

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, April 10, 2002**

**1:30 p.m.**

Date: 02/04/10

[The Speaker in the chair]

### head: **Prayers**

THE SPEAKER: Welcome.

Let us pray. O God, grant that we the members of our province's Legislature may fulfill our office with honesty and integrity. May our first concern be for the good of all our people. Guide our deliberations this day. Amen.

Please be seated.

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

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly the new Chinese consul general in Calgary, Mr. Xizhu, and his wife. They are accompanied by the vice-consul general, Mr. Tian Yuzhen. Alberta has long been one of Canada's most active provinces in China. China and Alberta have a mutually beneficial relationship covering a wide variety of areas from trade and investment to culture and education. Nearly 150,000 Albertans are of Chinese descent, and they make tremendous contributions each day to our province. The Chinese consulate in Calgary does a great deal to advance Alberta/Chinese relations and to support the province's Chinese community. We have had an excellent working relationship with the consulate ever since it opened in 1998, and we're looking forward to continued strong relations under the leadership of Mr. Xizhu. I would ask that our honoured guests please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. BOUTILIER: Thank you. It's my pleasure today, Mr. Speaker, to introduce very good partners of this province, and they're the executive of the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, known as the AUMA. Today we have in the Speaker's gallery, your gallery, the president. He is the mayor of the city of Leduc, George Rogers. As well, we have the vice-president and director of towns, Mayor Ernie Patterson from the town of Claresholm. As well, we have the vice-president and director of cities, Alderman Bob Hawkesworth from the city of Calgary. I would also like to make an honourable mention of a former mayor who recently was tragically killed, as we all know, in the village of Thorhild. He, of course, was a very avid member of the AUMA executive, Mayor Michael Senych, and he was the vice-president and director of villages on the executive. I would like to ask the distinguished gentlemen to all rise and receive the very warm welcome of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a great deal of pleasure for me today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly some 45 very enthusiastic, brilliant young people from the elementary school in Bentley. They are accompanied today by their teachers Mr. Merv Leidl and Mrs. Diane Scarlett and also parent helpers Pat Wiggins and Rod Koetke. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask that they now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

MS EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly three distinguished guests representing the Alberta College of Social Workers here today, no doubt, for the fact that we're presenting the Children's Services budget in Committee of Supply. May I introduce with pleasure Mr. Jake Kuiken, Mr. Arnie Thiessen, and Mr. Rod Adachi. If they would rise and the Assembly please duly recognize them for their work.

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

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour today to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly two wonderful citizens of St. Albert, Maura and Aidan McGarrigle. They are wonderful musicians. They play at church and in pubs and a number of other places around. They are also wonderful volunteers in our community. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

DR. TAFT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Ann Keane, who is seated in the gallery. I'd like to ask Ann to rise. Ann is leaving this weekend for Newfoundland, where she will begin a run across Canada to be completed on Vancouver Island at the end of August. Ann will be raising funds for two charities, but it is her underlying purpose that is so inspiring, and I quote from her web site, powerofpeople.com: to raise the awareness of Canadians that they have a choice in every moment to help make this world a better place or not. Please join me in offering Ann best wishes.

### head: **Ministerial Statements**

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

#### **Child Pornography**

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak about a very troubling issue. As Justice minister I take great pride in the work that this government does to ensure that our communities are safe and our children have every opportunity to grow into well-rounded and contributing members of our society. Two weeks ago, while this Assembly stood in recess, the British Columbia Supreme Court made a ruling in a child pornography case that I found deeply disturbing, as I'm sure did most Albertans.

The case involved a man who had previously fought for the constitutional right to possess child pornography right up to the Supreme Court of Canada, which thankfully ruled against him. At the time, however, the Supreme Court of Canada outlined various examples of defences that caused us concern and one which the man subsequently availed himself of in his defence. I must say that this man is a man whose actions and views on child pornography are upsetting and abhorrent to most, if not all, Canadians. We had faith that the court system would rule against him and demonstrate to the accused and to all Canadians that child pornography in any form is unacceptable and has absolutely no place in our society, but sadly, Mr. Speaker, that was not to be the case. The defendant, although found guilty on two other counts of possession of child pornography, was acquitted of two charges that related to his writings. His legal arguments were based on exceptions in the Criminal Code which

state that an individual may be found not guilty if materials are deemed to have artistic merit.

This is a decision that surprised me as Attorney General and shocked and upset me as a father. The broad interpretation of artistic merit suggests to me that this legislation has weaknesses that may not allow us to protect Canadian children to the best of our ability. Although the decision is not binding in Alberta and has only persuasive value in cases before our courts today or in the future, it does set a dangerous standard. Possessing child pornography is not a victimless crime. It degrades, dehumanizes, and sexually exploits children. The demand for child pornography leads to its continued production and distribution, and to suggest otherwise is naive and absurd. The idea that possession of one's own pornographic writings is harmless, especially in this electronic age of easy transmission and where publication of material on the Internet is difficult if not impossible to control, simply ignores modern realities.

Some say that we must be careful not to restrict freedom of expression. I say that if there is any place that cries out for society to say no, it's in the area of child pornography. We do not accept, Mr. Speaker, the concept that people should be free to defile children either physically or in writing. We do not accept the concept that there can be artistic merit in the victimization of children, and we do not accept the concept that the intention of exciting or titillating a passion for that which is illegal, immoral, and in all fashion and form reprehensible to a civil society is acceptable in any form, even if it is based on the rather far-fetched notion that the creators of such offensive material will not share it with others and will keep it only for themselves.

I want to remind Albertans that the prosecution of child pornography offences is an essential part of Alberta Justice's responsibility to protect children and promote safer communities. Our committed and professional team of Crown prosecutors will prosecute these cases to the fullest extent of the law.

1:40

A similar defence, Mr. Speaker, based on artistic exceptions outlined in the Criminal Code could be made here or elsewhere in Canada. While prosecutors could argue against such a claim, it's ultimately up to the court to determine whether materials have so-called artistic merit. This government will not wait for similar court rulings elsewhere in the country that may further weaken our ability to protect Canadian children. As Minister of Justice and Attorney General I have written to the federal Minister of Justice and have urgently requested a nationwide examination of the child pornography provisions of the Criminal Code to help ensure that they reflect the values of Canadian society and protect the interests and safety of Canadian children. I have already assigned staff from my department to examine all available options and alternatives and report back to me. I intend to bring forward for discussion with my provincial and federal counterparts some viable options as soon as possible.

In my letter to the federal Justice minister I also renewed Alberta's request to raise the legal age of consent for sexual activity from the present 14 to at least 16 years of age. This is a request, Mr. Speaker, that we have made persistently. In fact, a motion making the same request was passed by this Assembly in March of 1999, and we've taken that request forward to the government each and every time we've met as Justice ministers. I am convinced that raising the age of consent will provide yet another tool to ensure that our children are protected from sexual predators, and I will continue to push for this change in the law.

Protection of society's most vulnerable members is our most important duty as a government and as a society, and ensuring that

our children have the opportunity to be the best that they can be is our primary function. It is only through the protection of our children and the promotion of their successes that we can defend against and defeat so many of the ills that exist in our society, be it poverty, domestic violence, or criminal activity, and which cost our society enormously both in human and economic terms and serve to clog our courts and our prisons.

Mr. Speaker, the government of Alberta will do everything it can to protect the children of this province and this country. That is a commitment that we make proudly to the members of this Assembly and to all Albertans.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Official Opposition I'm pleased to respond to the minister's statement. The Official Opposition joins the Minister of Justice in a call for a national review of the child pornography laws to help ensure that they reflect the values of Canadian society and protect the best interests and safety of children. We believe that keeping children free from harm by protecting their innocence and safety must be primary principles governing the laws of this land.

The issues raised in the Sharpe case need public discussion. His acquittal on two charges related to his writings based on artistic merit has raised some serious questions. Do we as a society support artistic merit as a principle that should take precedence over harm that may be done to children? As a father and as a grandfather I can appreciate and share the minister's anger and outrage. However, as with most questions that appear before the courts, issues are not always as black and white as they initially seem. For instance, should possession of *Romeo & Juliet* be a chargeable offence? *Juliet*, after all, was a minor.

The current child pornography laws were hastily written prior to a federal election. Expectations that they would subsequently be reconsidered in the light of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and be amended, if needed, have not been realized, and we think they should be. Canadians need to clearly settle any perceived tension between children's rights and adult freedoms on the side of children. The government has rightfully called for a national debate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: **Oral Question Period**

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

#### **Swan Hills Waste Treatment Facility**

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first question is to the Premier. Do Alberta taxpayers own the Swan Hills waste treatment plant? Yes or no?

MR. KLEIN: Yes.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Bovar was paid to take the plant off the government's hands and now it's back in our hands, will the Premier bring that deal and the arrangements that have been made with Sensor before the Assembly and the people of Alberta?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, this is a somewhat complex situation relative to the ongoing operation of the plant. There are reasons to

keep it open and to keep it operating. One of those reasons is the collection of toxic garbage here in the province of Alberta, which would otherwise have to be gathered up, containerized properly, and shipped to some other waste disposal plant at taxpayers' expense. We would try to charge, certainly, the creators of this garbage to the best of our ability, but you have to understand that there are many circumstances, many instances where we can't track down the original owners or the people originally responsible for the pollution violations or the creation of this toxic waste.

Relative to the details and the complexities of the negotiations and the ongoing operation of the Swan Hills plant, I'll have the hon. Minister of Infrastructure respond.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the last year we were attempting to sell the plant. We had a call for proposals, but at the end of the day we were concerned that, in fact, as the Premier has indicated, it was very, very important that that plant continue to operate and be there for the destruction of waste within the province.

When you look at what the plant has done over time, it has basically cleaned the province of PCBs. We have a lot of other very toxic materials like dioxins and furans, and this plant is a location where they can be handled. When you look at the industry that's within the province, there is always going to be a generation of materials that we are very concerned that they don't be land filled, that they be treated in a proper manner. It's really interesting when you look at the capacities of that plant. It is the only plant in North America that can handle and completely neutralize and destroy these toxic materials – the only plant in North America. So it's really a gem for the province, and it's something that we need to maintain and protect.

As far as Sensor is concerned, we have an operating contract with them. We are going to be going out for a long-term operator contract, and we will be, probably in May, putting forward the calls for proposals for that operator.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question didn't deal with the technical aspects of running the plant. I asked the Premier: will you bring the financial commitment of this province in operating the Swan Hills plant before this Legislature?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I have no problems providing that information. As a matter of fact, if the hon. leader of the Liberal Party wishes to bring forward a motion for a return, I'm sure that the hon. minister will provide him with all the information he seeks.

MR. LUND: Well, Mr. Speaker, certainly the budget process demonstrates what the commitments are, but those kinds of details of the costs and the return that we are getting for the destruction of the toxic materials, we have no problem with bringing those forward.

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

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My next question is to the Finance minister. Have provisions of the Financial Administration Act been changed to allow for the government to get involved in this plant again?

1:50

MRS. NELSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have been involved in this

plant for quite some time, right from the very beginning of 1984, when we first made the decision to deal with the disposal of hazardous waste within the province of Alberta. We recognize that the plant has done I think a top-rate job in the province, as was enunciated by the Minister of Infrastructure, and we are committed to making sure that we have an environmentally clean province here in Alberta. Is the plant costly? Yes. Would it be costlier if we didn't do this? You bet it would. We have to have a clean province. We have to have economic development go forward in an environmentally friendly way. This plant ensures that that occurs. There isn't another facility like this plant in North America, so we have to be able to dispose of hazardous wastes.

The Minister of Infrastructure has already explained that with the nature of the development that occurs within this province, there is always going to be the concern over the disposal of waste, so we have a facility that we are proud of, that has done the job, that has virtually made us PCB free in this province, that has given us the enviable position of all other jurisdictions of economic development within Canada and North America. So we are involved in this plant, yes. We have had outside operators, yes. We will continue to be involved with this plant to make sure that it does in fact dispose of hazardous waste from the province of Alberta.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Finance: will you bring the financial dealings of this plant before this House, as required by the Financial Administration Act?

MRS. NELSON: I believe that the Minister of Infrastructure has already answered that question, Mr. Speaker.

DR. NICOL: Mr. Speaker, I did not hear from any of the three people that have answered a response to this question: will they bring it forward? Mr. Premier, will you commit to having that material brought to this House?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I think that we did answer the question. We said that we would make all the information that we can available to the Legislature. I asked the hon. leader of the Liberal Party to bring forward a motion for a return to outline specifically and precisely what information he requires, and we will answer that motion to the best of our ability.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In June 2001 Sensor Environmental, the company currently running the Swan Hills Treatment Centre, spilled between 200 and 300 litres of PCB-contaminated water. The report on this incident says that recommendations for improvements would be made. As this information was filed with Alberta Environment, my questions are to that minister. Why did Sensor only receive a warning letter for this spill?

DR. TAYLOR: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have a number of procedures that we do follow under the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act, and one of the things that happens depends on how a company responds to the spill. If they notify us, as is appropriate, and if they clean up the spill, as is appropriate, we have a number of actions that we can take. One of those actions is sending a warning letter, and that's the action we took.

MS CARLSON: When will information be available to this Assembly and to Albertans about further action that they're taking with Sensor on this particular incident?

DR. TAYLOR: Well, it's my understanding that at the present time the spill has been cleaned up to an appropriate level. I will check on that and make sure that that is in fact the case and will then inform the member appropriately.

MS CARLSON: My final question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, this plant is an environmental and financial nightmare. There is better, less expensive technology available. When will you close the plant down and stop Alberta taxpayers from subsidizing PCB imports from other provinces?

MR. KLEIN: Quite to the contrary, Mr. Speaker, the plant is an environmental asset. To put it into perspective, throughout this province we have landfill sites. We have municipal landfill sites and we have regional landfills. The Minister of Environment knows all about this. These are facilities to collect garbage. The Swan Hills plant is a facility to collect garbage and dispose of a very special kind of garbage in a very specific and controlled manner. No other jurisdiction in this country has a plant of that nature, perhaps even in North America. Quite simply, if we did not have the plant to dispose of that very toxic, very special garbage here, we would have to, as I said before, gather it up, put it in special containers, find a way to ship it outside the province at great cost, and have it destroyed elsewhere. What better opportunity than to have the facility right here to make sure that this province can be free of toxic and dangerous waste? It's an asset, not an environmental nightmare.

DR. TAYLOR: I might just add to my comments. I can tell the member that the spill that did occur was under a collecting pad, and it has been 100 percent cleaned up. It was spilled by Bovar. Bovar has been charged, and Sensor has cleaned up that spill 100 percent.

