

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, April 30, 2002**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 02/04/30

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

THE SPEAKER: Good afternoon and welcome.

Let us pray. O Lord, we give thanks for the bounty of our province: our land, our resources, and our people. We pledge ourselves to act as good stewards on behalf of all Albertans. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I have the pleasure of introducing two wonderful men. In fact, one of the men, whom I've known for quite a while, is the most charming man I've ever met. [interjections] He is. He is. Just wait. He's been a longtime resident of Edmonton, and he's no stranger to this House. He's been here a number of times. In fact, he's been here quite a few times, and he should, because he's the very proud father of our Premier. In fact, Phil Klein is sitting in the members' gallery along with one of my constituents, Robert Vanderwell, who has been a resident of my constituency of Lesser Slave Lake for 48 years. He is a businessman in the forest products industry. He has a family business. In fact, they've celebrated 60 years this year as a family business. He is the president/owner of Vanderwell Contractors Ltd., one of Alberta's largest family-run forestry companies. I would ask that they stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a great pleasure for me to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the House 49 of Alberta's very brightest and best students. They of course come from the school of Blessed Kateri in my constituency, and they are accompanied by teachers Brigitte Berube, Mhairi Miskew, and parent helpers Bonnie Davis and Vivian Liberona. May I ask all of our special guests from Blessed Kateri to please rise and receive the thunderous ovation of the House.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills I'd like to introduce to you and through you 31 students and staff from the Kneehill Christian school in Linden. They are visiting the Legislature today, and I believe they are sitting in the public gallery, and I'd like to ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MR. MASON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you two gentlemen who are seated in the gallery today. One is my constituency assistant, who for the last couple of years has ably handled the many duties and details of my very busy constituency office in Edmonton-Highlands, Mr. Craig Stumpf-Allen. The second is Mike Buurman, who will be working

in our office this summer. He is a political science student just finishing his second year at Grant MacEwan and entering the U of A this fall. Mike also has considerable background as a volunteer with Edmonton's Food Bank and the Glenrose hospital. I'm happy to have him as my STEP student for this year. I'd ask both gentlemen to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: **Ministerial Statements**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Municipal Government Day

MR. BOUTILIER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise in recognition of this being Municipal Government Day, April 30. In fact, Municipal Government Day was established by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to honour municipal leaders across Canada who take part in a very special activity in terms of promoting the unique role that municipal governments play in our country.

As Minister of Municipal Affairs I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the vital role that municipalities play in all of our lives. Throughout the history of our country and our province municipal governments have played a key role in sustaining and improving the quality of life of our communities. In fact, over one-third of the MLAs presently elected to this Assembly have served at the local municipal level either as a reeve, as a councillor, as an alderman, as a school trustee, as a hospital trustee, or as a mayor, and this really speaks well of the deep roots that municipal government has right here in this Legislative Assembly.

I know that all members of this Assembly join me in recognizing the 360 municipal governments that proudly serve all Albertans working in partnership with their province. In honour of this day I invite all members to join in recognizing the importance of municipalities in the province of Alberta.

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

MR. BONNER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the Official Opposition to recognize Municipal Government Day. Alberta's municipal leaders have the responsibility of building and supporting the great communities that we are proud to call home. Whether home is a village of 100 people or a city of almost 1 million, Albertans share similar expectations. We want safe streets, clean water, good roads, viable businesses, accessible schools and hospitals, and affordable recreation facilities and housing. It is not an easy to-do list for our local councils, but they do provide this and more. In the face of downloading, rising costs, shifting taxes, and increased pressures on volunteers, they achieve excellence. In honour of this day I invite all members of the Assembly to consider how the legislation and policies we debate affect municipal councils and their vision for our communities.

Thank you.

head: **Oral Question Period**

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

Child Welfare System

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In describing the child welfare system in Alberta it has been said, and I quote: when disaster strikes Alberta's child welfare system, reports follow the scandals like life insurance investigators covering a fire. It goes on:

their recommendations have been so repeated that now when a new study is released, it's hardly necessary to crack the cover to find out what's inside. My questions are to the Minister of Children's Services. Madam Minister, that was written in 1993. Why is it that we're still seeing reports every few months repeating the same recommendations, and none of the recommendations get implemented to improve service to children?

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, I'm so very, very grateful for that question today. It gives me an opportunity to brag about the things that we are doing right that have been unacknowledged while we've been going through this very, very painful period. We have the Alberta response model, which is out there, staff that are out there working to make sure that children that are in low-risk situations are maintained in their family with supports to the family, and we only will endeavour to protect those children that really need it most in high-risk situations and take them into care. This is the thrust that is important, that social workers are embracing, because it looks at the community for community-based support, something that was visioned by my predecessors. In the last two years we've made huge strides toward it. Another very unacclaimed situation is that when communities all over Alberta, the very ones the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs spoke about, asked us for full funding of family and community support services, this year an additional \$15 million has gone into that fund, which will help us with a lot of those early intervention projects. We're making some good moves. They're not hitting the headlines, but I'm confident they're making a difference.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the minister. Specific recommendations, Madam Minister. How many recommendations of the 1984 Richard Cardinal fatality inquiry were not followed and have to be rerecommended on subsequent inquiries?

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, I'm not familiar with what the number is, but I would certainly be pleased to table that in the House on a subsequent day.

1:40

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bob Rechner, the former Children's Advocate, has recommended an independent external review process to hear children's maltreatment claims. Will the minister be implementing that recommendation?

MS EVANS: Well, Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member opposite knows, there has been an adjournment of a court case that was filed by a solicitor in Calgary with other participants who've identified themselves as friends of children who have been in child protection cases. We have selected with Justice's assistance a solicitor to act on behalf of the government, and we will be responding in kind. The issues of compensation I have already declared would be part of our overall review of the Child Welfare Act that's being conducted by the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo. More than that I don't think is appropriate for me to comment on at this time.

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

Foster Care Delivery

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Still following up with the Minister of Children's Services: has the minister implemented the

recommendations of the Korvette Crier report that foster agency staff make unscheduled visits to foster homes?

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, as we speak, there are significant discussions between the principals of Keystone. It would be: frankly, I'm not sure yet. We have been looking at these issues with the CEO from Keystone, who is on site at Kasohkowew. We have been talking with those folks that are delivering the child welfare service. I don't know exactly what has been implemented, but substantive improvements have occurred since August 1999, and just exactly where we go from here will be determined by the extent that we can review those cases and assure ourselves of the bottom line: that children are safe and protected.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the minister: can the minister tell us whether, as of today, all nongovernment agencies operating foster homes are registered with the government?

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, as of today not all are registered with the government. I don't know exactly how many are not registered with the government, but of course if you are providing child care services, we are asking for those to be registered, to be accredited. In fact, in the accreditation process there is some opportunity for various agencies to work towards their accreditation. It's a fairly complex process. In the situation of the most recent tragic death the agency that was managing the foster placement was an accredited agency.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question again to the minister: when will the results of the minister's overall review of foster care delivery be made public?

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, we'll be pleased to make it public when it's complete. [interjection] We have been working on that foster care review for the last few months, and rather than being subjected to some taunting, I'll just simply say: when the work in progress is complete and done properly.

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

Case Plans for Children in Care

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Minister of Children's Services referred to some of the 600 children whose case plans were not filed with the courts. She said: "It's entirely possible today that some of those children are already back with their families, and in some cases, tragically . . ." My questions are to the Minister of Children's Services. Does the minister know of cases where children were actually put back in families where tragedy befell them?

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, as we speak, our staff on that front are looking into what has happened with the children that have been under temporary guardianship orders filed before March 4th's Court of Appeal. We know in fact, as I stated last evening, that some of the appeal notices had been filed too late. Last evening I was endeavouring to explain that we really don't know in the last two months exactly the status of each one of those at the provincial level.

At the local level we've asked for them, through the child welfare director on site, to determine what's happened with each one of those cases, to provide us exactly what the status is. We noted yesterday – and I believe I spoke to this yesterday – that less than 50 were contested in court, and we may be reapprehending those. Again, the status of that I know not. I will provide that report to this Assembly as soon as it's available.

DR. MASSEY: Again to the same minister, Mr. Speaker: does the minister know of children who were put back in homes where tragedy befell them?

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, I have to thank my colleague so that in the rest of this Assembly you're not misled by excerpts from my statement. To quote from *Hansard*, page 973, I stated:

It's entirely possible . . . that some of those children are already back with their families, and in some cases, tragically, I'm told that we can't locate some of those parents, because those are children that have been taken into protection sometimes because parents have not been available to do the job that parents should be doing.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what is wrong with that?

DR. MASSEY: Mr. Speaker, if there's one child that's been put into a tragic situation, that's what's wrong with that.

My question is to the minister. Given that there are alternative actions the department can legally take, why would any child be put back in a risky situation?

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, no child will be put back in a risky situation. While the hon. member opposite may be trying to fault this government for the tragic results of things that happened to children who have been at risk, what is really tragic is that sometimes those parents disappear. They leave the children with child welfare and wash their hands of those circumstances. That's a real tragedy, because parents should be responsible. If in fact today there are those children in care that need protection, we will under an emergency order be reapprehending those children so that in fact they are never at risk. Those 636 children are not at risk, because we will make sure that they are not at risk, because our procedures allow us in an emergency, which could occur if a parent who doesn't deserve the child comes back, to reapprehend that child and make sure those children are protected.

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

Workers' Compensation Board Health Care Costs

MR. MASON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In 1999 the Workers' Compensation Board adopted a policy under which they pay private surgical facilities up to four and a half times more than they pay the public system for the same procedure. Small wonder that the WCB's health care costs have tripled in the past five years, and no wonder that HRC investors are excited, because if approved, they expect 90 percent of their patients to be injured workers paid for by the WCB. To the Minister of Human Resources and Employment: given the recent rapid escalation in employer premium rates, is the minister at all concerned that WCB's plan to pay top rates to HRC to do total joint replacements and major back surgery will drive employer premium rates even higher?

MR. DUNFORD: Mr. Speaker, the operation of the Workers' Compensation Board is through appointments of the board members, and it is a long tradition that we appoint members not only from the

employer sector but also from the employee and the public sectors. It's the responsibility of the chair and those nine appointees to operate the Workers' Compensation Board system. So the particular issue that the hon. member is on I think is a valid one, and I think it's something that quite appropriately can be taken up beyond just here in question period. As he's a serious member, as we all know, he can certainly take it up with the individual board members.

The thing that must be mentioned, I think, by me at this point in time is that it is of the utmost urgency that injured workers receive first of all proper diagnosis but then proper treatment, because it is very, very important, as the hon. member knows, that we get injured workers back into the workplace. There is a direct correlation between the severance of a worker from a workplace and that worker's ability to ever get back to meaningful employment, so I think that WCB has to do what it has to do to get workers back as quickly as possible.

1:50

MR. MASON: Mr. Speaker, the minister cannot escape his ministerial responsibility that easily. These members are appointed by the government. Will the minister at least agree to look into whether the escalating health care costs of the WCB might be related to an overreliance on private, for-profit surgical facilities before allowing them to enter into an agreement with the Health Resource Centre, or HRC, to do joint replacements or major back surgery?

