interpretation. I alluded to this publicly, and I'll allude to it in this House: the interpretation of comprehensiveness. What does comprehensive mean? Now, to me it's very subjective. To the hon. leader it could mean – and maybe he'll answer this. Does it mean all things for all people at all times

and for all causes? If that is his interpretation of comprehensiveness, then let him stand up and say. It may not and it probably will not be the interpretation of this government.

### Speaker's Ruling Oral Question Period Rules

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, please. There's a lot of speculation going on here in the question period today. The purpose of question period is to deal with government policy. There seems to be speculation leading to debate, and that's not the purpose of question period.

The hon. leader.

### Health Care Reform

(continued)

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My next question to the Premier: did the government say nothing about introducing user fees or delisting services in its throne speech of February 12, 2001, the very day the election was called, because the government hadn't done its homework over the previous eight years?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, certainly as the election was called and as it unfolded, there was widespread knowledge that the Premier's Advisory Council on Health, headed by Mr. Mazankowski, was indeed at that time doing its work. It was only in the last few weeks that we received the preliminary recommendations. The final recommendations will come down later this month, and they will be given due and very careful and very sincere consideration by this government. But we alluded during the election many, many times that we are looking forward with great anticipation to the recommendations of the Mazankowski report so that indeed we could once again become leaders in effecting and bringing about health care reform.

2:40

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final supplementary to the Premier: given that his government has no mandate whatsoever from the people of Alberta to introduce user fees or deinsure services, will the Premier do the honourable thing and call an election before proceeding with his agenda?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, we just had an election, and you know what? They dwindled to two, we've got 74, and they've got seven. And he talks about a mandate? I would remind the hon. leader of the third party that throughout the election campaign it was well known to the hon. member, it was well known to the Liberals, certainly it was well known to every member of the Conservative caucus that a report was under way, a report from a committee that was commissioned by this government to study health care reform. Now they're coming across as if it's a big surprise, you know, as if it's new. Has he had his head in the sand all this time? Will he stand up now and admit – you know, is he saying that he didn't know that Mr. Mazankowski was reviewing health care reform? Is that what he's trying to say, that he didn't know? If he didn't know, then I would respectfully suggest that he is not a very good representative for his people.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

### Softwood Lumber Trade Dispute

MR. GRAYDON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first question is for the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations. Can the minister tell the House what the province is doing to protect Alberta's softwood lumber industry against the recent countervail and antidumping actions taken by the U.S. Department of Commerce?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, as members of the Assembly may recall, this is not a new issue facing the lumber industry or the timber industry in this province and the provincial government. We have established an overall reputation of working with industry and with the federal government to defend against these allegations, and on previous occasions we've been successful in that defence. However, at this particular time there has been a preliminary determination by the United States Department of Commerce, and currently work is going on in conjunction with the federal government and the other provinces on providing every possible legal and other help that we can to the industry in defending their part of the case, which deals with dumping allegations that have been decided upon by the Department of Commerce. We are working as governments to defend against the countervail findings that have been made by the U.S. Department of Commerce. Those activities are going on currently. We are also communicating with and in touch with the industry with respect to developments in this whole area.

MR. GRAYDON: My supplementary is to the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations. Can the minister update the House on recent developments on this issue?

MR. JONSON: As I've indicated, Mr. Speaker, there has been the preliminary determination by the Department of Commerce, and currently we are working on putting our case before that particular body. I regret to indicate that it will probably be a matter that will continue on, perhaps into May of next year, before final determinations are made.

In the meantime we are working with industry in terms of their having to deal with the bonding requirements that they have to put in place because of this preliminary ruling. We are also working with the industry to look at the whole possibility of there being some mediated or negotiated settlement that would be of mutual benefit to all parties. As it has been shown in at least two previous incidents, we do feel that there is a strong case to be made on behalf of our industry, and we'll continue to pursue that line of representation.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. GRAYDON: Thank you. To the same minister, my second supplementary: can the minister tell us how the government is keeping our industry involved in this process?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, along with the Department of Sustainable Resource Development we have worked with the industry and its various parts to form an Alberta forestry council. We have been meeting regularly with them through our officials. We're trying to advise them on developments on a regular basis so they know what is occurring with respect to these negotiations and these legal matters. In addition, we are discussing on an ongoing basis with them the possible measures that might be taken to resolve this overall matter on a long-term basis.

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

### Foster Children

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year at least 439 children in government care were abused or neglected. Recently one youth in care, a 16 year old, was charged with killing a man. My questions are to the Minister of Children's Services. What action did the minister take after being warned by memo that the boy exhibited unpredictable and aggressive behaviour?

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, in response to the question I would advise that there's an investigation going on. There are issues that cannot be discussed. Every time a child in care dies or a child in care moves to commit some violent and unfortunate act, we are concerned. We are sadly affected, but the hon. member is asking about a particular issue which I'm not at liberty to divulge any further.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

DR. MASSEY: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that the boy had been placed in 25 foster or group homes, how many more of the 400-plus abused children have similar unacceptable placement records?

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, I am assuming that the hon. member is referring to some children that have been referenced in the advocate's report released August 30. If I may, we have asked for a complete investigation into all of the substantiated and suggested acts. In fact, we have gone so far as to ask which of those particular circumstances had been acts of violence or acts of indiscretion or acts of violation against children while they were in the care of our government, specifically by people who were assigned to do due diligence on behalf of the child. So we're doing a complete investigation on all of the issues that have been cited in that advocate's report. We take very seriously any allegation of lack of care or concern related to children that are in our jurisdiction.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you. To the same minister, Mr. Speaker: how will cutting counseling, limiting case conferences, failing to support foster parents, and placing families on wait lists due to government budget cuts not lead to more incidents like this with these fragile children?

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, the discussion about budget cuts I'll take right on right now. There was a 1 percent cut that every minister at this table agreed would help us fit the cloth of our cost containment. Since that time, Treasury Board has agreed to add to our base budget a line of \$4 million, knowing that we get that money right back from the federal government as it relates to care of aboriginal children in those areas which have been served by our government.

2:50

We have added resources, Mr. Speaker, on the front lines. In this past year almost 475 staff or staff positions have been part of what is going on in Children's Services, and of those we have filled as many as we could up until the hiring freeze. We have worked very hard to make sure that the reductions do not happen on the level of dealing with the child. If there are changes in the administrative functions, they are happening administratively, not where the child in need actually sits.

Mr. Speaker, I am concerned as well about those allegations of reductions that might occur where the child is, but our foster parents

as of May of this year had an increase in moneys across the board. I'm puzzled somewhat that there are allegations coming from the hon. member opposite that we have not done our due diligence to children's services.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Little Bow, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

### Coyote Hunting

MR. McFARLAND: Mr. Speaker, following our Remembrance Day service in Champion this past Sunday, which celebrated our freedoms, I had three constituents convey to me their disappointment and disapproval with the new government regulation which they feel was created after negative feedback from one TV documentary and which they feel severely restricts their freedoms to protect their private land and their assets. My question today is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Why did the minister's department come out with the regulation to prohibit coyote hunting with dogs in rural Alberta?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development.

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That is a good question. Of course, we are concerned when the use of dogs for recreational hunting is happening in Alberta. Albertans have told us that they do not support and do not accept the use of dogs for recreational hunting. Both my department, Sustainable Resource Development, and Agriculture, Food and Rural Development have amended regulations to strictly limit – it's not prevent but limit – the use of dogs to hunt coyotes. Livestock producers will be able to continue using dogs. All they have to do is prove to us that the coyotes are doing damage to their livestock, and what we will do is then assess the situation and provide them actually with a 30-day permit to be able to deal with that particular issue. I believe we are doing the right thing. We believe the new permit system will satisfy generally all Albertans out there.

MR. McFARLAND: Mr. Speaker, if I could, I'd like to ask my first supplemental question, then, to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Why should a farmer or a rancher have to demonstrate that they've tried all other means of coyote predation control before even getting a permit to have coyotes hunted on their own land?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, let me make it very clear that that in fact is not the case. Livestock producers do not have to prove that they have exhausted every means. In fact, Alberta Agriculture has given the responsibility for the giving out of permits to agricultural fieldmen to make it as convenient to the producer as possible, to make sure that the decisions are made in the region where the problem is so that those people in those regions are well aware of whether coyote predation is a serious issue, and if it is, the producer will go to the ag fieldman and request a temporary permit, which they will get, I am sure, if this is an issue.

I want to make it clear. I've heard the same thing, that this was going to be an onerous process, that we were going to cause livestock producers grave losses in sheep and calves and so on because they would have to go through some onerous process to get a permit. To protect their livestock from coyote predators, they can obtain a permit in their own region from an agricultural fieldman who will be well aware of the issue of coyote numbers causing

havoc with livestock. So along with other methods of prevention that we certainly encourage, this is there for the producer if they need to use it.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you. It sounds to me like coyotes are worth more than livestock.

Mr. Speaker, my final question: because the animal rights activists seem to have had a great influence, I'd like to know if the farmers and ranchers who've lost livestock or family pets were consulted on this regulatory change.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, yes, we've had a lot of input from livestock producers, certainly from producers who have need to use this type of control to protect their livestock. In some cases it is just by using guard dogs, but in other cases where it is difficult to hunt coyotes, perhaps with a gun or other methods, and if using dogs is the only answer, we've talked to those folks. Actually discussing it with them was a key factor in us continuing to allow this practice.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make sure the hon. member heard my first answer, because it is not the case . . .

