

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, November 22, 2001**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 01/11/22

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: Prayers

THE SPEAKER: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. Our divine Father, as we conclude for this week our work in this Assembly, we renew our thanks and ask that we may continue our work under Your guidance. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: Reading and Receiving Petitions

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to request that the petition I presented yesterday be now read and received.

Thank you.

THE CLERK:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to provide health care coverage for medical supplies for diabetic children under the Alberta Health Care Plan and provide financial assistance to parents to enable them to meet their children's necessary dietary requirements and cover costs incurred in travelling to Diabetes Education and Treatment Centres outside their own communities in Alberta.

head: Tabling Returns and Reports

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Revenue.

MR. MELCHIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have five copies of each of the 2000 and 2001 annual reports of the Alberta Securities Commission to table. The Alberta Securities Commission is the industry-funded regulatory agency responsible for administering the Alberta Securities Act. Its mission is to foster a fair and efficient capital market in Alberta and, together with other members of the Canadian Securities Administrators, develop and operate the Canadian securities regulatory system.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Gaming.

MR. STEVENS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have one tabling today. In accordance with section 30 of the Gaming and Liquor Act it's my pleasure to table five copies of the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission's 2000-2001 annual report.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. BOUTILIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to table the requisite number of copies of the Petroleum Tank Management Association of Alberta annual report for the year 2000.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Learning.

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today with close to a hundred tablings. They have been delivered to your office, and they are the individual financial statements for all school jurisdictions, including charter schools, universities, college

foundations, and subsidiaries of the University of Calgary and the University of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, the next tabling that I have is the requisite number of copies of the Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board's 2000-2001 annual report.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have five different tablings. They are all tablings opposed to the Inland conversion to coal-burning cement production. One is from Mike Nelson, one from Verona Goodwyn, two from Elke Blodgett, and one from the Edmonton friends of the north society.

Thank you.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With permission I'd like to table the required number of copies of 41 requests from Albertans who want the government to vote in support of the class-size targets bill, "end the need for parents to fundraise for classroom basics," and "ensure that Alberta can attract and keep the best teachers for our children."

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today, both very thoughtful letters from constituents concerned over education. The first is from Christopher Rymes, who is most concerned about the contract negotiations between Alberta Learning and the ATA and is upholding the responsibilities of teachers and their value.

The second one is from Al Johnson of Carstairs. He is most concerned that "the government spends significantly less per student for public education than the Canadian average."

Thank you very much.

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

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the required number of copies of 31 requests from Albertans who want the government to support Bill 218 to provide proper funding for education.

Thank you.

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

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the required number of copies of requests from Albertans who want the government to vote in support of the Liberal opposition's class size targets bill so that "classrooms will no longer be overcrowded," to "end the need for parents to fundraise for classroom basics," and "ensure that Alberta can attract and keep the best teachers for our children."

Thank you.

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

MR. BONNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your permission I'd like to table the required number of copies of 19 requests from Albertans who want the government to vote in support of the Liberal opposition's class size targets bill "so that classrooms will no longer be overcrowded," to "end the need for parents to fundraise for

classroom basics,” and “ensure that Alberta can attract and keep the best teachers for our children.”

Thank you.

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table five copies of a document which shows that the Crossroads centre in downtown Edmonton over the first 10 months of this year provided services, 72 percent of which went to children 17 years and under and 93 percent of the services to youth 19 years of age or under, information that contradicts the information provided by the Minister of Children's Services yesterday to the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

DR. TAFT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today with two tablings. One is an article by John Burry, chairman and CEO of Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Ohio, in which he argues that the medical savings accounts “are the ultimate ‘cherry-picking’ scheme invented by some insurers to guarantee . . . large profits.”

The other is the required number of copies of 21 requests from Albertans who want the government to vote in support of the Liberal opposition's class size targets bill “so that classrooms will no longer be overcrowded” and that we may maintain the top-quality teachers.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, the chair would like to table the sufficient copies of three memoranda from three hon. members: first of all, from the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, requesting that Bill 208, the Alberta Official Song Act, be given early consideration for third reading; the second memorandum, from the hon. Member for Calgary-Cross, requesting that Bill 209, the Highway Traffic (Bicycle Safety Helmet) Amendment Act, 2001, be given early consideration for third reading; and the third memorandum, from the hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan, requesting that Bill 207, the Alberta Personal Income Tax (Tools Credit) Amendment Act, 2001, be given early consideration for third reading.

head: Introduction of Guests

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Peace River.

MR. FRIEDEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly my pleasure to introduce to you and to the members of this Assembly the members of the Northern Alberta Development Council who are in Edmonton today and tomorrow, partly for their annual meeting with the northern MLAs. Among them is Art Avery from Fort McMurray, Sandra Cardinal from Kikino, Berkley Ferguson from Athabasca, Gerald McIvor from Whitecourt, Pete Merlo from Grande Prairie, Michael Procter from Peace River, and Al Toews from Fort Vermilion. There are several staff members with them: Audrey DeWit, Pat Nelson – there is another one of those; she doesn't control as much money as the one we know a little bit better – Rita Phillips, Kathy Miller, and my administrative assistant, Gladys Gammon. They're in the public gallery, and I'd like to ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. SHARIFF: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 15 students from the Faculty of Law at the University of Alberta who are enrolled in the course Legislative Process and Legislative Drafting, taught by Rob Reynolds, Senior Parliamentary Counsel, and Peter Pagano, Chief

Legislative Counsel. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I request that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

MR. MARZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you today 36 grades 5 and 6 students from the Dr. Elliott school in Linden, Alberta. Linden is the industrial heart of my constituency. I'm very pleased to have them here today. I'd also like to introduce the teachers that are accompanying them, Mrs. Mary Hughes and Mrs. Sherry Hempel, as well as parents that have come along to enjoy the trip as well: Mr. Mike Klassen, Mr. Ken Leinweber, Mr. Mike Ratzlaff, Mrs. Nancy Heyblom, Mrs. Pat Christiansen, Mrs. Brenda Schroeder, Mr. James Klassen, Mr. Darren Esau, Mrs. Chris Thurn, Mrs. Heidi Thiessen, and Mr. Kerry Eitzen. I would ask them to rise and please receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. BRODA: Thank you. I have two introductions today. On your behalf I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly visitors in the members' gallery, 21 students and two adults from Dunstable school, located in Busby and the constituency of Barrhead-Westlock, your constituency, Mr. Speaker. I'd ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

My second introduction, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly 13 students accompanied by their teacher Debra and parents Rita Vandenbrink, Annie Visser, and Inga Herbold. They are from the Christian Homeschool Fellowship school located in my constituency. They're sitting, I believe, in the public gallery. I'd ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Solicitor General.

MRS. FORSYTH: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure and an honour for me to welcome representatives of Mothers Against Drinking Drivers. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Eloise Leckie, president of the Mothers Against Drinking Drivers, Edmonton chapter, and LeRay Witbeck, the assistant victims services manager of MADD, Canada western region. I ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Energy.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege for me to rise today and introduce to you and through you to the Assembly a dedicated public servant, one who is adding immeasurably to the effectiveness of the Department of Energy and one who is here today in a job shadowing assignment with his son Evan. I would ask John and Evan Buie to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you.

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

MR. OUELLETTE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise in the House today and introduce to you and through you to all

members of the Assembly 27 students from the John Wilson elementary school in Innisfail, Alberta, where my constituency office is located. Along with them is their teacher, Mrs. Linda Pederson, and parent helpers Mr. Dennis Fehr, Mr. Greg Morris, Mr. Trent Porter, Mrs. Coreen Evans, Mr. Perry Randell, and Mrs. Leslie Quinton. I'd like them to rise if they're here – they are I think seated in the members' gallery – and I'd like the House to give them their warm welcome.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development on behalf of the hon. Minister of Seniors.

MS CALAHASEN: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. It is rare that I get up to introduce my own group, so it's a pleasure to be able to do this on behalf of my colleague from Stony Plain. With us today from Forest Green school are 47 visitors, of which 42 students are joined by Mrs. Esposito, Mrs. Vanstratten, and Mrs. Lukey, with parent helpers Mrs. Burchaski and Mrs. Ashworth. They're seated in the public gallery. I'd ask that they all rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MR. LORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a well-known Calgary personality who is visiting us today. Among other things our guest was a candidate for mayor in the last election, and I understand that his campaign lapel buttons have become quite a collector's item. He is seated in the members' gallery. I would ask that Oscar Fech rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

head: Oral Question Period

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

Provincial Fiscal Policies

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has over \$2 billion sitting in a bank account for future debt payment while cuts are being made to departments every day. That's like having \$10,000 in the bank waiting to make a mortgage payment two years from now while your children go without enough food today. My questions are to the Premier. Why is this government cutting preventative services for children when they have over \$2 billion sitting in the bank?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I'll have the hon. Minister of Finance supplement my answer, but it's quite clear. It has been no secret that the philosophy and the policy of this government is to dedicate what we can to debt repayment so that we can free up literally hundreds of millions of dollars to go to essential services in this province.

MRS. NELSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess we're going to have to replay the tape from yesterday, because I went through this with the hon. member opposite yesterday. So I'll do it again.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of last year, which was a banner year in this province, we were able to dedicate a huge amount of dollars to pay down the debt in this province, which did a number of things. First of all, we are now paying over a billion dollars less in interest expense on an annual basis for that debt. Those dollars are gone forever. Because of the banner year we had last year, we were able to commit that \$2 billion to pay off our debt to bring us over eight

years ahead of the scheduled debt retirement plan that is legislated for this province.

What this hon. member wants us to do is to go back to last year and say: we're going to pull back the \$2 billion that we have put to debt retirement in an account to pay off when those dollars come due. By the way, the interest on it is being used in general revenue to meet priority programs. He wants us to pull that out, increase the debt of this province, and increase spending at a time when everyone else is taking corrective actions to live within their means. So he wants us to increase our debt, run a deficit, and go after it and forget about the requirement and increase our debt service costs.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: is the government waiting until after the teachers settle before dipping into this \$2 billion?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the \$2 billion that has been set aside for debt repayment has nothing at all whatsoever to do with the negotiations between the teachers and the various locals of the ATA and the various school districts, not the ATA and the government. I just thought I'd make that little correction.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader.

MRS. NELSON: And, Mr. Speaker . . .

THE SPEAKER: To supplement?

MRS. NELSON: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Please, a short one.

MRS. NELSON: Let's be very clear. I thought I made it abundantly clear in the first answer. That money has gone already to debt retirement. It is not available to come back. He has to understand that.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader.

DR. NICOL: Mr. Speaker, money in a bank account is money in a bank account. It hasn't been spent yet.

My third question is to the Premier as well. Why did the government cut 1 percent from every single department but not from the \$2 billion that you're holding in the bank account?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I don't – no; I do know where the hon. leader of the Liberal party has been. He's been in this Legislature for some time. It is the law of this province – the law of this province – that we dedicate 75 percent of all surplus funds to debt pay-down. It is the law.

1:50

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

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Premier said: "It's simple to borrow, and it's simple to raise taxes. All of those things are simple." Well, it must be simple to cut and download the deficit on RHAs, school boards, and children's authorities. My questions are to the Premier. How can the government claim to have a balanced budget when the Capital health authority and the Calgary

regional health authority are running a combined deficit of \$50 million? They're your agencies.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition knows, the Calgary regional health authority has cut \$30 million from their budget. I understand the Capital regional health authority will be coming up with a proposal or an announcement soon indicating that they have made significant cuts. I would remind the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition that these cuts are to administration. They have achieved finding efficiencies and more effective ways of doing things relative to systems management. The cuts have been made to corporate services. I want to make it quite clear, especially as it relates to the Calgary regional health authority, that they did not touch frontline services.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. But they still have a \$50 million deficit.

My second question is to the Premier. If the Premier is so confident that the way to contain costs is through efficiencies, then why are RHAs and children's authorities running deficits? Are they inefficient?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't say that they are inefficient. That's why we have agreed to work together co-operatively with all regional health authorities to achieve efficiencies and to find better and more effective methods of doing things.

Relative to the specifics, I'll have the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness respond.

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, I should note that there was a significant increase and there will be an increase to the base funding for health in the current year. Even after our adjustment, even before the adjustment that was made to regional health authority funding, the 2001-2002 increase remained at at least 10.8 percent.* So we have invested significant dollars into health care authorities.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in reference to the hon. leader's question about the deficits, we are working with the regional health authorities both in Calgary and Edmonton and in other parts of the province. I should note that of the 17 regional health authorities, most have posted healthy surpluses. Our assurance from the regional health authorities in both Calgary and Edmonton is that they will work toward making sure that those deficits do not recur in future years and that they will have a way of rationally being able to eliminate the deficits that they are currently running in a way that minimizes the impact on services and makes their systems as effective and as efficient as possible.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader.

DR. NICOL: Thank you. They still are running a deficit based on the revenues they got this year.

My final question, Mr. Speaker. Will the Premier admit that the one way the government has balanced its budget was on the backs of Edmonton and Calgary by withholding almost \$23 million from the fuel tax program?

MR. KLEIN: That is not true. We've asked all municipalities, all regional health authorities, all school districts, all departments of government to co-operate with the government in this period of restraint when the prices of oil and gas are down, Mr. Speaker, to see

us through this particular situation. If things improve, of course their situation will improve also.

The hon. leader of the Liberal opposition alluded earlier to a statement I did make yesterday. It's absolutely true. The simplest and the most mindless way – and that's why it appeals to the Liberals – of getting additional revenues is to raise taxes. I mean, that is a no-brainer, an absolute no-brainer. All you've got to do is pass the appropriate legislation during the budgetary debates and say: I'm going to raise taxes; I'm going to pick your pockets. Right? That's the easiest thing to do. It's mindless, it's dumb, and it appeals to the Liberals. Or you can borrow. You can borrow and go into a deficit situation. That also appeals to the Liberals because, again, it doesn't take any thought. It's a mindless solution. To find effective ways of delivering services and to achieve efficiencies, that's the right way to do it.

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

Contingency Plan for Schools

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saturday evening and summer school instruction for students are included in the government's contingency plan should teacher contract negotiations fail. My questions are to the Minister of Learning. Under what authority would the minister force teachers to conduct these classes?