MR. DUNFORD: In 1995 the members that were here within this Assembly – and as I stand here, I just don't recall whether or not the Member for Edmonton-Highlands was part of it. Perhaps he wasn't. In any event, we had a debate on a bill at that particular time. What that bill managed to do and what it continues to do quite successfully is to move the Workers' Compensation Board system, entirely paid for by employers' money – there is not one dollar of taxpayers' money in that WCB system. The idea at the time, then, was to move the WCB to an arm's-length relationship with the government. We succeeded in doing that with the passage of that bill in 1995, and that bill stands in good stead today.

MR. MASON: Mr. Speaker, would the minister tell the House why and how he can stall on resolving the long-standing issues of injured workers because the employers don't want to pay higher premiums, yet he allows WCB to pay three times the price for certain procedures because it's a private health care facility?

MR. DUNFORD: Well, the member is being provocative. It's not me that's allowing the contract relationship between the WCB and physicians around the province.

As far as the question itself in the sense of long-term contentious claims, I believe that it is important that we have all stakeholders onside on this issue, especially those that will have to foot the bill. What we're talking about here in terms of long-term contentious claims is the fact that there was an appeal system that was recognized by law, and the actual mechanics and the logistics of that appeal system were in fact administered for claims in the past. So at that particular point in time basically, then, the issues that came out of those appeals have been dealt with. We had two reports. There was a recommendation made that a further appeal system be looked into. We have accepted that recommendation. Now we're trying to find a way to make it work.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. Deputy Government House Leader, you advised of a point of order.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you.

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

Electricity Billing

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently I have received a number of calls from constituents about their electricity bills, and I daresay that even some of those might have been calls from the parents of the students who are seated in the public gallery today from Sir Alexander Mackenzie school. They are concerned about the number of consumer charges that are on their bill: the actual power consumed, the transmission and distribution charges, and the various deferral account rate riders. My question is to the Minister of Energy. What is the role of the EUB in all of this issue determining what is regulated, if anything, and what are regulated and what are unregulated items on their bill?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. SMITH: Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure the Member for St. Albert, when talking to the members of the Sir Alexander Mackenzie school, probably also told them of the energy rebate that they got last year and why the bills that the Minister of Infrastructure put forward were indeed less than what they could have been.

The member brings up an excellent question, Mr. Speaker. EPCOR bills are the bills that the member gets in her service area. Those serviced by Utilicorp in southern Alberta will also receive an EPCOR bill, and those in the northern part of Alberta will receive an ATCO bill. In this portion the regulator, the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board, that holds hearings in an open fashion, fully transcribed and fully available to everybody in Alberta, receives an application on these numerous charges. They then go through a rigorous process and deliver a public decision.

With respect to the specific bill to which the Member for St. Albert refers, the delivery charge, the energy charge, the service charge, and the rate riders are brought through the EUB. The energy charge is a regulated rate option. Now, I know that the opposition members may not want this specific information, because they're concerned more about the ideology as opposed to the good questions of the member, who asks for actual fact. That is the key part of the new electrical restructuring market, Mr. Speaker. We asked for the umbrella, the camouflage of regulation to be lifted and for the honesty of transparency and the EUB regulation to show these important charges to the consumer so that the consumer knows exactly what they're paying for.

MRS. O'NEILL: Mr. Speaker, my first supplemental is to the same minister, and that is with respect to some of those charges: will they change, and if so, when will they change?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. SMITH: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased for the supplementary because I forgot to add that there is also, of course, a federal tax, a federal GST tax, on the bills.

AN HON. MEMBER: The Liberals.

MR. SMITH: Yes. I know that's the Liberals. I even remember a Liberal campaign promise to eliminate the GST. Good work, guys. Good work. You didn't get anywhere; did you?

Mr. Speaker, the member asks a very good question. The regulated rate option has two phases. One is the charge for electric-

ity that was encountered in the year 2000, when we had a regulated rate model, and the difference between what they paid for in electricity. Secondly, there is a deferral rate for 2001. This is the price in excess of the regulated rate that the utility paid for the purpose of providing electrical services to the constituents of St. Albert.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie on a point of order as well.

Go ahead, hon. member.

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you. My second supplemental to the same minister has to do with: how are the service charges determined?

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, I apologize for what seems to be a long time, but it's an extremely important topic. The 2001 regulated rate option shortfall has been approved on an interim or temporary basis, and the EUB, the Energy and Utilities Board, received the last of the material on April 2. Consistently, the Energy and Utilities Board will render a decision by June 2002. The intent is for the deferral rates, which are clear and transparent, to be paid off and eliminated in 2004 and to show generators that there is opportunity for more generation and for more capability in Alberta.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands, I'll recognize you, too, later on a point of order.

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

Electricity Balancing Pool

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last summer the Minister of Energy welcomed Enron's entry into Alberta's electricity industry as vindication that the anticipated deregulation scheme is working more or less as promised and said at the time, quote: Enron's announcement is a signal that this power market is here to stay. End of quote. We saw the success of Enron, so I guess we can only wait for the success of this government's electricity deregulation scheme. Now, when I asked the minister two weeks ago about the proceeds of the electricity auctions in 2000, he said that the money was "all returned in the \$40 bill. That was consumers' money. They got it all back. It's gone." My first question is to the Minister of Energy. If that money is all gone, then how does the Balancing Pool still operate certain power plants from the proceeds of these electricity auctions?

2:00

MR. SMITH: The first thing is that when the Enron situation was mentioned, as quoted by the member, that was at a time when I believe we were 63 members of government and there were some 15, 20-plus members of the opposition. So, in fact, from the time that I made that quote to today, the only thing that's gone, Mr. Speaker, is eight members from the opposition. What remains are more government members than ever before and a government that actively, totally put the new competitive restructuring on the line for the election of 2001, said and committed to consumers that they would return the auction proceeds. They did. We have operated totally above board, we've operated with integrity, and most importantly we've operated with transparency to this marketplace and to this taxpayer.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same

minister: if some of the auction proceeds have been allocated to the Balancing Pool, how then are the minister's comments from the estimates debate only two weeks ago correct when he said that consumers got it all back when we know that they have not? It's in the Balancing Pool. Don't you know your own policy?

MR. SMITH: I assume that when he says, don't I even know my own policy?, it's his third supplementary, so my answer to that, Mr. Speaker, would be: yes, I do know the policy.

Of course, the member does know, I would hope that the member knows, that proceeds from the payment in lieu of taxation – there is a notional tax put on the utilities, and that is passed into the Balancing Pool, that the Balancing Pool makes revenues from the operation of Clover Bar, a peaking plant in Alberta, and that the Balancing Pool has a clear, open, and transparent balance sheet that is accessible to any and all Albertans.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: if all of the accounting has not been Enronized, will the minister provide us with a breakdown of where the proceeds from the electricity auctions went and where all this money is going into the Balancing Pool and exactly how it is being spent?

Thank you.

MR. SMITH: Well, I will answer the hon. member's fourth and fifth questions, Mr. Speaker. The ability for the member, one, through a process that I believe has been in this House for a good length of time called motion for a return – that's one that I'm sure he would be able to pursue. Secondly, if the member would follow the Enron story, he would find that during the time that Enron was in possession of a PPA, during the time that Enron was active in the trading market, and during the subsequent times, there has not been one light go dark in this province, there has not been one shipment of gas that was missed. In fact, the deregulation process, the competitive market structuring of electricity, stands in far greater stead and far better stead than Securities and Exchange Commission reporting requirements on how a company does business and congressional inquiries. So I think that this Alberta system is a good one.

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

Grizzly Bears

MS DeLONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some Albertans have expressed concerns about how grizzly bear management might be affected by a push to have the animal declared a threatened species. My first question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. What steps is your department taking in response to the recent recommendation by the Endangered Species Conservation Committee to have grizzly bears designated as threatened?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That's a very good question. The Endangered Species Conservation Committee – and I see that the chairman is here today – did an excellent job of compiling information assessing the status of grizzly bears in Alberta. My department actually is looking at a number of things as a result of the recommendations made by that committee. Considering whether the species should be given special status is one aspect of grizzly bear management, of course.

We will immediately provincially be initiating a recovery team and recovery plans, as the committee advises. We will also of course specifically assess the recommendations related to the issue of hunting as early as we can in order to assess that situation and put our process in place. We will make decisions on the designation of the species pending our thorough assessment, and I am looking forward to this assessment, Mr. Speaker. At that time, we will share our recommendations with the public.

MS DeLONG: Mr. Speaker, my next question is also to the same minister. Considering the recommendation by the Endangered Species Conservation Committee, where does this leave the annual grizzly bear hunt, which is already limited to a very small number of animals?

MR. CARDINAL: Yes, it is a fact that only a small number of grizzly bears are taken out each year. Although over a hundred licences are provided, we are taking out about 14 grizzly bears.

DR. TAYLOR: How many?

MR. CARDINAL: Fourteen, on the average, mostly male animals out of a population of a thousand and out of an adjacent population of 5,000 to 13,000 in B.C., which is just west of us.

So as I mentioned, I will thoroughly assess the committee's recommendations related to hunting because it is a very important issue. As well, we will do it early in developing our recovery plans, Mr. Speaker. It is important to note that the status evaluation provided by the Scientific Subcommittee states that the recent legal harvest of grizzly bears is not the primary cause for concern. So we are on the positive side. We have time to look at this issue thoroughly.

We must look at a number of other issues. For example, the quality of habitat may be a concern, the survival rates of the young may be a concern, and the number of young produced each year. We need a balanced approach in dealing with this valuable resource.

MS DeLONG: Mr. Speaker, my final question is also to the same minister. What's the process that the Endangered Species Conservation Committee follows to make recommendations to you on various species?

MR. CARDINAL: That's a very good question, Mr. Speaker. Overall, the Endangered Species Conservation Committee advises my department on the identification and recovery of species at risk in Alberta. The committee is chaired by the Member for West Yellowhead, who is here today of course to support the minister. It includes individuals also from 19 stakeholders including resource users, land managers, conservation groups, university scientists, et cetera. It is also supported by an independent scientific committee.

Mr. Speaker, as a point of interest, Alberta leads the country with programs to identify and restore species at risk. We've had such programs for over 25 years here in Alberta, so we are ahead of most jurisdictions in North America in fact with our recovery plans and our management and our assessment processes.

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

Community Lottery Boards

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On April 8 of this year the Premier said that the Minister of Gaming would look for ways

to fund groups that were falling through the cracks because of the government's decision to eliminate community lottery boards. Well, these groups are falling through the cracks, and they would like some answers. My questions today are to the Minister of Gaming. Edmonton Meals on Wheels spent valuable volunteer hours compiling a community lottery board grant application for much-needed computer equipment. What program is the minister putting in place to meet their needs?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. STEVENS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is correct that the Premier has asked me to review the existing foundations, and I am in the process of doing that with my department. I can tell you, generally speaking, that about 50 percent of the applications that went before the community lottery boards throughout the province and were in fact funded both in terms of number and amount would qualify, for example, under the community facility enhancement program. There were other numbers which would qualify with respect to different foundations, such as Wild Rose and the sports and recreation foundation.