MR. LUND: Well, Mr. Speaker, leading from the question that the hon. member asked, you know, I find it so frustrating when she pretends to want to protect the environment. The Premier has clearly stated how important this is to make sure that our environment is kept clean. And as a matter of fact, if you want to talk about the cost, for every \$250 in our department only \$1 goes toward the Swan Hills plant. Now, if that is too much money to spend to keep our environment pristine, then I'm sorry; I don't agree with you.

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

### **Royalty Rates**

DR. PANNU: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There has been recent criticism of Alberta's royalty rates for our nonrenewable oil and gas resources. Some have suggested the need for a public review of this matter. Despite its claims to be out of the business of business, the government continues to operate a royalty tax credit program that exclusively benefits a single industry; namely, oil and gas companies. The government also gives away hundreds of millions of other revenue dollars every year to various royalty reduction programs. My questions are to the Premier. Why has the government failed to conduct a thorough public review of provincial royalty rates and policy to make sure that Albertans are receiving a fair economic rent for their nonrenewable resources.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I'll have the hon. Minister of Finance

supplement my answer. The Minister of Energy is not with us today and perhaps can reply more appropriately at a later date. I'll take the matter as it pertains to the Minister of Energy under notice.

With respect to royalties and with respect to an ongoing review, this is a subject of ongoing review. It is reviewed, I believe, on an annual basis and perhaps even more often with the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers. There are analysts within the Department of Energy and, I'm sure, within the Department of Finance who are continually reviewing the fairness and the appropriateness of royalties that are paid by the oil and gas companies. Relative to whether they're fair and the process for review, I'll have the hon. Minister of Finance supplement.

MRS. NELSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, actually I'm delighted to get up and supplement the answer. I did have some background in this area at one point when I was in the private sector and then when I was in the portfolio a few years back.

The royalty program in Alberta is a program that brings in roughly between 25 and 35 to 40 percent of the revenue base for the province of Alberta. This is a very important program, because it's a program where we charge on average just over 21 percent to companies to contract to us to produce the natural resources within the province. This program is reviewed on an ongoing basis, but obviously with the activity level that is in place in the province of Alberta today and has been here for a number of years and seems to increase, the framework that has been put in place is one that is working. In fact, the development and the drilling activity continues to increase on a year-to-year basis.

2:00

The hon. member alluded to a group of royalty holidays. There really is only, I believe, the one royalty holiday that still exists, and that is the pure exploration holiday for one year. The other holidays have been eliminated because the framework is conducive to development, not to holidays. The program is very fair. It brings in the lion's share of the revenue base for the province, and it's been most successful. Quite frankly, for a province of this size to have drilling activity anywhere between 12,000 and 14,000 wells in a given year is a phenomenal testament to the structure that's here.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question to the Premier: why does the Premier believe that a royalty policy review and a rate framework should be developed behind closed doors in government or corporate boardrooms while freezing out the owners of Alberta's oil and gas resources, namely every Alberta citizen?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, that's hardly true at all. The negotiations are taking place with industry, with associations representing industry, like the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers. The amounts that we collect from royalties are reported in various budget documents.

I think that what the hon. leader of the third party is alluding to is this report by the Parkland Institute, and what he's driving at is that royalties are less today than they were during the 1970s. But what this think tank failed to take into consideration, Mr. Speaker, was the simple fact that oil and gas production back in the '70s was a lot simpler then. There was a lot more oil and gas, and it was a lot easier to get at than the kind of technology that is being used today to go in and drill tertiary wells, to use horizontal and slant-hole drilling, to develop the technology that is needed for tar sands development.

Mr. Speaker, the costs today to recover oil and gas are far different than the costs were back in the 1970s. This is why there is an ongoing examination, an ongoing review, and an ongoing assessment as to what is fair for industry and what is fair for government. That's what it's all about, and the royalty regime we have in place today is fair to everyone.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Parkland Institute enjoys a high reputation and great support from lots of Albertans.

My question to the Premier, the last one: what objections does the Premier have to conducting an open, thorough, public review – public review – of the policies that he's so ready to defend in this Assembly?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the public review is done about every four years or so. This is when the people come to the polling booths to elect a government that will represent their interests. And guess what? They elected 74 of us and two of them.

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

#### **Teachers' Arbitration Process**

MR. MASKELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've received many calls from my constituents, from former teacher colleagues, and I've heard many comments from the media stating that the arbitration process listed under the Education Services Settlement Act is unfair. My question is to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. What is he doing to ensure that the process is fair?

MR. DUNFORD: Mr. Speaker, I should mention in beginning that I, too, have received the same types of calls, and because of the situation I think it was incumbent upon us as a department to be very, very careful throughout this entire process about making sure that we can be as fair as we possibly can to all of the parties concerned.

Now, just before question period today I made the announcement of the tribunal panel that will be looking into disputes between school boards and teachers, and I'm pleased that we were able to name a Mr. David Jones as the third arbitrator and the one appointed by the government. Many within the sound of our voices today and perhaps members even here in the Legislature will be aware of Mr. David Jones. He has impeccable credentials as an arbitrator, has extensive experience, and in fact has dealt with teacher disputes in the past. We also announced today the other two members of the tribunal, and I would want to indicate to all members that the Alberta School Boards Association has named a Mr. William Armstrong as their arbitrator, and the Alberta Teachers' Association's nominee is a Mr. Lyle Kanee, a lawyer here in Edmonton.

MR. MASKELL: Mr. Speaker, again to the same minister. I've also heard concerns that Bill 12 places unfair restrictions on the arbitrators. How could the minister allow these terms to exist in the legislation?

MR. DUNFORD: Well, Mr. Speaker, all of us I think have been troubled by comments that somehow the arbitrators' hands would be tied, but I would just want people to know and understand that it would be perfectly reasonable even in a private-sector dispute that no arbitrator is going to assign an award under a binding arbitration

situation that is going to put that employer into bankruptcy. It just simply doesn't happen. So I can say, then, that they will deal with the wage issues in what I believe will be a fair and proper manner, and then as far as the classroom conditions are concerned, we're all aware that through a request from the ATA and a request from the School Boards Association, we're going to deal with pupil/teacher ratios and other matters that deal with the classroom in a commission that should be up and running sometime this year.

MR. MASKELL: Again to the same minister. I've heard you say that there have been settlements since the legislation was introduced. How has Bill 12 affected the teacher wage settlement?

MR. DUNFORD: I think it's fair to say, Mr. Speaker, that first of all the passage in the Assembly of Bill 12 but also then the announcement that an arbitration panel would be put together has stimulated in some cases local negotiations. After all, this is really what all of us want. We want as many of the local agreements as we possibly can have to be done at the local level, and the announcement today of the arbitration tribunal does not stop that kind of a process. I would hope that any member in this Assembly that's still receiving calls about whether or not local boards and whether or not local ATA union representatives can get together to continue to negotiate local agreements – I want to assure them that, yes, they can. I think Bill 12 and the arbitration panel has actually been a stimulus to the situation. Seven months of activity and what did we have? Maybe five agreements. We've had nine more agreements since the announcement of the arbitration.

So, again, the arbitration panel is going to be there to deal with the salary dispute of the teachers. They'll go dispute by dispute by dispute, but there's nothing today that would prevent any of the school boards, any of the ATA locals out there from getting back to the bargaining table and doing their own deal.

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

#### **2:10 Lottery Funds for Community Development**

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are to the Premier. Does the Premier think it's important that communities have a direct say through local decision-making in decisions on how lottery funds earmarked for community development are spent in their community?

MR. KLEIN: Yes, I do, Mr. Speaker. That's why we have programs such as the community facility enhancement program and Wild Rose and a number of other lottery programs: the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation, various ag boards, and so on. All of these are community-based organizations that gather to determine what they need for their communities and then set out to raise the money, making applications through CFEP and some of the other lottery programs, approaching various components of the private sector to match dollars, and getting community members involved in providing sweat equity and various other kinds of donations to the particular project.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: well, given that those foundations that he mentioned do not have local decision-making as a part of their process, can he ensure that an open and transparent process would be used to obtain direct input

on funds under a new CFEP program? Or will the decisions be made under the dome or with a bureaucrat?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. Minister of Finance would say: hello? Do you think that this government goes out and says to a community, "You need a playground," or "You need an ice rink," or "You need this," or "You need that"? No, we don't. You know, it comes from the community. These are community organizations that get together and say: "We need a community hall. We need an ice rink. We need a playground. How do we go about getting it?" Well, they check the various sources of information and they find that there's a program under CFEP. They find that there's a program here. They find that perhaps they can hold a bingo or have a casino. They find that they can get various members of the community together to provide sweat equity and maybe some materials and some talent. That's how the decisions are made. When it comes to government, we say: "Lookit, are all these things together? Is the community involved? Will there be private-sector dollars? Is there going to be a sharing?" On the basis of that, we make a decision as to whether they will get a grant under various lottery programs.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you. When these groups apply for these grants, Premier, who makes the decision? It is not a locally based decision. Who makes it?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, there is a criteria, and the criteria is really quite simple. The hon. member should know what the criteria is because her constituency is involved, as is every other constituency in this province. The criteria is that if there are matching dollars and the project is deemed to be of community benefit, then it usually is approved.

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

### **Seniors' Extended Health Benefits**

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Because many seniors by and large live on fixed incomes, except for those who continue to pursue employment, many seniors become concerned whenever the government makes changes to any programs for seniors. I have received many calls of concern from seniors in the past three weeks regarding the increase in health care premiums and the cancellation of the extended health benefit program. My question is to the minister of health. Why did the extended benefit program end?

MR. MAR: The extended health benefits program provided very limited coverage for eyeglasses and the costs of dental services and dentures to seniors regardless of their income level, and in developing our budget this year, we were always compelled to examine the effectiveness of each area of expenditure including extended health benefits. We determined that the funds, which were in the magnitude of \$25 million, that were in the program for EHB would be better used and more effectively used if given to regional health authorities to help them provide services within RHAs. But we did recognize, Mr. Speaker, that lower income seniors would continue to need assistance in the coverage of costs associated with dentures, dental care, and eyeglasses, so we did transfer \$9 million and three staff to the Ministry of Seniors to help them administer assistance for dental and optical costs for lower income seniors. Finally, I note that we've also adjusted the time line for the end of the program for

denture work that was started prior to the budget to the middle of April, as completing this work takes longer than the completion of other services covered by extended health benefits.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MS KRYCZKA: Yes, thank you. My first supplemental is to the Minister of Seniors. With that transference of dollars, what is the possibility of adequate replacement assistance to lower income seniors, in particular, with these optical and dental needs?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. WOLOSZYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've always been aware that dental and eye care is a serious wellness issue for seniors. Obviously, if you don't have good eyesight, you can end up getting injured. If you don't take good care of your teeth, you have other health problems. So we have been supplementing the extended health care program up to this point. As the minister of health indicated, it wasn't a very broad coverage, and it did receive an awful lot of support. We are currently working on a program that hopefully will adequately take care of the needs of seniors who are on the Alberta seniors' benefit program to ensure – and I stress to ensure – that their dental and eye care needs are met.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you. My second supplemental is back to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Can the minister explain why continued funding for chiropractic and podiatry services to Albertans is under consideration?

MR. MAR: Of course the government has accepted the 44 recommendations of the Mazankowski report, the report prepared by the Premier's Advisory Council on Health. One of the recommendations laid out in that report, Mr. Speaker, was to establish a permanent expert panel to review and make recommendations to government on what services and treatments should be publicly funded. I think it's worth noting that chiropractic and podiatry services are outside of the Canada Health Act but like many other health services are covered by the Alberta health care insurance plan.

At this time the Department of Health and Wellness is reviewing applications for positions on the expert panel referred to in the Premier's advisory council, and I hope to announce the composition of that panel soon. When it is composed, the panel will consider all health services currently covered under the Alberta health care insurance plan, and that will include chiropractic and podiatry.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne.

2:20

### **Electricity Deregulation**

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The economic losses suffered by Albertans due to electricity deregulation continue to climb. My first question is to the Premier. Does the government consider electricity a good or a service?

Thank you.

MR. KLEIN: We would consider it a good service.

MR. MacDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I would call it now, with deregulation, a good expensive service.

Again to the Premier: what is the government's policy on electricity exports to the United States?

MR. KLEIN: The policy is quite clear. It's being developed; in other words, the details are being ironed out. Fundamentally, the policy is that power can be exported to the United States providing all the regulatory requirements are met and providing the needs of this province are met. In other words, only surplus power can go for export, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MacDONALD: Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier: who is to pay for future expansion of our transmission system within Alberta?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, those who generate and sell the electricity would be responsible for the transmission of that electricity and the construction of the lines.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

### **Softwood Lumber Trade Dispute**

MR. VANDERBURG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first question is for the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations. Industry representatives from the forest industry in Whitecourt-St. Anne have been very involved, and after several months of negotiations talks to settle the softwood lumber dispute between Canada and the United States broke down. As a result, the U.S. Department of Commerce has made final determinations in its countervailing and antidumping investigations of softwood lumber. Can the minister tell the House what this means for Alberta's softwood exporters?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, we are extremely concerned about the rulings of the Department of Commerce in the United States regarding our Canadian lumber producers' exports. Their determination that there are subsidies involved in the production of our lumber and timber products in Alberta and across, of course, the whole country is a national issue.

I would however like to indicate in direct response to the member's question that at this particular point in time there will be no direct duties charged against the companies involved, albeit they do have to post bonds to indicate that if and when those duties click in, which now is scheduled to be, depending on the final determination, in mid-May, they can in fact pay the duties that will be charged.

I think the overall impact that this will have on the industry will of course be very negative. There's no doubt about that; there's no getting away from that. But the specific impact will depend upon markets within Canada at that particular point in time, the size of the potential final duties that will have to be paid, the number of housing starts that are taking place within this country, and what other markets there are for wood.

So we have here, Mr. Speaker, a very serious situation, one that the government takes very seriously and is doing further work on, but that's the situation as we see it right now.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. VANDERBURG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: can the minister tell the House and the industry players in this province what the province is doing to find a solution to this dispute?

MR. JONSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, we are continuing to work with

our own lawyers as well as with the Alberta industry to defend further against the U.S. industry's subsidy allegations. We are co-operating with the federal government and through the federal government and also directly with the other provinces in terms of continuing to work on this matter and continuing to work on an overall strategy. We are assisting the federal government in its World Trade Organization challenge, and we are also working with respect to the submissions and information that we provided to the North American Free Trade Agreement Panel in May.