DR. OBERG: Mr. Speaker, the answer to that is quite simple, and it's called the School Act. Under the School Act the school boards are required to provide 1,000 hours of instruction time. The last time I looked, if the teachers go out on strike, that is not instruction time.

DR. MASSEY: My second question is to the same minister, Mr. Speaker. Will this contingency plan, which would have to be approved by the teachers, not make reaching a settlement even more difficult?

DR. OBERG: Mr. Speaker, the School Act does not have to be approved by the teachers.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you. My third question is to the same minister, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister has again inserted the government in negotiations, will the minister be constructive and call a meeting of the teachers and trustees to prevent the situation from worsening?

DR. OBERG: First of all, Mr. Speaker, the School Act has been in Alberta for some 85 or 90 years. The hours of instruction at 1,000 hours have been in for a long time, so I do not believe that that is putting myself in the middle of the negotiation. It's simply enforcing the law. There tends to be a lack of regard for the law on the other side with the questions today. It is the law; 1,000 hours is the law.

I hope and I'm sure that everyone on this side of the Legislature hopes that there is no teachers' strike. Teachers should be in front of the classrooms teaching students. I hope that the school boards and the local ATAs will be able to negotiate a settlement, as they have done in Medicine Hat, where 92 percent of the teachers voted to accept the contract that was offered them. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the central ATA has not ratified that contract at the moment. Hopefully, that will occur. As I said in the Legislative

*see page 1212, left col., para. 2

Assembly before, that is a true slap in the face to the local ATA when the central ATA will not ratify that agreement.

Mr. Speaker, we are in no way in the middle of these negotiations. [interjection] These people laugh. What we did in the budget, as you've heard many times in this Assembly, was guarantee a minimum of 6 percent. There's another 3 and a half percent that has always been there to negotiate. It is up to the local school boards. It's up to the ATA to find out where that happy medium is, just as they did in Medicine Hat, where they put forward an offer with what they could afford, what both the Teachers' Association and the school boards wanted to do.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader of the third party, followed by the hon. Member for Highwood.

Children's Services Funding

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the 1st of November a number of Calgary agencies received letters stating that their contracts with the Calgary Rocky View children's authority would be terminated effective December 31. These well-established and well-respected agencies were told that the unilateral termination of their contracts was needed to make up an \$8 million to \$10 million shortfall in the authority's budget. To the Premier: how can the Premier justify giving deputy ministers and other highly paid senior officials 9 percent raises just before Christmas while giving lumps of coal to thousands of vulnerable children in Calgary that will suffer as a result of these brutal cuts?

MR. KLEIN: First of all, Mr. Speaker, the cuts are not brutal. Certainly the Minister of Children's Services, who has spoken in this Assembly before on this particular matter, has indicated that children in need of protection continue to be Children's Services' first priority. Like every other minister she has been asked to set her priorities, and her priorities, clearly, are children in need of protection.

Those agencies still exist. Not only do they exist, but there are other departments offering other services: Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for instance, the Department of Health and Wellness, the Solicitor General's department, programs that involve early intervention, departments that also fund early intervention programs like early literacy initiatives and programs for pregnant women, which help before a child is even born. There are a number of services that are essential and are being fully funded by this government. Although the Minister of Children's Services is not with us today, perhaps we can have the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development supplement.

2:00

THE SPEAKER: We're just going to move on. We've got quite a list of questioners today.

The hon. member.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplementary to the Premier: why is the government ignoring respected business-people like Bob Stollery, who even before these latest cuts accused this government of abandoning vulnerable Alberta children?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, we're hardly abandoning Children's Services and services for children. I would venture to say that the Stollery children's health centre at the University hospital is a marvelous example of how this government is working with the private sector to provide essential services for children. Indeed, the children who go to that centre are sick children. They need help,

and they're getting first-class help and care, probably the best in this country. I would say that that is a very poor example.

Relative to another statement, I think that there needs to be some clarification here. The salaries of exempt employees – that is, non-unionized employees in this government – were adjusted to give them the same rate of pay from a percentage point of view as the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees. Is this hon. member saying that because you're in mid management or because you're in senior management, you ought not to be treated the same as unionized employees? In other words, unionized employees can get raise after raise after raise and everyone else stays the same? That's hardly fair. That's not the way it works at his university. I know that for sure.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final supplementary to the Premier: why is the Premier still determined to push through the planned \$275 million in corporate tax cuts? Why is he refusing to do his part even if it means that thousands of vulnerable children in Calgary and elsewhere will suffer?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, children in this province will not suffer. It has been made abundantly clear that children are going to be looked after. In two departments – and I'll have both ministers, the Solicitor General and the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, supplement if they will – we are looking after children in need. That is a priority, and I'll have both these ministers supplement to give the hon. member an outline as to exactly what we are doing in this province to protect children.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MS CALAHASEN: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. First of all, I'd like to indicate that we have a \$647 million budget in Children's Services. If we're talking about vulnerable children, we've got a number of areas that we've been working on: child care subsidies to help low-income families with child care costs; family violence prevention, including funding for women's shelters; child welfare and child protective services; programs to combat fetal alcohol syndrome; services for children with disabilities; early intervention, which is what we're talking about – and these are still ongoing because it's just a scale-back – early childhood development programs; mental health and student health programs for children; and of course the child financial support program that provides monetary assistance to caregivers looking after children whose parents are unable or unwilling to properly care for that child. These are just a few, and all 18 regional authorities are charged with setting priorities and living within the budget.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, hon. minister.

I have a long list of hon. members who wish to participate today. We've now spent over six minutes on this exchange, and of course the principle is not that one member should dominate question period, so we're moving on.

The hon. Member for Highwood, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Endangered Species

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The federal Species at Risk legislation was in the news again today. The federal government has defeated a motion that would have given fair compensation to ranchers and farmers whose property is occupied by an endan-

gered species. My question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. In what ways have you, Mr. Minister, and/or your department sought the co-operation of the federal Department of the Environment in achieving a fair and just way to protect endangered species in Alberta without serious harm befalling our farmers, ranchers, and acreage owners on whose property the organisms might be found?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That's a good, timely question. As you're no doubt aware, Alberta has been a driving force behind the national accord for the protection of species at risk. This agreement has brought together all provincial, territorial, and federal jurisdictions across Canada to build an effective approach in protecting these species. Of course, the proposed federal act includes penalties for those who contravene it, but Alberta's approach is to protect these species' habitat in a more co-operative manner. In fact, Alberta's active participation in the national recovery plans for species has worked very well because we do involve landowners, we involve land managers, we involve agriculture, and we involve industry in the process. This is the Alberta way.

MR. TANNAS: Mr. Speaker, my first supplemental question is also to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Some environmental groups have criticized Alberta for not having specific species at risk legislation and recently awarded the province a D minus for its protection of species at risk. To the minister then: what is your department doing to better protect endangered species in the province of Alberta?

THE SPEAKER: Sorry. I caution the hon. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Deputy Speaker knows the rules as well as anybody. There are no preambles on the second question.

The hon. minister.

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is a very, very important question. Alberta of course has been very active for over 25 years already to identify the species at risk through legislation, regulations, and a policy of protection under my department through the Wildlife Act. We conduct many initiatives to identify and restore species at risk. This may include a wide range of conservation strategies based on good science. We've had very good success, and this is very important. The white pelican is one example, and the trumpeter swan, the swift fox, the Peregrine falcon. I think Alberta has done very well.

In addition to that, of course, we have the Alberta Endangered Species Conservation Committee here in Alberta, which was set up back in 1998 I believe. This committee involves industry, involves scientists, involves environmentalists, involves land managers in laying out a plan as to which animals may be endangered and recommends to me how we may restore those particular animals.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you. Without preamble, Mr. Speaker, does this proposed federal Species at Risk act complement or duplicate Alberta's protection of endangered species, Mr. Minister?

MR. CARDINAL: This is very, very sensitive to our overall economy in Alberta. We are concerned that the federal legislation might intrude and probably will, once it's passed, into provincial

jurisdiction. We feel we are already very, very successful in that area. Therefore, we do not support the proposed federal legislation. Again, Mr. Speaker, we do not support the legislation.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Electricity Deregulation

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier is planning on picking the pockets of electricity consumers in this province to get back the \$700 million that is owed. It's the largest power bill in the history of this country. Now, on Tuesday the Minister of Energy mentioned all of the various issues in the electricity industry he is looking into: "deferral accounts, prescribed rate, pool price deficiency regulation, export principles, [power purchase] arrangements, Clover Bar bidding arrangements," among other problems. My first question is to the Premier this afternoon. Why does the Premier continue to delay decisions or miss deadlines for such things as the regulated rate option, surely realizing that it denies consumers and industry much-needed information?

2:10

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll have the hon. Minister of Energy answer the question, but in reply to the statement that was made, we are in not in any way, shape, or form picking the pockets of Alberta consumers. As a matter of fact, this government came to the rescue in a very, very big way of Alberta consumers, both corporate and individual consumers, so that they wouldn't have to pay exorbitant electricity and natural gas rates.

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, just in the way that the Leader of the Opposition started out earlier today and said to dip into the \$2 billion, what the member who asked the question has said is: why didn't you just leave everybody out there to pay the highest bills ever encountered? Instead, what happened was that a load leveling occurred where these bills are spread over a period of time. It was the right thing to do, it was a prudent thing to do, and reflections from the last provincial election told us that is was the correct thing to do.

The member needs to know clearly that the Energy and Utilities Board for the jurisdictions they are responsible for will reflect the regulated rate option. In the areas of Calgary and Edmonton, where these are city-owned utilities, the recommendation for the regulated rate option is made to the cities. City council then approves these.

Mr. Speaker, the only piece of information that the member wants to know is if we will set a prescribed regulated rate option for the following year. That decision is going through the thorough and introspective examination of this government and caucus and will be reported in the fullness of time.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Energy then: is it not true that the minister has as of last weekend missed three deadlines dating back to the end of summer for releasing the electricity restructuring review?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SMITH: No.

MR. MacDONALD: Again to the Minister of Energy: how is failing to get information out in a timely manner going to address what the Centre for the Advancement of Energy Markets points out as a

weak link in deregulation in Alberta? Consumer information: weak link.

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, as invited and enticed as I am to make a comment about weak link or missing link, I will refrain from that and only suggest that if the member goes back to his reference material on the Centre for the Advancement of Energy Markets, he will find that that centre, the very centre he is talking about, rates Alberta as number one in North America in proceeding towards a competitive market.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Union Organizing Practices

MR. LUKASZUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My office is receiving a number of calls from members of the construction industry about the practices of salting in Alberta. Although they are not of the culinary variety, it appears that they are giving the members of the construction industry some high blood pressure. Can the Minister of Human Resources and Employment explain to us: what do the practices of salting and MERFing involve, and how do they affect the industry in Alberta?

MR. DUNFORD: Mr. Speaker, the term salting is a description that has come into labour relations in recent years. It indicates a situation where members of a union go into the job market, and they seek to be hired by usually a small contractor. They get hired because, of course, of the demand we have in this great province for skilled labour.

MRS. FORSYTH: And then they want a union.

MR. DUNFORD: All donations gratefully accepted to my answer. Then, of course, they begin to attempt to organize that group of employees working for that contractor. Upon the vote, whether it's successful or not successful, then they move on to other employment matters.

In trying to deal with this situation as a government, because we are, of course, here to try to provide a level playing field between the parties involved in labour relations, the difficulty for us is complicated. First of all, it should be a right of any person to go and seek employment. Of course, it's been established as a human right that once employed, if a person wishes to have a collective bargaining agent bargain on their behalf, that again is a right as well. Where the difficulty comes in and it seems like the playing field might not be exactly level is that if the company is certified and these salts, as they're referred to, then move on to other employment leaving behind them the certification, the employer is somewhat restricted in timing as to doing anything with that.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. LUKASZUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same hon. minister: are these practices currently legal in Alberta?

MR. DUNFORD: There have been a number of test cases with the Alberta Labour Relations Board, and of course I might add that there have been cases in other jurisdictions as well. The practice of salting has thus far been deemed as a legal activity within labour relations.

MR. LUKASZUK: My last supplemental, Mr. Speaker: since this

practice appears to be causing, as the minister has stated, a somewhat unlevel playing field, are you planning on introducing any amendments to the legislation to deal with this practice?

MR. DUNFORD: Mr. Speaker, we currently have been meeting with various stakeholder groups, and of course salting is one of the areas that has come to my attention, and there is controversy surrounding it. What I've been saying publicly – and I'll say it again – is that we want to enter into a series of consultations with stakeholders in labour relations through the year 2002. We are not going to open the Labour Relations Code from section 1 right through the whole code, but I would be interested in hearing from all parties, both representing employers and representing employees, as to whether or not there are specific sections of that code that we might have a look at with the idea, then, of bringing forth amendments in spring '03.

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

Adolescent Gambling

MS BLAKEMAN: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. In Alberta gambling is endorsed and promoted as an industry of choice by this government. Today's children are the first generation to be exposed to widespread access to gambling, ubiquitous gambling advertising, and general social approval of gambling. My questions are to the Minister of Gaming. What percentage of the over \$1 billion in gaming revenue is directed to programs specifically designed to combat adolescent gambling addictions?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. STEVENS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased that the Alberta lottery fund, which is the fund into which all of the gaming revenue in Alberta goes, is the source of funding for AADAC, through which all addiction programming in the province is done. Some \$4.1 million of the AADAC budget goes to gambling, and in my discussions with AADAC they tell me that \$4.1 million is the amount that is currently required to address the gambling problems in our province at this time.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

2:20

MS BLAKEMAN: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Given that a recent study indicates that 13 percent of Canadian youths have some kind of gambling problem, what steps has the minister taken to ensure that expansion of the gaming industry will not result in increased youth gaming?

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Speaker, there are two aspects to this that I think are appropriate to address at this time. The first is that AADAC has a program of education that goes into our schools to address problem gambling that might be there. I think that problem gambling in large measure is best addressed through education, and they have an active program there.

I can also tell you that the AGLC has a very strict enforcement policy and that we are very concerned that no minors do participate in gambling in our casinos or in our lounges in this province, and I can tell you that there is not one charge this year associated with underage gambling in this province.

MS BLAKEMAN: Given that several studies show that lottery tickets are the pied piper of problem gambling amongst youth, how

can the minister justify the new hockey lottery directed at young sports fans in Alberta?