At this point in time, Mr. Speaker, what I am doing is taking a very close look at the good work that the community lottery boards did to see where there are gaps in the existing foundations, and I am working toward bringing forward a proposal that will put options for my colleagues to address those groups which, as the hon. member opposite indicated, are falling between the cracks.

2:10

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, where does the minister suggest the Sturgeon Foundation of Redwater access funding for programs like the wheelchair-accessible garden now that the community lottery boards have been cut? Which program should they go to?

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Speaker, what I have said to groups and to those that have been writing generally is that if they have examples of their situation that they wish to share with me, that is a good thing because I then will have a better understanding of the perception of groups that have fallen between the cracks. I've also indicated to anyone who wishes to put forward a concrete proposal as to how we might review this matter to send it to me, because I'm very appreciative of any good ideas that people could come forward with.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MS BLAKEMAN: Well, thank you very much. Perhaps the minister could consider the Alberta Easter Seals March of Dimes, who is scrambling to access funding for mobility aids for 25 of their clients. Which program will the minister be helpful in finding them funding from?

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to recognize that the community lottery boards did a great deal of good throughout the province, but they also were, like most other foundations, in receipt of far more applications than they could accommodate. If you take a look at the numbers, something in the order of 50 percent of applications in fact would be honoured. So while I am not familiar with the particular group in this last question and in the two previous questions, the fact of the matter is that because there is a group that has a worthy cause, it does not necessarily mean that they would

have qualified under the community lottery board. In any event, we are, as I indicated to the hon. member, looking at reviewing the existing programs to see how we may accommodate those who fall between the cracks.

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

Sustainability of Municipalities

MR. McCLELLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On April 22 the Toronto-Dominion Bank issued the report *A Choice Between Investing in Canada's Cities or Disinvesting in Canada's Future*, which was perhaps not the most objective title that they could have found. The premise of the report was that cities account for the bulk of Canada's gross domestic product but do not have the financial tools necessary to sustain the infrastructure necessary over the long term. Provincially, Edmonton and Calgary account for a significant portion of Alberta's gross provincial product. My question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: does the minister agree with the premise of the Toronto-Dominion Bank report?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. BOUTILIER: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the report, which actually I have been reviewing. One thing is for sure. The report is talking about the sustainability of municipalities. I am optimistic that the report will add to the growing debate in terms of the important role that municipalities play, something that this province is viewed as a leader of across Canada. The report does talk about increasing revenue opportunities to ensure that, if I understand this correctly, there's no net increase to taxpayers. Of course, this is a very complex issue, because we have to review all of the priorities that municipal and provincial and federal governments face, but one thing for sure is that this province is not afraid of thinking outside the box, which we're doing.

I'd like to point out that the report is of a national perspective. Just to give you an example, we're reviewing how the orders of government can best work together to keep the Alberta advantage strong. It's kind of interesting and I'm pleased to see that they're advocating in the report private/public partnerships, and of course many of my colleagues here, the ministers of Transportation and of Infrastructure, are using that private/public partnership in terms of advancing what keeps the Alberta advantage strong.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. McCLELLAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Edmonton and Calgary are Alberta's two primary urban regions, yet we need to work . . . [interjections] No. Primary, I said, primary urban regions. Now, what initiatives is the government taking to ensure that the two major cities work together to complement each other in a North American competitive market and rather than competing with each other to their mutual disadvantage, to work together to our common advantage as a province?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. BOUTILIER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member raises an important point. Of course, in this province we have the first minister's council of its kind across Canada in terms of roles, responsibilities, and resources. I might add that I'm pleased to say that the Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne constitu-

ency is co-chairing that committee with me, as well as the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, as well as actually the former Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons, who happens to come from – I’m sorry, but the constituency escapes me; he also participates. But what I think is also important is the fact that a cautionary note has been extended by an economist from Alberta who has said that one thing we do not want to do is create a tax jungle, because at the end of the day there’s only one taxpayer. I think all Albertans agree that we don’t want another tax jungle relative to any proposals by someone in Toronto.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. McCLELLAND: My final question, Mr. Speaker, is to the same minister. How does the government envision arriving at equity between the large urban municipalities, including others not necessarily Edmonton and Calgary, and the smaller rural municipalities?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. BOUTILIER: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is why on this minister’s council we have the president of the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties as well as the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, which represents the 360 municipalities, but as well the mayors of Edmonton and Calgary, which make up our total of 3 million people that live in Alberta. So I think it’s really important that we work together and that we’re taking that initiative. I’m pleased to say that I’m going to be speaking at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities on this initiative, but I also would like to indicate this: this report and these comments were made from the perspective of an economist in a Toronto-based bank, but I did observe that any mention of rural Canada or rural Alberta was noticeably absent. That’s interesting in terms of how three factors – natural resources, agriculture, and forestry – play such a key role in the competitive markets of not only this province and this country but throughout the world.

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

Angling Regulations

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Sustainable Resource Development is initiating efforts to switch Alberta to barbless-only angling regulations. Many Albertans believe that resource management decisions should be based on a sound foundation of science, and science indicates that there are no clear benefits for implementing these kinds of regulations. It makes more sense to allow this issue to be a personal choice among anglers rather than have government implement a regulation that science indicates will have no clear benefits to the fishing resource. Can the minister tell us what plans or studies he is basing this proposal on?

MR. CARDINAL: Well, Mr. Speaker, scientific information of course is very important, and we definitely consider that as we move forward with changes of this nature. But the commonsense approach, which is what I’m using, is also very, very important in developing policy, because we do gather information from Albertans. It seems that about 50 percent or more support what we are proposing, and the other 50 percent are not opposed to it but do not come out publicly supporting it. That is what we’re using.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MS CARLSON: Does the same minister base this information on any kind of a scientific basis, and how does he plan to enforce this kind of a regulation?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, I think part of the overall strategy we are challenged with in Alberta is in relation to fisheries’ restoration for both the sportfishing industry, which is about a \$350 million industry – over 300,000 anglers participate in that process – and for the 800 commercial fishermen we have, who use up to 34,000 hundred-yard nets for fisheries. At the same time, our economic growth, which is a very positive growth in Alberta, provides additional challenges. We have more people with more dollars interested in these activities. We have more population growth in Alberta, for an example, because we only have 1,000 lakes in Alberta that are fish-bearing lakes, so the resource is limited; the demand is greater. So we have to be very innovative in how we move forward in making changes, taking into consideration the scientific information that’s out there and also using a commonsense approach, which a lot of times you get from the people of Alberta, and that is exactly what we’re doing.

2:20

MS CARLSON: Mr. Speaker, does the minister see this proposed regulation as part of cleaning up government policy that has led to the collapse of fisheries in this province?

MR. CARDINAL: No, Mr. Speaker. You know, it’s a challenging area. I know the Liberals would take the easy way out, and that’s to throw up their hands and give up. Well, on this side of the House we don’t do that. What we do is we carefully assess the situation, the challenges we have, and we work positively to resolve those issues. That’s what this sports fisheries and commercial fisheries rationalization is doing.

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

Edmonton South Indoor Soccer Centre

MR. MASON: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, a day without a question to the Premier is like a day without sunshine, so I’d like to ask him a question today. Indoor soccer is the fastest growing participation sport for children and adults alike. More kids are now playing indoor soccer than are playing minor hockey. Edmonton’s two existing indoor soccer centres are bursting at the seams, and the city desperately needs another indoor soccer centre on the fast-growing south side, but as a result of provincial budget cuts Edmonton Minor Soccer’s plan to have the southeast centre ready for the next indoor season has had to be put on hold indefinitely. My question is to the Premier. Why did the government pull the rug out from under the Edmonton Minor Soccer Association and the kids of southeast Edmonton by axing a previously committed \$3 million provincial contribution to construct a badly needed soccer centre in southeast Edmonton?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I understand that that’s not entirely true, but before I have the hon. Minister of Community Development respond and explain the situation, I will say that budgeting is not an easy task. We do have to assess priorities, and certainly the priority areas of this government are the areas of health, education, solid infrastructure, and safe communities. I know that this all relates to it, but we do have to make some tough decisions from time to time. Relative to this particular project I understand that what the

hon. member says is not entirely true, and I'll have the hon. minister shed some light on it.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member opposite is referring to a soccer centre which basically is planned for the far east end of 51st Avenue, what is true is that that particular group did come to see me. I don't recall the exact date, but as I recall, it was beyond the March 1, 2001, deadline. That is what we refer to as phase 2; those were the ones that were deferred. So the particular application from that particular group, if it's for that particular location, would be considered in phase 3, if we ever get phase 3. At the moment we're still trying to get out of the deferral mode on phase 2. So I think we should just let that member be aware of that.

Now, I'm assuming that he's referring to that one. If it's a different one, then we'll wait to hear it, Mr. Speaker, because I should also say that there is one other soccer centre planned further south. It's just beyond the city limits on 50th street, closer to Beaumont, and that's an entirely different situation.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. MASON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I think the hon. minister is mistaken. This is one of the city of Edmonton's that has been postponed or canceled as a result of the cancellation of provincial funding.

I'm pleased that the Premier has spoken about priorities, and given that, I would like to ask him to justify to the tens of thousands of children who are counting on a new soccer centre being available by next winter his government's decision to instead provide a \$33 million subsidy to the horse racing industry.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, again it was alluded to that the city of Calgary, as I understand it, has one soccer centre. I don't know the details relative to the soccer centre, and the hon. member alluded to this being a city project. I don't know to what extent the city of Edmonton is contributing to this project. I don't know to what extent they have applied for community facility enhancement program funds. I don't know to what extent there have been private funds raised.

I do know, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. Minister of Community Development received about 170 applications for various projects, centennial projects, and there simply isn't enough money. It would have added up to the billions of dollars for all of these projects. He had to prioritize them and make some tough decisions. There's one thing certain about government: you can't please all the people all the time. You know, God forbid the NDs ever get into government, but they'll find that out. I know they found that out in Ontario. Certainly they found it out in a big way in British Columbia.

Mr. Speaker, I forgot what the question was.

THE SPEAKER: Let's move on, then. The hon. member.

MR. MASON: Mr. Speaker, you know, I agree that it's hard to please all the people all the time, but . . .

THE SPEAKER: Hon. member, you have to help me. There's another member waiting to raise questions. The Minister of Community Development's estimates are up this afternoon. If this has to do with his estimates, I'm ruling it out and we're moving on.

MR. MASON: No, it's not, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to ask the Premier why \$33 million in annual subsidies

to horse racing takes precedence over a onetime \$3 million grant to construct the Edmonton south soccer centre?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, this is not a subsidy. This is a program that was developed relative to horse racing, where the number of slot machines that are assigned exclusively to racetracks has been enhanced to allow the horse racing industry to garner some more money to support an industry which in turn supports thousands of jobs in this province and is a vital component of our agricultural sector. I would remind the hon. member that not one penny of taxpayers' dollars is going into this program, and all the money is being generated by the racetracks – by the racetracks.

head: **Members' Statements**

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

Leaders of Tomorrow Awards Volunteer Citizen of the Year Award

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to acknowledge the wonderful volunteer work and contribution to our community of St. Albert of 10 individuals and one group. I wish to acknowledge the Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, who joins me in this congratulatory message.