MR. VANDERBURG: Well, I guess, Mr. Speaker, that doesn't quite answer the question. Specifically I'd like to know: what are the next steps? What can I go home this weekend and tell my industry players? What are we going to do next?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I do certainly appreciate the seriousness of the situation for the hon. member's constituency as it is a centre of lumber production. We are working with the industry. We will be following up on an industry meeting that, as I understand it, took place a few days ago where some 50 different companies or people involved in lumber production were involved. We will be taking the views from that particular meeting into our further discussions with the other provinces and the federal government. We will be looking at a further strategy in this regard. I have already mentioned that we will be pursuing our appeals to the World Trade Organization, et cetera – I won't go through the whole list again – because there are avenues of appeal beyond the determinations being made by the United States Department of Commerce, and of course we'll be making representation to the panel under the Department of Commerce process. We'll be making further submissions there before they make their final determination.

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

### **Rural Health Services**

DR. TAFT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government seems to be particularly tough on regional health authorities in rural Alberta. Several rural RHAs are facing bed closures, layoffs, or worse. To the Minister of Health and Wellness: why is the government cutting rural RHA budgets by only allowing 1 percent for inflation when inflation clearly is more than double that?

MR. MAR: Let me say first of all, Mr. Speaker, that health care is the top priority of this government. The 7 percent increase in the budget just recently tabled reflects that. I think, as I've said earlier in replying to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, that it is too early to talk about whether there will be bed closures or conversions in rural facilities throughout the province. Health authorities are working on their business plans. I expect those business plans to be in by the end of this month. I believe the 29th of April is the date that's been set. We will review those business plans. We will make sure that available facilities are being used appropriately in meeting the needs of communities.

Mr. Speaker, the overall message is this: health care is not simply about how much money you have but how you spend it. I have confidence in the regional health authorities throughout this province, both in urban and rural areas, to do the right things. Where there are underutilized facilities, then perhaps those facilities can be converted into long-term care.

The hon. Member for Redwater prepared a report, that is referred to as the Broda report. It has a number of important points and

recommendations that can be applied by regional health authorities for meeting the real needs of the people that they serve.

Mr. Speaker, we will move forward on the Mazankowski report and its recommendations. We can maintain the quality of health care in this province, improve the access, and we can do it in a way that will be sustainable for now and into the future.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

DR. TAFT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again addressing the issues of rural RHAs. Given that high ambulance costs, which are a fact of life in rural Alberta, contribute directly to RHA deficits, why hasn't the department made the commitment to rural Albertans to fully cover ambulance services?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, I am reminded by the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs that a good report is forthcoming. Right now ambulance services in this province vary dramatically. Some are very excellent. Some are less than average. The issue of ambulances and many other issues faced by rural health authorities speak to the need for collaboration and innovation in both the services that are provided and the delivery of those services.

MS CARLSON: Answer the question, Gary.

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member of course knows that I am answering the question. We are working with an important committee, that will be chaired by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, on collaboration and innovation so that the services that are required in regional health authorities in rural Alberta do meet the needs of people that live in those areas. We are focused on making sure that we make the best use of the facilities and the resources and the dollars and the people that provide important services to Albertans in health care.

2:30

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

DR. TAFT: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. How does the government expect rural RHAs to cover the higher costs of labour contracts that the government itself negotiated when its funding increases to them are so low?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, last year, in order to allow regional health authorities to cover the cost of increased contracts, the base budgets were added to, and the amount that was added was \$200 million on a onetime basis. That \$200 million has been annualized and is now part of the base budgets for regional health authorities, and that is what will cover the increased costs associated with those contracts.

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

### Natural Gas Venting

MR. MASON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. During the recent Legislature debate on Bill 203 government members engaged in a great deal of self-congratulation about the reductions that are being achieved in gas flaring in Alberta. But what these members may not be aware of is that while gas flaring is being reduced, the venting of gas, which is far more serious, is going up sharply. In fact, there has been a 50 percent increase in the venting of gas between 1999 and 2000 so that the increase in the volume of gas being vented more than fully offsets the reductions in gas flaring. To the Minister of Environment: how can the minister stand idly by

while the volume of gas being vented in this province is going up by 50 percent in a single year?

DR. TAYLOR: Well, in the first place, Mr. Speaker, we are not standing idly by, and I want to correct that assumption. We do have an ongoing working group that is working with the EUB and other stakeholders. In fact, it's being worked through the Clean Air Strategic Alliance group. That's a nongovernmental group that's made up of industry, that's made up of environmental groups, and it's made up of government representatives as well. There's an ongoing working group that is looking at and investigating this whole flaring/venting issue.

It is correct, Mr. Speaker, that a lot of work and a lot of reduction has been made in the flaring part of it. For instance, in 1997, I believe it was, the goal through the CASA, Clean Air Strategic Alliance, process was to reduce that amount of gas that was flared by 25 percent, but in fact by the end of 2001 that had been reduced by 50 percent. So what it clearly shows is that the Clean Air Strategic Alliance process works.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. MASON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister, then, tell the House what, besides studying the issue, they are actually doing to reduce the amount of venting taking place, which is a far more serious thing than the flaring of gas?

DR. TAYLOR: Well, I'm not sure that his assumption, again, is correct, that one is more serious than the other. We've had very good success in reducing flaring, and there's an ongoing working group with industry and CASA looking at ways of reducing venting as well. In fact, this government is spending in the neighbourhood of \$14 million looking at the effects of flaring and venting on animals and humans as we go forward. So this government has committed resources to this, and the CASA working group will continue to work on this process.

MR. MASON: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would be very interested in the minister answering the question and telling us what exactly is being done – actually being done – to reduce the amount of venting of natural gas. The minister also should be aware and I would like his comment on the fact that natural gas is a far more aggressive greenhouse gas than CO<sub>2</sub>.

DR. TAYLOR: Well, the member has pointed out something that is crucial: natural gas is a greenhouse gas, and we need to control it. But one of the difficulties, Mr. Speaker, with the federal government's approach to it in the Kyoto agreement is that Kyoto only looks at CO<sub>2</sub>. CO<sub>2</sub> is not a pollutant. So we need a broader mandate, and this has been the Alberta government's position on Kyoto. It needs to have a much broader mandate and needs to be technologically driven as we go forward. The venting issue will be dealt with in the same way the flaring issue was dealt with. It will be reduced, and it will be done through the use of technology.

### head: Recognitions

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

### Her Royal Highness Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother

MR. LUKASZUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to recognize the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. Yesterday the Queen Mother was honoured at Westminster Abbey, and many Albertans along with millions of people from

other Commonwealth countries joined the royal family in the loss of one of the bravest, strongest, and most dignified women of our time.

#### **Canadian Military Contributions**

MR. LUKASZUK: Mr. Speaker, as we join Britain in the mourning of our loss, let's also remember the loss of 3,600 Canadians at Vimy Ridge 85 years ago. On April 9, 1917, 10,000 Canadians were part of the British army that captured Vimy Ridge, a hill in the north of France, during a horrible snowstorm. The Canadian troops captured more land, guns, and prisoners than the British during their earlier attempts. Although Canada suffered great sacrifice, the battle at Vimy Ridge remains one of the proudest moments in Canada's military history. Canada's military contribution continues today as over 2,000 brave men and women join a coalition in Afghanistan to help a country torn by war to repair and rebuild itself. I would like to thank them and all the men and women that are in Afghanistan on our behalf and wish them a safe return.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **Grandparents' Rights**

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to recognize the work of the Canadian Grandparents' Rights Association, the Orphaned Grandparents Association, and Grandparents Unlimited. These organizations exist for the purpose of promoting, supporting, and assisting grandparents and their families in maintaining or re-establishing family ties and family stability where the family has been disrupted, especially those ties between grandparents and grandchildren.

On display in the Legislature rotunda on March 20, 2002, was their current project dubbed the Hearts and Hands quilt, also known as the Heartache and Tears quilt, consisting of some one hundred 14 by 14 blocks and growing. Squares with hearts represent children who are denied access to their grandparents. Squares with hands represent grandchildren being raised by their grandparents. Attempts to rectify this sad situation have been made by different levels of government including the Alberta government, but the heartache continues, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **The Holocaust**

DR. PANNU: Mr. Speaker, during the Second World War a wave of mass murder swept across Europe. By the end of World War II the death toll had risen to approximately 6 million people, mostly Jews, which included 1.5 million children who perished at the hands of the Nazi murderers. When the war ended, those who survived were released from the concentration camps or came out of hiding. To survivors the Holocaust remains real and ever present. Their stories continue to be told. Year-round we try to teach and inform others about the horrors of the Holocaust. We confront the questions of what happened and how and why it did happen. We attempt to fight against ignorance with education and against disbelief with proof. One day a year we make a special effort to remember. The purpose of the Holocaust Remembrance Day is to ensure that the horrendous crimes against humanity committed during the Holocaust are never forgotten and its relevance for each new generation is understood. We stand in remembrance of the deceased and the survivors.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

2:40

#### **World Lebanese Cultural Union**

MR. BONNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last month I was honoured to attend the official opening of the office of the World Lebanese Cultural Union, Edmonton chapter. The Edmonton-Glengarry constituency is the home of many people of Lebanese descent, and we are delighted to learn that the Edmonton chapter of the World Lebanese Cultural Union chose to locate their office here. Congratulations are to be extended to President Samir Bleibel and Vice-President Samir Sleiman and to all members.

One of the objectives of the World Lebanese Cultural Union is to encourage sports, cultural and educational activities amongst their youth. There are a number of schools in Edmonton-Glengarry where students have the opportunity to study in Arabic as well as English. The community is in the process of having Arabic recognized by Alberta Education. Much work has already been done completing the translation of that curriculum into Arabic. Last fall at Killarney junior high school the Lebanese students and their families hosted a lunch featuring their ethnic food. The lunch was an outstanding success and gave students with different backgrounds an opportunity to learn and share in some very delicious culinary delights.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, let me once again congratulate the Edmonton chapter of the World Lebanese Cultural Union. I am certain that it will be an instrumental key in uniting the Lebanese community in Edmonton.

Thank you.

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

#### **Calgary Aquamums Synchronized Swimming Team**

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Three weeks ago I applauded in this Assembly the commitment of the Calgary Aquamums master synchronized swimmers and wished them well in the world aquatic championships in New Zealand, March 28 to April 4, 2002. Today, well, I'm back and I'm proud to recognize the terrific results of this Calgary contingent, who had the largest synchro group of 14 swimmers.

The team won gold in the 35- to 49-year-old category. The duet of Kelly Kryczka-Irwin and Carol Fitzsimmons won gold in the 40- to 49-year-old category. Carol Fitzsimmons won solo gold in the 40 to 49 age group. Kelly Kryczka-Irwin won solo tech gold in the 40 to 49 age group with Carol Fitzsimmons second and Raphaela Jablonca third. Michelle Paget won solo gold in the 30 to 39 age group and Robyn Kaser was second. Compared to an Olympic competition, I'm told, this championship was lots of fun, proving to these wonderful athletes that there is life after family. Arriving home last weekend, everyone is still pretty keen and looking at the Worlds in Rome in 2004. Well, why not, when the Swiss complimented Carol and Kelly with: "Why don't you guys come over," meaning compete, "in the Swiss open this summer with no age restrictions?"

Congratulations, athletes, on your success in New Zealand. And by the way, the family won't let them go.

Thank you.

#### **Bill Hunter**

MR. SNELGROVE: It's not your aptitude, it's your attitude that gives you your altitude in life. Those words were the guidelines for a truly great Canadian honoured here in Edmonton last night. Mr. Bill Hunter, Wild Bill, as he was rightfully known, is truly one of the most remarkable people that this community, both sport and

business, has ever known. Mr. Hunter has previously been awarded the Order of Canada and was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame. Mr. Hunter's loyalty and commitment to those he knew is legendary. I could not begin to cover all of Mr. Hunter's adventures in this short time. However, I cherish an autographed copy of his memoirs, and I recommend it to all. Mr. Hunter played a huge and colourful part in Canada's hockey history.

Mr. Speaker, there is probably no greater honour than to be honoured by your friends, as Mr. Hunter was last night. I would ask you and all hon. members to join me in recognizing a truly wonderful man, a great Albertan, a proud Edmontonian: Mr. Bill Hunter.

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

#### **Dr. Dwayne Elaschuk**

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to recognize the late Dr. Dwayne Elaschuk, a veterinarian and friend of the entire community of Camrose and beyond. Dr. Elaschuk was inducted into the county of Camrose's agricultural wall of honour on March 8 for his contributions to agriculture in the Camrose community. He was an avid supporter of agriculture and was actively involved with the Camrose Regional Exhibition and the Canadian Bull Congress. A scholarship fund to honour Dwayne's memory was established at this year's Canadian Bull Congress. Also, the Dr. Dwayne Elaschuk perpetual 4-H bison trophy has been created for the 4-H winner in the bison class at the annual Wild Rose Classic Bison Show and Sale. This year Dr. Dwayne Elaschuk was selected as the veterinarian of the year by the Western Canadian Association of Bovine Practitioners. Dwayne Elaschuk's commitment to excellence, which showed in all aspects of his work and life, and his legacy will live forever through those who had the privilege of knowing and working with him.

Thank you.

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

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition asking this Assembly "to urge the government of Alberta to not delist services, raise health care premiums, introduce user fees or further privatize health care." This petition is signed by 204 seniors and other residents of this great city.

Thank you.

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

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

#### **Bill 23**

#### **Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2002**

MR. VANDERBURG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour for me to request leave to introduce Bill 23, the Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2002.

The bill provides a standard of good faith for protection from liability for municipal officials, employees, and volunteers and municipal boxing and wrestling commissions. The bill also introduces changes that will enhance and improve the equalized assessment process and assessment audit system. Mr. Speaker, the bill is based on consultations with stakeholders and recommendations of the equalized assessment panel.

Thank you, sir.

[Motion carried; Bill 23 read a first time]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd move that Bill 23 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

#### **Bill Pr. 1**

#### **Synod of the Diocese of Edmonton Amendment Act, 2002**

MR. MASKELL: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce a bill being Bill Pr. 1, Synod of the Diocese of Edmonton Amendment Act, 2002.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 1 read a first time]

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

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

MR. HORNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have one tabling today. It's a letter from Mrs. Joan Trettler, chair of the board of trustees of the St. Albert Protestant school district. The letter expresses some concerns regarding the Education Services Settlement Act.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've two tablings today. The first is a letter from Marilyn Marks with the Alberta Grandparents' Association addressed to Minister Hancock in which she appeals to him to "help bring the focus of grandparent access forward, by strengthening the Access Law Legislation, so children won't continue to be used as pawns."