MR. STEVENS: We have very clear rules with respect to gambling and in particular with respect to participating in the purchase of lottery tickets in this province, Mr. Speaker. The rule simply is that minors are not allowed to purchase those tickets. We have in excess of 2,000 retailers. They're very well aware of that. We also, through the AGLC, ensure that that is monitored, and that is working very well.

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

Kyoto Climate Change Agreement

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the biggest environmental issues facing Alberta and, in fact, the world today is the issue of climate change. This past summer and then again in recent weeks there's been a lot of attention given to the international talks relating to the Kyoto protocol and the global agreement to address this issue. My question is for the Minister of Environment, who I believe participated in some of the international discussions in July. What is the status of these negotiations, especially in terms of their impact on Canada and Alberta?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

DR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ten years ago at Rio the Kyoto climate change agreement was signed by about 170 countries. It's the biggest treaty the world has ever known. Since that time, there has been ongoing negotiation in terms of what rules will be set around the Kyoto agreement and how it will be implemented, and at Bonn in July those rules were agreed on. In Marrakech last month the technical details of those rules were agreed on. So essentially the agreement is in place, and the federal Minister of the Environment has announced that these two agreements, the Bonn and the Marrakech agreements, pave the way to ratification. It is his expectation that the agreement will be ratified either before the G-8 or at the G-8 next June in Kananaskis.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. To the same minister: if Canada does proceed with ratification, what will that mean to Alberta?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

DR. TAYLOR: Yes. It's a very interesting question, Mr. Speaker. This agreement as it stands would have significant cost to Alberta, and the issue is that the federal government has no idea of what these costs would be at the present time. So that's the scary issue. Our estimate is that this could cost the industry in Alberta up to \$3 per barrel of oil to a total some place in the neighbourhood of \$6 billion per year out of our economy, and obviously that is a significant cost. The first one to be hit on that would be industry, and at the same time as industry is hit, the Alberta Treasury would be hit. So this is an extremely significant issue for Alberta, and we have to deal with it as a province.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Energy to supplement.

MR. SMITH: Thank you. I just want to supplement this. The

dominion of Canada exports more oil and gas to the United States than the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Mr. Speaker, the United States will not be a signatory to this agreement. Those are our biggest customers in that country. Mexico and Venezuela are our largest competitors in that marketplace, and they will not be signatories to Kyoto. We are being taxed by putting one hand behind our back and trying to compete in a free market where export is the lifeblood of this province, and it's punitive to this province.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. My final question is to the Minister of Environment. Within that context, as stated by both ministers, what is the Alberta government's position on climate change? Do we have a strategy?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

DR. TAYLOR: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we have a very clear position on Kyoto; that is, the federal government should not ratify Kyoto in its present situation. As the Minister of Energy has correctly pointed out, the U.S. is not a signatory. While Venezuela and Mexico are signatories, they do not have any compliance requirements, and that's the issue. We will have compliance requirements. Our biggest competitors, Venezuela and Mexico, will not have any compliance requirements.

As well, Canada only produces 2 percent, Mr. Speaker, of the greenhouse gas in the world. The U.S., China, and India produce approximately 50 percent. So my question to the federal government is: why do you take steps that could be disastrous to the Canadian and the Alberta economy for 2 percent of the greenhouse gas in the world? If we eliminated that 2 percent and went back to living in caves, which some people seem to want us to do, it would not have any, you know, main effect on the greenhouse gas. Until the U.S., India, and China are involved, it makes no sense to sign this agreement.

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

Underground Petroleum Storage Tanks

MR. BONNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: why is your department jeopardizing the safety of groundwater in Alberta by cutting \$30 million from the underground petroleum storage tank program?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. BOUTILIER: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is absolutely correct in the fact that we are deferring \$31 million of our program. But I think it's important to note this: it is the only program of its kind in Canada. Albertans have committed over \$80 million. Fifty million dollars of that work has been done, which has reached over 600 sites.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. BONNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: if protecting groundwater is a priority, why did this program take a major cut? Thirty million dollars is more than 1 percent.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. BOUTILIER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, the hon. member raises a very good point. In fact, today at the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, which many members here were at, I spoke to a member of the committee that is examining the issue of groundwater, the president of the Alberta association. I think it's also important to understand that the assessment that was done of the highest risk sites in this province is part of the 55 orphan sites and the 600 sites that have been remediated at this time.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Leduc.

Homelessness

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is national homelessness action day. As I speak, hundreds of concerned Edmontonians are gathering in Edmonton's inner city on a provincial government parking lot that was previously zoned for affordable housing. Turning land zoned for housing into a parking lot is an apt metaphor for this government's housing policy, it seems. My questions are to the hon. Premier. Why is the government prepared to spend in excess of a million dollars to assemble land in Edmonton's inner city and build a paved parking lot there while it ignores the needs of thousands of low-income Albertans for affordable housing?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I really don't know what we are assembling in terms of land. Perhaps I'll have the hon. Minister of Infrastructure or Municipal Affairs respond relative to that particular situation.

As it affects the homeless in this province, I think that the government has worked well with a number of agencies to accommodate the homeless and to deal with the homeless situation in this province. The agency that comes to mind – it's not here in the city of Edmonton, although they're doing a wonderful job here – is certainly in the city of Calgary, where they have taken significant steps to provide low-income housing. I was just reading the paper the other day, relative to the Canadian forces base land that was left vacant when the military moved to Edmonton, that there are rental units in some cases going for absolutely nothing based on the person's or the family's ability to pay. The rent in some cases is nothing.

2:30

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, in most recent times we haven't purchased any land in the city of Edmonton except for very specific needs, like where Transportation is going to be building some roadways.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How is the government planning to replace the affordable housing that was sacrificed to build this parking lot?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know where this parking lot is. I don't have the information. I don't know if the hon. Minister of Infrastructure or Municipal Affairs or anyone else has the information, but if we own a parking lot somewhere, it is obviously for a purpose of government or for a future right-of-way or for something. We just don't buy land for the sake of buying land.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will get the information on this parking lot to the Premier.

My last question to him: will the Premier advise the House if his government will match the dollars that the federal government has agreed to provide for affordable housing over the next four years, and if not, why not?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, we are working with agencies in Calgary and Edmonton and indeed throughout the province to address the homeless situation. I already alluded to the situation in Calgary, where I know they're doing an absolutely marvelous job to deal with the homeless situation there. I understand they are doing a similar kind of job here in the capital region.

It's not just government. It's governments. It's the federal government, it's the Alberta government, it's municipal governments, it's the business community and volunteers, everyone working together.

MR. NORRIS: Just as a supplement, Mr. Speaker. An organization in Edmonton, the Rotary Club, which I'm sure everybody's familiar with, has partnered in downtown Edmonton with the provincial government and the federal government, each putting in \$800,000, to build a 26-suite low-income home for singles. It's in downtown Edmonton, and it ain't a parking lot. It's an action this government has matched with the federal government, and it's going to be opened in the spring of 2002.

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

Rural Electrification Associations

MR. KLAPSTEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Energy. My constituents are receiving bills, and quite frankly they don't seem to make any sense. There seems to be an ongoing problem associated with load settlement estimates used to prepare wholesale bills for rural electrification associations. These estimates appear to be unreasonable and do not reflect actual consumption. Is that the case?

MR. SMITH: Well, Mr. Speaker that is absolutely correct. It's a good question. It indicates that you have bills that come in that are not balancing with the charges that are going out. Action has to be undertaken to correct this so that people are in fact paying for what they used. In that line, we are undertaking a review of the rural electrification associations data collection process to ensure that we can use the load settlement data accordingly, and we are working with the Power Pool.

MR. KLAPSTEIN: So when can consumers expect to get a complete and accurate picture of their consumption on their bill?

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, in fact, a committee has been put together called the Alberta settlement committee. It's a group consisting of representation from retailers, distribution utilities, the Power Pool, transmission administrator, the rural electrification associations, and the Department of Energy. We are completing our work after having set out the description of the tasks at hand. We expect to have a complete and accurate picture of the consumption in the first quarter of 2002 and at the onset will then take corrective action. Secondly, we will continue to monitor existing issues inside that marketplace.

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

Provincial Fiscal Policies

(continued)

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, in response to an earlier question by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, I cited an incorrect number. I earlier stated that RHA base funding for the current year would be increased by 10.8 percent. That was actually before the adjustment. The actual figure is in fact 8.9 percent, and I wish to make that correction.*

Thank you.

head: Members' Statements

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

Mothers Against Drunk Driving

MR. HUTTON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Impaired driving is the number one Criminal Code cause of death in Canada. Each holiday season Mothers Against Drunk Driving, better known as MADD, puts on the red ribbon campaign to raise awareness of the dangers of drinking and driving. The campaign was launched on November 15 with an open house at the MADD Edmonton chapter, which is in my constituency. Police officers, paramedics, taxi drivers, all levels of government, and many other corporate sponsors showed their support at the launch by wearing a ribbon or tying it on their vehicles. On average 4.5 Canadians are killed and over 125 more Canadians are injured daily in alcohol-related crashes. Direct and indirect costs of alcohol-related crashes are estimated at \$9 billion annually. Simply, more needs to be done about this serious crime.

At the campaign launch an announcement was made of Calgary opening its own MADD chapter in the coming year. It is great news to hear of more support but sad news in knowing it is needed. Impaired driving has killed far too many people in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, today MADD has provided red ribbons for all the Members of the Legislative Assembly to pin on their lapels in support of this invaluable campaign. My hope is that all members will tie them onto their vehicles. By tying on a red ribbon, we will make our own personal commitment to drive sober and promote the message that impaired-driving deaths and injuries are needless and preventable. We need to take a stand and make it clear that the members of the Assembly will not tolerate drinking and driving.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

MS BLAKEMAN: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The Public Accounts Committee is created by Standing Order 50, which refers the previous year's financial accounts and the Auditor General's report to the committee to review. By tradition, not rule, the committee meets only when the Legislature is in session. Each week a different department is under review, and the minister appears before the committee to answer questions. This committee is a committee of the Legislative Assembly. It has representation from all parties. At this time it has 13 MLAs appointed by government, two from the Official Opposition, and one from the third party.

I have sat on this committee for five years, and each year I become more alarmed at how the usefulness and integrity of the committee is being eroded. Even ministers' respect for this committee ranges from respectful to dismissive and unco-operative.

A case in point. As the government has the Legislature sit for

fewer weeks each year, the committee has fewer opportunities to scrutinize the accounts of ministries. Last year we were only able to get through nine departments of a total of 24. That's two-thirds that did not receive any scrutiny on behalf of Albertans. This year – who knows? – maybe we'll get through half of the ministries.

Every attempt to have the committee operate in a manner which would give greater latitude to question ministers in depth and examine their departments has been voted down by the Conservative majority on the committee. What are they afraid of?

Just this week I put forward a motion that the \$6,000 budgeted for the Public Accounts Committee travel budget, which was unexpended due to cancellation of a conference, be used instead to have the committee meet outside of session. This would have allowed us to at least examine a few additional ministries. I've seen this committee approve other changes in its budgets, so why not this?

Government members who spoke against the motion said that we should not expend the money to do what we are constituted to do but that, instead, the money should be returned to government coffers. Does paying off the government's debt come before everything, including our legislated mandate? Do they really think it's okay to leave our job half done?

Transparent and open government? I don't think so, not if the attempt to control, limit, and hobble the Public Accounts Committee is any indication of this government's willingness to be questioned on its management of money.

2:40

Dr. Noor Jaffer

MR. SHARIFF: Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, November 21, 2001, YMCA Calgary presented the Canada Peace medal to Dr. Noor Jaffer. This medal is presented annually to an individual or a group that demonstrates commitment to work towards peace either locally or globally.

Born in London, England, Dr. Jaffer spent most of his childhood in Uganda and graduated from the University of London with a doctorate in dentistry. He practised in St. John's, Newfoundland, before taking up a teaching position at the University of Alberta, faculty of dentistry.

Dr. Jaffer's involvement with international service and community development started when he joined Rotary International at the age of 24. He has served as director of international service and president of the Rotary Club of Calgary Olympic. He has initiated and spearheaded many projects for Rotary, including the provision of equipment and beds to a hospice for terminally ill patients in south India; the provision of over 80 ambulances to the same region, for which he was awarded the prestigious Paul Harris fellowship of Rotary International; and the building of sanitation and clean water systems in Honduras and Guatemala, to mention just a few.

From 1991 to 1994 Dr. Jaffer served as the Calgary convener for Aga Khan Foundation Canada, organizing successful annual partnership walks that raise funds and awareness of international development. More recently he has served as the communications director for Focus Humanitarian Assistance Canada, that provides emergency relief, primarily in developing countries. In May 2000 Dr. Jaffer volunteered on a CIDA mission to Afghanistan and Tajikistan to evaluate and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian food aid to those in need. Currently he is a director on the board of the Alberta Children's Hospital Foundation.

Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to extend congratulations and best wishes to Dr. Noor Jaffer upon receiving the YMCA Canada Peace medal.

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

*see page 1206, left col., para. 8

Children's Services

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two events have occurred recently with respect to children. First, philanthropist Robert Stollery proposed to an awards luncheon for innovative charities and volunteer organizations that this province dramatically change priorities. Stollery challenged Albertans to reduce poverty in the province so conditions of poorer citizens could be at least as good as those of citizens in European nations, Australia, Japan, and even Poland. He went on to say, and I quote: we could show the world a stunning Alberta advantage by shifting our priorities, by making a real frontal attack on poverty of that 20 percent of Albertans, mainly children, who now live here below the poverty line.

Second, this week we celebrated National Child Day on November 20. On November 20, 1989, the convention on the rights of the child was adopted in the United Nations General Assembly. In a move to promote an awareness of this convention, the Canadian Parliament passed the Child Day Act in 1993, designating November 20 as Child Day.

These two events seem to have had little impact on government policy. The race to be debt free is more attractive than the race to end poverty. The fervour to balance budgets is more intense than the fervour to help children. Accelerating the debt repayment is more important than accelerating programs for children.

MR. MAR: That's horseshit.

DR. MASSEY: And it isn't bullshit, Mr. Member.

The Premier seems attracted to the . . .

THE SPEAKER: Sorry. Continue.