THE SPEAKER: Please. We've now spent five minutes on this question. If the hon. member has not heard the complete first answer, he will have the privilege of reading the answer in *Hansard*, which will be published shortly.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

### Rent Subsidy Program

MS BLAKEMAN: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Albertans have been struggling over the past couple of years with 30 to 40 percent rent increases and vacancy rates that have dropped to 1 percent. For low-income households that pay 45 percent of their income for rent, this struggle has been very hard. My question is to the Minister of Seniors. Why did the government choose to put thousands of at-risk people onto the street by freezing the rent subsidy program available under the private landlord rent supplement program?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Seniors.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, this government hasn't, nor will it, put people out on the street. I'd like to point out very clearly that our rent subsidy, social housing support, and senior housing support cover some 40,000 units – I repeat that, 40,000 units – 28,000 of which are owned by the province. When private landlords increase the rent, we are stuck into it. Nobody is put out on the street.

I'd like to also further state very clearly, Mr. Speaker, that one of the problems we're having with an active economy is that with what once was social housing in terms of units being made available by the private sector, many of these are being condominiumized, making it difficult for us to find new units.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you. Given that the units the minister speaks about are not available to these people who have been cut off this list, where exactly did the minister contemplate these people were going to go? Another MAP program?

MR. WOLOSZYN: Mr. Speaker, again I must emphasize that we are doing everything possible, everything reasonable to work with these folks. We've also embarked in co-operation with another level of government, so both levels, local and federal, in dealing with the whole area of affordable housing in Edmonton, Calgary, Fort McMurray, you name it. There are a lot of spots around this province where due to the strong economic activity, yes, we are facing housing problems, and we are dealing with them.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the people on the waiting list for the housing subsidies have been blindsided by this announcement, can't the department do better than to delay until six weeks after the change to inform these Albertans affected and to give the workers administering these programs an opportunity to plan? Six weeks later they were told.

3:00

MR. WOLOSZYN: Mr. Speaker, I don't know from where she gets her information, because we haven't announced any freezes on anything; we haven't frozen anything. I'd like to also point out that our housing support program works very, very well in that we have some 48 percent of clients who are people who are on other forms of government assistance. This is additional assistance to them. Also, fully 70 percent of the other half of the people are not on the program for more than three years, which means they're able to get off and find alternate forms of housing which are within their realm.

I'd also like to point out, Mr. Speaker, that we've made some other changes recently, which are not being brought up by the hon. member, in that we don't immediately increase their rents with their income – that is frozen for a full year to give them the opportunity to better themselves and hopefully move off – and a lot of other improvements to the regulations which have come about through consultation with the very people who live in these units. I would suggest that the member get her facts a little bit more clear.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

#### **Travel Default Insurance**

REV. ABBOTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week Albertans were shocked and surprised by the unfortunate news that yet another of Canada's international airlines, Canada 3000, had ceased operations. Now, this announcement has left many Albertans who had purchased tickets from Canada 3000 uncertain of whether or not they will be able to take the vacations they had purchased. Although airlines are a federally regulated industry, from a consumer protection standpoint can the Minister of Government Services update the House on Canada 3000's current situation?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Government Services.

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and it is a very good question from the hon. member. The current situation is changing minute by minute. We found that Canada 3000 was in bankruptcy on Sunday, and they are in court today. I understand that one potential buyer for approximately one-third of the airline has come forward, and that's the former owner, Royal Airlines. I think the hon. member will have a comfort level that other carriers and other charter organizations have pitched in to get their travelers home here to Alberta, but the bottom line is that we'll know more about these events following the court case today.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

REV. ABBOTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental to the same minister: what protection specifically is available for Alberta travelers who booked Canada 3000 flights through travel agencies such as the ones in my constituency?

MR. COUTTS: Mr. Speaker, the government has worked with the travel industry to encourage travel agents to offer travel default insurance to all consumers. As a result, the Association of Canadian Travel Agents (Alberta) has made it mandatory for their members to offer this kind of insurance. For Albertans who have purchased tickets with a credit card, refunds should be made available through Visa, American Express, and MasterCard. Alberta legislation also protects consumers who may have purchased travel arrangements over the Internet, and that can be done through our new Internet sales regulations. Albertans can contact Government Services consumer information line for information on this and can access our tip sheet on that particular subject on the Internet.

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

REV. ABBOTT: Thank you. My last supplemental to the same minister: has Alberta considered employing an assurance fund similar to those in other provinces?

MR. COUTTS: Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that that possibility was considered, but there would be costs to taxpayers, to consumers, and to businesses to fund and administer such a plan. These costs have to be looked at seriously, especially given all the other compensation options offered in the marketplace.

In the three provinces that offer such funds, travelers must have booked through a travel agent to be covered under that fund, and individuals who book directly through the airlines are not protected. However, in light of the recent events we may need to take another look at travel compensation funds for the future, unlike what I'm hearing from the opposition.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands.

#### **Intensive Livestock Operations**

MR. BONNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. What changes are being made to the Municipal Government Act in support of the government's decision to restrict municipal control over local land planning issues and intensive livestock operations, or confined feeding operations, as you now prefer to call them?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. BOUTILIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the question being posed falls under our Deputy Premier and minister of agriculture, but I am prepared to say that we're working very closely with the Association of Municipal Districts and Counties and the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association. In fact, this week we'll be attending their convention. So I will say that I will supplement to the hon. minister responsible for the question.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. BONNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister:

why is your department supporting the removal of an important local land use planning issue from municipal authorities, where it belongs?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. BOUTILIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, the question being posed is to the minister of agriculture, but the short answer to the question is that we are not.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I am a bit surprised at the hon. member's line of questioning because I know that we had a fairly extensive discussion with the leader of that party to talk about how we would handle this. This is a very important matter to both the livestock industry and the citizens of this province because it deals with the protection of soil, water, and air. But the thing that really surprised me – and I just want to mention to the hon. member that there was a news release released by their caucus in 1997. It said:

The Minister of Environmental Protection should work with the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development to ensure that the current Code of Practice for the operation of intensive livestock operations is administered by the province and is enforceable.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we're talking about. To suggest that the municipalities have lost their opportunity to zone land or to designate its use is wrong, because the municipalities have been asked to voluntarily forward to the NRCB, which will be the body that looks after this, not Alberta Agriculture, the land use plans for their municipalities and to identify areas where intensive livestock operations, or confined feeding operations, a more appropriate term, will not be permitted and the reasons for that. The NRCB would have that information and would factor it into their deliberations. In fact, the first thing that the NRCB would do with an application is send it to the municipality for their input.

So, Mr. Speaker, I don't know where this gentleman has been, but it certainly hasn't been in the discussion of the report that came in to us that we accepted the recommendations of.

MR. BONNER: Back to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Mr. Speaker. When is your department going to establish a new partnership with municipal councils based on clear rules and responsibilities rather than the whim of that government?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. BOUTILIER: Well, thank you very much. In fact, to the hon. member, I was very pleased, Mr. Speaker, just two weeks ago to speak at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. In speaking with them, it was interesting how the province of Alberta under Alberta's Municipal Government Act is viewed as a leader in every province of this country.

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

3:10

### Teachers' Salaries

MR. MASON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last April the Premier told this province's teachers that they could expect wage settlements that were on a par with those provided to doctors and nurses, yet here we are more than six months later and this promise has not been kept. My question is then to the minister. When will the minister step in and ensure that school boards are given the necessary financial resources to provide fair wage settlements to Alberta teachers?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Learning.

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In Budget 2001 there was a 4 percent amount put in for teachers' salaries, a minimum of 4 percent, and 2 percent further in the year 2002. The rationale behind that 6 percent is that it made our teachers on average the best paid across the provinces in the country of Canada, and we felt that that was an important starting point for the negotiations. The school boards had their per student grant, which they have been negotiating teachers' salaries with for the last 50 or 60 years, and they now have the ability to sit down to negotiate an end to the discussion about salaries with teachers.

MR. MASON: Mr. Speaker, if the minister says that the 4 percent and the 2 percent offered by the government was a starting point for negotiation, will he then commit the government to supplement the resources of school boards so that they can offer a fair deal to Alberta's teachers?

DR. OBERG: Mr. Speaker, there are actually a couple of questions there. First of all, when it comes to the 4 and 2 percent as being fair, what we said is that we wanted our teachers to be the highest paid in the country, which they will be. The 4 and 2 percent would assure them of that. It is then up to the school boards and the teachers, the ATA, to sit down and negotiate a settlement as to what they think is the fair amount.

There are dollars available. We increased the budget to the school boards this year – this year – 8.4 percent, Mr. Speaker. That's in addition to 9.8 percent last year. That's around 17 or 18 percent that it has increased in the last two years. We've increased funding to education close to 40 percent since 1995, so this government is making a huge commitment to education.

We presently spend about \$4.8 billion in the Department of Learning, Mr. Speaker. For every student who is in the province of Alberta, the government of Alberta spends \$7,500.

MR. MASON: Mr. Speaker, is the minister and this government attempting to provoke job action by Alberta's teachers in order to take away their right to strike?

DR. OBERG: Mr. Speaker, this minister and this government want anything but. We want our teachers to be in the classroom. We want our students to be learning. We want our students to be in the classroom. I don't think anyone in this House, I don't think anyone in Alberta feels that paying teachers 15 percent higher than any other provincial rate is the right way to go. We do not want a strike. We want our teachers to be where they should be, which is in the classroom in front of students, teaching kids.

### head: Members' Statements

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

### Helen Hart

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Friday, November 10, 2001, I was extremely privileged to attend the very wonderful memorial service held in honour of Helen Hart, a truly amazing woman who for 53 years was wife and constant companion to wrestler Stu Hart. Emotionally charged tributes were delivered by brother-in-law Jock Osler, children Bruce, Bret, Ross, and Georgia, and close friends Premier Ralph Klein, Ed Whalen, and Alderman Craig Burrows, all in loving memory of Helen, the remarkable matriarch of the legendary Hart wrestling family of Calgary, Alberta.