On Friday evening, April 26, St. Albert's Community Information and Volunteer Centre personnel hosted a banquet and awards ceremony recognizing leaders of tomorrow, who are young people in our community who have shown excellent volunteer and community involvement. They are Ryan Desilets, Jordan Mann, Damien Crockett, Matt Chapelsky, and Arwen Fleming. They join the St. Albert Youth Council in being acknowledged as our leaders of tomorrow winners.

I'd also like to acknowledge the five nominees for the volunteer citizen of the year 2001. Doug Campbell, Lauretta Easson, Dean Krawec, Greta Sterling, and Bill Webber were nominees, and Doug Campbell and Bill Webber were selected as the volunteer citizens of the year for 2001. These are extraordinary individuals who contribute selfless hours of their time and talent in order for us as a community to enjoy a very high quality of life in which neighbour helps neighbour.

So, as I said, on behalf of the Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert and myself I wish to acknowledge their wonderful presence in our community.

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

2:30

Education Week

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The theme for Education Week this April is: encouraging learners to reach new heights. Just what are those new heights has become a matter of public debate in our province. Without calling it specifically that, we have engaged ourselves in an intense debate about the ends of schooling. At the K to 12 level the question has centred on the basics and what we have called the extras. Many believe the basics to be common subjects taught in school such as English, mathematics, and science. However, the withdrawal of teachers' support for extra school activities shook that belief. A large number of citizens are not satisfied with such a narrow definition. They believe that field trips, bands, and sports teams are a basic part of school programming. Parents revealed a similar unwillingness to confine themselves to a narrow definition of schooling in their fund-raising activities, suggesting that gym equipment, computers, computer software all provide support for basic programs.

At the postsecondary level there is alarm over the narrowing of education to programs that result in vocational preparation. The focus on the utilitarian as opposed to the reflective is seen in the large research funds created for medicine and the sciences while the humanities go begging. The debate extends to research, where there is fear that research agendas predicated on support from private enterprise will narrow the definition of research at the expense of the public research agenda.

Education Week provides an opportunity for us to further define what the ends of schooling should be, what those new heights will be. The debate is timely. Definitive answers will emerge as the blue-ribbon panel arising out of Bill 12 completes its work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Glendale Elementary School Earth Day Garden

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday, April 22, I was very honoured to attend a special assembly recognizing International Earth Day 2002 at Glendale elementary school in Calgary-West. This assembly was truly a celebration event for Glendale school and the community as they formally launched their garden project. It was indeed a very wonderful occasion for me to join 275 enthusiastic students, many parents, the school principal and teachers when only one year ago the community faced a CBE decision to close Glendale Meadows, one of their two underutilized elementary schools. Glendale elementary is now fully utilized and integrated, judging by this event. A dedicated parent committee is to be commended – co-ordinator Liz Courage, Tina Donkers, and Lisa Lamb – who worked with principal Lori Pamplin and two student representatives from each classroom.

The project evolved from the decision to make Glendale school as exciting on the outside as the inside. Following research on Canadian and Calgary schools, the committee received input on design and details from literally all of the students, so the Glendale's school garden represents a truly collaborative, unique outdoor classroom. Donations of services and supplies from local businesses, especially Paul McCormick from Green Escape and funds from the Calgary Foundation's neighbourhood grant program, contributed greatly to the project's outcome.

As the garden project developed, many native Alberta plants and shrubs were chosen for their valuable qualities such as the ability to grow naturally in Calgary. Olds College also assisted, and many city kids learned about wheat, barley, canola, and oats, just what their country neighbours are growing. Mr. Speaker, as the program unfolded, I was truly impressed by the participation of the students, from the greeters at the door to the student emcee, to the brief individual student presentations, and to the enthusiastic singing by all of *Saskatoon Blues* with Tom Wilson, Calgary singer and songwriter.

Glendale school has very good reason to be extremely proud of this impressive accomplishment, and I plan to invite our Lieutenant Governor for a special visit in the near future. Thank you.

head: Presenting Petitions

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition. It's signed by 2,239 Albertans asking that the government take action to recognize and protect Bighorn Country. These names, when taken together with the previous 2,116 that have been tabled

here, bring the total number of Albertans who have signed the petition to 4,355. They are specifically requesting:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to support the establishment of Bighorn Country as a legislated protected area.

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

MR. MASON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm presenting today a petition signed by 100 Albertans petitioning the Legislative Assembly to urge the government "to not delist services, raise health care premiums, introduce user fees or further privatize health care."

head: Tabling Returns and Reports

THE CLERK: Pursuant to Standing Order 37.1(2) I wish to advise the House that the following document was deposited today with the office of the Clerk: return to order of the Assembly MR 7, asked for by Dr. Taft on April 29, 2002, the hon. Mr. Klein.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Finance.

MRS. NELSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the requisite number of copies of the Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation's 2001 annual report.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to make another tabling. On March 19 I tabled the government and lottery fund estimates for 2002-2003. I am now having to table a replacement page for page 218. This page shows the statement of operations by entity for the Ministry of Gaming. Unfortunately, due to a problem in our compilation process, page 218 of the estimates was a partial repeat of the previous page, page 217, which showed the statement of operations by program. This tabling does not affect our appropriations being considered by the House.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a couple of tablings today. The first is a letter from Connie Lambrecht to her MLA, the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, asking if it wouldn't be better for the government to reinstate the community lottery board structure so that if future funds become available, the funds can go into an existing structure.

My next tabling, from Maureen Decore, the president of the Citadel Theatre's board of directors, is directed to the Minister of Gaming and points out that on October 4 they were granted an amount of money for improvements to their building. In November they were asked to hold that due to the provincial cutbacks. They were told that the cheque would be issued in April of 2002, and now the community lottery boards are gone. They're wondering where their money is.

My next tabling is from Jodi Zabloudowski, the director of operations for Alberta Easter Seals March of Dimes, explaining how the loss of the community lottery boards is affecting their clients.

A letter signed by Michelle Hill, program co-ordinator with the Diamond Spring Lodge and Golden Villa Apartments in Redwater, asking for community lottery boards to be reinstated so that they can improve their quality of life with benches, planters, furniture, and wheelchair-accessible gardens.

A letter from Christine Rechico, a board member with Edmonton Meals on Wheels. The group spent time preparing a detailed grant application for lottery board money and now cannot get access to those funds.

Finally, a submission from Alberta Easter Seals that I mentioned

to the Minister of Gaming, the listing of 25 of their clients and the specialized equipment that they need and the cost of that, which they can now no longer get from the community lottery boards.

Thank you.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first is from Connie Fogal, who states that "when the G8 meets in Kananaskis, Alberta, Canada in May 2002, it is crucial that as many seniors as possible stand together with the younger generations" in protest.

The second tabling is from Glen and Brenda Niskaaro, who support midwives in this province. Thank you.

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

MR. MASON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My first tabling is a letter from Manny Langman, the vice-chair of the St. Albert public library, addressed to the Premier. Mr. Langman is disappointed with the government's decision to eliminate the community lottery board program and is strongly urging the Premier to restore the community lottery boards.

The second tabling is a city of Edmonton document regarding the financing of a new indoor soccer facility in southeast Edmonton. The city is placing this project on hold because of the cancellation of the centennial legacy fund grant program.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**
(reversion)

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

MR. HUTTON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand up today to introduce two important people in my life as an MLA. Sitting in the public gallery today is Betty Saurette, owner of Cut-6 hair salon. She was a very important individual working with me on my campaign and was a strong supporter. Accompanying Betty today is my constituency manager, Judi Kendall, who takes care of all the details in my constituency office. I would ask them both to please rise and accept the warm welcome.

2:40

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader on a purported point of order.

Point of Order
Use of Quotations in Oral Questions

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to our Standing Order 23(h), which clearly states:

A member will be called to order by the Speaker if, in the Speaker's opinion, that member . . .

(h) makes allegations against another member.

Also, I'd like to quote section (i), which goes on to read: or if that member "imputes false or unavowed motives to another member." I believe we saw a bit of that today when the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods rose in question period to question the hon. Minister of Children's Services.

The issue at heart here, Mr. Speaker, was a quote which I believe

he used. I don't have the benefit of the Blues, but I recall the use of the word "tragically," and I quickly scanned through here. I think he was referring to page 973 of yesterday's *Hansard*, wherein the Minister of Children's Services said:

It's entirely possible today that some of those children are already back with their families, and in some cases, tragically, I'm told that we can't locate some of those parents, because those are children than have been taken into protection sometimes because parents have not been available to do the job that parents should be doing.

That is the full quote. Unfortunately, by the way that that member phrased his question, he stopped after a particular comma in the sentence and only read this part of the quote: "It's entirely possible today that some of those children are already back with their families, and in some cases, tragically." Now, if I stop there, it would seem to me that the inference and the usage of "tragically" refers to the fact that some of those children are already back with their families. That's not a tragedy, Mr. Speaker. "Tragically" refers to what follows, and that is the tone in which our hon. Minister of Children's Services used that phrase.

I find it highly, highly disrespectful and a total disregard for this House. In nine years of this hon. member sitting in this House, a member, I might add, for whom I have had the greatest of respect — he is, after all, a former professor of education, a former author of books for children, a former curriculum developer. His credentials in that regard . . .

MS CARLSON: Careful. Careful.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Please, hon. member. I'll give you a chance. This is a highly, highly serious matter. I don't interrupt you, and I don't expect you to interrupt me, Edmonton-Ellerslie, so hear it out.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if I might continue. I don't often get steamed up, as you well know, but on this one I think something has to be done. This particular member does have a lot of respect on both sides of the House, but this particular usage of a misread, almost a misquote, feeds directly into a form of misrepresentation that does impute a false motive onto another member of this House. It's almost an issue of privilege. I won't go there, but I will call for the member, hopefully, to be brought to order.

I want to also cite pages 426 and 427 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, wherein it states, in this case referring to how question period should run: "Furthermore, a question should not . . . create disorder." This member has, in my view, created some disorder.

One other point of reference, Mr. Speaker. On page 525 of the same book, which is *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, it states:

Generally, Members should not quote from their former speeches or from the speeches of their colleagues made during the current session; the rule does not apply to speeches on different stages of a bill. Direct reference is permitted, however, when a Member wishes to complain of something said or to clear up a misrepresentation or make a personal explanation.

That's not how this particular quote was used. In fact, instead of clearing up a misrepresentation, which did not happen, this member has, in my view, created a misrepresentation.

Mr. Speaker, we sit in this House, some of us for many years, yourself being a great example and a fine legacy to your constituents, where you work hard to try and be as accurate in your delivery of your speeches, as carefully researched in your facts as you possibly can be, and we all strive for that. But when a member takes and misquotes or misreads or deliberately stops a quote at a certain point from the *Hansard* of this House, which is our Holy Grail — we're not talking about some magazine or some newspaper article

that may have been misheard or stopped short because of some other reason. We're talking about our own *Hansard*. The people in *Hansard* go to great lengths, as we all know, to provide us almost within 24 hours whenever possible with a record of what has been said. Now, the hon. member surely must have checked that quote, and I can't come to any other conclusion than a deliberate stoppage after a particular comma in the middle of a sentence. As a former professor I wonder what he would have done to one of his students if one of his students had dared to pull that kind of trick on him.