My second tabling is a letter directed to the Premier from Christine Cook, who is stating that it's "morally unacceptable to pull [the community lottery board] money out of the communities who create effective programs with it" and urging the government to "honour the promises" and reinstate the community lottery board with an increase.

Thank you.

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table appropriate copies of a letter written by Ms Sandra Tessman, manager of Diamond Spring Lodge and Golden Villa Apartments located in Redwater. This facility is managed by the Sturgeon Foundation management, which looks after seniors' supportive housing for moderate- to low-income seniors. The letter is calling on the Premier to reconsider his decision on the community lottery board funding and reinstate the funding programs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Highlands.

MR. MASON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today with your permission I would like to table five copies of 33 letters addressed to the Premier. The individuals signing these letters are joining the War Amps in their request for reinstating their access to the motor vehicle operators list.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Government Bills and Orders**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Consistent with the practice of the last few days with respect to the Committee of Supply I would seek unanimous consent of the Assembly to waive Standing Order 58(4) to allow this afternoon's consideration of the estimates of the Department of Children's Services to go beyond two hours with the vote on these estimates to take place no later than 5:15 this afternoon as per Standing Order 58(5) or sooner if no one wishes to speak.

[Unanimous consent granted]

2:50

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

THE DEPUTY CHAIR: We shall call the committee to order.

head: **Main Estimates 2002-03**

**Children's Services**

THE DEPUTY CHAIR: As per our Standing Order the first hour is allocated to the minister and members of the opposition, and thereafter any other member is able to raise questions.

The hon. minister.

MS EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Actually, I'd like to clarify. My intent is to speak for probably about 15 minutes. I would be pleased to entertain questions as our House procedures apply and will just try and make this a brief summary so that we can have some dialogue, hopefully meaningful to the House.

I would like to discuss the accomplishments of Children's Services in the past fiscal year and our budget for 2002-03 and our business plan for the coming year. The past fiscal year has been challenging for Children's Services. We persevered, made some hard decisions, and brought in a balanced budget.

I want to clarify some misconceptions about our fall cost-containment strategies. We did not cut our budget. In fact, at the end of the year it remained at \$648 million throughout 2001-02 with the exception of the 1 percent reduction mandated across government. Now, the 1 percent reduction mandated would have reduced that \$648 million, but during the latter part of the fourth quarter, we added moneys from the federal government for aboriginal children's services as well as some allocation to help offset the teachers' strike, et cetera. However, Mr. Chairman, there was an adjustment, in fact, in our service delivery to offset any expected deficit so that we would come in on target, and that projected overspending totaled \$32 million in child and family services authorities across Alberta.

So, in fact, we did achieve our fiscal accountability, and many of the programs that were thus reduced were programs that we believe could be delivered in a different fashion. At all times during cost containment we kept the impact on children and families foremost in our minds. So the program changes were made as far as possible from the child at risk and truly at high risk.

In the last fiscal year we named 16 Great Kids from across Alberta who were honoured for their outstanding achievements. We heard from 700 children and youth who shared their dreams about Alberta's future as part of the Future Summit, and the ministry received and implemented all recommendations that were made after the tragic deaths of twin babies.

Headed up by the MLA for Calgary-Buffalo, we started a comprehensive review of Alberta's child welfare legislation that will lead to further improvements in our welfare system. This hasn't been done for over 17 years. The review team has already crossed the province hearing from many stakeholders and the public about what is working well and what solutions, in fact, could be available for issues that currently surround child welfare.

The second Children's Forum drew a thousand Albertans together last fall and heard again from a cross section of people about ways to improve services for children, youth, and families. These ideas are being implemented into our business planning process. Thanks to the work of the MLA for Red Deer-North we are also addressing the needs of youth who require ongoing supports as they go into adulthood. I am most proud, Mr. Chairman, of the work of that particular member, who has gathered together a group of vibrant young people who delight, in fact, in their regular meetings with the hon. member and provide us some policy advice on everything from mentoring to transition from youth to adulthood. I'm pleased to be a partner with her in trying to effect the most positive policies.

Mr. Chairman, children are a priority for this government, and this year's budget will in fact indicate that. As we heard in the budget announced by the Finance minister on March 19, the Children's Services' budget for this fiscal year is \$675 million, a 4.2 percent increase from the budget last year of \$648 million. With the additional \$27 million this year Children's Services will be making further investment in Alberta children and families. Regional child and family services authorities will receive \$517 million, an increase of \$6 million, or 1 percent, over the last year. But not all authorities will receive funding increases in the next year. Based on last year's experience, we have reallocated funding to address issues in some regions where more services are necessary and some cases require extra resources.

Mr. Chairman, an example I should point out right now is present on the consolidated financial sheet, which might show that, in fact, it appears that we have reduced the funding for women's shelters and shelter support in the province. This is not the case. There are reallocations within this budget. In fact, in that particular area, if you took a look at the functional delivery costs, there will be \$14 million delivered for shelter support and support within communities of women who have suffered in violent situations along with their children who need supports. Child welfare will receive a \$23 million increase, children with disabilities a \$7 million increase, a 36 percent increase in family and community support services for local prevention programs.

Mr. Chairman, I truly wish that the people in this House were listening to me, because I'm going to provide something that would be in part a response to what has been said for the last several days about community lottery boards. We have increased to full funding the amount of dollars that are coming to family and community support services. Many of those 15 million additional dollars will serve to fund programs, especially those in early intervention and prevention that may have been funded previously by lottery dollars. So while there's been a lot of crying about lottery boards, we're doing something about it, and people have completely ignored that amount of money in this year's budget.

The \$15 million, I believe, added with the dollars that are complementary amounts from local jurisdictions, will see that local authorities are better able at the municipal level to look at issues that surround the family. We have targeted to have approximately 2,402 full-time equivalents in our budget compared to 2,588 in 2001-02. I must stress that this reduction of 186 full-time equivalents will come largely through attrition, and there will be no reduction in social workers or frontline staff anticipated in this coming year.

We will spend \$14 million on family violence, as I have reiterated, and we've added a new line to the budget: governance for child and family services authorities. Two million dollars will be spent on CFSA governance this year. Previously these dollars were in the category of program support, and they have now been isolated for improved disclosure of our costs. Community capacity building has been added under family and community support, and we have recategorized it and taken it out of the support area. Community capacity building adds to our integration pillar and puts money into partnerships with community stakeholders. There is a \$2 million reduction in the ministry's support services budget. So with these reallocations there are additional dollars supporting communities and supporting frontline workers.

3:00

The lower spending on ministry support services will predominantly come through reductions in technology projects. The change is part of our aim to refocus corporate activities on those that directly support the regional delivery model and eliminate duplication.

Because of the way the estimates are presented, what the numbers may not clearly show is that for the coming year we've moved a number of programs that were previously retained in the department's budget to the child and family services authorities. These include fetal alcohol syndrome, child financial support, mentoring for parents and home visitation, and early childhood development. In that case, we've moved \$11 million to the regions, retaining \$10 million in the department. Mr. Chairman, we will ensure that the dollars that are moving to the authorities will be wisely spent through our monitoring and our mentoring processes.

While the 2002-2003 budget for Children's Services has increased by 4.2 percent, the ministry must be more efficient than ever with its dollars because of the current challenging economic climate. We've received significant budgetary increases through the years, but we're continually challenged to ensure that the at-risk child receives protection services within the funding we receive.

In the next fiscal year we will continue focusing on protective services, on frontline services, and a key, Mr. Chairman, will be our Alberta response model, an initiative that looks to the future, helping at-risk families but ensuring as much as possible that children reside in permanent, nurturing homes. We will be working on family preservation, family reunification, and where children are most at risk, working hard to make sure that there are permanency plans for those children.

Through the Alberta response model we will utilize community-based resources. We will in fact use these resources through FCSS and also through a number of local providers. With a renewed emphasis on adoptions we hope through this model to increase the number of children who are placed in permanent, nurturing homes. Cases where the risk to children is higher would be investigated under the existing strict investigative process. Implementing a model that will require the participation and efforts of many people, we expect to have strong staff training programs this year for all of the staff in the 18 child and family services authorities. With guidance and dedication these boards, I know, will govern and work hard to make sure that the implementation plan is smooth.

Through our other initiatives in the Child Welfare Act we will engage in significant dialogue with our authorities and with Albertans. A recommendations document regarding the review of the act will be circulated to stakeholders later this year. New child welfare legislation will be drafted in the last six months of this year and, I expect, will be very positively received because of the amount of consultation.

Mr. Chairman, the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw has done a

yeoman's job in following in your footsteps to make sure that the social care facilities in Alberta are reviewed and judged in concert with our partners. I'm very pleased with the activity of the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw, who has continued to keep us well informed, to keep the ministry informed, and closed the loop on some of the investigations so that in fact we may be able to see improvements in those facilities. She is also working with the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark to determine whether or not in the partnership of reviewing health care facilities our government can make improvements in our efficiencies.

Mr. Chairman, our new youth in transition policy framework, again under the MLA for Red Deer-North, will guide our cross-ministry program, developing policies and programs for youth progressing to adulthood. Mentorship and other ways to ensure that youth will continue to receive the support services they require will be part of the program this year.

Children's Services will develop a message that will ensure that only safe levels of alcohol use come when people are not pregnant. Our message is strongly that prenatal alcohol use is not safe. It is best to use no alcohol at all. That message will be carried not only to pregnant moms but, because of the new research, to those that would be fathers of children and make sure that young men and adults of all ages understand how critical the use of alcohol is and that it should not be used during times of gestation. We will continue to spread that message.

Our business plan has had some fine-tuning since we first established the ministry in 1999. Our vision is that Alberta in the future will be "an Alberta where children and youth are valued, nurtured and loved, and develop to their potential." We believe that Alberta should be child friendly for families, children, and youth, and we believe, Mr. Chairman, that everybody in Alberta deserves to live in a situation where there is no violence, where there is no abuse. This year I personally accept a challenge with other partners to reduce the amount of violence and to work with other ministries to really focus on the detrimental circumstances that Albertans find themselves in when family violence impacts our communities.

There are five goals, eight strategies, and 13 performance measures for this year. Our goals:

- Children and youth will have a healthy start in life and the supports they need to reach their potential . . .
- Families will be safe, healthy, and able to promote children's development.
- Children in need will be protected and supported by permanent, nurturing relationships . . .
- The well-being and self-reliance of Aboriginal children, families, and communities will be promoted, supported and comparable to that of other Albertans.
- Communities will have the capacity to plan and deliver services that promote the well-being of Alberta's children, youth, and families.

As we promote the well-being of Albertans, our core business and key program areas do include the how-tos of this ministry: early intervention programs, early childhood development, child care programming, and resources for children with disabilities. As we work to keep children, youth, and families safe and protected, we will also work very hard and strive with all of our energies on the Alberta response model to transform child welfare, to protect families, to protect children involved in prostitution, and to promote healthy communities.

Mr. Chairman, the future is bright for Children's Services. Our budget has increased by \$27 million. We will be working closely with our partners to improve services. We will implement early childhood development and early intervention programs and strengthen child care programs, and we will continue to transform

child welfare and improve the outcomes for children. We will promote the abilities of families to provide safe and nurturing environments for children, and we will advance the well-being and safe reliance of aboriginal communities.

I'm looking forward to the coming year, and I'm delighted at the mirth and enthusiasm of the members of the House as they joyously applaud the work that I will do this year and that they will do on our behalf. [some applause]

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It should be noted that the applause came from the government benches. I just want that on the record.

I'm delighted to have the opportunity to ask some questions of the Minister of Children's Services. To start off with, three initial questions. First of all, to thank the minister for the consultation she engaged in in terms of the Alberta response model. I brought back the two videotapes that she shared with me and the documents outlining the basis, as I understand it, for the Alberta response model, which are the projects in San Diego and the Toronto drug court. So I thank her for that information, and I'll return those tapes.

3:10

I think there's need for clarification in terms of the department's financial situation. There seem to be two messages that are out there. One is that the cuts, no matter what they are, do not affect frontline service, and if that is the case, then the question that I've had asked of me is: was the department so bloated that it could take a 1 percent cut and then a reduction of 186 people in this year's budget? I think there needs to be some clarification, and I'm not sure that even the language is helping by using words like "cost containment." I'm not sure it's quite clear to people exactly what's happening, so I would appreciate sort of a global statement from the minister in terms of the department's finances. How can the cuts continually take place—I know there's been money put back in—but not affect frontline services to children?

A second really general query is for information about the Alberta response model. I don't pretend to know about the San Diego model or the Toronto model other than what I've read and seen on the video, Mr. Chairman, but it seems to me that one of the characteristics of those models was that it wasn't top down, that it was bottom up, all the agencies being involved in developing the model and bringing it forward as the model that would be used. There are all kinds of questions about the Alberta response model that are raised in the estimates. It's mentioned a number of times, and the minister mentioned it in her remarks, but what exactly is the Alberta response model? How does it differ or does it differ from the San Diego model and Judge Milliken's court? Does it differ from the Toronto model? What are the departments and what are the other agencies that are going to be expected to take part in the Alberta response model? Where in the budget will the responsibility for the model lie? Is it with the department, or is it with the regions? I think we need to have that clarified, because it's not clear where that model is going to be driven from. And what are the implications for the regions, particularly some of the regions that are taking reductions in their budgets this year? Again, I would appreciate and I think Albertans would appreciate knowing exactly what the Alberta response model entails, how the agencies are going to be involved, how it's going to be financed, and where authority for the model will reside. So that's sort of the second general area that I think would be useful to have the minister make comments on.

The third area is early childhood development, and this, I guess, arises out of some specific concerns, and that's in terms of day care and day care workers and what's happening to the preparation of day care workers and to the personnel working in day care centres across the province. There are a number of people who have characterized early child development with respect to day cares in the province as being in crisis. Students are leaving the programs in the colleges. It's hard to attract new students. Workers in the field are being paid minimum wages, and it's very, very hard to convince someone that they should go and take a two-year program to send them out to work in a day care where they end up having to work two jobs just to pay the rent and the food bills. It's an important question and one that I would appreciate the minister's thoughts on.

So in those three general areas, Mr. Chairman, I would appreciate some comment from the minister.