By now thousands of Calgarians, Albertans, and Canadians will have come to know of Helen Hart, who was indeed the rock at the centre of a large, exuberant family of 12 children. To know Helen's story, of the strikingly beautiful and intelligent young lady raised in Long Island, New York, who was the oldest of five daughters of an international track star and who chose to marry the handsome wrestler from rural Alberta, enables one to begin to understand the qualities and dynamics of the large family Helen and Stu Hart created. Son Bruce referred to the opposites attract theory and his mother's humorous quote: we got married in a blizzard, and I've been snowed under ever since.

Helen Hart represented many strengths and values throughout her life, which enabled her to endure the tragic deaths of sons Dean and Owen and grandson Matthew. Helen always held her head high, exercised unwavering integrity, was totally devoted to her family, and was so proud of their accomplishments. She was the voice of reason, tolerance, and compassion, and said Brett: she had the most perfect hug.

Our Premier quoted an old Jewish proverb: God cannot be everywhere, so he made mothers. Why is it that only upon death one receives full acknowledgment of one's specialness and worth? Helen Hart's very special memorial service told so well her story of a much loved, remarkable wife, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother and of her family's pain and devastation in their loss. My wish for Stu and their family is to honour Helen's memory by always remembering her strength of character, courage, dignity, acceptance, and love.

Thank you.

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

#### **Bettie Hewes**

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour for me to rise today to pay tribute to our former interim leader and the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Edmonton-Gold Bar, Bettie Hewes. Bettie was an outstanding wife, mother, grandmother, sister, friend, community advocate, and colleague. As a politician she has no equal. Our Great White Granny took the task of educating Prime Ministers, Premiers, ministers, private members, and private citizens on issues close to her heart with a determination that was formidable. Her issues were people issues. How did decision-making impact people? How were we helping those who didn't have a voice? Most particularly, how did we help, protect, and best serve the needs of children.

As a result of her focus she was able to shift political debate and decision-making in this province and in this country to include a human focus that has often been missing. Mr. Speaker, on a number of occasions many of us that came into the Legislature as new MLAs were seen to be consulting, seeking advice, and getting Bettie's opinion on how to make sure our legislation reflected the human aspect.

One of her great political regrets was that the province did not fully ratify the UN convention on the rights of the child. This was an issue she brought forward as a bill in 1993 and continued to ask for throughout her term as an MLA. We have no doubt that this government will wish to leave a legacy for Bettie Hewes as an outstanding contributor to the history of this province. Would it not be great if we could leave her the legacy she repeatedly asked for, if a full, unconditional ratification of the UN convention on the rights of the child could happen?

Thank you very much.

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

#### **Communities in Bloom Town of Millet**

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 1995 a nonprofit Canadian organization, Communities in Bloom, began a program committed to fostering civic pride, environmental responsibility and beautification through community participation and friendly national competition. Communities are challenged to improve the appearance of their streets, neighbourhoods, and parks through their imaginative use of flowers, plants, and trees with emphasis upon environmental awareness and preservation of heritage and culture.

Interest in this program has been growing, particularly in Alberta, which has more municipalities involved than any other province. Communities in Bloom has had particular appeal in the Wetaskiwin-Camrose constituency, where almost all communities have entered the competition at one level or another with noticeable results in appearance, community involvement, tourist attraction, and a heightened sense of civic pride and quality of life.

One community in my constituency, the town of Millet, has especially embraced the Communities in Bloom challenge under the leadership of Bernice Knight, who is locally known as Millet's flower lady. Millet first entered this competition in 1996, when it was judged best in Alberta in its population category of 1,000 to 3,000. Since then, Millet's dedicated Communities in Bloom committees have guided the town to numerous awards. In 1997 Millet was again judged best in Alberta. In 1998 it won the award in the best floral category in all of Canada. In 1999 it was judged to have the best landscaped areas in all of Canada, and in international competition in 2000 it was judged to have the best landscaping with historical artifacts. This year Millet was awarded the best in the area of heritage conservation and overall best in Canada in its population category. It's no wonder Millet is known by many as the prettiest little town in Alberta.

To all of the communities in Alberta that have beautified our province this summer through the Communities in Bloom program, I say thanks and congratulations.

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

#### **Bettie Hewes**

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you. Bettie Hewes, former MLA for Edmonton-Gold Bar, served in this legislative Chamber for 11 years. While I did not know Bettie well, I admired her for many reasons. Mrs. Hewes and I shared the same birth province, Ontario, and the same alma mater, the University of Toronto.

3:20

I wish now to share my admiration for the life of Bettie Hewes, a woman who was tirelessly involved in activities that improved life in the communities of Edmonton and the province. Over the years, Mrs. Hewes was recognized with many honours. Today I wish to highlight a few. Among them, in 1980 Bettie Hewes received the province of Alberta's achievement award for community service. In 1987 she was deservedly honoured with the YWCA's tribute to women award for public affairs and communication. In 1990 the Edmonton City Centre Church Corporation recognized Mrs. Hewes' effective efforts to improve the quality of life in Edmonton with their outstanding service award.

Bettie Hewes was an intelligent and compassionate woman who through her numerous contributions to public life and with the strength of her personality has contributed significantly to the richly textured and strongly woven social fabric of our province.

head: **Motions under Standing Order 40**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition on a Standing Order 40 application.

**Health Care Reform**

Dr. Nicol: Be it resolved that this Assembly adjourn the ordinary business of the Assembly to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the need for public debate and consultation to counteract the speculation that surrounds reform of the health care system in Alberta.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Speaking to the urgency of the motion, I think it's obvious that this is our first day of the session, so we couldn't bring it forward before. So we'll start with that as the premise of creating the urgency.

One of the things that has been brought to my attention very much in the last week or 10 days is the fact that there are a lot of, quote, suggestions being made about the direction our health care may take in the future. These suggestions are leading people to basically question what is happening, how much weight they should put on those musings, and whether or not those musings are really preambles or buildups to new legislation. So they're basically asking for clarification. Given that this is, again as I said, our first day, it's a good time for us to clarify that, especially in the context that possibly over the next month, two months, three months we may see a series of public reports being completed and distributed in the public domain, those being the report by the Premier's Advisory Council on Health from Mr. Mazankowski and the report being done federally by Mr. Romanow, and also as we lead up to next spring's budget, dealing with the province's interpretation and application of the public health care system.

So it's my sense today that what we need to do is talk about how all of these things fit together so that as we go into the next few weeks, few months and people start to hear about those reports, start to hear about potential budget changes, they'll be able to interpret them in the context of how those kinds of reports and budgeting activities fit together. So if we don't have that kind of overarching view today, then we won't be able to fully communicate to the constituents the kinds of priorities that are being put on it, the kinds of boundaries that were being put on these kinds of committees that have to deal with providing us with input.

The other issue I'd like to address, Mr. Speaker, is that we have opportunity to question the government in the context of question period, but it doesn't give us the chance to encourage the interactive debate that's necessary for Albertans to fully understand the potential and the impact of the kind of changes that are being rumoured in connection with the health care system. During question period today you constantly reminded us that question period is a time when we question the government on government policy; we don't get into interactive debate.

Mr. Speaker, I'd ask now that you find that this is a time when we should set aside a period for some urgent debate on how Albertans can expect to fall together and to bring into perspective all of the things they'll be hearing about in the coming weeks in connection with possible changes in the public health care system and the overall health care system of Alberta in terms of how they relate to each other, how the public system fits with the insured system and the cash system as well.

So those are the reasons, Mr. Speaker, that I truly believe, that I would hope you'd find right now that this is a time when urgency does prevail and a debate on the whole aspect of the future of our health care system would fit in.

Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: This is a Standing Order 40 application. It has nothing to do with the Speaker. It requires unanimous consent of the Assembly to proceed, so I'll now address the question.

[Unanimous consent denied]

head: **Public Bills and Orders Other than  
Government Bills and Orders  
Second Reading**

**Bill 210**

**Alberta Personal Income Tax (In-Home Care and  
Dependant Tax Credit) Amendment Act, 2001**

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

MR. CENAIKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour for me to rise and begin debate on Bill 210, the Alberta Personal Income Tax (In-Home Care and Dependant Tax Credit) Amendment Act, 2001. This bill will help thousands of Albertans continue to maintain their independence, make decisions about their own lives, and have choices in where and how they live. Bill 210 will amend the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act to allow for a greater tax exemption for individuals who are caring for dependent adults or relatives in their homes.

Specifically, the bill would allow for nonrefundable tax credits equal to the spousal credit of \$12,900 for individuals that have dependent adults or relatives living with them. This is a substantial jump in tax credits but necessary to reward and encourage home care. Bill 210's tax credit rewards people who currently care for dependent adults and adds incentive for more people to consider home care as an option in the future.

This bill is another proactive step forward for the short- and long-term benefit of all Albertans. Before the spring 2000 session of this Legislature the maximum level of tax credits was \$2,386. However, Bill 18 raised both the caregiver and the dependent tax credit to \$3,500. Bill 210 proposes to prepare for the future and offer an even bigger tax credit level for taxpayers considering or already caring for dependent adults. This bill involves not only the Department of Finance, by amending the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act, but also the Department of Health and Wellness' goals and visions for Alberta's larger aging population.

There are two excellent reports that touch on the reasons why we need to encourage and reward home care. The reports, Strategic Directions and Future Actions and Healthy Aging: New Directions for Care, share many of the same objectives as Bill 210. This government must ensure that aging Albertans are treated with respect and dignity and create a setting where dependent adults can achieve quality living supported by relatives, friends, and community networks. Bill 210 will lift the pressure off Health and Wellness' initiatives while at the same time keeping communities strong and dynamic. Our constituents will appreciate Bill 210 as the increased tax credits will have a direct, positive effect on home care providers.