DR. MASSEY: The Premier seems attracted to the idea of being remembered as the Premier who returned Alberta to a debt-free status. Why not a different legacy? Why not the legacy of an Alberta family poverty free? Why not a province known as much for excellent people programs as for fiscal programs? Why not a province where Child Day is truly cause for celebration?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker's Ruling Parliamentary Language

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, one of the innovative provisions we have in this Assembly is an opportunity for hon. members to provide a statement during the week. It's called Members' Statements. Tradition has always been that members' statements are provided uninterrupted, and the Speaker would never accept a point of order or, in fact, even deal with an interjection. Unfortunately, during this last member's statement there was a statement made by an hon. member in the Assembly which was totally inappropriate. The hon. member giving the member's statement obviously heard it and responded to it. What I'm going to do now is ask the hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment to withdraw his statement.

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, it was not the hon. minister for human resources.

THE SPEAKER: Sorry. I apologize to the hon. minister.

The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

MR. MAR: I so withdraw it, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Would that be appropriate, hon. member?

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: Projected Government Business

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask the Government House Leader to share next week's projected business with us at this time.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Commencing Monday, November 26, in the afternoon we would anticipate second reading of Bill 30, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2001 (No. 2), proceeding with Government Motion 21 and Committee of the Whole on Bill 28. At 8 p.m. under Government Motions, Motion 21; committee on Bill 28; third reading as per the Order Paper; and second reading of Bill 30, the Appropriation Act (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2001 (No. 2), if necessary.

Tuesday, November 27, we would contemplate introduction of the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2001 (No. 2), Bill 31, at 1:30 p.m. for first reading and then under Government Bills and Orders at 4:30 p.m. third readings on bills 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, and 29 and otherwise as per the Order Paper. Tuesday evening at 8 under Government Bills and Orders for third reading bills 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, and 29 and committee on Bill 30 and as per the Order Paper.

Wednesday, November 28, at 8 p.m. under Government Bills and Orders for second reading and Committee of the Whole Bill 31, miscellaneous statutes, and third reading of Bill 30, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2001 (No. 2).

Thursday, November 29, under Government Bills and Orders for third reading, miscellaneous statutes. I should mention at this point in time, Mr. Speaker, that while miscellaneous statutes are not normally debated in the House, having been agreed to by all parties before introduction, there is an agreement between all three parties that we would spend Thursday afternoon, before inviting the Lieutenant Governor into the House at 5:15, debating the portion of the miscellaneous statutes which refers to the change to the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act.

2:50

head: Orders of the Day

head: Committee of Supply

[Mr. Tannas in the chair]

THE CHAIRMAN: I'll call the Committee of Supply to order.

head: Supplementary Estimates 2001-02
General Revenue Fund

Agriculture, Food and Rural Development

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. minister.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will just make some very brief comments to the hon. members to explain the supply estimate. This supply estimate is really separated into three components. First, the request for \$73 million: this funding is required for the farm income assistance program 2001, native forage and honey components. This program, as members would recall

from the spring, provided much-needed drought relief for Alberta's livestock and honey producers who faced very severe difficulties due to the very poor pasture conditions across the province.

Secondly, \$20 million was allocated for the Alberta farm water program, which will assist producers to secure long-term supplies to help them deal with future drought conditions. Mr. Chairman, as I have indicated to members on other occasions and in conversation, we are very impressed with the innovative use of that program and the very valuable long-term water projects that we are seeing, which include co-operative projects, which include using solar pumping, cleaning out springs, underground pipelines, and just all types of innovative things that actually really provide some drought mitigation for the future.

Finally, on the third component, since the original estimates were approved for the Canada/Alberta farm income assistance program, an additional \$51.1 million of federal contributions have been negotiated. Approval of this portion of this supplementary estimate is required to allow us to spend this allocation. With this approval, the Canada/Alberta farm income assistance program expenditures will total \$318 million, which are offset by federal contributions of \$177.9 million. We have of course received approval for these programs earlier in the year from Treasury Board.

The supplementary estimates total \$144.1 million and are offset by spending lapses of \$14.581 million, and I'll identify where those were for members: \$12.5 million in energy rebate funding that was not used or required and \$2.081 million, or 1 percent of the department's budget, pursuant to the October 18 announcement of the Finance ministers's request. Therefore, hon. members, our total supplementary estimate request is \$129,519,000.

It has been an extraordinary challenge for the agricultural producers in this province this year. Challenge is not unusual or uncommon in that industry. We have peaks and valleys; we have things that happen. But in talking to a number of producers who have been in the province for a long number of years in this industry, this has been the year probably of the greatest challenge. I must say, Mr. Chairman, that the producers in this province have I know indicated to many of you as members and certainly to me as minister their thanks and appreciation for what they feel was a very serious consideration of the challenges they faced that were far beyond their control. On their behalf I thank the members of the Assembly for considering these supplementary estimates.

THE CHAIRMAN: Before calling on the hon. leader, I wonder if the committee would agree to briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: Introduction of Guests

(reversion)

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

MR. LORD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my pleasure to again rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly some very special guests that we have visiting us today. We have, I believe, 21 young ladies and gentlemen and future voters in my constituency, I might add, from the Calgary Waldorf school in Calgary-Currie along with six parent helpers, Denise Hare, Jan LeRoy, Geli Hamilton, Colette Mactaggart, Stuart Watson, and Kevin Marjoram, and their teacher, Stacey Kaban. They are seated in the members' gallery. I would ask that they all rise, and I hope they receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

head: Supplementary Estimates 2001-02
General Revenue Fund

Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (continued)

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a real privilege to stand this afternoon and work with the minister of agriculture on trying to deal with the issues of the crisis that our sector has faced this year. It's been really important to the province and to a lot of the people in rural Alberta that we have programs in place that will provide them with some kind of certainty or some kind of stability in a time of crisis. Not only have we been faced with low prices on the world markets, but we've had drought and a whole series of other setbacks in terms of the environmental issues in our own geographic area, not just within our province but the whole western agricultural area.

I guess if I comment on the budget allocations here and some of the numbers that the minister gave us as she was making her presentation, the one question that I would have, just to make sure I got the number written down right: was it \$177.9 million from the federal government on the farm income disaster assistance program? This is part of one of the programs that we have that runs with the federal government so that we end up with a balance in terms of the responsibilities. The normal process has been that these are kind of 50-50 funded or 60-40 funded. This gives us the sense of where that balance came out, if it runs into that 60-40 range that is there in terms of the federal/provincial cost share.

I put this on the record for the minister to respond to at probably a later date, because I'm sure the data will have to be looked at, but a lot of the farmers keep asking in terms of the dollars that are allocated to the programs: how are they in the end distributed? Who are the recipients? How does it divide up in terms of the farm sector? This is a farm income based program, but farmers still want to have some kind of a demographic or characteristic breakdown of it. So that kind of information just for the public's perspective might be useful when Ag Financial Services does their annual report or something like that. I'm not asking the minister to give us that information right now, because that's too much detail to expect to be readily available, but say in an annual report or something like that so that farmers get a sense of where the dollars are going.

I guess the other question that comes up is that historically we've had a number of times when the dollars have been allocated in the budget, and they're calculated based on an expectation of need, yet by the end of the year farmers don't qualify. We end up not paying out under these programs, and there will end up being dollars left that haven't been allocated. So with the long downturn that we've had in prices, the margin that works in the FIDP program now is gradually ratcheting itself down as we get further and further away from that five-year-ago period when prices were more reasonable. I guess that's a question that comes up in terms of: how has that affected the effectiveness and the distribution of these payouts? You know, a lot of farmers now are finding themselves in the situation – and this is really characteristic of the farmers in the area a little bit east of here and out to the Saskatchewan border – where they've had four or five years now of what would be considered below-average yield because of the weather and then compounded by the down cycle in the prices. They've really, in effect, ratcheted their margins down to the point where they're not getting much support from a program like the farm income assistance program.

3:00

This is where I will recognize the minister and the efforts that they

put into the acreage payments that came out last spring at planting time so that those farmers would have the money to be the optimistic farmer: you know, this is the year. It's always going to be this year that the big crop comes. That acreage payment in the spring really gave them a chance to get that crop in the ground, to get their expenses under control to start the season.

We can see that there are some reasonably good signs now in the ag sector. Some of the commodity prices are starting to show a little bit of strength. If the trade negotiations that were started in Qatar a couple of weeks ago now will actually do something for agriculture – the Europeans have promised to open up the agriculture subsidy programs, maybe two or three or four. I hope it's not the 11 years that the Uruguay round took. That could give us some insight and some optimism three or four or five years down the road. If we can get some of those subsidy programs changed, then maybe the need for something like the farm income assistance program might not be so critical.

I guess the other thing is that, you know, a lot of farmers are asking how this program could be adjusted or if it needs to be adjusted to reflect more a cost of production base rather than just dealing with the issues of how they go about getting some kind of an insurance on a margin that they don't have any longer. They'd like to have some reflection of it in terms of the cost of production. I know that the minister has been dealing with this but more in terms of the crop insurance program rather than the direct farm income assistance program. I guess I would say that you're doing the right thing, Madam Minister, because we've got to make sure that when we make options available for the farmers, they should be made available in a way that they have to undertake an active decision for their risk management. So should they buy crop insurance, or should they not buy crop insurance? That's the kind of active participation in risk management that we should be asking the farmers to undertake.

The farm income disaster program is kind of an after-the-fact program where if they didn't get the income they were hoping for, then we as a public step in and give them some support. That, in effect, doesn't encourage them to be active participants in maybe diversification or some other kind of activity that will actually deal with the risk management that's so important. You know, these are the kinds of signals that we need to be sending as we modify these programs. We have to make sure that as the public discussion comes up about the benefit of these programs and whether or not they work well and really suit the needs of our community out there, can they work and can they be improved?

I guess one of the other questions that's come up a number of times – and I always can come up with a response for these things, Mr. Chairman. You know, it's been like some of the ag sector is basically price negotiated or price controlled under our supply management. Well, why do we, in effect, have them eligible for this as well? You know, it's the cropping sector that they have in along with their supply-managed part of their operations. The supply-managed price adjustments reflect the input costs, so why are we actually paying them for their input costs when it's being reflected in their prices? You know, this is the option that you end up with. You talk about, well, if you are only going to subsidize part of the enterprise, what they end up doing is categorizing the enterprise and spinning off a corporation over here that does the cropping and another corporation over here that does the supply management. There are ways around it, and we need to look at these kinds of manipulations and whether or not that should be taken into account. The thing that we need to look at is also how the program comes out.

The other comments on the \$75 million – or \$73 million. These glasses kind of blur things once in awhile, and I've got to get used

to them yet. So it's \$73 million in connection with the livestock and the honey producers. The money that went out on the \$4 per acre for native pasture, Mr. Chairman, is an interesting comparison between the way the two programs were put together in the sense that the \$4 per acre on native pasture was paid on an input to an agriculture commodity production. Pasture is an input to the cow/calf operator or to the other grazing operators in the province, where the \$4 per operational hive is based on a capital facility or a capacity measure. What you see is that if you pay it on the operational hive, most of the hives around the province are based on a standard size of capacity, the number of bees in it. So what we're basically doing is making sure that everybody around the province is getting about the same amount of money per unit upon which their income is based to deal with their support.

But when we look at the native pasture payment, we look at that in the context of the variation that that created in terms of opportunity across the province. In this area, say, north of Red Deer on up, it's not quite as noticeable as it is when you get into the southern part of the province. If you compare the western part of Alberta to the east, where the carrying capacity for a cow is so much different, effectively what we're doing when we get out into the eastern part of Alberta – and the carrying capacity out there might be as high as sometimes 30 or 40 or 45 acres per cow. They're getting essentially \$4. Let's just make it easy and say 30 acres per cow. They're basically getting \$120 per cow. If you go to the eastern slopes of the foothills, there the carrying capacity is down maybe 10 or 12 or 15 acres per cow. They're only getting half of the money, so they'll be getting \$50 or \$60 per cow. Now, what you've got is the eastern cow/calf operator with \$120 per cow to bid for the forage. The cow/calf operator in the foothills area has only \$50 to bid for the forage.

In essence, by our program we've created a disequilibrium in the ability of each of these individual operators to sustain their animals over the drought period. What I would contend, Mr. Chairman, is that when this program was put together, we should have used the same concept that we did for the bees. We should have made the payment on the basis of the income unit, which is the cow or the cow/calf unit. By doing that, what we could have done was given operators a matter of, say, a couple of weeks or three weeks or a month to in essence file their record with Ag Financial Services or an ag office in the province somewhere, to bring in some data that showed that these are our historic levels of the number of animal units that were owned. Then the payments could have been made on that. It may have delayed the payment two or three weeks, but it would have made it accurate. It would have made it so that we're truly dealing with market conditions, where the market is the factor that determines the decision-making rather than an inequity created by a government program.

It's really important that as we put our programs together, we don't disrupt market forces. Mr. Chairman, I think most of us in this House believe that in terms of allocating commodities and making economic decisions, the market has to be the place where we let that happen. When we develop programs that create disequilibrium disadvantages in that market system, we should be looking again at whether or not those programs are right.

3:10

I know a number of these producers had their herd sizes already registered when they were dealing with the farm income disaster program or some of the other programs that were associated, because they had to report as they filed each year, you know, the size of their operations. It wouldn't have been really difficult to have made that

based on an income unit rather than an input unit. I think that would have made the program much better, and we could have made much better use of the money that we allocated when we look at it from the provincial point of view.

The final comments that I have on this, Mr. Chairman, deal with the Alberta farm water program, the new program that was announced this year in response to the drought. I will commend the department on this, because it was so much better than the old program that we had. It provided farmers with the option to take these dollars and really deal with the crisis situation that they were facing in more than just the let's fix it up right now, the band-aid solution kind of approach. What we were doing – and the minister spoke about this for a little while when she was talking about some of the innovative ways that farmers took to implement and to put in place new water acquisition programs that basically were going to guarantee on a year-to-year basis their access to water rather than just kind of fixing it up and hoping for next year. There are a lot of places in Alberta now that have found that hoping for next year just compounds the problem. So this was a great program. The Alberta ag staff that came up with this, the people in all of the government agencies that put this program together should be recognized for it.