We then have, of course, some specific questions. I guess one is the budget itself and the business plan and where exactly we're eventually going to end up in terms of performance measures and the objectives that we find in the plan. In previous budgets there was a great deal made of the four pillars, and it seems to me that in the past year those pillars, at least a couple of them, have been greatly weakened. I've listened to a number of community groups who feel that early prevention and intervention have really suffered in terms of what's been done to those programs, and I've heard from the aboriginal community that the hope to improve services to aboriginal children and their families has also been badly hurt. In fact, I had one individual call and say: you know, really there has been no work in these two areas, and they have been severely curtailed and hurt by the actions of the department in the last year. So what is the importance of those four pillars? Are they really the four pillars that support the department, or have they been changed? Has the government, as it seems at times, really retreated into intervention, where there has to be police intervention before the department feels any responsibility for being involved? So, again, a question about the business plan. I know it's hard to come up with performance measures, but it's equally hard for people to judge the budget when they constantly change. Is the implementation of the Alberta response model going to mean that next year we're faced with another set of performance measures in the budget?

I'd like to start asking a few specific questions of the minister, and they're those that are concerned with the Children's Advocate. Funding to the Children's Advocate will decrease by 15 percent in the 2002-2003 budget. That budget goes from \$2,122,000 to \$1,800,000. I guess the question is: why? It's a department that puts out an annual report that I'm sure causes the minister some great unease, and I would hope that the valuable service provided by the Children's Advocate is not going to be undercut because of that. I think that if we are really and truly interested in serving the children of the province, it has to be an independent advocate and one who is free to speak and to reiterate the kinds of things that he or she hears, an advocate that can speak and be the voice of the children in the system who are not being served well.

It seems that there's been the review, and the advocate is in limbo or worse. Again, I would ask: has the minister considered making the advocate an officer who reports to the Legislature, much as the Ethics Commissioner and the Chief Electoral Officer do? Ultimately, that independence from the department seems to be the only way we can really ensure that the office is going to be independent. Is the minister not concerned that a budget reduction such as the one that we have in front of us for the Children's Advocate is going to have a chilling effect on the advocate and cause the advocate to question even more closely the things that he reports on because of the notion that you must not bring forward things that might

embarrass the government? I hope that's not the case, Mr. Chairman.

3:20

It seems really a curious juxtaposition of budget items. There's this cut of 15 percent to the Children's Advocate, and then there's an increase for accountability and provincial standards of 48 percent. So how do you account for those two amounts and the spending that has been allocated to those two items? These questions arise under program 1, Mr. Chairman, of the ministry support services.

A general question before I leave that: is the increase in the overall budget going to keep pace with the expected increases in child welfare caseloads this year? Is there some evidence we can have? On what basis were budget decisions made so that we can be assured that they will actually keep pace with increases in the child welfare caseload?

Going back again under program 2.1.2, Alberta response model implementation, and some specifics to that. How many full-time equivalents are going to be required to implement the model? In terms of the implementation, is there any assurance that it's going to be more successful than the Health and Learning initiative, where there is still great difficulty having both departments come together and work in the interests of children? There's been a lot of money spent on planning, but the actual impact on children's lives I think has been fairly minimal at this point.

With the ministry's overall reduction of the 186 full-time equivalents, where are the people that are going to implement the Alberta response model? Where are they going to come from? What about the children's authorities? Is there money in that model, or are they going to have to redeploy resources? What exactly is the impact on the children's authorities, and what are the other departments that are expected? Where is Justice in this model? Are there moneys budgeted in other departments, for instance in the Justice department, to help implement the model? What about in Human Resources and Employment? Are there moneys in that department to implement the model? I guess the basic question is: is there a cost sharing that's being undertaken?

I didn't see it in the materials that the minister shared with me, but one of the comments I did read was that the model used in San Diego needed more money for resources, that it was more costly to run the model than it was to stay with the former practices. Now, I think that there were savings claimed in terms of the amount of time that families stay in the system, but as I read the report, it seemed to me that the implication was that there had to be very generous resource allocations put in place by a number of departments and agencies to make sure that those programs worked. If there is information on the implementation of those programs recognizing the differences between Canada and the United States, I'd be interested in seeing that.

I guess there are questions about the Child Welfare Act review and the \$350,000. Why is that kind of money being spent when we're having changes introduced in the Legislature before the review, the consultations are over? We've had bills come to the Legislature that one might have thought would have awaited the report and the recommendations of the review. A further question: when can we expect the recommendations of the review to be made public?

I think that for the first round those are some of the questions that I'd be interested in hearing a response to from the minister. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

THE DEPUTY CHAIR: The hon. minister.

MS EVANS: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Let me give a

few remarks and try and capture some of the issues that have been raised.

In the very first instance let me talk about the ARM, or the Alberta response model, because I think it's something that I should clarify for the House and see if I can do it thoroughly enough so that it'll address a number of the issues that the hon. member opposite raised both at the beginning of his remarks and later in his remarks. The Alberta response model is in some communities defined, for example in Texas, as a flexible model, which means that there's not simply one way to address all of the intakes of child welfare and that every child is being dealt with flexibly in a different fashion. In Missouri it's called a dual response model. In California it's called a differential model. What it really means is an attempt by the intake worker to identify what the risk is, the risk assessment for each individual child that's coming into the system. So if there is low risk, if in fact they deem that the child, number one and the most paramount thing, is safe in their current environment, then supports are provided to the family – parent supports, parent training, children's supports – through the school, through the kind of community network that we hope to build capacity within communities.

That's why one of our pillars is community based. That's part of our CFSA, our child and family services authority, accountability: community based. So we build the capacity in communities, something we've been doing since May '99, when this ministry came in, and something that the family and community support services will continue to do this year with the dollars that are there for early intervention: the home visitation, the early intervention that will occur even before children might come to risk, the kinds of identification of hazards or barriers to the safety of the child to the capacity of the family to do things in the right way. Many of the dollars spent on early child development will be part of building family capacity to cope so that in the very first instance, when somebody reports that an investigation should be undertaken on behalf of a child, we hope that most would be found to be low risk that we could easily accommodate.

The Alberta response model will look at the moderate risk, where social workers, trained psychologists, and other professionals would have required visits in the home, again working at keeping and nurturing a family to be better suited to accommodate parenting needs, looking after them, and providing supervision and monitoring, working in family case conferencing to add additional support so that the child would not be removed from the home. It would be much like we've done where we remove the perpetrator of violence under a different piece of legislation, to try and remove the hazards under one piece of legislation dealing with family violence. Here we would be trying to add to support children who are at moderate risk where we believe that they were safe in their homes but where home services to support that home, to support parents would be necessary. It would be a very schooled, disciplined approach of working with that family within the home. High risk children where the child's protection is so paramount would be removed from the home at the outset and protection services provided, we hope, with a concurrent plan or a plan that will help work with that child and also work with that family.

3:30

Something that has been drawn to my attention several times this year is that often if we remove a child, we simply warehouse a child for the family's convenience without working on that child's family environment to see if we can save that child's family home. For example, in the Toronto model in the drug courts of Toronto they work actively on both the family as well as the person that has been abusing themselves with drugs. Well, we would like to work on

protecting the child, give them nurturing but also work on the family home so that they just didn't simply continue perhaps to abuse drugs or to abuse themselves in other ways with alcohol and then come back to court in six months and we continue to keep a child in family protection and in foster care or in group residential homes.

Mr. Chairman, one of the parts of the Alberta response model that's most exciting is that we will review many of the cases we've got. Last year we had over 15,000 cases, about half of which were in homes other than their family home. This year we have about 14,300 cases, I believe, as we speak, and we will look at what the options are for children that are currently in care. So there'll be sort of a dual focus: trying to focus on those that we're taking into care if they need to come into care and focus on the ones that are already in care.

I am not suggesting for a minute that we're going to adopt all of the other models we've seen across America or in other provinces, but one thing that intrigues me is that in America all of the states function with a requirement for family reunification within a shorter period of time. I don't want to fast-track and put children at risk for a fast track, but in the United States a reunification is at a one-year level. They say: insist on one-year reunification. I think it behooves us not to reject that out of hand but look at whether or not the planning for the child in the longer term improves if we try to improve those families and get the children back in those homes if they should be back in those homes. If not, we work on finding a permanent place for that child, kinship care perhaps, but a permanent loving home. Every child deserves one adult that loves them and cares for them and is their advocate at all times, Mr. Chairman.

That's why we have some optimism that the ARM model in various forms across North America is currently showing better results. We protect children well. When I see at the end of the day that less than 15 percent, in some areas less than 10 percent, even graduate from school or graduate from another postsecondary institution and yet they've been in our care for sometimes 10 and 12 years, then like the young child in a safe house who had been prostituting herself for years said to me: you have to work harder; you should have been stronger and more tough on my mom so she didn't get away with bad behaviour for a long period of time.

The Alberta response model will in part save families, Mr. Chairman, and that's a good part of what we'll do. We will provide for the hon. members opposite more information on the ARM model because we believe and are very optimistic that we will see improvements in the child welfare delivery system through training our workers and through what's happening already in this capital region as I speak with region 10 and the Ma'Mōwe child and family service authorities. They are embracing the opportunity to look at different ways to deliver child welfare.

Mr. Chairman, I was asked about the 186 workers. Were we bloated? No, we weren't, but we had some cases where we could become much more efficient. Even prior to the end of this past year at about the 1st of March I understand that there were positions that were unfilled, it's true, that we may still choose to fill now that the freeze is off, but we're going to analyze very closely where the workers need to be on the front lines, and I will try and provide a more detailed evaluation of it. In some parts of the city of Edmonton, for example, there were certainly a larger number of workers than there were, for example, in the way that child and family services were delivered in Calgary. So through management of the various contracts – and as the hon. member opposite knows, agency supports have a huge amount to do with how child welfare is administered. So I'll try and provide quite specifically for the Ma'Mōwe child and family services how we are trying to organize ourselves to do better.

In terms of the day care supports in this budget there are supports. Some of these supports, if you stay tuned, will come through in our policies that will be delivered later. We're looking right now not only at the KPMG report that has been raised in this House for not only day care but family day homes, but we're looking at other programs to do in co-operation with universities and with other nonprofit agencies and with other agency supports for training, nutritional supports, for additional supports for day care. Ultimately, Mr. Chairman, I hope to look at accreditation as a model to respond to some of the concerns that people raised with me relative to day care.

I want to talk a bit about the four pillars. I think that this is essential. We have not weakened the four pillars. If anything this year we have devoted more to First Nations' aboriginal child and family services, and I'm loath to understand quite specifically what might be the problem. We've worked to strengthen them where necessary. We've resumed what had been delegated authority in at least one case. But if you really take a look at the four pillars – community-based, early intervention, improving aboriginal services, and integrated services – they focus a lot on how we do things. We think that a lot of how we do things is coming along pretty well, but what we do in the management of Children's Services – the crisis protection, the family reunification, or the maintenance of family services, the permanency planning – is part of the focus of what we're undertaking in this business plan, and that's why the objectives may appear to be altered slightly.

On the matter of the advocate we see a realignment of advocate staff. We have already asked the question of the hon. Minister of Infrastructure about collaborating on moving out of two facilities here in the city of Edmonton, moving staff out of Hilltop, relocating into the one facility in Peace Hills Trust Tower, and looking throughout Alberta in co-operation with advocate staff at other ways to work on tutoring people for natural advocacy and changing the advocate's role somewhat to provide more frequent reporting, more frequent dialogue with the directors at the local level, to tutoring advocacy for families and community services, and to increasing the work with the children and the families in various communities, targeting where we really have caseload needs. But we do not necessarily anticipate that the caseloads will increase if the Alberta response model works well, even if we have an increased child and family population in Alberta.

Mr. Chairman, I'll just talk a bit about the dollars for the act review. That accommodates staff. In this past year we've had some 30 staff from across Alberta and child care providers from agencies that have sometimes donated their services, but somehow right now as we wrap up and use our staff and Justice staff and other people together, we just wanted to anticipate that we had sufficient dollars to follow through and do that as well as possible. But we have had changes coming prior to the tabling of the new act because we believed that they were vital. I'm going to be talking with the hon. members opposite about another change that has to be made where we see some sense of urgency in the need to do that.

3:40

In support for the AR model those dollars are built into the authorities in their training dollars as well as built into the department. We have at least \$2 million in the department to accommodate that, and under our assistant deputy minister I know we'll do it.

Mr. Chair, I'm fascinated by the level of understanding that my colleagues in the House have and the three or four other members that have joined us this afternoon.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I thank the minister for those responses. Just a couple of questions that arose out of her comments. There has been a reduction in caseloads from 15,000 to 14,300, and I wonder if the minister could share with us what accounts for that reduction in caseloads given the material that's out about the increase in poverty and the other kinds of social indicators that would lead one to expect that the caseloads might be rising.

[Mr. Tannas in the chair]

I'm still not clear on the Children's Advocate. If I understand what was being said, there's going to be more frequent reporting; there's going to be targeting of youngsters and resources put in to try to solve the problems. If that's the case, then why are there reductions? Why would that not cost more? Or are those reductions just entirely wrapped up in physical facilities and savings on rents and leases? It doesn't seem to quite fit. Again, I would be interested in the minister's response to making the Children's Advocate independent and reporting directly to the Legislature, giving the assurance, then, that the advocate is truly free to represent the interests of young people in the province.

Those are the general ones that came out of the minister's response. Another specific one though – and I must be a little slow, even slower than usual this afternoon, Mr. Chairman, but I can't quite understand how the ARM program is now going to be implemented in children's authorities when you look through and a number of those authorities have had reductions in their budgets. It seems that they are going to be asked to do more to take on an innovative project, yet they are going to be given fewer resources to do that. It's also interesting that some of the authorities that are receiving less money are ones that were in financial difficulty at the end of last year.

So I think there has to be some sort of public reconciliation in terms of how we are going to be able to do more and spend less. I think it has to be addressed, particularly when, as the minister has said, the benefits from implementing the ARM program are not going to be immediate; they're going to take some time before we actually see that happen.

And again the question about the other departments being involved, Justice: are there dollars salted away in the budgets of those departments to help with the ARM project? Does that account for being able to spend less in Children's Services, because the slack is being taken up in one of the other departments? I would appreciate some comment on that.

The minister indicated that caseloads were being reduced, and I guess I've already asked the question. I'd be interested in what accounts for that reduction.

I'd like to ask a question under 3.0.2, the financial assistance to communities and organizations. Why has there been a 100 percent increase in funding from lotteries to line 3.0.2, financial assistance to communities and organizations, as this is where some of the money is coming from, and what additional projects or services are going to be provided by the extra \$25 million that have been allocated in lottery revenues?

I have a question under the key program area looking at children involved in prostitution. Why did the department cut its funding last year for the Crossroads program? Is Crossroads going to have the support that they need this year to deal with the initiative? It's a program that I know the government is proud of having instituted and has certainly said is a high priority, but the concern is: does Crossroads have the resources to do the job that's expected of them?