Thankfully the fact that our province is rapidly aging is not lost on this government. We have been thinking ahead, analyzing the aging trend, and developing plans to smother the smoldering fires that could be caused from this emerging problem. According to the report Alberta for All Ages: Directions for the Future, by the year 2016 the number of seniors in Alberta will equal half of the population of Calgary. The tricky part of this aging trend is that although these people will not be fully independent, they will continue to be community leaders, volunteers, and essential to the family unit.

One large example of seniors' importance to society is their accomplishments as dedicated volunteers. In 1997 23 percent of

seniors were formal volunteers and 64 percent were involved in informal volunteer work. This vital group will grow as the number of seniors increases. I know that everyone in this Assembly can think of several times during the election when seniors worked diligently to help us all get there.

THE SPEAKER: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but the speaking time allocated for this particular order of business today has now left us.

3:30

head: **Motions Other than Government Motions**

**Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped**

507. Mr. Cao moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to ensure that assured income for the severely handicapped recipients transferring to a nonexempt income such as the Canadian pension plan disability program retain medical benefits until similar income limits are reached that disqualify medical benefits to partially exempt income earners under the assured income for the severely handicapped program.

[Debate adjourned May 22: Mr. Cao speaking]

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

MR. CAO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What this motion means is that such an action would generally improve the care of the disabled in Alberta. AISH clients will not seek alternate income streams that would cause them to lose medical benefits. Annual costs for equivalent medical benefits through Alberta Blue Cross and Alberta health care are about \$1,170. Individuals earning more than the current AISH nonexempt income threshold of \$10,800 receive no subsidy for their health care costs. Given this, individuals would have to be compensated by at least \$100 per month to leave the AISH program for other income streams. However, if this motion is passed, the government can expect some AISH clients to leave the AISH income stream for other nonexempt income alternatives outside the provincial government. Additionally, there would be cost savings on the administration and billing by Alberta health care and Alberta Blue Cross, not to mention the probable savings through avoiding the forfeiture of the Alberta health care premium.

The AISH recipients are typically low-income individuals. As this Assembly is aware, many low-income Albertans find it difficult to cover the cost of their health care premiums and must forfeit them anyway. The amount of the premiums forfeited by the government is around \$408 per year for every person who does not receive medical benefits and cannot pay for them on their own.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not saying that this change would be costless, but there are many very real possibilities of recouping at least a portion of the expenses. Ultimately, this is a matter of priorities. Are we willing to allow those afflicted with severe disabilities to go without essential medical services? It is important to recognize that for some Albertans extended medical coverage is an urgent concern. For example, individuals who are brittle diabetics or severe epileptics could very well not survive without emergency ambulance service. Although these services would not be deprived based upon the inability to pay, is it fair that we ask them to? Can we honestly expect disadvantaged individuals to be able to pay for those ambulance services from their own pockets, considering the frequency that the service would be required by them?

The target income amount, just over \$20,900, for individuals to cover their own medical costs is far more reasonable than the current \$10,800 for the nonexempt income earners. By passing Motion 507,

we would provide severely disabled Albertans with peace of mind and the recognition that they have a right to extended medical services, for their very survival depends on it.

I strongly urge the members of this Assembly to put the health of severely handicapped Albertans first in supporting Motion 507. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to respond to this motion that's been brought forward. Certainly I believe that this is the kind of motion that we can support in this Assembly. All of us who have done constituency work, a short period for those newly elected and the many years that some of us have been around, understand the problems that occur with people on limited incomes trying to access medical services if their plans that they're on change or if they try to integrate into other available plans such as this member talked about, being the Canada pension plan. A small amount of increase in revenue puts them over the limit for the AISH limits for receiving medical treatment, and clearly they can't access medical treatment.

Now, anyone who thinks reasonably that someone who's living on \$855 a month has got the resources to be able to access a private medical insurance plan is dreaming in technicolour, because they don't have the cash flow. They also don't have the cash flow to pay up front for the prescription drugs or the services that they need and get reimbursed later on. The money is just not there. By the time they cover their basic costs of housing and food, lots of months there isn't even enough money left over for bus passes, never mind medical care. So what happens is that they end up going without needed medical care or medicine.

I believe that depriving those people of that ability to access proper medical care truly is a human rights issue and is something that this government needs to be aware of. We have asked repeatedly for this to happen, so we're happy to see this motion come forward. We would hope that at some point the government will take the advice from this private member and incorporate this into a bill that will come forward in the Legislature so that we can see this particular issue addressed.

Particularly, this is going to become increasingly important as we see a tightening up of the fiscal regime in the province. There's going to be less money available for all the people who would want to access such kinds of programs. We may eventually see more delisting of services. We may see user fees come in a health care model in this province in the future. If that's the case, then these people on limited incomes are going to be even more significantly affected, and this government needs to think proactively and in the long term in terms of the kind of impact their decisions are going to have on people on limited incomes. So we would hope that they would consider this.

As the government turns to what we hope will be a wellness model in the future, where people are encouraged to take good care of their health now rather than waiting for problems to occur, and we talk about prevention models being put in place, it's going to be even more important for people on AISH to have access to medical care and to other kinds of services that will help move them into a wellness mode. So, again, now is the time for the government to be considering this kind of a motion.

While they're considering it for AISH, we would like them to consider it for other kinds of models in this province, Mr. Speaker. Repeatedly we have seen problems occur for families or individuals who are on social assistance and who are trying to move back into



the workforce. There's a transition period there where they have absolutely zero dollars and resources as they're moving back into the workforce, yet immediately when they get a job, their health care services are cut off. So if the kids get sick or they get sick or they need prescriptions, ambulance services, whatever, suddenly they have no resources to pay for this. It makes the transition back into the workforce even harder for these people, and it is very discouraging for them to do so.

So while the government takes a look at this kind of a proposal from a private member, we would hope that they would expand the view that they're taking here and take a look at some of the other problems that we see occurring on a regular basis, and that would be transition time for those on social assistance moving back into the workforce.

I think that some of the points that this member has made during his debates, now and previously, before we recessed for the summer, are good points, not perhaps entirely the way that we would like to see the model brought forward. One thing that he didn't talk about that we would have wanted to see addressed in debate and perhaps it will be by other members is the exact amount or costs of medical benefits. Is it going to be on a sliding scale? Are we just going to look at 100 percent transition? What kind of a model are they looking at there? So the details haven't really been fleshed out, but being that this is a motion, where we just bring the idea forward for discussion hoping that the government will take advantage of it and will help take care of these vulnerable citizens, we're happy to support it and certainly hope that we see some of the ministers from the government standing up and supporting this, particularly the minister of health. I believe that this is where a great deal of discussion would have to happen around the cabinet table to see this particular idea brought forward and put into legislation.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat, leaving lots of room for members of the government to address this particular motion.

3:40

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

MR. McCLELLAND: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege, and I'm very happy to speak in favour of Motion 507, put forward by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort. It's a great and very timely motion. It speaks to the kinds of motions that we should be considering here in the House. It deals directly with one of the most vital duties of this elected Legislature, and that is to find equitable and compassionate solutions for the challenges facing our most vulnerable citizens. You know, I've often heard it said that you measure the worth of a society not by how the most favourite among us are treated but by how the most disfavoured among us are treated. Really, that's how we should be measuring the worth of our society, in which by any world standard we are all quite privileged.

Mr. Speaker, current policies regarding the assured income for the severely handicapped place unnecessary financial and emotional stress on AISH clients. This stress is being felt by a group of people who already confront extraordinarily difficult challenges on a daily basis relative to other Albertans.

Before I go into detail about why this motion should be supported, it is appropriate to explain exactly what this motion would do. I know that the Member for Calgary-Fort explained it, but because this particular presentation of mine I think will be read by people in my constituency independent of what other people may have said, I'd like to reiterate it just once again.

Now, to be considered severely handicapped in Alberta, a person must be in a physical state that permanently – and that's the key word: permanently – prohibits that person from being able to earn

enough to cover even minimal living expenses. Eligible persons apply for funding from both provincial and federal sources. The main source of funding from the federal government is the Canadian pension plan disability section. The main source of funding from the provincial government is the assured income for the severely handicapped, or AISH. So that means that eligible persons are able to apply to the federal government through the Canada pension plan disability provision and to the provincial government through AISH.

Both of the programs have similar standards, but there is a very, very important difference between the two programs. The federal CPP program does not have medical disability, the medical payment component. One big difference in addition to the level of financial assistance provided by the two programs: AISH provides \$850 per month for a person with no spouse or dependants who receive no other form of income; the Canada pension plan has a maximum financial assistance level of \$932.12 per month. So the Canada pension plan pays \$85 or so more per month. So there's an incentive for people to go to the Canada pension plan for their disability benefits, but if they get the Canada pension plan disability benefits, they're not eligible for the medical benefits from Alberta, a catch-22 position if ever there was one.

The support level from the Canada pension plan depends on a variety of factors, including how much one contributed over their working life to the Canada pension plan, if anything. Now, an applicant to AISH must apply for Canada pension plan disability benefits before they can apply for AISH financial benefits and receive nothing at all or receive less than the maximum \$850 per month AISH benefit payment. To be clear, if you apply to the Canada pension plan and get less than \$850, you would be eligible to get the Alberta medical benefits, but if you applied to the Canada pension plan and got more than \$850, if you got \$851, you would not be eligible to get the Alberta medical benefits for dental care, for ambulance, the extended medical package.

Another crucial difference is that for people who receive any level of AISH financial benefits, they are also eligible for AISH medical benefits. So that means that if you get AISH benefits at all, if you get one dollar of AISH benefits, you're also eligible for the complete Alberta medical benefit, and that's a very important consideration. These benefits, the Alberta medical benefits, provide payment for medical expenses not already covered by Alberta health care such as prescription drugs, eyeglasses, dental work, and ambulance services. The average AISH benefit recipient uses about \$240 per month of these additional benefits. For terminally ill patients, such as some clients with HIV/AIDS, these medical benefits can far exceed the AISH financial benefit, to an amount perhaps as much as \$3,000 a month.