It'll be interesting, you know, as we get some feedback from the producers out there, to see whether or not it continues and does give them the support over a number of years that this kind of thing would provide. I guess the question that comes up yet is how they can be using that to improve the quality of the water as much as the access to the water. In a lot of places now especially groundwater sources are becoming more and more saline. So basically they're not high-quality waters any longer for livestock production. We have to start looking at some of the mechanisms that are there to kind of purify that water and make sure that that water is in a level or is in a quality that is effective and contributes to good animal husbandry.

Mr. Chairman, you know, in the context of these programs I think it's important we recognize that these \$129 million are dollars that were allocated because of the crisis the sector was in. I think it's imperative now that we ask the minister to make sure that we're looking at programs that create sustainability in the sector so that we're not ending up with these kinds of up-and-down swings in terms of public funding. We can basically put in place programs that will give us some long-term stability in the sector. I know from the comments I've had around rural Alberta that Albertans really appreciated the role that the public played in this. There are always questions about how the dollars were allocated and whether or not they were allocated fairly. I've raised a few of those questions now on behalf of those farmers and those citizens who have contacted me, but in the end I think this \$129 million is needed for the sector, and I hope we deal with it appropriately.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the comments made by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. I'm going to be very brief in just answering a couple of questions. One was on the figures, and yes, it was \$177.9 million. However, it was a \$126.8 million contribution, if you would recall, that the federal government allotted to Alberta for its share of a program for crops. The \$51.1 million are some dollars that we were able to negotiate with the federal government that really were owed to us from past times. Members would recall that this government provided \$10.29 per acre to producers last year with no assistance. So the 60-40 probably carries but a different way than it might be thought here. I wasn't sure if I'd been clear on how that came about.

Comments on the program of the \$10.29 and the \$4 an acre and whether it's done the right way. I think everybody would agree that

if you can go to a productivity or that type of a program, it probably is fairer. It's probably fair to say, too, that nobody would have cheques yet. We would still be trying to implement it or they would just be going out, instead of concluding it. The second thing would be that our administration costs for the program would not be less than 1 and a half percent, which they are for that one. The other one, which the member recognized, is that this was an emergency. It was a disaster, and we needed to respond quickly. The best answer is the one that he went on to talk about and that we have been working on, and that is an improved safety net program. Certainly I have appreciated the assistance and support that we've got since we did the drought tour with Minister Vanclief. I think his eyes were quite opened on really how serious it was in Alberta, particularly southern Alberta.

I'm going to ask for further assistance in impressing upon the federal minister that it's absolutely integral that they contribute on the safety net side to improve that program to more properly reflect the costs of production without distorting markets or without, as much as we can, encouraging bad management practices because of the safety net program. So we've been working on that makeup, trying to strike that balance and provide producers with a safety net that they can buy. They can insure themselves. They can buy it. They will have the certainty, their lender will have the certainty, and they will make the decisions themselves. Producers do not like to work with ad hoc programs. As appreciative as they were of this money, they do not like to work with that, and we're really hopeful that we can strike that balance.

The water program. We would never have been able to implement that in such a short time if it hadn't been for all the work that had been done by the PFRA; Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development; and Alberta Environment. As I have indicated in the House before, we have been working on a drought mitigation plan for this province for some time. Thanks to that work we were able to pool some elements of that program and bring it into effect very, very quickly and respond to a very, very serious need.

There is no question that we have to continue the drought mitigation, and it would be my hope that we will bring forward to the members a plan that will work on an ongoing basis. We regret that the PFRA has not been able to be a participant in dollars in a meaningful way in recent years, but we certainly are appreciative of the expertise, the engineering technicians and so on that the PFRA brings to our province and certainly their work with all of our municipal leaders or fieldmen, with us in all of our district offices, and with us here when we're trying to put forward something that will respond to good water management and mitigation of drought.

So, Mr. Chairman, I thank you for allowing me to just respond very briefly to a few of the main areas that the hon. member commented on. Again, thank you for consideration of these estimates.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am happy to have an opportunity this afternoon to respond to the 2001-2002 supplementary estimates for the general revenue fund, initially talking about Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. I'll make a few comments about the Ag estimates, and then I'll make some more general remarks about supplementary supply estimates in general, specifically to do with the process and concerns that we in the Official Opposition have with some of those.

3:20

Mr. Chairman, in terms of the dollars that the Minister of

Agriculture, Food and Rural Development is coming back to the House for, I also support the request in terms of the actual dollar amounts and support the dollars in the specific programs that she has asked for here. We have a couple of points, primarily on process, on this.

One is in terms of the \$20 million for the Alberta farm water program. It's very good that the government is undertaking to help farmers develop long-term, on-farm water supplies to better prepare for a drought in the future. What isn't quite as good about that is the process. They're coming now, asking for \$20 million in supplementary supply, when drought is not a new issue for this province. It has been I think the biggest issue that certainly I have ever heard farmers talk about in all the years that I've been around, and I come from a farming community, a dryland farming community, in fact the very same one the minister comes from. So she will believe that certainly the first things I ever heard out of a farmer's mouth were: when's it going to rain, and how are they going to get the crops in, how are they going to get them off, and what are they going to do when they dry up and blow away? So this has been a problem forever in this province, no two ways about it.

So why is it now, in supplementary estimates, that the government, if they're planning on putting together some support or long-term solutions, have to come for the money? This is a very natural kind of item to have been integrated into the general budgeting plan and focus of this government if they were taking the long-term strategy, and we would have seen it in the budget in the spring. If they weren't ready to spend the money or didn't know if they were going to be ready to spend the money, they could have put that in as a note to the financial statements without there being any problems, and we would have congratulated them on their ability to plan for the future and to anticipate the kinds of needs that are out there. So this is really a planning issue, and we see it as a problem.

It comes in here as a onetime amount. We don't see any explanation in terms of whether or not it will be one time. Will they come back again next year? Is there going to be some ongoing funding? How come there's no debate about the need for ongoing funding? It would seem to me that this is the kind of plan that may require those kinds of dollars, so let's talk about it at the first opportunity, Mr. Chairman, rather than the last opportunity, which is what we see here.

In the minister's opening comments she provided some great detail and a great number of dollar figures that explained why the dollar amount that we see in supplementary appropriations was what it was. Some funds came from the feds, some they pulled from other programs, and this is the net outcome of all of those. A problem with supplementary supply estimates is that we only see a total gross figure in these books at this particular time with no detail on what the breakdown is of those dollars, and that's the real downfall of the system. The government might like that because they may think it's less easy to criticize or comment on, but it's also very much less helpful for anybody who's associated with this process, including the end users who are the recipients of the funds.

So we would like to suggest that the government take a little more proactive action. Here we have a minister who does the right thing when she comes in here and explains the dollars. She gives us the detail, but it would be even better, Mr. Chairman, if we could see that kind of detail come in these supplementary estimates, if we could see it on the actual page that explains the program funding or could see it on the page opposite that, where they give the reasons that the supplementary estimates are requested. We have a very condensed form of information here, and certainly that detail could have been put in place.

If the information isn't available prior to the printing of these

supplementary estimates, then certainly the minister could table the information in the legislation or at the very least have the courtesy to supply it to the appropriate critic in the opposition at a time when we're taking a look at reviewing these. The information is helpful. I think there isn't a member of cabinet who would disagree that for the most part, when the dollars they come and ask for in supplementary supply are unusual items or new additional items based on new additional information, we support the request for the dollars. It's only when there's a blatant case of mismanagement or an improper kind of planning that we have a problem with supplementary supply dollars. The process often we have huge problems with but not the actual request for the money. If we could ask, then, this minister to lead the rest of cabinet in terms of supplying that detail in a written form prior to these estimates being debated, that would be very helpful.

I would like to know at this time if there are any other long-term water projects that are in the works for this government. If so, will we see those budgeted amounts coming forward any time soon? Even just in terms of strategic planning as opposed to actual on-the-ground dollars that are going to be expended in the near future, that kind of information is very helpful to us.

Also in terms of the water supply situation for the droughts, what is this minister doing to work with or to apply for or to develop R and D projects that will help to address this problem and other water issues that we see throughout this province? It has just recently come to our attention that there was another as yet unconfirmed but potential problem with the water supply in southern Alberta this week in the Picture Butte area, where there seems to be some correlation between young children developing rashes and blister outbreaks on their skin, with the potential for water contamination. In fact, the information provided to us would indicate that it was quite serious in nature and that they were testing for E. coli bacteria in the water supply.

Those are the kinds of issues that we're seeing increasingly happen throughout this province, and they need some attention. This is not to cast any blame on the government in this particular instance. This is to raise the issue that it is a time for us to seriously look at finding solutions to water quality problems in this province. For the most part, we have excellent water quality, but there are spots in the province, not just in southern Alberta but along the Alberta/Saskatchewan border and in the Peace block, where we have had recurring serious water problems. It isn't enough to try and solve those after they happen, Mr. Chairman. We need to be way more proactive in that. We need to start to see some serious R and D money go into finding solutions for these kinds of projects.

Recently in my office and in my colleagues' offices we have seen people come forward with what would seem to be very bright ideas about water quality solutions, Mr. Chairman. Not the least of those are discoveries or inventions that are finished, in the process of being finished, or being tested, and the people have a hard time getting funding for them and a hard time carrying on in terms of the testing and development. One of those is one that many farmers would be interested in, I'm sure. That is a system that's relatively cheap to install and operate that takes the ozone out of the air. You pump it into your lagoon or the dugout that you've got your water in, and it cleans it up. That would be a replacement for using chemicals like chlorine or any of the other kinds of chemicals that people are now using for water treatment in small facilities or, in fact, in small towns. It solves two problems for us. It solves an air pollution problem in terms of excessive ozone in our air, and it cleans up the water to a point where the testing that they've done so far would indicate that the water samples, regardless of where they come from, are quite potable after the injection of the ozone.

3:30

So those are the kinds of developments that are very interesting, but the problem is that even if people are prepared to pursue these inventions on a part-time basis after work hours and on weekends and put in their own dollars to develop them, at the stage when they feel that they're marketable and need to be tested, they have to find some entry into the market, Mr. Chairman. Most of these kinds of inventions require approval by health departments and sometimes agriculture departments, and there aren't the right kinds of windows for these people to get in at this time.

So I would urge this minister, who very much understands the process of how to get R and D doors opened, to think beyond the box a little bit on this one and think about how we can solve some of these water issues by supporting research and development, not just at the up-front stage, when they need dollars, but all the way through to the outcome stages, where they need to go to various departments to get licences and approvals to make them market testable or even at least to the point where they can start to get approval to consumer test products prior to their actually hitting the market. It's a niche in development that this government is missing, and perhaps the Economic Development minister would be quite interested in getting involved in this too, because of course once these inventions are marketable, there's revenue to be had and spin-off to be had for all Albertans, and he seems to be quite keen to pursue those kinds of interests. So this is one of those integrated issues that many ministries could get involved in.

Now, I'd like to broaden my comments a little bit in terms of our concerns about supplementary supply estimates in general. We've had as the Official Opposition, Mr. Chairman . . . [interjections] You guys can get up and speak any time you want. It'd be nice to get one of you on the record just once before the session is over. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm sorry, but the frat boys continue to annoy us on a regular basis.

My comments are about supplementary supply in general, and they're about the serious issues, about the lack of explanation we get of how new spending will contribute to meeting defined outcomes and performance criteria. We know that the Auditor General has repeatedly brought concerns forward about that very issue, that dollar spending particularly in supplementary supply estimates doesn't meet defined outcomes and performance criteria. In fact, the Auditor General is on record as saying that this one-off kind of spending that we often see in supplementary supply estimates is a real problem for this government in the long term. It does a few things. It raises expectations for ministries that they can access onetime funding, which expectation, then, is raised that that funding is going to be ongoing on a regular basis when, in fact, often the dollars they dedicate are not sustainable and not available in any kind of a long-term fashion. It raises expectations of the recipients of those dollars that if government gives them money once, then it's not going to be as hard to get it again the second time. But, in fact, as we've seen happen in this year, that doesn't happen; it's not the case. So those are the kinds of issues that we would like the government to address.

Planning within the government's budgeting process is a problem. I spoke a little bit about that specifically to the agriculture estimates. There is no way that a government should have to come back more than once a year, which is what this government does, Mr. Chairman. As you well know, they come back once in the spring for sure, sometimes twice in the spring, for supplementary supply dollars and once in the fall. There is no way, if they were planning properly, that we would see this happening.

They come back at this particular time for a huge amount of

dollars. Why couldn't they budget for these amounts? Most of these expenses are recurring expenses every single year. Now, I know we're going to hear from the ministers that for the drought program nobody can anticipate how many dollars. That's true. The exact amount of dollars you can't anticipate. Can you anticipate in this province that there is a high likelihood that there will be some drought relief required? Yes. If you took a five-year average, you would see that in three out of five years there is some sort of drought assistance required at some point in this province. So what they need to do is start taking those long-term views. Take a look at what has happened historically, project what's going to be needed, and put funds in place to adequately fund these kinds of problems when they occur.

Exactly the same issue with fire – and I'll talk about that when we get to Sustainable Resource Development. Has there been a time in this province when we haven't had a fire? No. So figure out on average how much that is going to cost you, build it into the budget and build those kind of funds like we talked about in terms of the stability fund so that they can be addressed.

It isn't rocket science, Mr. Chairman, no matter what this government thinks. Industry has been doing this for absolutely decades. If we had a board of directors or CEOs of companies coming back to their companies two or three times a year with requests that totaled more than 1 percent or 5 percent or 10 percent of their annual budget, those people would get turfed out of their jobs, because that is not performance in any kind of a fashion. It's unacceptable. Why people accept it from their government is completely beyond me. Governments probably operate in that fashion because they can get away with it, but it isn't responsible, it isn't accountable, and it isn't the manner in which this Premier leads us to believe that he would like to operate this particular government. Yet we see this happening two, three times a year.

I think that one year we had a record. They came back three times in the spring, if I remember correctly. So that's a real issue. When the government should be doing what they say they do and what the Government Accountability Act says it does, which are the three-year plans, we see a government who actually plans on a three-month plan. Every three months they need more money.

It's a huge problem with the way the government operates, and it is not just us who are concerned about this, Mr. Chairman. We have it outlined, actually, in the Auditor General's annual report in the year 2000-2001 when he talks about the ministry business plans and the problems this government has in meeting them. We see that happening right here. He states that there are problems with costing core businesses and that "approximately one third of ministries did not adequately link costs to ministry core businesses." This is exactly what we have here when we take a look at the agriculture estimates that are more specifically up for debate right now.