I have a question again about the AR model. Is it intended that there will be mandatory drug treatment for parents in at-risk families

who are known to have drug and alcohol problems? Is mandatory drug treatment going to be part of the program? Maybe the minister can expand on what is intended. Will the department enforce drug treatment on parents by permanently removing children from parents who don't comply?

I guess it's the punitive measures that we see in the San Diego and Toronto models. Are those same punishments going to be meted out on parents in Alberta? There was a bit of a dichotomy when you watched the videotapes on the San Diego and Toronto programs. In one program they were interviewing some of the mothers who said that previously they had been sent to jail and that's where they learned their bad behaviour. That's where they learned to do drugs and where to obtain them. Yet the other program uses two- or three-day jail sentences as one of the punishments for parents who don't comply. So it seems to be counterproductive to try to help them and then send them to the very place where they learned the behaviour that's getting them into trouble. I wonder how our ARM program, the Alberta Response Model, is going to address that problem.

The minister talked about the realignment of services, and this is under item 1.1.4. Are the services for children with disabilities going to mean a reduction in support or in some cases a complete termination of support for these children? Handicapped children's services has been drastically reduced in its support for children. Does this new strategy intend that responsibility is going to be downloaded to other agencies? Just exactly what is going to happen? As the minister knows, parents with children with disabilities are greatly alarmed and have held meetings in the province to express their concerns with the reduction. I hope, again, that realignment isn't a fancy word for reduction, that those services those youngsters need are actually going to be there, if not from Children's Services then from somewhere else, and that before any realignment is undertaken the services are in place so that those children do not suffer.

3:50

Last year there was a goal, 1.2, that said that the ministry was going to "provide a continuum of services to support and promote the well-being of children, youth and families." This goal is included in performance measure B, "Percentage of families accessing Handicapped Children's Services who report the services are having a positive impact on their family." This was a new measure, so baseline data were still being developed. So I'd like to know what happened to the measure. Why has it been dropped, and did the department actually develop data for the performance measure? If it did, what has happened to that, and why don't we see that here? It would seem to me that it's certainly an important measure in terms of the department's performance.

There's a question under 2.1.1. Performance measure C is: "Percentage of children reported to be at-risk who received supports through community resources and did not require child protection services." The target is: "Caseload growth contained, and reduced by 5%." It seems to me that there's again a contradiction. If the ministry is trying to reduce child welfare caseloads, then why hasn't there been an increase in the support to the early prevention and intervention programs? It goes back to the basic problem, and when the 1 percent cross-ministry reductions of last fall were put in place, there seemed to be a retreat by the department. We all have heard from a number of agencies in this local area who had their programs changed or cut by the ministry at that time. Again I think it's at the root of the feeling that the early intervention and prevention pillar of the ministry is being undermined and that there would be those in the department happy with that and with the notion that intervention and apprehension when children are at high or moderate risk is

where the department should put its resources rather than into prevention and intervention. So it's a question that I would be interested in the minister responding to.

Under program 3.2.3, where the intent is to develop a provincial strategy for involving the private sector in addressing the needs of children, youth, and families, I wonder if the minister can clarify the kinds of plans to involve the private sector in providing those services to children, youth, and families. When she comments on those plans, would she clarify what has happened to day care in the province and whether or not that involvement of the private sector has been beneficial? So what involvement now is anticipated, and how has the involvement of the private sector in day care affected the province's programs there?

I really did appreciate the minister sharing with me the San Diego and the Toronto models, but I wonder if there are models from any other jurisdictions that Alberta has looked at in terms of addressing the needs of children, youth, and families and the involvement of the private sector. Again I guess my question would be the motivation. Is this an attempt to save money? If it is, you know, will it improve services, and is there evidence elsewhere that would back that up? If there are examples that we could look at from elsewhere, we'd greatly appreciate that, Mr. Chairman.

So with those questions I'll wait for a response from the minister. Thank you.

MS EVANS: First of all, on the matter of the advocate some of the cost reduction would be implicit in a move or a consolidation here to one office, but there are other implicit reductions implied with the way we're going to do work. We've got a situation now where annual reports have been published, but rather than waiting for an entire year to have those reports, it was my belief that a frequent dialogue between the advocate and the director as well as back to the ministry, quite specifically to the minister, would ensure that on cases which have been identified as delicate or have any problems associated with them, we could grasp the situation immediately and ensure that resources are in place to work on those particular cases. A good part of the time this happens, but the Advocate has advised me that not always has it happened. So we're trying very hard to work through a new process – and it's not complete yet – of putting advocates in more close contact with directors at the local level.

A comment about a reduction of \$300,000. Here is no different than some of the things we're doing in the departmental budgets where the departmental staff have had to tighten their belts so that we don't impact the ones out in the field as much, so I've asked for the Acting Children's Advocate to come back with the impact. We're looking quite specifically at the Alberta Youth in Care Network to see if we can fund some of that from the local level, from the child and family services authority. I met with Youth in Care, for example, in Calgary, and I think the responsibility for some of those networks to share in local CFSA funding – that amount is about \$90,000. There may be other agency and local support for that funding, which would account for a portion of it. So we are working very hard to see if we can accommodate some realignments of funding for the advocate.

Will we have supports from Justice and other ministers on the AR model in the cross-ministry initiative? Absolutely. I can see a lot of support but more of a resource support. This year, for example, one of the things that will be very interesting to track will be the Zebra initiative that's opening this month here on the top of Pacific Plaza, which will put our police, our social workers, and other child care professionals in a training facility together, and hopefully with a one-process intake, talking about their issues. We can do things with that co-operation that will find some benefits not only to the AR

model but to the cost efficiencies of doing our program, again on the front lines, to make sure that there is an interaction. We're going to track that very closely, and I am pleased that our local authority here is very interested in it.

Why have the caseloads reduced right now was part of the question. I can't answer that in all situations. We had a situation where we had over 450 children that were over 18 years of age. So we have worked with other ministries to make sure that all of these children are being managed in some fashion in the appropriate place with the appropriate ministry, and a lot of what has been done has not necessarily implied that government is no longer looking after those children but that other responsibility centres, quite specifically Human Resources and Employment, are picking up responsibilities for children elsewhere.

PCHIP funding is as it was. Will Crossroads continue to be used? When we looked at Crossroads during that period of cost containment, there wasn't one in there that was of the age of a child, but we have absolutely guaranteed that if there are children that are prostitutes in these facilities, there will be a substitute facility found, and I can get more clarification from Calgary to see what is currently happening from Calgary Rocky View's perspective in the contract management of Crossroads. But there were far too many in Crossroads at one point that were really adults, and I know there were some young mothers as well that needed supports, and I'm assured that they will be finding substitute placements for them.

Essentially, although we've explored the mandatory drug treatment programs in Toronto, I would advise this Assembly that probably the models that our model most closely affiliates with are the differential response models in California, the flexible response model in Texas, and the Missouri model. I have just recently got information about those models that I will share with the hon. member.

4:00

I should point out that the services to children with disabilities did have increases this year. I mentioned in my speaking notes about a \$7 million increase, and I should mention further that on page 83 of the business plan it shows the program going from \$55 million last year to \$62 million in the budget this year. For people who have been concerned about Bill 9 and the change in the policy direction that we believe has to happen before we have people coming to the Child Welfare Appeal Panel, I commit to the hon. member that it is my intent that we put policy in place before we start managing to channel people off and say that they can't do anything to appeal. That's not the intent of this. We want to make sure that they have an opportunity for appeal. With that expert panel that is just getting its sea legs, there has been some work done by the experts, if you will, already on it. But the work we're doing on the IBI and the autism and some of these special needs for children with disabilities is something that I think you'll see some improvements and some clarification with before we start making changes. So that's going to be a work in progress this year, and I can assure this Assembly that we've no intent to take that family in need, that child with special, unique disabilities and not serve them as much.

We have some very happy situations that I will share; for example, one in Rosecrest, where we're seeking alternate ways to fund drug therapies and other resources for children. That is something where just recently we found a huge cost saving because of some other networks.

You've asked about the private sector. The private sector that I see working with this ministry this year will be supporting us in fetal alcohol syndrome supports. We've got huge interest in working with Children's Cottage and Kids Cottage here in finding respite for

children in care when the families need that support, and that's one of the ways we've planned to work with the private sector.

Further than that, we're looking at enhancing something we started in the business plan last year, and that is research capacity. I don't know how we'll fit in with this childhood cancer research that has been announced just in the last couple of days, but it's our intent to work towards some kind of capacity building in checking on things like better ways of doing things.

I recently advised some members of the House that currently, for example, for fetal alcohol syndrome they can take a baby's first bowel movement, the meconium that comes when the baby is first born, and analyze that tarry substance and find out what the mother has ingested for the 20 weeks previous, whether she's smoking or whether she has been drinking. Today they can go further than that. They can take a hair from a woman's head while she's pregnant and determine what she has been having for food for a longer period of her gestation.

Some of these kinds of cutting-edge research things will help us all in the practice of looking after people, mothers prenatally and so on. That's where I see the private sector getting involved and funding some exciting research opportunities.

You've asked on line 3.0.2 about financial assistance to communities and organizations. That increase to the FCSS funding model is for the prevention programs which will help us with the AR model, which will help us maintain low-risk families with community agencies. Today, as we speak, we have a prevention panel mirroring the FCSS groups through members of the public and child and family services authority members: quite specifically, counselors from Calgary and from down in Lethbridge, a former president of FCSS, as well as two members from our CFSAs from Lethbridge and from Diamond Willow. Those chairs are working on how we use these prevention moneys to build capacity in communities on the low-risk side. In total we've moved up from \$53 million to \$70 million for community capacity building, and I think that that's a step that hopefully is in the right direction.

On the day care I can only say to the hon. member opposite: please stay tuned. I know we've heard from almost a thousand people on day care, but I haven't got that through the process yet of our standing policy committee because the family day home part of the study was later, and we've done some checks and balances. But I'm confident that through our early child development funding there will be some opportunity to follow through.

I know that hasn't perhaps addressed all of them. There were two more issues. You asked about 2.1.1. This caseload reduction we believe will happen and is already showing opportunity as we work with families at the local level. You know, quite frankly, to the hon. member opposite, when you add somebody to our caseload rolls, it isn't necessarily a success story. It identifies a failure on several levels, not necessarily a government failure but a failure by the family and the community and the extended family to help. So I'm hoping that our caseloads can reduce, and that's perhaps modest, but I think we will at least achieve that this year.

Then on 1.1.4 I hope I've clarified that \$7 million that you identified from that line for the resources for children with disabilities and my intent not to pursue anything punitive on the policy side until we're absolutely sure that we've got a policy and that families are comfortable that we are not leaving them high and dry with their individual cases. I really don't want to see handicapped children or families go through any more temerity than they do with those issues.

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to speak to the main estimates on Children's Services as part of the Committee of Supply debate in the Legislature for the year 2002-2003. I at the very outset want to caution or alert the minister to the fact that I may be repeating some of the questions that have already been addressed. I was away for part of the time that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods was on his feet and asking questions. So in case some questions are simply repeated by me, feel free to draw my attention to it and say to look in the *Hansard* tomorrow, and I'll be happy to do that.

Mr. Chairman, looking at the Children's Services business plan here and some reference to the goals of the department and then the program delivery models, under program delivery of course the thing that comes to notice immediately is that programs will be delivered based on four basic pillars, as it's called: "prevention and early intervention, integration of services, community-based delivery of services," and the fourth one is "improved services to Aboriginal children." Quickly just to make some general observations starting with the very last of the four pillars, "improved services to Aboriginal children and families" is certainly one of the four pillars of program delivery, yet I notice that in the regional authorities' budgets the Metis settlements item suffers quite a dramatic reduction. The Assembly of First Nations is really way down. The Metis settlements are down by 15.09 percent; that's the reduction there. So I hope the minister will help me understand the relationship between the stated program delivery objectives and modes and these particular reductions that come to quick notice under the Metis settlements, quite a substantial reduction of a little over 15 percent.

4:10

In the case of the Assembly of First Nations, this really needs an explanation. Maybe there's different money coming from elsewhere. It's an 86.2 percent reduction according to my numbers here, unless I'm totally out to lunch here. Alternatively, there's a huge increase in the services on First Nations reserves. So some explanations on what this means. According to my calculations here, there's perhaps a fifty-fold increase on that item in the budget, for services on First Nations reserves, as I see it here in my papers.

One other number here that I'll just ask the minister to perhaps make a few comments on has to do with the Ma'Môwe Capital region. In this region we know that because of particular patterns of population and in-migration, the number of aboriginal families and children continues to increase quite rapidly and already has one of the largest numbers here. The budget is almost frozen at last year's level. There's a very, very minor increase, less than one-third of a percentage. Given the rate of inflation and the probable increase of the target population, this increase seems to in fact mean fewer dollars available, unless the minister can perhaps argue that in the cost-containment strategies that she has, some of these programs can be delivered more cheaply than has been the case in the last year, not in the long run but this year as compared to last year.

The other question that I have related to the three sort of main core business statements. The core businesses are first stated, of course, as "promoting the development and well being of children," and early childhood programs are one of the bullets under 1.1.1, "to better meet the developmental needs of children." When I look at that worthy goal and go down to early childhood spending in, first of all, the overall program expenditures, there is a reduction of close to 9 percent from last year to the current budget year for which we are debating the estimates. Then you look at the early intervention spending by regional authorities, and out of 18 children's services regional authorities, 15 show a decrease in budgetary allocation from last year to this year. The Ma'Môwe Capital region again is an

interesting case. The reduction is close to 14 percent, 13.89 percent to be precise, compared to last year. There are some others that of course have seen much more dramatic decreases. In Diamond Willow – I suppose this is the area north and east of Redwater and that region – the reduction is minus 46 percent, a 46.2 percent reduction from last year.

So, as I said, in terms of the general picture it's clear that 15 of the 18 regional authorities responsible for providing children's services have had their budgets reduced for this coming year, and some of the cases that I mentioned clearly suggest very dramatic reductions. The Metis settlements here, with respect to early intervention spending, will see their budgets reduced by 24.95 percent, which is close to a 25 percent reduction, in early childhood intervention. So my question is: how does this square with the first major goal, which I call the business goal, which is quite worthy? I'm sure the minister will take time to comment on that.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

Then under core business 2 on page 77 I notice that starting with 2.1.5, coming down to 2.1.7 and so on, there's a focus on addressing the challenge of family violence. Again, when you look at the program spending commitments made by the department, the prevention of family violence budget is reduced by 14.77 percent from the year 2001-2002 to 2002-2003, the current year of the estimates which we are debating right now. While a fairly high priority is given in the strategy to dealing with family violence as part of the goal of keeping children, youth, and families safe and protected, how is this reduction to be explained in terms of the quite clear statement made on page 77 that this is one of the key strategies that will be used to make children safe, make youth safe, and make families safe and remain protected?