The AISH medical benefits are an incredibly important item to those eligible recipients. AISH has been designed with some flexibility so that former AISH recipients may continue to receive medical benefits even if they earn too much money to be eligible for AISH financial benefits. If an AISH recipient receives up to \$21,000, they are still eligible for the very important medical coverage. However, if the income is from Canada pension plan disability, they don't get it, and this just doesn't make sense.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Now, to be clear, for every dollar received from the Canada pension plan disability benefits, an AISH client receives \$1 less in AISH financial benefits. If a person on AISH receives \$849 a month in Canada pension plan payments or if they receive \$1 of AISH financial benefits, they are eligible to receive all of the AISH medical benefits. However, if the same person receives just \$2

more, or \$851, from Canada pension plan, they get zero, none, nada benefits of the medical coverage, which is prescription health, prescription eyeglasses, ambulance, and dental. It just doesn't make sense. So what this motion seeks to do, Mr. Speaker, is to treat all income the same for AISH medical benefit eligibility. Therefore, an eligible AISH recipient will still be eligible to receive medical benefits even though they are not receiving AISH financial benefits.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie alluded to this question: how much is all this going to cost? How many people are involved? As the member said, this being a motion, this is not part of this particular debate at this time. Today there are about 27,000 Albertans who are disabled to the degree that they cannot earn a living wage and are eligible for AISH and Canada pension plan disability benefits. So, Mr. Speaker, imagine how these people feel when they have to deal with the current complications with AISH and CPP benefits. Those that have qualified for either of these programs clearly need the financial support it provides, especially the medical benefits of AISH. Now, imagine those who by some government policy quirk received \$851 in Canada pension disability payments and all of a sudden their AISH medical benefits are gone. They're on their own to cover whatever prescription drug costs or ambulance services or dental or anything else that's covered that may arise.

Supporting this motion will cost substantially less than it may first seem. Yes, there will be increased costs because this government would be providing extended medical coverage for many hundreds of severely handicapped people that previously did not receive it. For some clients these will be considerable expenses, especially those terminally ill patients needing large amounts of prescription medications. But consider this: currently there is an incentive for people to stop receiving Canada pension plan disability payments and instead replace them with AISH financial benefits. So, you know, think about it. If the first source of payment is the Canada pension plan payments, but when you hit \$851, you're cut off your medical benefits, doesn't it make more sense to go to AISH, the Alberta plan, and get it all and then get the medical payments as well? That way they will continue to receive a similar amount of financial benefit, but they'll also receive the AISH medical benefit.

3:50

CPP disability payments are funded by the federal government while AISH financial payments are funded by the Alberta government. People are encouraged to accept money from the Alberta government when they just as easily qualify for income support from the federal government and should get it from the federal government because that is the order of government whose prime and first responsibility is to make those payments. You can see that the province would have an opportunity to save an immense amount of money if clients received more in CPP disability payments, which everyone who has paid into Canada pension plan disability over the years has paid into and should receive, and less AISH financial assistance, and clients would be encouraged to stay with the Canada pension plan disability payment plan if this motion were passed.

Surely the AISH program was not designed to punish those who happen to receive Canada pension plan disability payments. Surely our government and this province can be flexible enough to correct this imbalance, to make the small adjustment necessary so that Alberta's severely handicapped receive the dignity and respect they deserve.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. minister of human resources.

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure today to rise and speak to Motion 507 as it relates to some of the benefits that we provide for some of our Albertans that have experienced difficulties that many of us here in the House today have no experience with, and of course we thank God that we don't have to, but at the same time we have to understand that here in Alberta and as the government of Alberta we do have a responsibility that we will certainly meet in terms of assistance to those Albertans who truly need our assistance.

Now, the earlier speakers have discussed at some length, I think, the issue that we find ourselves in as it relates to any kind of a program when a line is drawn, and of course if people are below that particular line, in this case in terms of income, there are benefits, then, that apply. Of course, whether it's \$1, \$5, or even 5 cents over that line, then there are some consequences to that. So I think that it's important that motions like this come forward so that they can be discussed in the House and thus, then, provide information to the government as we move forward.

The motion, of course, being debated this afternoon is very timely, Mr. Speaker, because as all Albertans know, we have recently had a group of government MLAs that have gone throughout the province of Alberta listening to the concerns of Albertans as it relates to assistance to Albertans who receive low income. I think that it's only proper that I go on record as the minister responsible that certainly with an AISH payment of \$855 a month these AISH people would be classed in the low-income area. So part of the review, then, was to determine what, if anything, should be done in these particular areas.

Now, the motion of course has singled out a particular group, and we have been doing that in Alberta for quite a period of time. We might want to discuss at some point – but it would have to be under other topics, I would guess – this constant pattern that we have of labeling people. So we have assured income for the severely handicapped. I understand and I realize that the so-called AISH program is a program that's supported very well not only around this province but is seen as a leader across Canada. Again, just for the purposes of the discussion this afternoon, you know, we label some people as severely handicapped, and because of that particular label we don't worry, then, so much about the need, but as soon as we apply that particular label, then we start moving benefits into place that provide, then, for that particular grouping.

There are other labels that we use. We have, you know, people who are expected to work, people who are not expected to work. We have assured support for people, and we continue throughout our mandate, as we look at legislation that we're responsible for, and keep coming up with these groups that are labeled. Why can't we just, for at least a second, start to think in terms of Albertans, that we all are citizens of this great province, that we all have needs and we all have wants, and that there's really only a difference in magnitude of those needs and wants, depending, then, on our particular position, whether we've gained a particular position through education that we have in our background, whether we've been very fortunate in terms of our birth, or whether we're just lucky and got dealt a hand by whoever it is that deals out these hands in life that was easier to manage than what some other people have had to deal with? Wouldn't it be nice to be able to just think in terms of all of us as Albertans and recognize that, yes, there are Albertans that will have a specific need and then start to move toward trying to develop a response to that particular need and have them recognized by their name rather than as severely handicapped?

I don't want to take away from the motivation of the Member for Calgary-Fort, who has brought forward this motion. He has shown to me and other ministers his concern for his constituents, his

concern for Albertans that are in need. So he is here today with a motion urging the government to ensure, to consider, and to evaluate as to how we might deal with this line in the sand that we've talked about and, when a person goes beyond it, how their medical benefits can be impacted. I encourage that kind of motivation and I encourage that kind of debate, because I think that as we have entered into this new century, maybe it's just time for some new thinking.

Now, I've seen preliminary reports from the low-income review task force, and of course we are waiting for the final submissions from that group both in terms of what it was that they heard and then, coming from that of course, the recommendations that would follow from that. Then it'll be our responsibility as a government to then make a determination as to our response.

In any event, Mr. Speaker, the motion is a worthy motion. I would encourage all members in the House to support this motion, as I will be. Again, I want to just add the caveat, if I can, that in supporting it and in urging the government to ensure this kind of a relationship, we take this as one more suggestion that we're receiving inside all of those huge suggestions that Albertans have presented to us in the low-income review and that when it is time to respond, we respond in a cohesive and a coherent manner based on the need of an individual Albertan instead of a collective need of some labeled group.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. MASKELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise today to speak to Motion 507, which urges our government to continue to extend medical benefits to clients of assured income for the severely handicapped if they have transferred to Canadian pension plan disability or other nonexempt income programs. I firmly believe that assured income for the severely handicapped recipients in our province who choose to transfer to other income support programs should still receive extended medical benefits. I feel it should be considered that these people receive medical benefits until they reach the limit that would disqualify medical benefits under guidelines set out for partially exempt income recipients of AISH, which is what Motion 507 is proposing.

4:00

I believe that the AISH program has helped many Albertans continue to be vibrant participants in our families and communities in our province. The program was designed to protect and support the people who need it most, those who are unable to work to support themselves due to a severe disability.

I support Motion 507 because I believe it would make an already great program better. AISH benefits many vulnerable Albertans. The level of benefits a recipient receives is dependent on his or her income. The support program allows these people to gain greater independence in our communities and provides medical coverage for recipients and their families. The benefits that are covered are for prescription drugs, glasses, eye exams, dental work, ambulance services, and diabetic supplies.

Currently there are about 27,000 Albertans who receive AISH support, and of these recipients about 27 percent have a mental illness, 18 percent have developmental disabilities, 7 percent have arthritis, and 2 percent have sensory deprivation. The remainder have severe conditions like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, respiratory ailments, and traumatic brain injury.

For people to qualify for the AISH program, they must match their situation to every necessary requirement. The list is very detailed

and requires the recipient to have a disability that is so severe that it substantially limits their ability to earn a living. This disability must be permanent and impossible to remedy through any kind of treatment.

There are several work-related criteria that must be fulfilled in order to qualify for AISH. The disability of the recipient must be the main reason he is out of work, not age, lack of education, or even the lack of available jobs. In order to ensure their unemployability, the recipient must not have refused to take or look for reasonable employment for a reasonable wage.

There are qualifications to ensure that AISH is not given to those who have quit work they were capable of doing, refused or neglected help through training, or would not take rehabilitation and medical treatment to help them attain work.

The present situation also doesn't allow the income of their spouse to exceed the limits defined within the program. To ensure that they are utilizing all the opportunities available to their situations, they must have applied for other income benefits they qualified for, including CPP for disabilities benefits.