I'm sorry to get a bit personal on this, hon. member, but I'm really riled by this, and I would hope, bearing in mind the integrity with which I wish to continue holding this member, he might reconsider, perhaps withdraw, maybe even issue an apology such as it might be to the hon. Minister of Children's Services. No one in this House is working harder to protect those children than this minister, and I know that for a fact.

Mr. Speaker, in the interests of time I will stop there and look forward to your honourable ruling in due regard.

Thank you.

MS CARLSON: Mr. Speaker, as dramatic as that speech was, we do not find that it was a point of order, and in fact it's unfortunate that we can't do points of orders on points of orders, because there was certainly a personal attack flowing through that tirade against the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mr. Speaker, if we take a look at the exchange and the question that this point of order has been raised on, we will see that on page 973, as the member correctly quoted, there was an exchange yesterday in question period that the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods took part of his question from today. If you take a look at that exchange, it could be read the way the Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek stated that it was, but in fact there are many different interpretations on a particular sentence stated by this minister yesterday. The sentence being 56 words long, it's very easy for a member, particularly one who has a strong background in English and grammatically correct sentence structure, to take a look at that and read the sentence: "It's entirely possible today that some of those children are already back with their families, and in some cases, tragically . . ." and I respond that the initial response from the minister to this question would indicate that that is exactly how she took the question. She accepted the question as presented and began to answer it in terms of how some are tragic.

AN HON. MEMBER: Shame on you.

MS CARLSON: There is nothing to be ashamed of in answering a question or responding to a question, Mr. Speaker, that talks about the care of children, about plans that aren't filed, and about the subsequent tragic results for these children. There is no point of order here. The minister responded. It was after her colleague sitting beside her handed her *Hansard* that she decided to change the way she was answering the question. So there is no point of order on this particular question.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader on this point.

MR. HANCOCK: Just on that final point, Mr. Speaker. It's so obnoxious that it must be responded to. That exactly proves the rule. The hon. member misquoted in order to get a response from the hon. member, who may or may not have recollected exactly the words she said yesterday, and it was only upon the Deputy Government House Leader checking *Hansard* to see the full text of the quote that we were able to prompt the minister to know exactly what was said

yesterday. That is exactly the stuff and substance of the point of order. The hon. member totally misled the minister in his question, expecting her not to recollect exactly her words of yesterday, exactly the point of order made by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie on our behalf.

THE SPEAKER: Well. I thought we were actually doing quite well today.

The quotation is the following, and I think it is important to have all hon. members see the question that came from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Minister of Children's Services referred to some of the 600 children whose case plans were not filed with the courts. She said . . .

And then the hon. member goes on to quote.

"It's entirely possible today that some of those children are already back with their families, and in some cases, tragically." My questions are to the Minister of Children's Services. Does the minister know of cases where children were actually put back in families where tragedy befell them?

2:50

Then the next question from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Again, to the same minister, Mr. Speaker. Does the minister know of children who were put back in homes where tragedy befell them?

Then the hon. minister said:

Mr. Speaker, I have to thank my colleagues so that in the rest of this Assembly you're not misled by excerpts from my statement.

The hon. minister went on to quote from *Hansard* at page 973.

Then the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods said:

Mr. Speaker, if there's one child that's put into a tragic situation, that's what's wrong with that. My question is to the minister: given that there are alternative actions the department can legally take, why would any child be put back in a risky situation?

There was an intervention with respect to that.

Now, our Standing Order 23 says:

A member will be called to order by the Speaker if, in the Speaker's opinion, that member . . .

(d) refers at length to debates of the current session or reads unnecessarily from *Hansard* or from any other document, but a member may quote relevant passages for the purposes of a complaint about something said or of a reply to an alleged misrepresentation.

I suppose it's quite subjective, then, to determine whether or not the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods quoted necessarily or unnecessarily with respect to that. It was a brevity of a larger quote, and one hon. member who then rose on the point of order basically said that that gave a different direction to it.

Well, when the chair listened to all of this, the chair had great difficulty trying to determine how anybody could raise a point of order with respect to this. Having heard the impassioned presentation made by the hon. Deputy Government House Leader, one can see that there's obviously a dispute between members. No doubt at all about that.

Now, the chair has not heard from either the person who raised the question or the hon. minister. Others have spoken on their behalf, which is quite okay, but it might have helped with respect to this. I heard the word "personal" as well come in here once or twice during this exchange, and it would seem to me that it's very difficult to find how this is a point of order, regardless of the emotion that one wants to address to it.

In reading the text, it looks rather black and white and dull with respect to anything. There are differences of views, no doubt at all, with respect to this. The chair would have intervened if somebody

would have read a four-page quote out of *Hansard* with respect to this but, in looking at the questions that were raised and the context in which it was put, has great difficulty finding that this is a point of order.

The hon. Opposition House Leader on a purported point of order.

Point of Order

Allegations against Members

Brevity in Question Period

MS CARLSON: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order against the Minister of Energy in question period, an exchange between him and the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. I don't have the Blues in front of me, but the intent of the comments made by the Minister of Energy were to attribute decisions made by the federal Liberals to those of us here in the Official Opposition. So I rise under 23(h), where it says, "makes allegations against another member." In fact, he made an allegation against all of the members of the Official Opposition.

This has become a habit of this particular minister, Mr. Speaker. It is uncalled for, I believe, in this Legislature to make those kinds of allegations. He knows clearly that he is talking about the federal Liberals, with which we have little or no association and certainly no responsibility for any decisions made by them. So we would like him called to account for that, including another part of what he stated in terms of the length of his answers to the questions. I refer you to *Beauchesne's* 417, where it says, "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate."

Clearly, when he gives very, very lengthy answers to questions, as he did today, and he accuses us of being responsible for decisions made by federal Liberals and insinuates that those decisions are our responsibility, he is no doubt provoking debate.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Anyone on this point of order? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands on this point of order.

MR. MASON: Mr. Speaker, given that this is very similar to the point of order I wished to raise, perhaps it would be better if I just respond to . . .

THE SPEAKER: You want to put them both together?

MR. MASON: Yeah.

THE SPEAKER: Good. Go ahead.

MR. MASON: Thank you. I was going to rise on 417 in *Beauchesne's* as well, Mr. Speaker, because it seems to me that while we're all guilty from time to time of being partisan and we're all guilty from time to time of liking to hear ourselves talk – and I certainly do not think that I am exempt from that by any means; I'm not trying to say that – the minister's answers are extensively lengthy. He seems to go out of his way even when responding to a question from a member of his own caucus to attack the opposition parties, and that, I think, is not in keeping with 417.

Thank you.

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, if I'm being too hard in my comments to the opposition parties, who are elected to serve here, and if they find the rough-and-tumble of parliamentary debate, which I've heard you personally encourage on so many occasions as to the efficacy of each of the members in this House, if it's too much for them,

certainly I can try hard to tone down my comments with respect to the opposition parties. The fact that the Liberal opposition party has been in opposition here in Alberta since 1915 and on some occasions there weren't any of them at all – although there are clear and direct links outside of this House, if it's just too much for them, certainly I'll be a little lighter.

With respect, Mr. Speaker, to *Beauchesne* 417, an important ruling that was written far, far before the period of electrical deregulation, electrical competitive restructuring. It's a complicated market. I feel an obligation, a responsibility to bring these important issues to the House, to each and every member, whether they're rural members, which I think are very, very valuable and the backbone part of this great House, whether they come from the cities and they are served by publicly owned utilities. I just feel that it's literally a moral obligation as well as a ministerial responsibility.

MR. HANCOCK: Just as quickly, Mr. Speaker, on the question of rule 417 and the matter of brevity, brevity is obviously a judgment call which has to be made with respect to the complexity and the completeness of the issue. It's been the common ground in this House that the discussion of electrical deregulation is one of the most complex issues that has been dealt with in the House, and it stands to reason that in answers to questions with respect to electrical deregulation and other issues with respect to electricity, a full and complete answer is appropriate. The question of brevity surely has to be taken in the context of the topic and the answer necessary to complete the question.

THE SPEAKER: Well, hon. members, we'll take these two points of order together. Hon. Minister of Energy, you really didn't help and contribute much to this particular point of order.

I might point out that 23(h) and (i) suggest allegations and imputation of false motives. In the previous ruling with the previous point of order with respect to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods to the hon. minister the suggestion was that there was an imputation of false motives, and then the hon. Minister of Energy getting up and suggesting that the chair would encourage debate during the question period is absolutely erroneous. There is no debate during question period. The purpose of question period is to solicit information about government policy. If the hon. minister would have said that the hon. Speaker certainly would encourage debate amongst members outside of the question period, then the member would have been correct.

So it's very similar to the first ruling that we made today. Hon. minister, you are invited to participate in all of these points at any time you want to; however, it would help . . .

Okay. Brevity seemed to be the thing. The other one was, I guess, political baiting. Perhaps that would be the vernacular that one might use. Well, I guess all hon. members arrived here by the way of a certain colour that they wear with respect to their shirt and/or anything else, and it is absolutely correct that documents all say that we should not have statements that encourage provocative statements and what have you. But, hon. members, if that is the case with respect to that directed to the hon. Minister of Energy, then it can also be said with respect to other hon. members who do it from time to time. So I'm sure that the hon. Minister of Energy would probably even concede himself that perhaps sometimes it is not the best usage of words that he actually comes up with, but he would probably want to reflect on that, and I think I've heard him say that he would reflect on that in the future as well.

3:00

Now, on the question of brevity it's really kind of interesting,

because here is what the time factor was for the exchange of all the questions in the Assembly today. To the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands it just may seem like it's an eternity when the hon. Minister of Energy is involved in responding to another member with respect to a question, but the reality is that in terms of the lengths of what the questions were to the particular member of Executive Council today, the two questions addressed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands and the responses contained therein both arrived at just around six minutes plus a few seconds. Those were the two longest exchanges. In the situation with respect to the Minister of Energy and the exchange between the Member for St. Albert it was less than five minutes and a half, and then in the exchange for the questions between the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar and the hon. Minister of Energy it was approximately five minutes.

Now, what may appear to be such isn't necessarily such in fact and actuality. However, having said that, if it appears to hon. members in this House – and it seems to be shared by more than just one or two – that the exchange given by the hon. Minister of Energy does seem to lead to almost what seems to be an eternity, the chair would just simply like to quote from *Hansard* on page 799 on April 18, 2002, and the chair provided this as encouragement to members before:

At the same time that that advice is being provided to the members who direct questions, to those who reply to questions, the intent is to be brief, to as much as possible deal with the matter raised, and certainly not to have controversial or contentious comments in the responses that might lead to disorder.

This is given to all hon. members, not only to the Minister of Energy.

So we will deal with these two latter points of order the same way we dealt with the first one, and we will move on.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Government Bills and Orders**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After continuing communication on the issues surrounding supply considerations – I should say that those communications have been with the Official Opposition and the third party – I do now seek the unanimous consent of the Assembly to waive Standing Order 58(4) to allow this afternoon's considerations of the estimates of the Department of Community Development 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.

Thank you.