So there's a mismatch here, as I see it, between the priorities given to certain goals and the associated fairly dramatic reduction in the dollar resources to address those very services. I do notice – I must be evenhanded here – that there is quite a bit of an increase in the family and community support services. Perhaps that is where the funds have been transferred to, but I need some explanation as to how those will be accessed and will still be available for addressing the prevention of family violence.

Similarly, the child care program reduction in the budget is quite dramatic: 10.9 percent in terms of my calculation. I just want to share with the minister what I heard firsthand from visiting some child care facilities in Grande Prairie just a few months ago when I was there. I was asked to meet with this group on their insistence; I didn't seek this out. They were bitterly complaining about the lack of resources and the low rates that they have to pay to their workers and the difficulty that they have in attracting and keeping committed and skilled child care workers in the day care area. So that reduction, again, doesn't seem to jibe with the business goal that we have under goal 2.

4:20

Under core business 3 – I'm moving quickly to that one – we have the key focus on aboriginal communities, on helping these communities “develop the governance, organizational, accountability, and service delivery capacity to promote the care of their children, youth, and families.” Again, I draw the attention of the minister, I guess, to the Metis settlements, you know, the budget reduction which was quite dramatic, and I want the minister to perhaps comment on, again, that reduction on the one hand and the key focus of core business 3 on generating those capacities and helping those communities to develop those capacities there.

Under core business 3 I want to quickly draw the minister's attention to 3.2.3, the private sector. There's a reference there to “develop a provincial strategy for promoting the involvement of the private sector in addressing the needs of children, youth and families.” I thought that there's already a fair bit of participation by the voluntary nonprofit private sector in this area. What exactly does the minister have to say about 3.2.3 that is new, that would be different, that would be in addition to or on top of what's already being done?

The overall reduction in early childhood intervention programs, Mr. Chairman, as I see it, is close to 18 percent, 17.56 percent. Close to one-fifth of the budget is reduced in this area. We see in the program delivery strategy early childhood intervention and prevention as two of the four pillars, yet we see a rolling back of the budgetary commitment to strengthen those two pillars, if what is said in the first part, where goals are stated and strategies are outlined, is to be taken seriously.

I think that maybe I will stop at this point and hopefully will get another opportunity later on to ask some more questions. Thank you.

MS EVANS: Mr. Chairman, would you care for me to respond?

THE DEPUTY CHAIR: Hon. minister, you are recognized.

MS EVANS: Thank you. With some of the issues that have been raised, there may be reference points in the previous notes. The one that I would draw your attention to would be, really, how we do things and what we do. How we do things seems to be identified with the four pillars when you talk prevention, early intervention, integration, and so on. It talks about a method of improving service. But what we do is protect children, emergency protection of children, taking them in in crisis, family preservation, reunification, and permanency planning. So I won't repeat that, but I will go through the notes and give you some of my comments on a couple of areas.

First of all, the Metis settlements had an increase this year over last year's forecast. On page 57 of the estimates it was \$3.89 million forecast for last year, and budgeted for this year is \$3.927 million. So perhaps if you'd just make note of that. That's on page 57 of the estimates.

In terms of First Nations I want to just talk a little bit about one particular issue. We have noted that the federal government has made available over a million dollars' worth of programs. If we work this year – there are still moneys in the departmental budget – with each one of those agencies out there, with the reserves, and with the Metis settlements for the grants that they are lawfully entitled to that are coming from the federal government, particularly First Nations people, we believe that we can work them through the grant forms and help them achieve those funds that they are entitled to from the federal government. We will not drop them. We are going to work very hard with each of the reserves to make sure that they move from some dependency on provincial funding to some of the dependency they rightfully should have on the federal funding. We know that and they know that, but they just haven't all made the conversion to it. But there's no reduction in the funding.

Where the four regional authorities did have some reduction this past year, some parts of reductions are a function of the funding model not being correct. Some had huge anticipated surpluses proportionate to the service they were providing. Some relate to the mobility of families. In some cases with aboriginal families it relates to the moves from reserves to the city of Edmonton, for example. So I can assure you, hon. member opposite, that there's no reduction in funding. It may be reallocated elsewhere. I do have

some sympathy with all hon. members opposite because for over 20 years I have reviewed budgets in government that seem to move things from one post to the other, so it sometimes becomes very difficult for everybody to follow. I can assure you that in the areas of all of those goals, as a general principle there are not reductions. There may be reallocations elsewhere.

Let me explain on the early intervention, for example. If you reference page 83 of the business plan, there's a budget of \$51 million, which is compared to the 2001-2002 forecast of \$36 million, on early intervention. So that amount of money combined with the \$15 million that we have allocated to family and community services – you noted that our community support has actually increased from a total of \$53 million through CFSAs and FCSS to \$70 million. We are working in partnership with the FCSS and CFSAs to develop community support to accomplish the early intervention. There are actually more dollars there that have come in large part from reallocations within the department and also the new money that we received. As you know, we received some additional dollars, \$27 million more this year.

So we've actually significantly increased and substantively made a commitment to prevention and early intervention. Part of the money, when you used to see it, \$21 million last year, was some \$11 million to the authorities and about \$10 million being retained in the department to be allocated to early intervention projects as the approvals come in various communities and as projects improve. Although it's taking a while to illustrate that it's out there, it's in those parts both on page 83 of the business plan and in the workings of FCSS building the community support. To the hon. member opposite, we can provide that detail later if that's not obvious.

Under family violence I want to assure you that when we first canvassed the authorities for supports to shelters, they did not account for all of the funding that comes through under early intervention. So although the line item in the budget talks about \$11,161,000, there's actually a total of \$14 million that's being spent directly on programs related to family violence for the shelter supports as well as for other child welfare programs.

When I visited shelters, some of the complaints were that they couldn't be sure that they were already accessing some of the agency supports that were in communities. The other thing that we're doing is we have been working with the association for shelters on a database program so that there's not all the fuss there used to be in collecting data about what happened to women coming to shelters. If I can just put it plainly, if a woman comes in with her two children but that leaves an extra bed in the room, then that bed can't really be occupied by somebody else, and we're looking at changing those formulas. That's working well, and another thing that's working really well right now is our work with the RCMP in trying to find better ways of working on family violence. So I assure the hon. member opposite that we are working on family violence.

4:30

Day cares I've mentioned previously, but stay tuned. There is work that will be culminating in some initiatives I hoped to bring before this House in the very first few weeks of this year. It's just taking a while to make sure it's all together. I have made some reference points in response to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods previously on some specific things that we're doing right away.

I hope I've addressed goal 3. You've got 3.2.3, the money there for the private-sector donations that hopefully will be coming into research, something that we talked about last year that we were exploring with Innovation and Science, something we continue to explore as we look at projects in Alberta hoping to prompt and

provoke other private-sector people to become involved, certainly with fetal alcohol syndrome. We have a working group now that's working private sector/public sector for supports and respite, and I know that's in previously. So goal 3 relates to increasing our research capacity and comments that I've previously made.

So on all areas that you've asked about, I think I can safely say that there are no reductions; there are reallocations through different line items in the budget. If you have further questions after you review the *Hansard*, I'll make sure that we sit together and review them so that, Edmonton-Strathcona, you have that information.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thanks very much. I appreciate the minister's activity and engagement in this debate this afternoon. There are just a couple of kind of sections that I want to concentrate on that the minister is aware are a keen interest for me, and they, of course, are around the violence initiatives and specifically shelters for abused women and sometimes their children.

I noticed in the minister's note that she was talking about \$14 million allocated to it. If I could just get a description of whether this is an increase? No, it can't be an increase.

MS EVANS: It is.

MS BLAKEMAN: Okay.

I'll just outline the questions for you. I think I also heard her say off-the-cuff in her remarks that there was \$5 million specific to the shelters. Can you detail for me what that's for: whether it's staff increases, are there strings attached to it, is it to deliver programs that they didn't have to deliver before, or is it just a straight cost-of-living increase in their expenses?

I guess part of that discussion is this kind of a two steps forward, one step back perception of the funding in this department over the last year or 18 months. The minister and I have had previous conversations about whether the women's shelters would be required to take the funding cut. She was adamant that they wouldn't be, but I had returned to her saying that in some cases it was being reported to me that they were being pressured to volunteer to take this. Again the minister is very quick to get on it and say, "No, that shouldn't be happening," and I appreciate her action on that. But if it did happen and if they did volunteer, then is this \$5 million, if that's the amount, bringing them back to where they were before, or is it genuinely an increase, or is it just restoring them to where they were?

I'm also wondering specifically what is the update on the – I worked on this forever; why can't I remember it? – Protection against Family Violence Act. Oh, there, I had it. I noticed that goal 2.1.5 is "increase stakeholder awareness" about the act and the "family violence prevention strategies." Now, I know that after the first year there was to be a sort of review and adjustment, and I've never really heard what happened there, and it's now under the minister's care. So I'm wondering if I can get an update on whether there have been any changes in implementation, lessons learned, where resources are allocated. Of course, I don't expect her to necessarily know that off the top of her head. I'm happy to take that in writing, as with any of the answers to any of the questions I'm giving her today.

There's also under 2.1.6: "Together with Health and Wellness and other partners, develop and implement treatment programs for children who witness family violence, victims of family violence, and perpetrators." So, again, I'm sure this is part of the \$14 million, but how is this program going to develop, who is going to deliver it, how many staff are assigned to it, what's the resource pot of money

they can pull from, what's the program expected to look like, how long is the time line for it, and what kind of evaluation process is in place for it?

Strategy 2.1.8 is sort of a very open-ended goal: "Work with Justice and other partners in the reform of family law." Now, I'm wondering if this is in anticipation of the review and changes in the family law statutes that we're expecting to be working on this spring and maybe into next fall, and particularly, then, I'm interested in what the department is bringing into the discussion.

I'm also aware that the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters did a survey and a response document around the federal initiative that was recommending changes that went forward to the Minister of Justice some time ago now, a year or more than a year ago. So there's a whole package of questions that I'd like to get answers for around the violence initiatives.

The next sort of cluster of questions I have – and it would almost be helpful to have a little diagram, the two steps forward, one step back, two steps forward diagram, to help understand where the money came in and went out to. I know that the minister spent a lot of time this afternoon explaining that, but if I might make a suggestion, that sort of thing might be a helpful promotional tool for her at this point. I did phone around to some people I know that work in this area over the last couple of days saying: you know that this budget debate is today and were there any last minute things they wanted me to bring up? And one woman just said, "This is such a bad day, Laurie." She said: "I honestly don't understand what's going on here. I don't see where the money is going. They say that there's an increase; I can't find anybody with an increase. Where did the money go?" And I couldn't answer that question for her.

Now, I know the minister has been trying to do that in a sort of piecemeal way here, but even just listening to the comments, I'm trying to add and subtract here. Essentially in 2001-2002 we had a \$648 million budget. Then there was a 1 percent cut of \$6 million to offset the deficit that could have been coming, which brings us to \$642 million. Well, then when the minister starts talking about the budget being increased this year to \$675 million and that being a 4.2 percent increase, I go: no, not from \$642 million. No, no. I finally figure out that it's a 4.2 percent increase from the original budgeted amount, and this is where people start to get confused, because they're just going: "Look; this is how much money I have this year; I know that. How much money do I have next year?"

What was the original budget just doesn't connect to them anymore, and to be truthful, a couple of years down the road that budget amount will not even appear in any of these documents because we start showing actuals once we have them. So that's a bit confusing for even laypeople like me that are trying to work our way through this and, I'm sure, frustrating for people in the business.

4:40

Then I'm looking farther down, and it talks about regional authorities getting \$517 million. I'm not sure if these are my notes, but it says: increase of 1 percent. But I'm going: 1 percent of what? You see what I mean about two steps forward, one step back, two steps forward? I think the minister is moving the department forward, but it is so confusing with the comings and goings and transference. Maybe this is her big year to move everything around, but, you know, here's another example of where it gets crazy-making. Not all authorities are getting an increase, but some programs they deliver may get an increase. I think I know what she's talking about there, but other people hearing that go: well, how is that possible?

I know what I was going to ask. Okay. We've got a number of programs that were paid for under the department that are now being

paid for under the children's authorities. Like, fetal alcohol syndrome, child financial support, mentoring for parents and home visitation, and part of early childhood development used to be paid for out of the department and are now being paid for by the children's authorities. Is that money contained in that \$517 million that is extra money going to the children's authorities? So if Mistahia is getting an extra \$517 million, is that \$517 million also paying for their assumption of the delivery of the fetal alcohol syndrome program, the child financial support program, the mentoring for parents and home visitation program, and a portion of the early childhood development program? That's where I'm starting to get confused.

On to a new topic. At one point the minister talked about capacity building, which is a phrase that we've been using in the voluntary sector to describe helping agencies working in that area to give themselves a technological and equipment base that allows them to sort of work in the modern world; let me put it that way. So capacity building may include under those definitions things like buying computers and software programs to help a nonprofit group in the community get onto the Internet or be able to do a mail merge program so that they could be in touch with their membership base in a more organized and timely and expedient fashion. I'm just wondering if the capacity building that the minister referred to is the same thing that I just described. Or is this a different kind of capacity building than what we've been talking about across the nation for strengthening and supporting voluntary organizations that are delivering all kinds of services?

I'm going to sit down and let the minister have a stab at that, and then if there's time, I'll maybe have another go. Sorry. Actually before I do that, I just want to bring up homelessness and rent costs. In my constituency of Edmonton-Centre we have a lot of people that live in apartments, a lot of people. Probably 80 percent of my constituents live in some kind of apartment complex, whether that's a high-rise or a fourplex or one of those ones that has three floors and 20 apartments in it. There are not many children, but I'm really seeing everybody that's in these, especially in the rental accommodations, struggling because the cost of rent has gone up so much. One-bedroom apartments have gone from \$590 to \$900. This is not fancy. It's an okay building with okay security in an okay location. When I start to see seniors and families that are having to move to lower quality to find reasonable rent, I really start to worry.

We don't have a lot of resources for kids in my constituency. I know that there are other constituencies that would have the same issue, but I know mine, so I'll talk about mine. So moving kids to an even less secure area and an area that has less access to recreational opportunities, even a bit of green space, which can be a problem in my constituency, is I think impairing quality of life for those kids and who knows what else: recreational opportunities, health, fitness, all kinds of things. I recognize that the minister is not responsible for housing, is not responsible for homeless initiatives; nonetheless, it affects children.