The Auditor General goes on to list, Mr. Chairman, what those deficiencies are, and what he talks about there is "not identifying costs for some core businesses." [interjections] I hear a little chirping in the Assembly, Mr. Chairman. I know that we have got some accountants in this crowd, and I'm sure that they'll be happy to leap to their feet and join me in stating that this is not the proper way for businesses to run.

So he says, "Not identifying costs for some core businesses," which we saw in the ag estimates. He states that a problem is "presenting cost information for businesses other than the stated core businesses." I don't remember that Agriculture said that one of their core businesses is water/drought control. That isn't one of their core businesses. They are facilitating that process, and that is quite different.

I'll return, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview on the supplementary estimates of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

3:40

DR. TAFT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll just make a handful of comments again reflecting my travels around the province and talking to people in various rural areas. It's pretty obvious that the drought conditions that have been the primary stimulus for these increases in expenditure are unevenly shared across the province and are concentrated in a handful of areas. These are areas that certainly in the last few years and in some cases for many decades have been prone to drought. It raises the question for me: how are we managing our predictions of this when we get caught having to bring in another \$130 million or so in funding a mere six months into the fiscal year? Clearly, it's difficult to predict weather, but in some ways we should be able to predict climate.

I know that in speaking to farmers around the province, farmers who are in areas that are generally successful most years, say, farmers in areas of central Alberta or through the Edmonton/Calgary corridor and so on, after a while raise concerns about the ongoing subsidies going to dryland farmers or farmers in drought areas, not that they're feeling resentful, but there is a concern that at some point we're sustaining production on land that should not any longer be in production. Is there any consideration going on in the longer term to taking some of this land out of production so that we are not faced with, say, six or seven years out of 10 having to provide drought support?

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

So the main thrust of my comments on the agricultural side are having to do with how we get out of this ongoing requirement to support farmers in a drought area. Are we looking at getting the land out of production? Are we looking at changes in production? Should we be looking at, as some farmers have suggested to me, simply letting the unviable farmers go under. I think that's a pretty harsh and unthoughtful approach to take, but I know that there are people in this province and, in fact, people whose opinions on agriculture I respect who would say simply: after a certain point let these farms go under. I'm not prepared to take that position right now, but if we are in a period of tightening fiscal constraints and if we find that year after year the same areas of the province are requiring subsidies, I think at some point we're going to have to say: do we want to continue, or do we want to get ourselves out of this?

MS BLAKEMAN: Wouldn't that be priority setting?

DR. TAFT: It is a matter of setting priorities. Certainly farmers are priorities for us, and farm communities are a priority, and they have suffered badly in some cases under policies that have closed down health care facilities, consolidated schools, and generally weakened those communities. So there are many sides to this issue.

For the moment in this debate I'll stand with probably the majority of the rest of us and support this supplement, but in the longer term I would really encourage the government to look closely at ways to break this pattern, either by bringing the farms up to a sustainable level or taking the land out of production.

I'll save the rest of my comments on the entire process for later in the debate, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you very much.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: After considering the supplementary

estimates for the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, are you ready for the vote?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

Agreed to:

Operating Expense and Capital Investment	\$129,519,000
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THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.

Health and Wellness

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

MR. MAR: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I'll make my comments brief. In aggregate the supplementary estimate being requested is \$118.7 million. This is made up as follows. After the April budget announcement the 9.6 percent increase in health authorities' base funding did not appear to meet population growth and aging and the higher cost of staff and equipment, and \$200 million in onetime funding was set aside for such authorities. New business plans are being developed on how health authorities will be able to meet their responsibilities without this additional funding in the coming fiscal year. Also, \$10.9 million is being requested for the immunization program that was applied for meningitis. Following that, there was a \$92.2 million fiscal adjustment, where on October 18 Health and Wellness adjusted expenditures by this amount as part of a governmentwide fiscal adjustment. That \$92.2 million is made up as follows: \$40 million from the health authority base budgets, \$12.2 million from the department base budget, and \$40 million from onetime energy rebates, for a total of \$92.2 million. Accordingly, if you add \$200 million plus \$10.9 million for immunization and take a \$92.2 million adjustment out, the net amount is the \$118.7 million being requested, and that is what is before us for consideration.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

DR. TAFT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a privilege to rise to discuss these supplementary estimates for 2001-2002. I will make a range of comments on these, starting with the general concern of how quickly we have seen the fiscal ground shift in terms of the provincial government's management of its money. There is almost a sense of crisis – not crisis; I don't want to overstate it – a sense of very serious, serious concern about how resources are being managed by the Department of Health and Wellness and by the regional health authorities and a sense that there is nothing reliable anymore in terms of predicting expenditures or managing expenditures or predicting or managing revenues.

On the revenue side, after so many years of surpluses – I can't remember what it is now, seven or eight consecutive years of surpluses – within a very few months of tight times arriving in the province, we are into constraints and, indeed, cuts in health care, and it's exasperating. I think the citizens of Alberta are tired of government living from paycheque to paycheque and having a sense that so quickly people's requirements for health care are affected by events

that unfold, say, in the Middle East or in other parts of the world, how the length of time somebody is left on a waiting list goes up and down with the price of crude oil and natural gas.

3:50

So there's that context for this document and the estimates that we're debating today, and so much of it has been predictable. I know that I was at a one-day conference at the University of Alberta on September 7 at the business school there. It was organized by the economics department at the U of A. The theme of the conference was: Alberta managing in an era of postdebt budgets. The idea initially seemed to be that there was going to be so much money for all kinds of projects that we wouldn't know what to do with it, but it was apparent from the very first paper presented that times were tightening, that there was an unsustainable combination of policies in place from this government, a combination of hurried debt pay-down and accelerated debt payoff, falling energy royalties, corporate tax cuts, flat taxes, and spending increases, and that these combinations of things were not sustainable. So these kinds of problems were being foreseen even in the academic community – which, I'll admit, is often a bit slow to respond to things – some months ago.

There is a difficult context out there generally, and more specifically I am concerned with the trends relating to this department and the management of this department. As legislators we voted on the budget here on I believe it was the 31st of May. We gave final approval to the budget. Then six weeks later or thereabouts there was a \$200 million increase to that budget, and then in late August there was an announcement by the major regional health authorities that they were going to be running deficits. Then in early October, as the minister explained, there was a cut, and now today we are debating supplements. So in a period of five months or so there have been four substantial changes to the budget, and it really does raise for me serious questions about budget control in the department.

I've worked in the health care field off and on for, I hate to say it, close to 30 years, 29 years, something like that. One of my first professional jobs was working on planning for new health care facilities and doing the population projections. We weren't quite using slide rules then; we actually had calculators. We would spend hours – this was as a consultant – with calculators doing the population projections: breaking the population down by age groups and projecting various migration levels, high, medium, and low migration levels; working in the inflation rates; and then projecting health care demands and health care costs on that basis. I'm not sure who's doing that function anymore, whether it's the regional health authorities themselves or the department, but when a mere six weeks or so after this Assembly approves a budget there is a requirement for a \$200 million increase because of failing to take population growth or aging or migration into account or failing to take inflation into account, it tells me that something in the budget control process either at the department level or in the regional health authorities is not working the way it should.

There was a time when hospitals, hospital boards, or hospital facilities that looked like they were going to be running into a deficit were monitored closely enough by the department that the management actually was called into the budget bureau at the department of hospitals in those days and was put on the spot well in advance of deficits actually appearing and told: if you do not take corrective action, you're going to be running a deficit. Now there's a concern that in some ways the regional health authorities, especially the two major ones – and don't take this as an outright attack on the regions; I think they're in many ways very good organizations – have become so big and so powerful that there's a sense that the Edmonton and Calgary regional health authorities are driving the system and that

the department itself is struggling to keep the regional health authorities accountable.

This is, I think, compounded by things that have occurred within the department over the last several years. For example, in the last eight years there have been seven deputy ministers of health, and there's a loss of continuity there that really creates problems. There's a failure for a reliable and trustworthy or predictable management structure to settle down. There's a failure for leadership to be able to take hold in that department. As a result, we end up with the kinds of fiscal questions that are here today. There have been at times changes in the management of the department that go much beyond the deputy minister. They go down through the assistant deputy ministers and even to the director level so that after the debates on Bill 11 we saw a large number of managers in that department simply replaced. As a result, the department lost its corporate memory. Certainly some very strong people left the department, and those who were brought in didn't have the experience, the history with the issues to be able to stay on top of them.

So when I listened today and in the last few days to a policy being developed that will allow the regional health authorities to accumulate deficits from one year to the next and put forward plans to pay those down, I think that people with a longer term memory of the system will look back and say: that's exactly what was allowed to be done in the 1970s and early 1980s. The result is that the regional health authorities just allow their deficits to build and build and build, and sooner or later the provincial government is on the hook for those deficits. That's a policy that's developing today that I think history will teach us and indeed can teach us is a mistake in policy. Sooner or later taxpayers pay for it. It's a cost that arises, I feel, to some substantial degree from a weakness in the management of the department.

As we begin to zero in more specifically on the \$118 million appropriation, I think everybody here is going to say: "Well, good. Good for the department for taking the initiative and supporting the inoculations for meningitis." Any of us who know people who have had meningitis or have followed the course of that disease with any care at all realize it's a terrifying disease with very high mortality rates. Tragically, people who survive are often seriously, seriously disabled. I know of cases where children with meningitis have survived but have had to have all their limbs amputated. Well, that's a terrible, terrible situation, and there are all kinds of other complications from meningitis. So I would fully endorse and I'm sure everybody here will fully endorse that sort of initiative. Indeed, it may well be that investing that \$10.9 million in immunization is in fact saving us all kinds of money in the long term, so I think that's a terrific expenditure.

4:00

When we look at the remaining, as the minister explains it, increases and decreases and ultimately the remaining \$107.8 million, my concern is not that that's too much money or that we're going above budget. My concern is more that I don't feel confident that we really know whether that's too much or too little, because we don't have and we haven't established a solid baseline. There have been so many changes in funding for health care over the last eight years that we don't have historical norms by which we can judge today's level of spending. In fact, I would take that back. We do have historical norms, but they are from the years before the current government took hold. Say, if we look at the 10-year interval from 1983 to 1992, we will see that health care spending, adjusting for population and inflation, was moving up and down in a pretty narrow range. Indeed, I would put forward to the minister that that's

about the level at which a well-managed health care system for Alberta should be sustained and can be sustained.

I'm not going to say that this money shouldn't be spent. It may well be spent, and it is in the overall scheme of things a fairly small percentage on a \$6 billion budget. So whether we use per capita spending as adjusted for inflation and go back to, say, the 10 years before the current government was in place or whether we use health care spending as a percentage of GDP, which is a standard level – by either of those measures we are in this year's budget more or less within normal ranges. I'm not going to be saying that we shouldn't spend this money or that we should. I'm going to say that it's within normal ranges, so I would support it. I guess I will be saying that we should be spending it.

I won't go into discussing in any depth my concerns for the future levels of spending. I'm sure the minister is motivated to manage within levels of funding that are currently available. Assuming those are adjusted for a growing population and for inflation and with a very small adjustment for aging, maybe 1 percent a year or 1.4 percent a year, we should, if we are disciplined and strong in our management, be able to keep a viable and vibrant and effective health care system going in this province indefinitely.

That exhausts my comments on these estimates. I will say that I'll be supporting this bill and encourage the minister to keep the system on track so that we're not back here with another round of supplements six months from now.

Thank you.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased this afternoon to have an opportunity to make a few comments about the estimates for Health and Wellness that are before us and before the House. One of the items that I have a great deal of sympathy for, of course, is the almost \$11 million that has been put into the budget to extend the immunization program for children under 24 months in terms of meningitis. I think it's just a great move, and I say that with a great deal of self-interest, having a grandson who was able to take advantage of that program and is now protected against meningitis. I think that you'll find broad support across the province for supplementary estimates being used for that kind of expense.

It was obvious for some time that there was concern about getting a vaccine that was safe, and it took some time to develop. I'm not sure, but I think it's the case that at budget time there was no way that the government or the department could have known that this opportunity would present itself and that a vaccine would be made available and that it would be in place as early as it is. So I really support the \$11 million.

The Auditor General made some comments about the Health and Wellness budget. One of the criticisms he made is that the department continually spends more money on our health system without knowing the value of the extra spending. I think this is an exception to that criticism. This is an expenditure that we certainly do know the value of, not only in prevention but in terms of ease of minds of parents and family members who are concerned about meningitis and the kinds of outbreaks that we've had in the community and now having protection for young children that was not previously available.

One of the concerns, of course – and it's a concern that's raised every time the supplementary estimates are before us – is the concern about business plans and the value of business plans. We spend at budget time a great deal of time poring over budget plans and trying to understand them, trying to take in the kinds of

objectives that the departments have and match those objectives with the dollars that they are projecting. It's work that, I think, most members of the House take very seriously. We expend a considerable amount of resources on our research staff poring over those plans, trying to assure ourselves that the money is being well spent and that, in fact, we are raising the kinds of issues that should be raised in budget consideration, only to find that supplementary estimates come along and those plans in some part are cast aside. It does call into question the business plans.

I think it's, again, something that the Auditor General has commented on. One of the comments he made was that he doesn't think it's management that's thwarting the business plans from being useful. He doesn't go on to say whom he does think it is, but I think the implications are rather clear. The number of supplementary requests for money has been considerable over the time that I've been in the Assembly, and as I said, every time one of those comes forward, it really calls into question all the hard work that's been done in budget preparation and trying to understand the budget.

The onetime transitional funding to health authorities: I was listening, but I'm not sure I'm clear as to exactly what that money is going to be used for. Again, it's going to be interesting to see how the new health authorities with elected boards approach fiscal management, whether the election of people at large makes a difference in terms of how those boards are managed and the impact eventually on supplementary estimates. Will it result in better planning at the local level and hence at the central budget? Certainly one hopes that that might be the case, that the introduction of public members to those authorities will be a healthy thing in terms of the operation of those authorities and their ability to match costs and revenues.