By outlining the different requirements of AISH in order to qualify under its targeted program, it was my intention to show that the program is not merely unemployment insurance. The people who are being supported by this program are unable to work because they are permanently and severely disabled. AISH provides income and extended medical benefits to these people. It is for this reason I support Motion 507. I feel it is important to continue to provide medical benefits to these people, regardless of the source of their incomes, because I believe these medical benefits could very well be saving their lives.

AISH recipients must have a condition so severe they are unable to provide for themselves or their families. AISH is not a temporary support system, as programs like workers' compensation and employment insurance are. Mr. Speaker, the people who receive these benefits will have their conditions for the rest of their lives. I feel that it is for this reason they are the ones who need medical assistance the most to overcome discomfort and in many cases to continue to live. Alberta developed the AISH program to assist these people and help them create lives that are more self-sufficient and to provide medical care for their needs. The vast majority of nonexempt income programs, like Canada pension plan disability, do not provide medical benefits.

Mr. Speaker, there are Albertans who no longer receive medical benefits for no reason other than a transfer from one income support program to another. If a person transfers to the CPP disability program, as an example, they will lose not only their AISH income support but the vital medical support they rely on. The current situation leaves this small percentage of transferred clients without medical coverage.

It is my concern there are people who live in our province who are not getting the care they need. Mr. Speaker, I believe we must strive to protect these people because they will be forever dependent upon varying degrees of medical attention in order to continue with their daily lives. Those who leave AISH and are utilizing the options that are available to them and required of them under the AISH program end up being unfairly penalized. Motion 507 would allow previous recipients of AISH who have transferred to CPP disability or employment insurance or workers' compensation or some such program to continue to receive medical benefits from the AISH program.

The AISH program is one of the best and most generous programs of its kind in Canada. I am proud to be a resident of a province who cares for its people and finds it important to improve the lives of all of its residents. I support the AISH program in our province because

of how imperative it is to over 25,000 vulnerable Albertans. I am aware that the budget for AISH is projected to increase 18 percent over the next three years, growing from \$303.5 million to an estimated \$357.1 million. The number of Albertans receiving AISH is expected to increase over 30,000 in the same period. I believe support given by AISH is providing the eligible recipients with fundamental assistance so they can continue to live as part of our communities, not outside or left behind. This income provides people with a tool to remain viable parts of our families. The medical benefits allow some of these people to remain capable of dignified and comfortable lives.

We are fortunate as a province to be able to provide a system of support which truly helps our residents. We have many programs which assist those who need help, and what Motion 507 is suggesting is that we look at adding one further measure to the AISH program. The maximum amount of money a recipient would receive under CPP disability is not substantially different from the maximum received under AISH, though once disqualified dollar for dollar by a nonexempt income program, the recipient no longer qualifies for their medical benefits. Motion 507 suggests that these people should still qualify for medical benefits, regardless of their source of income, until they reach given maximums.

Mr. Speaker, I believe what Motion 507 is urging the government to do is very reasonable. It would continue to provide medical benefits to those who need them the most. No matter who pays their rent, these people still have the same medical conditions and still need to have access to medical treatment which is not provided under nonexempt income programs. I support this motion and urge all my colleagues to do the same because it would allow us to capture those who are disqualified from medical benefits because they have transferred to programs like workers' compensation. I feel it is important to continue to give them the care they need so they can remain vibrant members of our families and communities.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar in the one minute remaining.

REV. ABBOTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just in the minute that's remaining, I would also like to rise and speak in favour of this motion. I think it's an excellent motion, and I was very glad to hear our hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment also speaking in favour of it. I think it's one of these examples of where we have an excellent program in place, but a program can always be fine-tuned and improved, so this is a motion that's certainly urging the government to do that. I've been very pleased with some of the debate that's been going on today, and I would just like to throw my support behind this motion as well.

One of the things that I like about this motion is that it really levels the playing field. Also, it encourages people to look for other sources of extra income. I know that's a big issue right now in my constituency, where we have a lot of small businesses looking for people who can work maybe part-time, and certainly some people who are on AISH have that ability. I just see this as an excellent way to help those who are handicapped to maybe earn a little bit of extra income or perhaps in some way to enhance their quality of life without losing their medical benefits.

So this is a great motion. I was glad to hear my colleague speak in favour of it, and hopefully when the time comes for us to vote on this very shortly, we will be able to pass this motion.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Ready for the question? We might have a few seconds left.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 507 carried unanimously]  
4:10

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

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I respectfully request unanimous consent of the House to deal with Motion 505 at this time.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont has moved that Motion 505 be debated at this time. May we have unanimous consent for this motion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

AN HON. MEMBER: No.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Okay. Just a minute; I haven't said my little piece. Anyway, we only need one person to say no and it's not unanimous, and I think I distinctly heard that.

### Delivery of Provincewide Health Services

508. Mrs. Gordon moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to prioritize restructuring of the parameters for delivering provincewide services such as renal dialysis and multiple sclerosis special therapy programs to focus more on patient need and outcome with emphasis given to service delivery closer to the patient's principal residence.

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

MRS. GORDON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon, fellow members of the Legislature. On this our first afternoon of resumed sitting, it is indeed an honour for me to be here on this very fine fall day and to stand humbly before you to speak passionately to you on an issue that is near and dear to my own heart and of great importance to several of my constituents, constituents who have, unfortunately, severe health problems that require very specialized medical treatment, treatment that is not available in their own respective communities and must be accessed by what I consider unreasonable distances. Please allow me to explain.

As stated, I have cited two examples of services currently administered under what is known as the provincewide services program through the auspices of the Capital regional health authority for northern Alberta and the Calgary regional health authority for southern Alberta. As you can see, these two health authorities have been given broader mandates than their counterparts in the other 15 regional health authorities. Why, you ask. Me too. However, these are the reasons given: to maintain consistency, effectiveness, and cost efficiency. I'm sorry, but I have many users in my constituency who would disagree and want us to reconsider our mandates, the mandates we gave these two regional health authorities, and the criteria their decisions are based upon.

One of my objectives today, if you will join me by voting yes, is to urge the government to redo and rethink this delivery model, to focus the needed changes on patient care and patient wellness outcome to ensure that treatment can be accessed without undue hardship on the patient or his family. Further, as is the case with renal dialysis, the present criteria through the northern Alberta renal program of allowing up to one or one and a half hours traveling time one way should be scrapped, allowing delivery much closer to the patient's principal residence or home community.

This doesn't necessarily mean the need for more dollars. Instead, it could be a reallocation of dollars. It could be as simple as being innovative, doing something differently, thinking outside the box, allowing all our RHAs who need to address these treatments to do so.

Needs will vary from area to area. The Stettler area in east-central Alberta has a high incidence of diabetes, kidney failure, and those that need renal dialysis. Please allow me to tell you about my constituents from the Stettler area, clients of East Central regional health authority. These individuals require on a continual, ongoing basis renal dialysis, or hemodialysis, and are forced by medical need to sometimes travel great distances to where space is available for treatment. Often because needs change, outreach rural satellite units operate at full capacity and have lengthy wait lists. These wait lists often mean years of long-distance commutes for others that can't access them, and due consideration is often given by them and their families to relocating to residences outside of their region so these services can be accessed easier. It's sad, very sad, often sick elderly people having to spend so much of their time, so much of their energy accessing a much-needed medical treatment.

These individuals need our help. I do not want them to have to leave the region, having to move to an unfamiliar, larger urban centre for this lifesaving treatment. I do not think that in today's world we need to ask elderly people to drive up to three hours a day three times a week. Worth mentioning, often these individuals are hooked up to dialysis for up to four hours at a time.

Please allow me to read portions of two letters, one from a concerned dialysis patient and the other from a son of one. Now, unfortunately, this man is deceased. This letter is from Mr. Raymond Schissler, and I've been working with Mr. Schissler for a long time.

You cannot make the politicians or Capital Health believe these treatments don't wipe you out. What is worse is when you have to get into a vehicle afterwards and drive another one to one and a half hours to get home. Traveling is a patient's worst enemy. By the time you get home, you are completely wiped out. Sometimes it takes 24 hours just to get straightened up, and then it is time to get ready for another go-round. I was told that when the cutbacks occurred, no one had to travel over 60 kilometres. Since then, this has changed continuously. Now it's up to one and a half hours one way. Another thing is the number of patients needed to bring a unit to the Stettler area. It started out at four, and now it's five or more.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

From Mr. Wayne Heronemus's letter.

I have had discussions with numerous people in Stettler and the surrounding area that need renal dialysis and would very much prefer to have dialysis in Stettler rather than continue to endure one to one and a half hours travel time one way to Hanna and Red Deer. Those currently traveling three times a week to Red Deer and Hanna for dialysis find the drive extremely exhausting and are already compromised due to their medical condition. The day following dialysis these people report they rest in preparation for the next day of marathon travel and dialysis again. There is very little quality of life for these people in what is considered an innovative and progressive health care system.

After lengthy discussions and research I have discovered that the Stettler health centre had a dialysis unit in place until it was closed in 1997. The plumbing required for this unit still remains in place. Over the last little while I have had several discussions with the involvement of physicians and East Central health representatives. I have discovered that there are a number of people in this area who either have to travel to Red Deer or Hanna for dialysis or

have completely chosen not to be treated at all because of the inconvenience, which bothers me greatly.

In addition, my father's specialist, Dr. Jim Kym of Red Deer, reports that the need for renal dialysis is increasing by 8 to 9 percent annually because of an aging population and increased episodes of diabetes.

4:20

So there are portions of just two of several, several letters I have received from constituents. I have spent considerable time and energy working on this problem, and I have promised many that I would bring their concerns forward in some such manner.