I'm making a plea for the minister to be aggressive in any cross-government initiatives that are worked on around housing. The provincial governments must take an aggressive role here. To say that the private sector is going to come forward with affordable housing, especially for the hard to house, is not going to happen. It has not happened. All we're doing is putting more people into less safe conditions, and that includes families with children. So I have to make that plea, and I would include seniors as well, because seniors are part of families. They're somebody's grandparents. It's particularly frightening for them.

I notice that the minister is involved in a cross-government initiative, the health sustainability initiative and the seniors policy

initiative. The ministry is now supporting this seniors policy initiative for strengthening "collaboration and coordination of initiatives to improve the health and wellness of Albertans, and the sustainability of the health care system."

Well, I sure think a place to live, a safe place to live, a reasonably priced place to live that isn't taking 60 percent of your take-home paycheque is a priority, and I would urge the minister to be very aggressive in working on that.

Thanks for the opportunity.

THE DEPUTY CHAIR: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have one question, and I'm not entirely sure I can give complete information to the minister to address it. I have in my notes here under regional health authority budgets that at the end there's a reference to the almost elimination of a program of community response teams. Was there a special budget item last year which provided that money? It looks like it's on the way to being completely eliminated. My calculations tell me that there's close to a 93 percent reduction in it. It caught my attention because it raised the question of: how do you develop local community-based capacities who are responding effectively to crises that may arise if you take resources away from community-based response teams? So that was my question.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY CHAIR: The hon. minister.

MS EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Perhaps just quickly. The community response teams were a pilot project to support some things that were going on in northeast Calgary, putting teams together. I think that the initiative continues. I couldn't identify quite where under community support, because we moved there from \$53 million up to \$70 million, but I can assure you that it hasn't been cut, hon. member.

I then go to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre. The increased funding for family violence has moved from last year's budget at \$13.627 million – actual spent was \$12.8 million – to \$14 million. Now, I must give credit to the hon. member opposite who has had a passion for families affected by family violence and who has made it very clear to me that we're on the same page on this issue, because we both want to get something done to resolve the issues. We really see that lots of times shelters have had checkered levels of support wherever they are in the province. So we have been working with the executive director of the Alberta Council of Women's shelters, who is currently not available, as she may know, for some dialogue. We have been working with that association to find out whether or not ultimately the funding should rest with the child and family services authorities or whether it should be dispensed from the department centrally to the authorities. In some places it's working exceptionally well. For example, in Lloydminster it's working exceptionally well, but in other places it doesn't work as well. So before we get into a knee-jerk reaction, we're going to look at how we can handle that. In some places local authorities have been giving wonderful support to the children in the programs, and as you know, we've had double the number of children, regrettably, as the number of women.

4:50

The Health Canada study by Nico Trocme has illustrated that violence regrettably is on the increase, a rapid increase, something that affects children and brings children into child welfare, a most

regrettable situation. So a lot of the dollars this year in our discussions will be to ensure, to guarantee, that those children get some programing supports and that people won't just meet with a mother on her exit stage left and assume that the mother will have the capacity to follow through with those children. So we're going to target those children in that area.

A lot of it isn't etched in concrete simply because we are still working with one of our staff members at a very senior level to make sure that we work on this family violence initiative in a way that really sorts out all of the best ways it can be done. Thanks in part to the hon. member opposite we are making some differences. I did not in the cost containment agree to any reductions to that particular area because of the impact of family violence on children and families and, in most cases, women that may be suffering abuse. So that's one of the areas. I just want to make sure that I identify my concurrence with the hon. member opposite about that very thing.

In the issue of our involvement with family law, there are many things, as you know, where there's an overlap, when there's joint or shared custody, mediation, child support. With the work that we're doing right now, for example, with the medical examiner – and the Children's Advocate has been represented as well as our department on fatality inquiries – are we examining the way that we should the death of a child? I want to look again quite seriously at our special case review process, again not with the attitude of reducing the importance of looking into it but making sure that we're getting some value for the exercise that we're going through. You know, the fatality inquiry could teach us a lot. The special case reviews can teach us, and I think we should learn from them. So we are doing some of that work with the Department of Justice, and we are working, of course, on the violence initiatives with the Solicitor General. So I'm quite satisfied with that.

I will ask the department to provide in writing, on your question about the 1 percent overall to the authorities, some clarification of my earlier remarks about the funding model and the alterations in the funding model, where the needs are, and also to assure you, hon. member, that there are additional dollars put in there. For example, last year we retained moneys within the department to pay for salary adjustments, and then this year those are accounted for quite differently in the authorities' budgets, but then we've taken other responsibilities. So rather than do the shell game with you, I would rather make sure you get a clear identification of those things as it pertains to each authority, and I think that that would be something all of the hon. members would like some anecdotal explanation of so that it helps identify where they are.

Fetal alcohol syndrome, an increase in our budgeting there. Probably the one thing that across North America we're beginning to be looked at as leaders on is the work we're doing with the communities on FAS building. When I was recently in California and in Texas, they asked us for our materials on that. Our staff have been invited to Denver, Colorado, to speak. In western Canada, from Manitoba eastward, and now northward with the Yukon, we seem to be gaining some prominence because we're working and building that capacity.

Can I just simply conclude by assuring the hon. member opposite that on homelessness the Minister of Seniors responsible for housing is being very aggressive, perhaps behind the scenes to some degree right now, on the initiatives for low-cost housing for families in need and affordable housing. I totally concur. With a buoyant economy once again, in the city of Edmonton particularly, the squeeze on housing is huge, and I hope we can gain some supports. Certainly poverty is one of the issues – and I acknowledge that – that presupposes the stresses that sometimes lead to other family problems on the social index and sometimes, not always, lead children onto our caseloads, and that's tragic.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you. Sorry; I forgot one ongoing issue with me that I always check in with you on. That is the issue about the tag-behind wages. I don't know if the working committee is still in existence, but there certainly was a committee from the nonprofit agencies that were, I think, actively meeting with members of the minister's staff. We keep trying to get those folks caught up, and every time there's an improvement in the wages for the unionized workers, then the gap between those workers and the people in the community agencies that are doing exactly the same work gets worse again. Then there's a great deal of lobbying for two or three years until there's a 2 percent increase back for the community groups, who now close the gap a little bit, and then the union people get another bargaining unit happening, and on they go. The minister doesn't have to answer it now. I know there are other people that want to get up, but in writing if I could get some update on where we are in that tagalong process. Okay?

Thank you.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before I start on some other questions, just to clarify on the handicapped children's services. The question that I had was that a number of parents have suffered reductions of service. I heard from, for instance, a parent who had lost the respite service that she had, that that had been cut. So I wasn't talking about budget cuts. I was talking about what has actually happened to the services to handicapped children, and that's been my concern. We've attended one meeting in Calgary and another here with parents of handicapped children who have had a reduction in their service, and it is a great concern. So that's what I was talking about, not a budget cut.

I'd like to go back for just a minute to the minister's comments about the reduction in caseloads and 450 of over 18 year olds being no longer served by Children's Services. I find it, you know, quite surprising that there were that many, but I also remember, as the minister does, that we attended a rally on the steps of the Legislature attended by many of the 16, 17, 18 year olds and then some 19 year olds that were very concerned about the kind of service they were receiving and the fact that many of them complained that at 18 they were suddenly cut loose whether they were prepared to be independent or not. So I was pleased to hear the minister say that Children's Services has arranged for other agencies to take up the slack to ensure that these young people are not left on their own just because they happen to have reached the magic age of 18.

5:00

It does raise for me some of the questions that that particular group raised at that rally and that we've heard from since. I guess I would like some comment from the minister in terms of placements, not just for 18 year olds but for all children. What kind of progress has been made in securing more placements for children? I know it was mentioned last year. It's a constant concern of the department. We had the unfortunate case of the youngster in Grande Prairie who was housed in a motel. My question is: what progress has been made? Has the problem of temporary placements and more permanent placements been addressed so that it is becoming less of a problem to people who have to end up putting children in a placement other than their own home? So I'm concerned about placements, Mr. Chairman.

The lack of permanency planning was also raised by those youth.

Some of them weren't even aware that they had a case plan. That whole notion of permanency planning – and I suspect that the minister will respond that the ARM project should help alleviate some of that, but there are still going to be hundreds of youngsters that have to be dealt with immediately. What kind of progress has been made in making sure that there is a plan to have the children permanently placed and, with respect to young people, that they are aware of that plan?

One of the other questions that was raised, Mr. Chairman, was the refusal to support adolescents who are in custody under the Young Offenders Act and not allowing them to look to the Children's Advocate for assistance. Has there been any thought given to expanding the mandate of the Children's Advocate so that the needs of those particular children could be met?

Adoption of First Nations children. I've spoken about this on several occasions, that the requirement for chief and band council approval results in many children not being placed in adoptive homes. I wonder if there has been consultation, if there have been moves made to make the placement of aboriginal youngsters in adoptive homes easier and to get rid of the kinds of barriers that have prevented that from happening.

The youth that we talked to were concerned about mental health assistance, and the Alberta children and youth initiative addresses that in part, I think, but that concern in terms of help with mental health problems and not being able to get the kind of service that they need in a timely fashion was a concern of those young people. I wonder what kind of action the department has taken to assure those youth that they in fact can get the kind of support they need.

There have been problems in the past with court delays, and I think it contributed to permanency planning. Again I'd like to know if the department has addressed it and what kinds of solutions they have been able to come up with.

The minister mentioned the child death reviews and, you know, what do we gain from those reviews. I think it's a good question. I also think that the question of independence is really important in terms of those reviews. The processes that are internal to the ministry are fine as far as they go, but it seems to me that there is a need for an independent, comprehensive body to review the deaths of children with the goal of trying to reduce the incidence of child fatality. The case of the twins up north I think brought to the fore the kinds of problems that the lack of an independent panel can present.

The Children's Advocate is one mechanism for youth to provide feedback to the department in terms of the services that they're receiving, but I wonder if the minister has considered other ways that they can receive feedback from children in the system so that the system can ultimately be improved.

One of the other problems mentioned was the gaps in the education system for young people. Abused and neglected youngsters just are not served well by conventional school programs, and it was something that I've raised with a local school trustee. I know that the minister was made aware of the problem, and I wondered if there's been any action taken to try to make sure that alternative programs are in place for those youngsters and that the kind of flexibility they need is there so they can continue their education.

The boundary issues between regional authorities still are with us. We hear again of pressures and disputes between authorities in terms of them providing services for students. Again my question would be: what kinds of provisions are being made to make sure that those disputes don't actually interfere with the kind of help that a youngster or a young person might need from the department?

The medicating of children in care has been raised as an issue. It was actually in a day care. Again what kinds of measures have been

put in place to assure the public that medications are not used in a way that they were never intended in terms of children and their behaviour and that there isn't an inordinate use of medication as a management tool?

I guess the last one that I would comment on at this time, Mr. Chairman, because I'd like to leave the minister a few minutes to respond, is the problem of staff turnover. We've touched on staff several times this afternoon, and the minister in previous questions in the House has talked about staff. I wonder exactly what is the situation in terms of turnover and what kinds of measures are being put in place to attract and to keep the best social workers, the best workers working with young people that we can.

So I think that with those, Mr. Chairman, I'd conclude. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY CHAIR: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

MR. BONNER: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I've just got a few comments today. I would like to thank the Minister of Children's Services and her staff for being here today and realizing the great work that they do in a very difficult ministry, particularly when they're dealing with some of our most vulnerable people in this society. I know that earlier last fall I had an opportunity to bring a special case to her attention where a couple had three children with special needs, and they were having a lot of difficulty in doing cross-departmental work. I know that in that particular case the minister was able to help them, and if she could elaborate on how, for other families that require that cross-departmental work, those issues can be smoothed out and the road can be much easier for them.

5:10

I had the opportunity to listen to Jesse Jackson speak, and he was telling us that the poor people in the United States today are not the new Americans, that they're not our seniors. They are mothers with young families. So this whole poverty issue is not only an issue here in Alberta. It's also quite frequent in the States. As part of that, I think it is because we do have lone-parent families. I see that in Alberta we do have – and this was in the year 2000 – approximately 105,000 lone-parent families, and a staggering 86,000 out of that number were mothers, female parents. Again I can see that a huge part of the job that you do have is tracking fathers for support payments or whatever.

Now, then, as well, I go on and I see that we have a breakdown of lone-parent families in the whole of Canada, but I don't have any for Alberta. I was wondering if the minister can provide me later on – I don't expect it today – with a breakdown of lone-parent families by age and, as well, if the minister has any statistics whatsoever on a breakdown of the socioeconomic standing of the various families that she does deal with.

So with that, Mr. Chairman, I'll take my seat. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY CHAIR: Hon. minister, we have about two more minutes if you'd like to make some response.

MS EVANS: Thank you very much. If I may, there are many references that I will not be able to expand upon in two minutes, and I don't want to give short shrift to really critical issues.

I think that at page 57 I should have noted that the child response teams were there, but I didn't provide that information earlier. On court delays that may be happening and on other issues relative to the chief and band and council approval, I will certainly provide more detail. In terms of the processes for child death reviews, again I will provide a briefing note.

The authority boundary issues, again we can talk about that, although those have been ironed out in some cases much more satisfactorily.

I want to make one comment about the issue of medicating children in care. The hon. Member for St. Albert has been dealing with a horrific case where somebody that I would deem to be an absolute rotter has been bringing children into a place that has not been licensed for day care and has been anticipating that nobody would catch her at it. This may have happened in other situations, and to some degree everybody should know that it's buyer beware and that they should check and follow through and find out when people present themselves as child care professionals licensed to do the work they do. They should absolutely make sure that they check with the local children's authority, phone the RITE government number, find out if they're registered, if they're licensed, because unscrupulous people will always make us look bad to the public. We do not condone nor should medication ever be given without parental and doctor's permission.

THE DEPUTY CHAIR: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Minister of Children's Services, but pursuant to an understanding agreed to unanimously by the Assembly earlier this afternoon, I must now put the following question. After considering the business plan and proposed estimates for the Department of Children's Services, are you ready for the vote?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

Agreed to:

Operating Expense	\$673,068,000
-------------------	---------------

THE DEPUTY CHAIR: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY CHAIR: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would move that the committee rise and report the Children's Services estimates and beg leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

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

MR. MARZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2003, for the following department.

Children's Services: operating expense, \$673,068,000.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Opposed? So ordered.  
The hon. Government House Leader.

adjourn until 8 this evening, at which time we'll return in Committee of Supply.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that we

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:18 p.m.]