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Tannas in the chair]

THE CHAIR: I'd like to call the Committee of Supply to order.

head: **Main Estimates 2002-03**

Community Development

THE CHAIR: I'd ask if there are any questions or comments to be offered with respect to these estimates and call on the hon. Minister of Community Development to begin.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's indeed a great pleasure for me to rise before you and other members in the Assembly today to present the three-year business plan and the budget estimates for 2002-2003 for the Ministry of Community Development, which I'm very proud to represent. The mandate of this ministry is very diverse, as most members here will know. It covers vital areas of importance to all Albertans, and it also impacts the quality of life of every citizen. Specifically, this ministry is responsible for addressing and helping persons with developmental and other disabilities and protecting those in care from potential abuse; sports and recreation; arts and culture; film classification and artistic development within the film industry; public libraries; volunteer development; human rights, citizenship, and the status of women; historic sites, museums, and cultural facilities; provincial parks and protected areas; planning for our upcoming centennial; liaison avec notre Secrétariat Francophone; and the Queen's jubilee, and so on. As well, the ministry includes a number of reporting agencies and foundations. I am proud of the quality of programs and activities undertaken by this ministry, and I'm proud of the individuals who work collaboratively with communities across Alberta to help realize our vision of creating a vibrant province where Albertans experience fair opportunity for the quality of life to which they aspire.

I would like to acknowledge some of these individuals – there are many – and formally thank them and all the volunteers with whom they serve on their respective boards for their sincere efforts. My colleague from the constituency of Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan, who chairs the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities; my colleague from the constituency of Calgary-Montrose, who chairs the Advisory Committee on the Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Education Fund; my colleague from the constituency of Bonnyville-Cold Lake, chair of the Francophone Secretariat, notre président; Ms Betty Thompson, chair of the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Provincial Board. As well, Mr. Chair, I'd like to acknowledge the very significant contribution that was made by the previous chair, Mr. Alan Anderton, who unfortunately left us and passed away recently. Mr. Charlach Mackintosh, chief commissioner of the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission; Dr. Jeffrey Anderson, chair of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, and Mr. Jock Osler, the previous chair; Mr. Orest Korbitt, chair of the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation; Mr. Brian Calliou, chair of the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation; Mr. Krishan Joshee, chair of the Wild Rose Foundation; and Mrs. Linda Mackenzie, chair of the Government House Foundation. As you can see, we cover a very broad gamut of interests and activities.

Our ministry has been in existence in its current form for one year, and due to these individuals just noted, their dedication and efforts on behalf of all Albertans, we have been able to solidify our programs and work very effectively as a team. I would particularly like to express my appreciation to all of these individuals and in particular to my deputy minister, Dr. Bill Byrne, who is in the gallery today with some of our staff. [some applause] Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. I'd ask that they convey my thanks to their staff members who are not here.

3:10

I'd like to present a brief overview with respect to the business plan for '02-03 specifically, and I'll follow that up, Mr. Chair, with some budget highlights. Given our diverse mandate, the ministry's mission continues to focus on enhancing and preserving the quality of life for Albertans. Our core businesses are derived from our mandate, and the ministry provides the leadership in advancing a

high quality of life for Albertans through these following five core businesses. They are:

1. promoting community development;
2. protecting human rights and promoting fairness and access;
3. supporting the inclusion and participation of Albertans with disabilities and protecting persons in care;
4. preserving, protecting and presenting Alberta's history and culture; and
5. preserving, protecting and presenting Alberta's parks and protected areas.

In support of these core businesses the ministry's five major goals are:

1. To design and deliver programs and services that nurture and support, in collaboration with geographic communities and communities of interest, a high quality of life in Alberta.
2. To design and deliver programs and services that increase understanding and awareness of diversity, foster equality and reduce discrimination so all Albertans have the opportunity to participate in the social, economic and cultural life of the province.
3. To design and deliver individual-based programs that ensure that Albertans who live with a disability have opportunity to participate in the social, economic and cultural life of the province and ensure that adult Albertans in care are protected from abuse.
4. To design and deliver programs and services that preserve, protect, research, present and promote appreciation for Alberta's historical resources and culture, and that provide significant educational, scientific and economic benefits.
5. To manage and maintain Alberta's provincial parks and protected areas to preserve the province's natural heritage and provide opportunities for heritage appreciation, outdoor recreation and heritage tourism.

Mr. Chair, the business plan for 2002-2005 continues in the direction set out last year, and its implementation is guided by the values of commitment, innovation, integrity, respect, a focus on teamwork, and a positive attitude.

Some of the key strategies for the upcoming year include:

- Support the Aboriginal Policy Initiative through the repatriation of ceremonial and sacred objects, through assistance in development of government policy for unregistered burials, and through creating partnerships with Aboriginal people to preserve, protect and present Aboriginal culture.
- Consult with persons with disabilities to identify and eliminate barriers to their participation in the social, economic and cultural life of the province.
- Deliver high-quality compliance and regulatory services in resolving and adjudicating complaints of alleged discrimination.
- Develop new provincial parks and protected areas legislation to consolidate and streamline existing legislation and to provide a sound basis for the management and protection of Alberta's expanded network of provincial parks and protected areas.
- Design and deliver programs to improve the ability of persons with developmental disabilities to participate more fully in all aspects of life in Alberta.
- Collaborate with ministries across government to further achievement of the goals of the government's priority policy initiatives

related to health, economic development, children and youth, and aboriginals; support the realization of the government's key administrative initiatives in the areas of information management, human resources, Corporate Service Centre, and the Alberta one-window initiative, and finally

- Coordinate Alberta's 2005 Centennial Initiative, which will provide opportunities for all Albertans to participate in the

celebrations and leave a legacy for future generations, in partnership with other ministries, foundations, communities, non-profit organizations, municipalities and the federal government. This will include, in partnership with Alberta Infrastructure, site renovations to the new home of the Provincial Archives of Alberta

and the establishment of the new educational wing at the Royal Tyrrell Museum in Drumheller.

On the issue of performance measures I would like to say that this ministry assesses its performance in achieving the goals of each core business through a solid range of performance measures. These measures are grouped under the overall categories of participation, satisfaction, quality of life, and economic impact to assist us in determining whether our mission, "to enhance and preserve the quality of life for Albertans," is being achieved. Given the transfer of responsibility for preserving, protecting, and presenting Alberta's provincial parks and protected areas to Community Development last year, a new measure to gauge visitors' satisfaction with their experiences at provincial parks and recreation areas was developed for the 2002-2003 fiscal year. Another new measure introduced this cycle focuses on the PDD program, persons with developmental disabilities, and it addresses the satisfaction of families or guardians of individuals receiving benefits. As well, "historical resources" was added to the measure addressing Albertans' perception of Community Development programs that contribute to the overall quality of life.

We will strive to meet or exceed our targets for the upcoming cycle. We will further strive to achieve excellence in the delivery of our programs, whether they are delivered directly through the ministry or in collaboration with our partners and stakeholders across the province.

With respect to ministry budget highlights, Mr. Chair, I want to briefly say that having provided a brief overview of some of the key components of the business plan, I will turn the latter part of my attention here specifically to the ministry budget for '02-03. The ministry's budget for the incoming year, which started a month ago, demonstrates a managed approach to budgeting at a time of global economic uncertainty while addressing ministry pressure points. The operating budget for '02-03 is approximately \$583 million, a net increase of approximately \$22 million from the fiscal year budget for 2001-2002.

I will now address some of the specific budgetary highlights. To begin with, the operating budget of the persons with developmental disabilities program, PDD, will increase by approximately \$30 million in Budget '02, up to an all-time high of \$407 million. In a time of fiscal restraint this increase demonstrates our government's commitment to sustain this very important program, which serves some of Alberta's most vulnerable citizens. The increased funding will enable the implementation of these selected strategic directions from the Building Better Bridges final report on programs and services in support of persons with developmental disabilities, which, I'm proud to tell you, I authored. Also, Mr. Chair, support specifically through this increase will be used primarily to provide for growth in the number of PDD recipients and to address wage increases to approximately 10,000 employees in and amongst our contracted community agencies. It's very good news during this very difficult budget time. This wage increase of course will enable community agencies to recruit and retain quality staff. This program serves approximately 8,000 adult Albertans and their families or guardians. It provides support for community living, employment, community access, and specialized supports aimed at enabling inclusion of persons with developmental disabilities into the community.

Approximately \$2.5 million in funding will be provided to the Alberta brain injury initiative. That's an increase of \$1 million from the amount budgeted last year. This will enable the continued development and implementation of this important and, should I say, long-awaited initiative. A provincial network of support and outreach services to assist individuals with acquired brain injury will continue to be developed and include contracted regional coordinators to work with local communities to develop a province-wide system of community-based resources.

With respect to library boards, operating grants to Alberta's 234 library boards and seven regional systems will increase by \$537,000 to a total of \$17.2 million. In actual fact, the total increase will more than likely be closer to about \$700,000 when we administer the new population counts. This funding increase to libraries is to keep pace with our growing population. Our public libraries play an essential role in providing a variety of information services to all Albertans, and the ministry will continue to be a key partner in supporting the delivery of public library services across the province.

Albertans are very proud of their diverse recreational, educational, social, cultural, and heritage programs and activities and recognize their contribution to the outstanding quality of life we are fortunate to enjoy. Approximately \$53 million will be spent in support of provincial, regional, and community-based organizations and individuals through Community Development's five lottery-funded agencies. The breakdown, Mr. Chair, for all members, who are interested I'm sure, will be as follows.

First, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts will have an operating budget of approximately \$21.4 million to assist individual artists and arts organizations in the visual, performing, and literary arts and cultural industries. As part of this allocation Community Development is continuing its commitment to the Alberta film development program by providing \$5 million in base funding for the '02-03 fiscal year. This program has sparked outstanding growth in Alberta's film industry, supporting over 100 productions ranging from the new CBC drama series *Tom Stone* to the Genie award-winning motion picture *The War Bride*. I want to thank my hon. colleague from Airdrie-Rocky View for her assistance in this regard.

The Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation will have an operating budget of approximately \$16.87 million to support the development of recreation, sport, and parks and wildlife activities by providing assistance to almost 100 provincial recreation and sports organizations. These funds are also used to help sponsor major games and to support the development of active lifestyles.

3:20

The Wild Rose Foundation will have an operating budget of approximately \$7.3 million to support nonprofit community service organizations that promote the use of volunteers and foster charitable, philanthropic, or humanitarian acts.

The Alberta Historical Resources Foundation will have an operating budget of approximately \$6.1 million to support individuals, community-based organizations, and provincewide heritage agencies involved in a broad range of heritage preservation activities ranging from building restoration to the publication of local histories.

The human rights, citizenship, and multiculturalism education fund will have an operating budget of approximately \$1.2 million to provide financial assistance to Alberta community organizations undertaking human rights and diversity initiatives that lead to change as well as supporting the educational work of the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission.

La communauté Francophone de l'Alberta enrichit notre tissu culturel, et je me réjouis de la conclusion en mars d'une nouvelle

entente fédérale/provinciale de trois ans permettant au ministère de s'engager d'avantage dans le soutien des activités du développement communautaire de ces groupes. Ce programme se compose d'une contribution du gouvernement fédéral de beaucoup d'argent mis à la disposition des associations communautaires Francophones selon un ensemble de priorités établies localement afin de promouvoir la culture Francophone dans notre province. And we're very proud of that.