There is a solution for the Stettler area, one that is endorsed and supported by the East Central regional health authority. However, they do not have the mandate to address it. This is what needs to change. Those closest to the problem should be the ones working through the solutions, not a group of individuals from Edmonton, people who do not know the individuals involved nor the severity of their medical conditions. However, I will not find fault with the Capital health region. I have spent considerable time on the telephone and sitting down discussing this with them, and I thank them for their co-operation. We do, though, need to address this for many areas outside of Edmonton and Calgary.

According to the East Central regional health authority, re-establishment of the dialysis unit as a satellite unit is possible at the Stettler health centre. It would be a relatively simple process since the space is already dedicated and the appropriate water system is easily accessed. They have all of the requirements for a unit, such as space, emergency backup, lab services on site, and could provide for basics such as food and parking. They tell me that all the other services required for such a unit would be available as well. There is the nursing care that is needed. The registered night nurse, the licensed practical nurse, would be available, and at this time there are definitely a number of patients from the Stettler area, some from Coronation, Castor, Donalda, and Kelsey that would utilize the treatment.

It is my understanding that one of the requirements for a satellite unit, besides the need for funding, is a minimum number of four patients. I do know that of course this varies from time to time, but it certainly is my understanding that the need is there in Stettler and surrounding areas.

Something that has come to my attention recently – and this is when I talk about being innovative and thinking outside the box. The community of Stettler has a health foundation, and a great deal of money has been bequeathed or donated over time to this health foundation. The community has said that if in fact they can have a renal dialysis unit in Stettler, they will ensure that several, several thousand dollars from that health foundation would go to the full-time operation of this unit. So this is what I'm saying, Members of the Legislative Assembly. It is now time to think beyond the box, to look at some of these problems and come to terms with some innovative solutions. The community wants this to happen, and as their MLA I'm asking you by means of this motion to support me as I support them.

Another thing that I'm pleased to report is that Dr. Jim Kym, who is a specialist currently practising in Red Deer, has agreed to offer full consulting services to all the patients that would access such a unit. He would travel to Stettler on a regular basis to oversee the function of this dialysis program.

If Stettler is not chosen as a site, possibly a location that would be more central to this region could be considered, and as such I'm

saying that I believe that the decision for this should rest with the health authority that is closest to the area and not under the auspices of the Capital regional health authority. East Central regional health authority, as other health authorities in the province, knows the local needs of the local people. Because a renal dialysis unit might be needed in this part of Alberta doesn't necessarily mean it would be needed in other areas.

So I'm asking that we consider this. Region 7, the people of region 7, the members on the East Central regional health board are asking us to rethink this, to look at what is needed within their region. They want to be reasonable about it. They will look for innovative ways to fund this unit. They will ask the community for help. The community has said that they will give it.

In speaking to the multiple sclerosis special therapy program, right now in Alberta, several things. If you have MS, you must access, again, the services through the provincewide services program. Part of the province must go to Edmonton, the other part to Calgary. This can be very hard to access in a timely manner. As we are all aware, in Alberta MS is more prevalent in some areas than others, and I do think this is something that I would like to see and others would like to see: where MS programs can be looked at by the various regional health authorities to do with their clientele and the need in their area.

Right now when you go to a neurologist and he decides that he will put you on one of these new interferon drugs, you must make an appointment with an MS nurse. This has to be done either through Edmonton, at the University of Alberta under Dr. Warren's office, or Calgary, at the Foothills hospital. When you start these drugs, they are in needle form, and often for someone that isn't used to this type of medication or administering it, there are a number of questions, and certainly some help is usually welcomed. It is too far a distance for someone from central Alberta to make the trek to Edmonton or to walk and get information in a timely manner. My neurologist in Red Deer, Dr. Scott Wilson, who is a tremendous doctor, is advocating very strongly for a multiple sclerosis special therapy program to be part of the David Thompson regional health authority. I'm with him on this, and again I ask for your indulgence and your support.

Certainly I recognize that the bigger centres, Calgary and Edmonton through the Capital regional health authority, do have a mandate to provide many, many things that the rest of Alberta could not supply and could not look after with the dollars in a cost-effective manner. However, some of these other programs, with the help of community, with the help of individuals who need these programs delivered closer to them, I think can be done efficiently and certainly with cost-effectiveness. I have talked to many of these individuals from the Stettler area after they have spent a week traveling back and forth and spent the time on the dialysis machine, and I think: are we really helping these people, or are we hindering them?

They tell me that the incidence of diabetes . . .

THE ACTING SPEAKER: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler, but the time limit for consideration of this item of business has concluded.

4:30

head: **Government Bills and Orders**  
**Second Reading**

### **Bill 21** **Electronic Transactions Act**

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

MR. HORNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure this afternoon to move second reading and to begin debate on Bill 21, the Electronic Transactions Act.

Mr. Speaker, years ago when Alberta's laws were developed, the idea of communicating electronically had never really crossed our minds. Consequently, we have hundreds of statutes in Alberta that make no allowance for electronic communications. New opportunities for communication are rapidly increasing throughout the world, and our legislation must adapt to reflect these changes. As a government we recognize these opportunities. Therefore, over the last few years we have focused on creating an environment where the information and communications technology industry can thrive in our province. The Electronic Transactions Act is one more step in that direction.

In today's world of high-speed access to the Internet and electronic business, allowing only paper-based transactions is no longer practical. As a result, the objective of the Electronic Transactions Act is to give electronic communications the same legal status as their paper counterparts with one key principle, and that is, both parties must consent to handling their business transactions electronically.

It is important, Mr. Speaker, for us to understand that this legislation does not force people to use electronic communications nor does it eliminate paper transactions. It simply provides businesses, the government, and Albertans with the opportunity to communicate electronically, and it will still allow for current methods of interaction with government, public organizations, or the business sector.

The evolution of electronic commerce legislation dates back to 1996, when the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law developed a model law on electronic commerce. Based on this model law, the Uniform Law Conference of Canada then approved the Uniform Electronic Commerce Act. Mr. Speaker, the Uniform Law Conference of Canada is an organization that encourages harmonization of Canadian laws through preparation of uniform statutes. Once the statutes have been approved, they are then recommended to provinces, territories, and in some cases to the federal government for enactment. In Alberta we have based the legislation before this House on the Uniform Electronic Commerce Act. While Bill 21 was being developed, we also reviewed similar legislation passed by other jurisdictions. In Canada all jurisdictions – with the exception of Newfoundland, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and Alberta – have passed legislation based on this model law.

At the federal level, Mr. Speaker, the government of Canada passed the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act in April 2000. Part 2 of the federal statute deals with electronic transactions at the federal level. It sets out requirements to allow the use of electronic technology where under federal law the use of paper has been required in the past to ensure legal status. The difference between the federal legislation and Alberta's Bill 21 is that Bill 21 affects provincial laws that require information to be signed or in writing to be legally valid, and the federal legislation applies specifically to federal laws with the same requirements.

Mr. Speaker, there is one other issue that I would like to address before I begin talking about some of the more specific aspects of Bill 21, and that is the matter of consumer protection. The Electronic Transactions Act does not deal directly with issues surrounding consumer protection. In Alberta these matters are addressed in the Fair Trading Act, which is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Government Services. Under the Fair Trading Act a regulation has been developed by Government Services called the Internet sales

contract regulation, which came into force just this past October. Bill 21 and the Internet sales contract regulation complement each other. The Electronic Transactions Act will provide the legal validity for electronic transactions, and the new regulation deals with protecting consumers when they make transactions over the Internet.

I've talked about the objectives of Bill 21 and some important principles such as the consent provision and the legal validity that would be applied to electronic transactions with the passing of Bill 21. I would now like to talk about a number of particular features of Bill 21. The first feature is that the legislation will apply to both the public and private sectors. There are, however, specific provisions that apply only to the public sector. The reason for these specific provisions is that permission to use electronic communications may expose government to an overwhelming number of requests from the public to use a variety of formats. Therefore, the consent provision allows the government to expressly agree to interact electronically only when prepared to do so. The public sector will also be able to retain and use information in electronic form provided that consent is obtained from the parties involved. However, the public sector will be required by law to follow specific requirements regarding the retention of such records. The same applies to the private sector with the exception being that their records retention requirements are and will continue to be based on the guidelines established by the industry. In either case, Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to reiterate that a person's consent is required before information can be exchanged electronically.

Another feature of Bill 21 worth noting, Mr. Speaker, is that it requires the Minister of Finance to specify the electronic form of both incoming and outgoing payments for departments and branches or offices of the government of Alberta. The usual rules about authority and record-keeping will continue to apply to such payments.

Bill 21 also specifies that the public sector will determine the information technology standards that they will accept for electronic communications. Toward that end, Mr. Speaker, the office of the chief information officer is leading a cross-government initiative to implement corporate IT standards for government departments.

Given these steps, one can see that the legislation before us today reflects a corporate approach to government IT standard setting rather than individual departments setting their own standards. It is recognized that government agencies, boards, and commissions have close relationships with government departments. Therefore, the chief information officer for the government of Alberta, at the request of the minister responsible for this act, will set the IT standards for these organizations. Local public bodies such as municipalities, learning and health jurisdictions will have the ability to designate their own IT standards based on the fact that they operate at an arm's-length relationship from government. However, we expect all standards to complement one another and ensure that both public- and private-sector organizations can interact effectively in the electronic environment.

Another feature of Bill 21, Mr. Speaker, is a section that deals with exceptions to the act. The reason for this is that some records and transactions will require more detailed rules than this legislation will provide. If at some time in the future it is feasible and acceptable to handle transactions such as wills and personal directives in an electronic form, specific legislative requirements can be developed and implemented at that time, but as it currently stands, these types of transactions cannot be done electronically.

Mr. Speaker, another important provision of this bill is that it does not supercede the operation of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the Health Information Act, or any other

law that is intended to protect the confidentiality of information or the privacy of individuals.