One of the other comments, Mr. Chairman, is some concern or some question about the criteria that the government uses in determining whether or not unbudgeted spending is necessary. I think, as I said, that the case here for the immunization program is clear, but the rest of it in this budget and in other estimates that are before us this afternoon are not nearly as clear. So it would be interesting to have the criteria that is used by the government made explicit. I'm sure there has to be within departments something rather than ad hoc arrangements for making requests, that it is based on criteria that are defensible. [A beeper sounded]

4:10

DR. TAYLOR: Ask for unanimous consent to continue.

DR. MASSEY: I don't need it. I still have 10 minutes. But thank you. Sorry, I was interrupted, Mr. Chairman.

So making that criteria explicit I think would be useful to the Assembly, particularly when we have before us budgets such as this. I think I'll conclude with those comments.

Thank you.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Oh, thank you. Thank you for the support. I'm pleased to get an opportunity to comment on the supplementary estimate for the Department of Health and Wellness. This is an issue that touches every elected official, I think, particularly those in the provincial and the federal spheres. It's been interesting in my five years watching the progression of what's being offered through health care in Alberta and people's attitude towards it and even the government's attitude towards it.

When I first started, it was possible for people to be recognized as

being really in need of assistance and through some misunderstanding they hadn't gotten to the place they should be on the list. As MLAs you could try and help them there, and my office was very successful. I'd say that about two years ago the ability to do that stopped. As it was very succinctly put to me: "Look; you know, all 15 people on this waiting list are as sick as they can possibly be. They're all an emergency; they're all urgent. Your person is no sicker than the other 14, so there's no moving them around on a list. They're all really sick." What we've ended up with is a system where by the time people get into it, they are so ill that they're all in there together. So our attitude towards the health care system has changed, and what we think it's for and at what point health care comes into people's lives has changed.

When I'm looking at this supplementary budget, there are two areas that are being covered here. One is the almost \$11 million for the meningitis immunization program. Then there is sort of money in, money out, money around, and we end up with a shakedown figure of \$118.7 million, which is going into general health, I would say. But it's arrived at by extra money that was put in, then some was taken out, and then the energy rebates that were promised didn't happen, so that money was withdrawn. That's money going into the general health care system, and I think this is where there are a lot of lessons to be learned. Certainly the Auditor General has repeatedly used the Department of Health and Wellness as an example of what not to do and is expressing real concern about this because we have this repeated onetime funding, this repeated: well, we'll just put money in to cover this. The Auditor General's point is that you keep doing that and it becomes expected.

On the other side of this I look at – and we had a question today in question period about it – the downloading of the provincial deficit onto the RHAs and the school boards and the children's authorities, and that in fact is what is happening.

Let me take a step back here. When this particular government came into power in the early '90s, they were going to restructure health care, and I was looking forward to that because I think we did need a restructured health care program. What we got from it was another layer of bureaucracy, called the regional health authorities, that also allowed the government to take a step back and to shunt off responsibility. So for quite a long time when we asked questions in the House here, the response was: that's not us; that's the RHAs; ask the RHAs. Well, we did ask the RHAs, who went: well, sorry; that's the best we can do because that's the only money that we're getting. So back to the government and ask the government why they're not giving them so much money. Okay? So we would duly follow that through, and despite the number of times that the government tried to sort of say, "It has nothing to do with us; that's the RHA decision-making process," it isn't, in fact. If you're not given enough money to budget properly from the beginning and to do three-year plans and long-range plans and performance measurements and targets and outcomes, if you don't have enough money to provide the service that you are authorized to do or expected to do, yeah, you're going to have trouble and you're going to be running a deficit.

I think it's odd that the government had to pass a law to keep itself from racking up a deficit. I would have thought that was obvious, but this government needs to have a law to restrain itself. So, okay, they passed a law, and in doing so, they have to get rid of that deficit somewhere, so they end up squeezing these second-layer organizations, in some cases delegated administrative organizations, but second layers of responsibility: the regional health authorities, the children's authorities, school boards. Municipalities are the other place it's happening.

So we didn't get a restructured system except for this extra layer of responsibility-taking, which they really couldn't do because they

weren't getting enough money. They have consistently since '93 been unable to budget appropriately and have needed I think every year – I'm sure the minister would know and can correct me on that – additional funding to be injected into the budget to take care of it. You know, we've had a lot of figures thrown around here about whether health care spending is in a crisis and is spiraling out of control, and this is all sounding really early '90s to me. In fact, then we found out that health care costs weren't spiraling out of control. They had been reduced in the budget every year since 1986, so where was the spiraling out of control? Nonetheless, we had massive cuts.

Now we're being told again that we're approaching the 50 percent mark of the total government budget that could be spent on health care. Or what's the other figure we hear? Thirty five?

4:20

DR. TAFT: No. Even 100.

MS BLAKEMAN: Oh, 100 percent. Okay.

In fact, we've also got other figures that show that we're not out of control here. We're just not using the resources in a very efficient manner, and that does have to do with having some sort of consistency and stability to allow you to plan so that we don't have to keep injecting this, you know, \$118.7 million. Now, that figure, again, is arrived at by some sort of interesting financial alchemy. Nonetheless, it turns up in the budget as \$118.7 million. So we don't have a health care department or a health care system that is capable at this point of planning for the future, of dealing with its responsibilities now. It's not structured in a way that lends itself to that, and we have a public who's very unhappy with the way health care services are being delivered.

Now, let me stop there and talk a little bit about performance measurements. One of the things this government started out to do – and I think it's a good thing to do – is to set itself performance measurements to measure its progress. So you're going to have a benchmark of where you start and then measure your progress in accomplishing your goals, and you've got to have some targets about how you're going to do that. Over and over and over again this government sets its performance measurements by opinion poll, which I find really odd. So you get these surveys about, you know, how satisfied were people. Well, of course, ask somebody coming out of the hospital: how satisfied are you with health care? "Oh, you know, it's good. I didn't die." "Okay. Great. I'm glad you're so satisfied with it."

But that's not giving us a realistic picture of how long it took the person to get into the hospital, how long they waited in the corridor to get a bed. Were they able to get the appropriate tests? Were they seen by the correct specialist within a given period of time? Were too many tests ordered? There are all kinds of other performance measurements that can be used to describe whether someone is receiving appropriate care and whether there's good value for money in the health care system beyond an opinion poll of whether they were satisfied. Of course anyone that makes it out of the hospital is satisfied. Well, yeah. They got out of the hospital. So, yeah, you're going to score high.

The Minister of Justice is speaking to me, and I'm sure he'll leap to his feet and help to debate on this budget as soon as I'm finished.

So I'm talking about a business plan that needs to be followed and adhered to. We need stability in funding and consistency in funding for a good plan to be developed, and you need those measurements and targets to be able to test how you're doing and look at how you're doing in delivering that particular service. We don't even

have those performance measurements. We've got opinion polls, which isn't helping us with anything.

One of the other things that's occurred to me recently is that when the cuts first happened sort of in '93-94, a lot of people that were involved in the system – and I'm talking the health care system and other departments that were cut fairly dramatically at that time – really worked hard to pick up the pieces, to go the extra mile, to put in 150 percent. Eventually they stopped doing that, and I'm going to be really interested to see whether this time when there is another so-called crisis – and I've yet to be convinced that there is another crisis here – those people will step in again, and I think they won't. I think they've figured out that they are just disguising the problems the government is in. When you've got people that will work undocumented overtime hours, when they go that extra mile and the system is not aware that that time is being put in, that that money is being spent by a person and donated back into the system, you don't have a true picture of the cost of what's going on.

I know from speaking to some doctors that at that time they'd stay late every night. They'd phone around to all the hospitals and clinics and they'd try and get their patient in, the one that was sitting in the corridor or whatever. One guy said: "You know, I just realized that I could do this forever, and I stopped doing it. I just go home to my family now. I work my full day. I even work more than that, and then I go home, because I am never going to be able to get all of my patients in anymore. That time is gone. It's past. All I'm going to do is make myself sick and be less of a good doctor because of all this time I'm spending chasing after beds for my patients." So he just decided that that's it. He's not going to do that extra work, that hidden work, that hidden time and money that's supporting the system but is never accounted for.

I'm interested to see what's going to happen this time, and I think the people that are in the system are not going to support it again. They're not going to cover up. They're not going to put in that overtime anymore. Maybe, as a result of that, we will actually see what the system costs and we can actually get down to some realistic planning and understand exactly how much time and money this system costs us.

Now, I look at this additional money that's going into health care. We've really had quite a spiking of money going into health care over the last 10 years.

DR. TAFT: Yo-yo.

MS BLAKEMAN: A yo-yo effect. Thank you. That's probably more accurate.

We have been putting more money into the system in the last couple of years, but are we able to measure whether this is giving us a better system? I would contend that it doesn't. It's all the more puzzling when we now hear that despite all that money going in, we have the two largest regional health authorities with a combined deficit, after all of the accounting has been done and all of the ins and outs and the financial alchemy have been done, of \$50 million. That's astonishing, absolutely astonishing. It is a downloading from the provincial budget onto these RHAs and the children's health authorities.

That's one of the things that I'm most interested to not see – and I'll underline not – in this 2001-2002 supplementary estimates for the general revenue fund, that there's no money in here for Children's Services. We're putting extra money into Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Health and Wellness, Justice, Learning, Sustainable Resource Development, and then a number of areas under the Legislative Assembly. Support to the Legislative Assembly: I suspect that must be the additional pension money. Office of

the Chief Electoral Officer: well, that makes sense; we had an election. Office of the Ethics Commissioner: I think that's because the Ethics Commissioner and the FOIP Commissioner were split, and there would have been expenses in separating the administration of those two offices. There's no Children's Services on that list, so how important are children in this province? I guess they're not. We've got children's authorities that are running deficits as well, but for some reason the government is not going to put money in there. Interesting comment.

So I'm going to support this money going in because I think – you know, I really don't want to do this. I don't think it's right to support time after time after time this kind of shabby management, and every time we approve one of these supplementary estimates, we allow that poor management. We allow this: "Whoops; got it wrong; just a sec; let me shovel some more money in there to make it all come out so that we've got a balanced budget." Well, that's not balanced budgeting. It isn't, not if you can go and dig money out of some pocket and stick it back in to give yourself a zero-base budget. It's poor management. This is our health care system, and I expected better.

This government has been in power 30 years. You guys are supposed to know how to do this. It seems to me you get worse every year. Let's look at what's happened over the years with however many supplementary supplies we've had. You know, between '86 and '93 the Treasurer of the day had seven special warrants, for a total of \$2.1 billion. When we look between the 1992-93 fiscal year and '96-97, six different special warrants authorizing – oh, that's a bargain. That was only needing to authorize a total of \$611 million. Then between 1996 and the '99-2000 year we, again, had seven extra moneys. Look at this: there are two that were called for in '97-98, two that were called for in '98-99, and two that were called for in '99-2000, for a humdinger total of \$2.9 billion. They're not getting better; they're getting worse. Wait for this. In the last fiscal year, for the 2000-01 year – and we'd had two different Treasurers – we're at \$1.4 billion. That's amazing. We're at almost half from two appropriations compared to six or seven appropriations from other Treasurers. Astounding. We're not getting better at this; we're getting worse. We need more and more money to dig ourselves out of the lack of planning and management that's happened.

So you know what? I don't think I am going to vote for this. I know that this is money in health care and we all want to support that, but frankly I can't support this kind of shabby management and shabby budgeting.

4:30

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Shame.

MS BLAKEMAN: Shameful. Absolutely. I agree with my colleagues from the government side. It is shameful. I can't support that year after year after year, and I'm not going to support it.

DR. TAYLOR: Well, obviously you don't support it because there are only seven of you and 74 of us.

MS BLAKEMAN: Well, it's interesting that the Minister of Environment is wondering why the government side gained more members and the opposition side lost members. I would have been very, very interested to see what would have happened in that election had the government members actually fessed up to what their mandate was. If the government had actually been out there on the campaign trail talking about how they were going to vote

themselves a pension package or talking about how they were going to cut money from social services and preventative . . .

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, the allocated time has run out.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

MR. BONNER: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'd also like to make a few comments today on supplementary estimates. As the Member for Edmonton-Centre was doing such a fine job when her time ran out, I'd also like to point out the same observations when we talk about special warrants between the years of '86 to '93. We talk about appropriations from 1992 to '97. We talk about the Treasurer of the day from 1996 to 2000, who had supplementary estimates of close to \$3 billion. Here we are in the year 2000-2001 asking for supplementary estimates in the neighbourhood of \$1.4 billion. As the Member for Edmonton-Riverview said earlier, this is a matter of serious concern.

Now, when we look specifically at the Department of Health and Wellness and see that there is a \$6 billion budget there and they are requesting an additional \$118.7 million, I certainly would never not support this money going to these programs, where they are so desperately needed. It is a situation, Mr. Chairman, where we certainly can look at the needs of our health authorities and their money requests. At the same time I think we also have to look at what has been said over the years as far as the way we do business in the Department of Health and Wellness.

I look first of all at the Auditor General's report, and I'm quoting here from page 6, Mr. Chairman. This is from the 2000-2001 annual report. In this particular paragraph the Auditor General goes on to say:

In this year's report, you will read that the Department continually spends more money on our health system without knowing the value of that extra spending. The primary risk for the Department, regional health authorities, and physicians is that costs will escalate but results won't improve. Although the health budget continually and rapidly increases, supplementary funding is commonly used and one-time funding is now chronic. The principle that we follow as individuals, of managing within the resources we have, does not seem to apply.

Those words were from the most recent Auditor General's report about this particular department.

Now, then, earlier today a number of us were at the AAMDC convention, where we heard the Premier talking. The Premier was talking about the Mazankowski report and how they had a number. In this particular case, Mr. Chairman, he did indicate that the Mazankowski report was compiled by authorities from all over the world. Yet this report, that was supposed to be so great – and perhaps it is; I don't know. I haven't been able to see a copy of it yet. Certainly a copy was leaked to the *Calgary Herald*, it's my understanding, and it isn't there. I guess the thing that concerned me most about the Premier's comments today was how he's indicating that there is going to be a quick implementation of the recommendations of that report.

Now, then, if we had anything, Mr. Chairman, absolutely anything – any cost analysis, anything that shows we're going to have an improvement in services to Albertans, anything that indicates that the health of Albertans is going to improve, and anything that indicates that the demand on our health care system would be reduced by following these recommendations – if we had anything in regards to this, then certainly Albertans would support this. But to certainly go ahead and indicate that we are going to have massive changes without the analysis, without the studies being done, is totally wrong.