The translation, more or less, Mr. Chairman, would be that the Francophone community in Alberta enriches our cultural fabric, and I'm pleased that a new three-year federal/provincial agreement was concluded in March, a month ago, to enable this ministry to further support our groups' community development activities. It's a program that consists of a federal contribution of approximately a quarter million dollars made available to Francophone community groups in accordance with a set of priorities established locally to further Francophone culture in the province. There you have it.

These foundations all carry out work that enhances Albertans' quality of life and deserve our support. If provincial revenue targets are met this year, plans are to increase funding for these worthy programs in 2003-2004.

The centennial legacies grant program I will comment on briefly. As you know, it's been deferred, and there may be . . .

THE CHAIR: Hon. minister, we apparently have a point of order. Hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, your point of order.

Point of Order

Translation of Remarks in French

MS CARLSON: Mr. Chairman, I'm rising on a point of order. In Standing Orders it's been the tradition of this Assembly, when we receive information in a language other than English, to have a written translation in front of us so that we can follow it. Now, I know that the minister loosely translated off the page, but it did not sound exact to me, and I would like to have the documentation in front of me to review.

THE CHAIR: The hon. minister on the point of order.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie. I do have the document here. I asked for it earlier, and I just received it now, so I'll get it photocopied and ensure that all members receive it. If I could get some assistance from a page, please. Could we please have this page photocopied and presented to all members as a translation of what was said. Thank you.

Debate Continued

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Mr. Chairman, I thought you were signaling me that time was over. I didn't realize it was a point of order. So in the three minutes that I have left, I would just say that the centennial legacies grant program, which provided funding for the construction or renovation of major publicly accessible facilities by municipalities and nonprofit groups, was unfortunately deferred on October 18, 2001. The program will continue to be on hold, unfortunately, until the province's financial situation improves and new provincial moneys are allocated. Nonetheless, in collaboration with Alberta Infrastructure two key capital projects will continue in 2002-2003. The renovation of the new home of the Provincial Archives in Edmonton is one, and the other will be the educational wing project which is being constructed at the Royal Tyrrell Museum in Drumheller.

With respect to FTEs and staff reductions, may I just say that in our efforts to balance our budget and ensure the continuation of priority programs, it was necessary to undertake a net reduction of 83 FTEs, or full-time equivalents, in the '02-03 budget. Of these reductions, the majority are expected to be achieved through attrition and administrative streamlining.

In conclusion and in summary, I want to assure you that we will strive for excellence as we implement our business plan over the coming year and that we will continue to be responsive to our clients' and stakeholders' needs as we jointly focus on enhancing and preserving the quality of life for Albertans.

Mr. Chair, this will conclude my formal remarks, and I would be pleased to entertain questions. May I just say to those people who will be asking questions or presenting their comments or observations that if the comments are of a generic or a broad nature, then we'll try and address them as best we can here right now. If they're of a more detailed, more specific nature, then I will undertake to provide answers in writing. It would be very helpful, to make sure we understand the questions very specifically, if when questions are being asked, the questioners could cite the page in the estimates and the line item if it's so applicable.

With that, Mr. Chair, I see that my time is up. I will relinquish the floor to other speakers. Thank you.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm glad to be able to get a chance to start off the debate and questioning on the estimates, the budget, for the Department of Community Development today. We have an agreement with the minister. I will do part 1. I'm followed by the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie briefly, and then I'll return to do part 2. Then the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie will speak on parks, followed by the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry speaking on PDD.

We all know that this is probably the most multifaceted department that exists in government today. I think there are 30 some odd different components to this one ministry. It is my favourite ministry because this is the one I know the best. It's the one I once worked for as a STEP student, a university student, many years ago, in 1976 I think, in what was then Alberta Culture. The one thing I have to say that I don't miss is writing grant proposals, a truly awful job and one that everybody that is now working in the arts or sports or volunteerism, anybody in the NGO sector, is going to have to get really good at. I don't miss it at all, because it's a very difficult job.

I'd like to start by first looking at page 106, which is the breakdown for the Alberta Foundation for the Arts statement of operations. I'd like to raise just a couple of issues under this. No surprise to the minister that I'll be raising the point yet again that there has been no increase in funding for the arts in Alberta under this budget. The minister very carefully walked through the total amounts of money being designated to each foundation, and as I went along and checked with him, in most cases there's been no change. There hasn't been a change in many of those areas for many, many, many years. Indeed, there is no change in the funding for the arts. It's remained at \$16.4 million since before 1990. We have had the addition of \$5 million for the film fund, that's been added into that within the last couple of years, which brings it up to \$21.4 million.

We continue to have demand upon the Alberta Foundation for the Arts that's more than it can meet. There is, in fact, still a funding formula in place, but the maximum amounts that are supposedly achievable under the granting formula are never reached by organizations. I spoke to the artistic director at Latitude 53, which is an alternative visual art company here in Edmonton, and he was

able to give me some very specific examples which I'll bring into the debate to enlighten everyone today. For example, Latitude 53 qualifies for a grant in the amount of \$61,896 according to the AFA formula, but they only received \$40,549 in the most recent round of funding. It should qualify for funding equal to 30 percent of its total community support, but it is in fact only receiving somewhere between 14 and 22 percent of what it is eligible for.

3:30

At a certain point I think the formulas become redundant because there is no attachment to reality there and there hasn't been for some time. I know that the AFA has tried a number of different funding formulas and allocations. They went about and did a blueprint a couple of years ago, that they're trying to implement. Again, if there's not going to be the money there to achieve any of this, at times I wonder why we're making anybody jump through all the hoops. The money's not there and hasn't been, and there's no commitment from this government to increase it that I can see coming. I had hopes that when we had this particular individual installed as the minister, there might be an improvement there, but we're now into his second budget, and I don't see it. So there's disappointment there.

The second issue around the arts that's been raised with me is the one grant per organization rule. Now, some people are very quick to jump up and say: oh, that's about double-dipping; it's about double-dipping. No, it isn't. I've just talked about how we can't even come anywhere near to granting the amount of money that these organizations are eligible for. The department itself came up with project grant funding and said: "Here's another way that you can get money. If you have a onetime only or special project, you can apply to us for money. Look, there's another grant over here that's called CFEP. If you need help with a facility, to renovate or to build something new, then you can get money from CFEP." It's the government itself that came up with all these different ideas about how to augment what these arts groups were in fact getting, so don't turn around and tell me: double-dipping. This was all to augment what these groups were trying to do.

The truth is that now they can't even do that. If they want to get a project grant, then that's all they can get. They can't get operational funding. So what's the result been? No special projects, nothing moving forward, nothing enhancing what's going on because it would jeopardize their operational funding to do that. The granting and funds have been impacted not only by zero increases but also by a larger pool of applicants. That of course is resulting in less and less money available for each applicant. Smaller pieces of the same pie.

One of the issues being raised in discussions with Latitude 53 is the artist in residence program. There's a suggestion that perhaps the resources to pay for this program should be coming out of Learning instead of coming out of Community Development because it is about teaching and it's about working with students and exposing students to artistic and creative endeavours. I spoke at length with the Minister of Human Resources and Employment about an employment training program that they're looking at, working in the cultural sector. Maybe there's something else that could be considered there. I'm interested in that minister's reaction to this. So a question as well to the Minister of Learning: are they contemplating doing anything to alleviate the financial strain that's experienced in the art field by picking up some of the funding obligations here?

I know that some people feel quite strongly that the AFA has twisted itself in knots and is administratively nonfunctional at this point. I can't comment on that. I don't know enough about it, but certainly that's what I hear from members of the community.

One of the issues around peer adjudication – and it's something I've always been really proud about in Alberta – is that we did have peer juries and peer adjudication to decide on grants so that we had people with some idea of whether a given artistic company had merit, whether they had experience, whether there's somebody that should be considered, and indeed whether their proposals should be considered. I'm very concerned when I hear back from some artists that they've been told with a wink and a nudge that the applications are being held up by bureaucrats somewhere in the line. I guess what I should do is speak outside of the Assembly to the minister on where that seems to be raised for me, but I'll put it on the record here.

Now, the film fund is still sitting at \$5 million. I know that the minister was recently at the AMPA awards. I'm unable to track back and confirm a quote, but there was something about a 20 percent increase there but that that would have to be negotiated. I'm not sure what that was about, so I might as well ask the minister if there's any more money coming into that fund or any expectation or even any desire to have more money go into that fund.

I'd like to know where we are with the PASOs. They've now been in place for more than five years. What's the review on those? That's the provincial arts service organization, and there are about five of them. I'd like to know: has that been reviewed? Is there any monitoring there, any evaluation of whether they're successful or not? Are they serving the arts community, or do they just serve the government?

Moving on, what exactly is arts development? On page 106 under expenses under programs it says: artist development, \$1.331 million. What exactly is that? I know that there's a new program that's been showing up, and I thought it said arts development. This one looks like it says artist development. I'm wondering if the minister could comment on that, please.

I'm going to move on generally to talk about federal initiatives because it's somewhat connected to this. The federal government has been putting a good deal of money into the cultural sector, including cultural facilities. They have announced a big push into the arts sector for historical preservation and cultural facilities. I'm wondering: what has the province been able to do to work with the federal government on these programs? I think there's about \$80 million to be had through the cultural facilities programs, matching funds from Alberta. Nowhere in this budget do I see any matching funds. So is Alberta now going to lose out on a potential \$80 million coming from the feds because we can't step up to the plate with our matching dollars? That's a lot of money to kiss goodbye to in this province, particularly when it would help us with some of our aging cultural facilities or with some of the facilities that we don't in fact have. We're not very good on the new spaces that have more of a multipurpose use. I can also think of some new theatre spaces that we were looking at. Catalyst Theatre in Edmonton has been agitating for some time. As well, the Pleiades Theatre in Calgary is working to move into the Calgary Tower and do major renovations to a space there. All of these could be eligible for this money from the feds, but the province has to step up to the plate here.

As well, there has been some suggestion that the CFEP program having a cap on it of \$125,000 is limiting us, again with specific reference to the federal program as well as other programs, when that's all that can be leveraged out of that. Has the minister considered either taking the cap off per grant or looking at exceptional circumstances if necessary? That's something I'd like to suggest.

I have approached the minister about the arts' Habitat project. In fact, I think they were referred to the CFEP program, who then came back and said: nope, sorry; you don't qualify. You know, once

again, Mr. Minister, here is a project that could really carry us forward. It's an excellent project. It benefits the arts. It benefits the cultural workers in the arts. They've worked a long time to put all the pieces together, and with the loss of the community lottery boards where they had an agreement – they were going to move forward with funding there. They've lost that. This is the last day, the 30th of April. CFEP is what was suggested by the Premier was going to solve everybody's problems. CFEP said: no, can't help you; you're not eligible. They're not willing to change the eligibility to include them. So are we just going to dump this program, then? This is also a housing program. So I'm looking for leadership from the minister on that.