Bill 21 also allows contracts to be formed electronically, giving them the same legal status as paper contracts. In addition, the Electronic Transactions Act states that where there is a legal requirement for a record to be signed, that requirement is satisfied by an electronic signature. The bill does not attempt to determine what a signature is and is neutral on that point. It does, however, allow the chief information officer to designate the electronic signature standards to be used by government departments, agencies, boards, and commissions.

Part of the process in determining the standards for signatures will be recognizing that certain types of transactions may require higher degrees of reliability. In fact, Mr. Speaker, this requirement for different levels of security and reliability exists in our paper world too. As an example, in some cases we may simply send a letter through the mail, but there may be other occasions where we must send a letter by registered mail because we require the recipient to sign for the letter, acknowledging receipt of the correspondence. As a result, security and reliability requirements will also be considered when dealing with the setting of standards for electronic signatures.

Mr. Speaker, carriage of goods is another area that is addressed in this legislation. Goods frequently cross international boundaries; thus harmonization of the law across borders is encouraged. As a result, Bill 21 provides for an electronic equivalent to paper for certain shipping documents, such as a bill of lading.

Mr. Speaker, one of the last sections of the bill includes companion amendments to the Alberta Evidence Act. These amendments are included within this legislation to allow for acceptance of electronic evidence in a court of law.

There's one more subject that I'd like to touch on before I conclude my remarks. Members of this House may recall that when Bill 21 was introduced in May of this year, I indicated that a discussion paper was being circulated to Albertans to obtain their feedback on this legislation. The discussion paper was sent out to approximately 800 individuals and organizations by regular mail and, of course, electronic mail. It was also made available on the Alberta Innovation and Science web site. Stakeholders who received a copy of the paper ranged from the construction, banking, agricultural, and coal industries to municipalities and aboriginal organizations. The comments were supportive of the principles of Bill 21, and they encouraged us to proceed with passage of this legislation. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we received no negative feedback.

I do want to recognize in this House today that the consultation process was beneficial to us in developing the legislation. It gave us an opportunity to hear from Albertans and to answer questions they had about the legislation. Mr. Speaker, I believe we have recognized that electronic commerce is changing the way we do our business and the way we get our work done. We are recognizing that our laws need to evolve to reflect the growing use of electronic transactions in many aspects of both public- and private-sector businesses. In fact, over the course of the past year we have received numerous letters from organizations from around this province and from various industries encouraging the Alberta government to enact legislation such as the bill before us today. Many of the responses to the discussion paper echoed these sentiments.

4:40

The government of Alberta is committed to enhancing electronic transactions and the growth of Alberta's information and communications technology industry. The Electronic Transactions Act will help promote people's confidence in e-business. People need to have confidence in the validity of their electronic transactions. If

passed, Mr. Speaker, the Electronic Transactions Act will make it clear that electronic contracts, records, and signatures can have the same legal force and effect as contracts, records, and signatures on paper. I think it is important to recognize that when some people think about doing business on-line, they may have a concern about the security of the information they are sharing. Because of this concern it is very important for the public and private sectors to always ensure that the appropriate security measures are in place before proceeding into the realm of electronic communication.

I do think that at this relatively early stage of electronic communication, regardless of the security measures taken, there will be people who may still be uncomfortable conducting their business electronically, and that is why I want to stress again, Mr. Speaker, that this bill does not force people to communicate electronically. It simply offers those using electronic transactions the assurance that the transactions are legally binding.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is really about ensuring that Alberta can continue to conduct electronic business on a level playing field with the rest of Canada. It is not intended to take away services that people are comfortable with. Instead, it will provide an alternative to receiving information and doing business. It is one of the components that will help us build the foundation to provide electronic services to Albertans. There are many more steps for us to take, but with this legislation we are making a very good start.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I encourage members of this Assembly to provide their support for Bill 21, the Electronic Transactions Act.

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

**MS CARLSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Happy to speak to Bill 21, the Electronic Transactions Act. This is a bill that we can support. We would expect to see speedy passage through the Legislature, and the gallery is very happy with that. Certainly this is a bill that's probably overdue in terms of seeing it come through the Legislature. [interjections] It's true. It is overdue. How many people in this Assembly and throughout the province have renewed their insurance or their mortgages through an electronic signature either by fax or by e-mail? How many things have we bought by clicking on the button on the computer? So it's good that the government brings in the legislation that will bring them up to date with what happens to be current business practices for many organizations.

I think this is also an example of where the government's consultation process really did work. They listened – they actually listened – and adjusted and rephrased some of the information that they had put forward given the kind of feedback they had from the people they talked to. If they could take that model and apply it to all of the other consultation processes they have, I think that would be excellent. So good work to the sponsor of this bill in terms of that.

We hope to see the model working a little more effectively in some other areas. Maybe education and health care would be great places to start. [interjection] It's true. You have the consultations. You bring in all the information, and what comes out the other end often doesn't look like what went in at the beginning. Am I wrong? But in this case, it did, and it worked very effectively. I think there's something to be learned from these new guys, Mr. Minister. So I'm happy to see that this process went so smoothly and that we saw it in the Legislature and that it's moving forward.

I think the member who sponsored the bill made very good arguments in terms of the reasons why this legislation is needed. I

certainly agree with what he said. I would like to point out a couple of areas that I have some questions on, and I hope that when we get to committee, we can see them being addressed.

The first one is in section 8, where it talks about how consent must be given by a person to provide or accept information in electronic form. No problem with that. It's the next part that I have a problem with. Consent "may be inferred from a person's conduct if there are reasonable grounds to believe that the consent is genuine." That leaves a lot open to interpretation. Not only am I faxing off my signature apparently, but there may be other ways that consent is implied. So if we could just get some further definitions on that as we get further in the debate on this bill, I think that would make me and many other people happy. I'm sure there's got to be a broader definition of exactly what that means and entails that we're going to hear about, and I certainly look forward to that.

My other area of concern is on section 29, where it talks about an electronic transaction having no legal effect if a material error is made and the electronic agent gives no opportunity for correction. Two potential problems there. One is the material error: exactly what does that mean, and how open to interpretation is it going to be? Are we going to have to make use of lawyers if we believe there is a material error? So some parameters, some kind of a framework that we're working within there would be helpful. If the member could explain just what the intent was there. The electronic agent gives no opportunity for correction: once again we need a more detailed definition of exactly what that entails. I didn't hear one in his opening comments, so I would expect that we can see that at some time in the near future as this bill moves through the Legislature.

I'm happy to see the exceptions, Mr. Speaker, that they have outlined in this bill. I think it is very reasonable to expect that there are some original legal documents that won't be subject to this kind of an electronic transfer, because there's such a great potential for misunderstanding or misinformation when you talk about wills or trusts or powers of attorney or documents that transfer interests in lands and registrations, even original mortgages. I think if you're renewing, there's reasonable expectation that an electronic transfer could adequately meet the needs of all parties, but an original document, I still believe, should be a face-to-face kind of transaction.

So with those few questions I think that essentially limits all we have to say on this particular bill at this time. If someone from the government could get up in the next stage of the reading, Mr. Speaker, and address this, then I think we'll be happy to pass this through the readings quite quickly.

**THE ACTING SPEAKER:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert to close debate.

**MR. HORNER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have nothing further.

[Motion carried; Bill 21 read a second time]

### **Bill 18 Health Professions Amendment Act, 2001**

**THE ACTING SPEAKER:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**MR. MAR:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to move second reading of the Health Professions Amendment Act, 2001, which is before us today for second reading. This act amends the Health Professions Act, which received royal assent in 1999.

[The Speaker in the chair]



Now, it does seem unusual to amend an act that has not yet been proclaimed, but the Health Professions Act is an unusual piece of legislation in that it comes into force for each of the 30 professions it covers as we put regulations in place. While we worked on developing regulations, the professional colleges identified areas for further clarification. We discussed the solutions with the professions involved, circulated the proposed amendments for their review, and the result of that consultation is the Health Professions Amendment Act, 2001.

As a result of some questions from professions over the summer, I've chosen to bring House amendments to this bill to the Legislature. This legislation will further protect the confidentiality of competency information. It clarifies options the director can use to deal with complaints and provides detail on what costs may be recovered from disciplinary hearings. It clarifies how professional colleges approve education programs for the purposes of registration and further defines the process for canceling registration and practice permits, and it clarifies wording on how students may identify themselves. This act also grants the Alberta Dental Association and college the authority to accredit dental surgical facilities. Alberta's dentists welcome this support of their profession's autonomy. Currently the College of Physicians and Surgeons accredits dental surgery facilities.

Mr. Speaker, the Health Professions Act gives Alberta's health professions the tools that they need to respond to changing needs in a transparent way. The amendment act clarifies some of the details to support the intention of that legislation, and I ask members of the Assembly for their support in second reading.

Thank you.

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

4:50

DR. TAFT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will keep my comments, as always, brief. Our position on this is that we will also support this bill. We did take the time – and we appreciated the time that was

allowed by holding up this bill – to consult with a number of stakeholders including the AARN, the Health Sciences Association, the United Nurses, the College of Licensed Practical Nurses, and the federation of health professions. We did hear some concern that there may not be enough resources in the system available for all disciplinary hearings, but in the end, in my judgment, it wasn't a vociferous enough concern to stand in the way of this legislation, so we will be supporting it.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness to close the debate.

MR. MAR: I thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview for his constructive comments and thank him for his support as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 18 read a second time]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In light of the manner in which we've conducted business this afternoon and given that we had indicated earlier that we'd be moving to committee on Bill 16 this evening and there may be people who want to hold to that, I would ask that we call it 5:30.

THE SPEAKER: Would I take it as well, Mr. Government House Leader, that you're including in the motion that when the Assembly reconvenes at 8 o'clock, it is in committee?

MR. HANCOCK: Yes.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:53 p.m.]