It seems that I am not the only one that has these concerns. Again I want to go back to the Auditor General's report. He took a summary, and I'll just refer to this summary: "For example, the following summary is taken word for word from my 1997-1998 annual report. What I said three years ago still applies." Now, doesn't this give you great concern when this department has had three years to react to the Auditor General's report? After he quotes what he had said three years ago, he goes on to say: "I do not believe that management ignores my audits and recommendations. Management agrees with recommendations and tries to implement them. However, progress is unsatisfactory."

4:40

So we have here recommendations, in fact 25 pages of recommendations in his report on this particular department, and we find ourselves back here again asking for more money. Certainly this is a tough situation from our point of view, that we are continually being asked to approve supplementary estimates for departments that haven't budgeted properly, particularly when we see the yo-yo effect that has happened since our budget was released in March and since it was approved at the end of May. We do have a serious problem here. We do have a serious problem when the two largest health authorities in this province are running deficits. Of course, as we continue to cut back departments and if the price of oil and natural gas continues to fall and we get back to the days when Dick Johnston was our Treasurer and trying to deal with oil at \$10 a barrel and meet the costs that seem to be escalating, then what is going to happen at this particular juncture? How is this government going to deal with that? Are we going to see more and more cuts to our health care system?

I also was quite interested in another issue, *The Future: Meeting Priorities, Sharing Benefits, Budget 2001*. This is the second-quarter activity report. I notice on page 6, *Promoting Health and Wellness*:

Health care is important to all Albertans. That's why the Alberta Government continues to search for innovative ways to improve the health system and address the needs and priorities of Albertans.

In the Second Quarter, the government continued to focus on the health of Albertans.

And if we look at the third bullet in this particular issue, this is one thing that disturbs me. It "provided emergency response support for the BP Canada Fort Saskatchewan ethane cavern storage fires and the Barrington blowout west of Zama." Now, why is this department absorbing those costs?

MS BLAKEMAN: A blowout in Zama here under health care?

MR. BONNER: A blowout, yes, in this particular report. Now, why are we covering the costs that should have been covered by the private provider? So, yes, there are, Mr. Chairman, serious problems here with this whole idea of supplementary estimates.

It's also quite interesting to note that some of the members on the opposite side have increased their vocabulary.

MS BLAKEMAN: Oh, have they?

MR. BONNER: Yes. They're up to one signal now.

Now, then, I also noted that when the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre was talking, she referred to the fact that here in Alberta we cannot run a deficit. The Liberals fully agree with that, and we never would, but what we seem to forget, Mr. Chairman, is that it wasn't the Liberals that created this enormous debt.

MS BLAKEMAN: Who did?

MR. BONNER: Who did? Well, you know what? It wasn't this present government, but it must have been the government before this government, because we just don't seem to be able to say that this enormous debt that we are still working hard to pay off—and as the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East and Leader of the Official Opposition pointed out today, we are sitting on over \$2 billion to pay off the debt, to pay off issues that are coming due next October. We are sitting on that kind of money when in fact we have programs that are being cut, when in fact we have supplementary estimates that are asking for \$1.4 billion.

Mr. Chairman, in closing, I have to say that we haven't done a very good job this year, not when we are coming back to this House and asking for \$1.4 billion, which is half of what other governments in this province that have used supplementary estimates have asked for. So it is time for this government to seriously look at these recommendations of the Auditor General and certainly to follow the talk that they give us about good management and to certainly be better caretakers of those hard-earned dollars that Albertans supply to this government.

Thank you very much.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With all that clapping, I wish I had more to say, but what I wanted to put on the record was that I think my colleagues have done a very commendable job and a very thorough job of discussing the health care estimates. I won't add anything to that, but I would like to point out that it is Natalie the page's birthday, and we would like to wish her a very happy birthday.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

MR. MAR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I listened very carefully to the comments made by the hon. members for Edmonton-Riverview and Edmonton-Mill Woods and noted also the birthday greetings from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

I heard a number of words that caught my attention, particularly from Edmonton-Riverview, when he talked about the combination of factors that are challenging the sustainability of government programs, including health care spending. I'm glad that he recognizes that sustainability is an important factor that we must consider in drafting our policy. I should say that sustainability is often used in talking about health care but not often defined, and I would suggest that the definition of sustainability is that it is to employ our finances and our human resources in health care in such a way that we meet the needs of current generations of Albertans, in such a way that we do not impair the ability of future generations to do the same thing.

I noted also that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods talked about the Auditor General's comments on ensuring that we get value out of our health care dollars spent, and he noted, as did the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, that the immunization program for vaccination against meningitis was indeed a very cost-effective measure. I trust that we can expect from both these members future reforms that may come forward that will focus on outcomes as opposed to merely activity in our health care system.

I should note also that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre commented on the need to look at outcomes and not simply patient surveys of satisfaction rates. While those types of surveys are

important, Mr. Chairman, I should note that they cannot form the only basis for the development of policy, and to that extent I agree with her. I listened also to the constructive comments put forward by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

Mr. Chairman, having taken note of those comments, I would now like to call the vote on the supplementary estimates for the Department of Health and Wellness.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: After considering the supplementary estimates for the Department of Health and Wellness, are you ready for the vote?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Operating expense and capital investments, \$118,743,000. Are you agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Opposed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Carried.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:48 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

5:00

For the motion:

Bonner	Klapstein	O'Neill
Calahasen	Lord	Ouellette
Cardinal	Lougheed	Pham
Ducharme	Lukaszuk	Rathgeber
Fischer	Lund	Renner
Forsyth	Mar	Stelmach
Friedel	Marz	Stevens
Fritz	Masyk	Taft
Gordon	McFarland	Tarchuk
Graydon	Melchin	Taylor
Hancock	Nelson	VanderBurg
Hutton	Norris	Vandermeer
Jonson		

Against the motion:

Blakeman	Carlson
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Totals	For – 37	Against – 2
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Agreed to:

Operating Expense and Capital Investment	\$118,743,000
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THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.

Justice

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Justice.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The supplementary estimates that were tabled in the House really say almost all that needs to be said about the Justice supplementary estimate. We're looking for an extra \$9 million, and as members will know, those are divided into two areas, the first being extra supply for justice of the peace compensation.

Members will know that there was a justice of the peace compensation commission, as we're required to do. That compensation commission came in with a compensation level which was higher than we had quite frankly anticipated or believed was necessary. As we're entitled to do, we brought forward compensation levels which were less than recommended by the commission with appropriate reasons therefor. In any event, the compensation levels that we brought in were higher than we anticipated, and therefore we needed the extra dollars. The \$2.518 million are essentially to provide for those necessary funds. We were not expecting to have to pay at that level, and that's why the supplementary estimate is necessary and was unbudgeted.

The other \$6.5 million, as members will well know, are for the compensation for legal officers, increased legal officers' compensation for hiring additional Crown prosecutors. While some might say that could've been anticipated and should've been budgeted, I would point out to members that it really only came to a head at this point in time because of the improved economy which resulted in both the federal government getting into additional hiring and paying at a level that was higher than we were paying and, as well, an arbitration award in Ontario that increased prosecutors' salaries by about \$30,000.

So while it might've been argued that we should've budgeted for these supplementary dollars, I think it's reasonable to suggest that we didn't budget for them for those reasons and that it's quite appropriate to come back now and ask the Assembly for supplementary supply in those areas to accommodate the necessary increases to legal officers' compensation and hiring additional legal officers.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That's an interesting argument that's been put forward by the Minister of Justice about why he needs to be coming back and seeking out an additional \$9 million for his department.

You know, overall I'm sympathetic with the position that the minister finds himself in, because I think that justice is one of the most important things that a government provides to its people. I think that the government needs to be carefully prioritizing how it approaches the different services and programs that it offers, because this department I think has come far too close to the line of failing to meet its constitutional duties. We are obligated to make available access to justice. If access to justice is delayed too long in this country, the cases get thrown out of court. You're supposed to be seen in a timely manner; your case is to be heard in a timely manner.

One of the things that the Department of Justice is to be providing is public safety. It's not public safety if we have people that are charged with a crime – perhaps they're guilty; perhaps they're not. We don't know, because they're never going to get their court case. It gets punted because it's taken too long to get there. Why would it be taking too long to get there?

Well, let's have a look at the situation that this department has

found itself in in the last year, and I'll come back later to talking about why this should have been anticipated. In the last year we've had dozens of Crown prosecutors leave, and I've heard from them. Many of them are my constituents. They've phoned me, written to me, stopped me on the street and talked to me, just stopped me in a bank lineup and talked to me once, saying: "Look. I really, really, really love my job. I love doing this. I don't mind as a lawyer being paid substantially less than my colleagues or the students I graduated from university with. I don't mind that. I love the work. I love doing the right thing for people, but I've got to be realistic. You know, I'm carrying a caseload of 500 cases when the average across Canada is 342, when I'm paid substantially less than anybody else, and if I'm going to work that hard, I need some help here. I've got to hire someone to clean my house and walk my dogs and pick up my kids after school. I can't be there to do it because I'm working 500 cases. I'm working 40 percent more cases than is average in Canada." So these Crown prosecutors were getting coaxed away. Well, it hardly took any coaxing. They were walking across the street to the next federal job that came open. They were going back into private practice. We were losing our Crown prosecutors.

Now, part of our system of giving access to justice is you get a lawyer. One is appointed for you if you don't have one, and there's a lawyer on the government side that brings forward the case. If we don't have a lawyer on the government side that's bringing forward the case, it's not coming forward, so we need those Crown prosecutors.

The second thing that's happened is that there are now 10 vacancies in the Provincial Court, and we're responsible for that. Ten vacancies. There are courtrooms where there are no judges sitting, so they can't very well hear cases; can they? Even if we had the Crown prosecutors to bring the cases forward, we don't have the judges that are sitting in the courtrooms.

Courtrooms are the next thing. We don't have enough courtrooms. This, in particular, has been a long-standing problem that should have been anticipated. That's showing up on all levels of our court system and could certainly have been anticipated two or three years back.

I think we should have been able to anticipate fairly easily what was happening to our Crown prosecutors. They started leaving here a year ago. Well, we are well into our budget planning process for the budget that's going to come out in the spring of 2002. So a year ago the minister should have been able to figure out that we were going to have a problem with Crown Prosecutors. They were already starting to leave a year ago when the minister was well into the planning process. He should have been able to anticipate that, even looking across Canada and going, "Hmm; gosh, look at the workload that these guys have got; I think I might have trouble with them soon," or even looking and comparing the salary levels. Of course, it was obvious this was going to happen.

5:10

So three things were all conspiring against us there: the Crown prosecutors leaving because of their pay scales and their workload; the lack of judges and the vacancies on the bench; and, literally, the lack of courtroom space to hold trials in and to have your cases heard in. That was truly jeopardizing Albertans' access to justice, and if that is one of the things that the government must provide to its people, I think this is an appalling example of not being able to run a good business plan and anticipate this.

When I look at what the Auditor General has to say – something can dig this ministry out, for heaven's sake. No. We have huge points being brought forward about accountability for legal services and the fines. This department cannot figure out how much money

it's collecting. This recommendation has come forward from the Auditor General in the '99-2000 report and in the '94-95 report, a recommendation to "determine the results and costs of its fines collection activities." The department still hasn't done it. We don't really know how much money.

The Auditor General here is saying that "the Department collects about \$100 million from approximately one million fines," but we don't really know that. "The Department needs to understand the success of its collection activities. The Department should determine the number of fines levied, collected, outstanding and written off." We don't know that.

On the one hand, we've got a government going: "Oh, we're in trouble. We've got to cut back. We're going to shovel our deficits down the line onto the municipalities and regional health authorities and children's authorities." On the other hand, they don't know how much money they're supposed to be collecting. This is a revenue source. We're not sure how much it is.

So the minister of this department has my sympathy, because I don't think he gets the support and the prioritization from his colleagues that he should. If the government is not providing public safety to its citizens, then many of the other things that government provides don't even come into the mix. The minister has my sympathy in that.

At the same time, I'm going to take him to task. I think he's probably a good administrator. I don't know how it works, but he needs to spend more time looking at how his department is administered if he's got these kinds of problems coming. These are huge problems. I hope he's not telling me that he missed these and didn't see it coming, because that doesn't speak very well to management and planning. You know, when I go and I look at the past and go, "Okay; how have we done in the past with management and planning?" whoops, we've got repeated recommendations from the Auditor General going: hey, folks, we don't know how much money we're supposed to be collecting from fines. We don't know how much we did collect, and we don't know how much we missed or lost or it was canceled or whatever.

So am I willing to support this additional money that's going into this supplementary supply for 2001-2002? In this department I am willing to support it. I'm not willing to support it in health care anymore. That department has got to do this better. I have some sympathy for the Minister of Justice, for what he's trying to do here, and I will support that. The money is going to the things that are most needed. It is going to the Crown prosecutors. It is going to justices of the peace compensation and professional allowances for provincial judges. I don't know – it's certainly not in here – if it's going to fill some of those vacancies that are on the bench, but I would hope that . . .

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, but pursuant to Standing Order 59(3) and Government Motion 19, agreed to on November 21, 2001, I must now put the following question. Those members in favour of each of the resolutions not yet voted upon relating to the 2001-2002 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no. Carried.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions and reports as follows. All resolutions relating to the 2001-2002 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund have been approved.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to table a list of those resolutions voted upon by the Committee of Supply pursuant to Standing Orders.

Supplementary estimates for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2001: Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, operating expense and capital investment, \$129,519,000; Health and Wellness, operating expense and capital investment, \$118,743,000; Justice, operating expense and capital investment \$9,018,000; Learning, nonbudgetary disbursements, \$80,000,000; Sustainable Resource Development, operating expense and capital investment, \$97,691,000; office of the Ethics Commissioner, operating expense, \$142,000; amount to be transferred from the office of the Chief Electoral Officer to support to the Legislative Assembly, \$2,797,000.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that we have unanimous consent to revert to Introduction of Bills.

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: Introduction of Bills

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Bill 30
Appropriation (Supplementary Supply)
Act, 2001 (No. 2)

MRS. NELSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 30, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2001 (No. 2). This being a money bill, her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

[Motion carried; Bill 30 read a first time]

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that we adjourn until 1:30 p.m. Monday, November 26.

[Motion carried; at 5:19 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