Going to pages 105 and 107, we are looking at the historical resources fund and the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation. The Rossdale power plant: do we have any updates there? Any suggestions, any studies that have been done, feasibility studies looking at renovations into an art gallery, a museum, a cultural facility? Is anything being contemplated? We know we have – and I tabled in the House at the time a series of web sites that were showing renovated power plants that were in the centre of cities that had been turned into other things. The biggest example of that is in London. Is it the Tate? I think it was the Tate. They turned the power plant into the new version of the Tate. I hope I've got the right name there. I'm wondering whether anything has been anticipated or any studies done on that here?

3:40

I'm also wondering: what is the status of the Cochrane Ranche? Every now and then I hear about this one. The Western Heritage Centre raises its big head. There's now a discussion I hear about it becoming a casino, so I'm wondering if the government is going to get involved in that or what their particular ownership is or their responsibility to this. Can they turn it over to become a casino? Would the government be involved in then taking revenue off the casino in the same way that they do from the slots and VLTs or gaming machines in other casino locations? Just what's the deal there?

The Jubilee auditoria. Both of them I think are going to be closed for significant renovations. That is seriously affecting some companies for whom that is the only performance space, and I'm talking particularly about the Alberta Ballet and the Opera. There is no other space they can go to. The Winspear in Edmonton, for example, does not accommodate what they need. I don't know where these folks are supposed to go, and we're looking at an entire season. So do we just tell Alberta Ballet and the Edmonton Opera, "Sorry; you're not producing a season while the Jubilee auditorium is shut down"? What are they supposed to do for their finances there? I mean, they exist partly because that building was available. Now the space is taken away from them. What accommodation has been made for these groups to move somewhere else? Has the department offered them anything? What's being contemplated here? Or are these guys just told to go and find someplace else? If they can't, then what? You know, how are we going to deal with the finances of the Edmonton Opera, who can't produce a season, or Alberta Ballet, who can only do half a season, nothing in Edmonton? Those are severe restrictions for them.

I'm moving to libraries, page 91, sections 2.1.5 and 2.2.2. There has finally been an increase. Yay. I am very happy that I was able to support the libraries and the Alberta Library Trustees Association in their efforts to lobby and advocate for increased funds and particularly to have the funds updated to be attached to a per capita that has meaning in this day and age.

Now, there are still some additional issues that I have. In fact, the

issue around the Supernet that I used to bring up all the time that the government could never answer for me – I had a visit from the people that are putting the Supernet together, and they were able to answer the question for me. In fact, the wires do come through the wall. They go to a router in the basement. But that still does raise the question for libraries in particular I think of additional money to upgrade their computers and to upgrade their software to be able to handle the capacity and what's possible with the fibre optics in the Supernet. Again, it doesn't help them very much if they now have the wires hooked into the router in the basement but they are still trying to run the Apple IIs upstairs, that can't even connect to the Internet. So what's contemplated there by way of assistance for them?

If there's going to be no help coming, then let's hear that, and then they can either figure out to say, "No, thanks; don't even bring it through the wall" or "Gee, I guess we're going to have to not open part of this building so we can afford to do it." You know, give them some realistic answers so that they know how to plan for the future. I think that's what would be most helpful here.

The minister, in responding to a question that I asked in question period on April 23 in reference to library funding, said that he was providing information on "long-range and future plans" for libraries. I'm wondering if he can expand on that. I mean, I've heard and I can see here that there is a minor increase in money, not a lot. This year's budget is \$17,204,000, but the comparable in the budget last year was \$16,667,000, and the actuals were \$16,493,000. So, you know, we're not talking about a lot of money here. They're getting about a million dollars more. I don't know how that's going to divide up between all the possible libraries in the whole province. What are they going to end up with? About a hundred and fifty bucks each? I don't know how that's really going to allow them to get up to speed and get up to date on everything. Yeah, when I really look at this, this isn't so great. What's the ticker tape parade for? What are the long-range and future plans that are being considered here? Because that's not a substantial increase in money. We're talking what? A million bucks? Less than a million bucks. Like, big deal.

The other thing that came up is that the libraries were applying to their local community lottery boards for a number of ancillary costs. Because they were being underfunded by the government, they looked other places for additional funding to pay for shelving and their Internet costs and some other things like that. Now the community lottery boards are gone. They didn't get that much more money here. So how are they supposed to be moving onward? I guess that's part of these long-range and future plans the minister will tell me about. Yeah, I'm wondering if the increase is even more than what they've potentially lost through community lottery board grants.

The same thing with CFEP. [Ms Blakeman's speaking time expired] Oh, part 1 just went by in a flash. Thanks very much.

THE CHAIR: Before I recognize the next speaker, I wonder if we could revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**

(reversion)

THE CHAIR: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

MRS. JABLONSKI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is my very great pleasure to rise in the House today to introduce to you and through

you to members of this Assembly a very special little angel in my life. She loves Barney, Elmo, and Snuffleupagus. She dances to *Baby Beluga* and sings along with Sharon, Lois, and Bram. She brings sunshine and joy to our lives and charms everyone with her smile and her hugs. In the members' gallery with her very proud father, Brendan Curson, is my 2-year-old granddaughter Taiya Anne Jablonski. I'd ask that Taiya and Brendan rise to receive the warm welcome of the House.

head: **Main Estimates 2002-03**

Community Development (continued)

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You could maybe hold up signs for this afternoon that would save your voice.

AN HON. MEMBER: Tough act to follow.

MS CARLSON: That's right.

Mr. Chairman, I'm happy to be able to start the questions and discussions I have on these particular estimates, the Community Development estimates. We've seen a change here from prior years to where parks and protected areas are now included in this ministry. I have a specific question that I would like the minister to address in writing and in some detail if he could.

To give some background, a few years ago in a reorganization Alberta park rangers were joined up with conservation officers, and all became conservation officers in this province. As it is through most of North America, conservation officers are the policemen for the fish and wildlife resources. Another reorganization just happened, and park rangers have ended up back looking after parks. My concern, Mr. Chairman, is that the Minister of Community Development is looking after these parks people now and has approached the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development that he wants the park rangers to keep the name conservation officers, and the original conservation officers will now become fish and wildlife officers.

Mr. Chairman, this is crazy. Besides it being a tremendous expense to make this change, it just doesn't make any sense to many people and would be extremely confusing to everyone. I have had people call me on this and say that this is the biggest lunacy they've seen in this particular organization and that they don't want it to be done. It does not conform with any of the North American standards. It is just unbelievable that we could be going forward with this particular idea or even the thought of it.

So I would like the minister to respond. I will let him know in advance that I will be forwarding this to many hundreds of people across this province because they are eagerly awaiting the minister's response.

Thank you.

3:50

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you so much. Okay. Where I'd like to go next is human rights. It's page 92. I'm wondering what involvement Community Development has in the new immigrant nominee program that's being spearheaded by Economic Development. I'm sure that the minister has kept involved with this new program, but I'm wondering how we stay on top of the human rights implications there and in particular what support these immigrants could expect to be put in place as they adapt to a new environment and culture. What work is being done to help them understand what the laws are

in this country, what the human rights are, and what the expectations and the rights and obligations are in Alberta and Canada? So I'm interested to know what plans the Human Rights Commission is bringing in to knit with the work that is being done by the Minister of Economic Development.

Part of that of course is access to health care, which is a particularly bewildering experience if you've ever been in another country or somewhere where you don't speak the language and either you're not feeling well or a family member is not feeling well. There are few things more terrifying than being unable to explain what's wrong. Someone the other day, a woman whose first language is French, said to me: you know, when I hurt, I hurt in French. It's really frustrating that even here in Alberta when she goes to a hospital, she's hurting in French, and she may well have hospital staff that aren't hearing her, of course, and may not speak the language. It's an awful experience for us traveling. Imagine what – we want to encourage these economic immigrants to come here to do work for us, as the Economic Development minister puts it. What are we doing to make sure that they're able to access health care and understand how the system works and be able to walk through it?

The minister will know of my support for the program for multicultural health brokers. Now, that is a different program but one related to what I am talking about here. I mean, they are specifically going into communities, mostly looking to draw out the women of the families but, to be fair, for everyone in the family, and helping them to work their way through the health system and to know what's available for them and to make sure that they all stay healthy. I'm wondering if the minister has done any work on whether we are reducing the barriers for new Canadians who are trying to access health care here. What kind of work is the Human Rights Commission doing?

I'm also interested in what challenges the Human Rights Commission has, particularly their public education arm. What challenges are they facing since September 11? Has there been an increase in any reporting or inquiries in any way?

I'd now like to go and do a recap on just where we are with facts and figures. I'm interested in the number of cases that were opened I guess in the last fiscal year, but what's expected to be opened, then, in this fiscal year? So I'd like to see the numbers for last year and what's anticipated or forecast by the Human Rights Commission to be the cases for this year, also by type of discrimination. What did we have last year? The number of complaints for gender, race, colour, physical disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, religious beliefs, mental disability, family status, source of income, sexual orientation. This is always an interesting analysis, to see what the complaints were before and what we're anticipating those complaints to be.

I'd also like to know how many human rights panels we had in the last year and then how many you're expecting you can extrapolate for in this year. How many of those were referred by the director of the human rights secretariat? How many were referred after an appeal to the chief commissioner?

I'm also interested in the kinds of advice and recommendations that have been provided to the department and to the minister. There is an insistence that this Human Rights Commission is an arm's-length commission, and therefore if the advice is provided to the minister and the department, then one presumes it can be provided to all of us. I'm interested in what that advice has been. I'm also interested in what information or advice has been provided by the commission to deal with making Alberta legislation more Charter-proof. Certainly that continues to come up. We continue to get cases in the courts almost weekly that are challenging our legisla-

tion. What's anticipated? What kind of equal protection are we offering to all Albertans through suggested changes to legislation?

Now, I looked back in some other notes just to sort of check where we are, and I noticed that the previous critic for human rights had asked about a cultural diversity project that I think was coming out of Calgary. You can't ever find anything in these budgets that are presented. They don't break down far enough to find out whether such projects exist anymore. So I have to ask whether that project is still receiving funding. If so, how much? What are its goals, its objectives, its business plan? What kind of monitoring has been done? What sort of evaluation and review exists for it? Has it been successful in meeting its goals? So if I could get a really clear breakdown on that, please.

What has the minister done to bring forward the Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act, to open up that legislation and write in sexual orientation? We had the courts read it in for us or put it in for us. But if someone moves to this province from somewhere else, I still get them calling me up and going: "Well, I thought this was covered. How come when I read the legislation it's not there?" You know, it's not as though someone puts a sticky note on it as you walk out the door saying "Oh, by the way, you're supposed to read these extra two words into it." It's just not there, and when will the minister be putting it there? I think it's important, when people pick up legislation or when they read it on-line, that they're able to understand what it all means and what it all entails, and that is not the case now. That ruling came down to us – what? – four years ago now, and we still haven't managed to actually bring the legislation up to date. That's a bit of foot-dragging that's really quite unacceptable. So those are the sort of factual issues under the Human Rights Commission.

Now, the community lottery boards. I have spoken a lot in the Assembly about the community lottery boards and the elimination of them. As a matter of fact, I'm struggling now in the estimates book to even find where they were referred to. In going back and forth, I can't even find where they were. What is the long-range plan here? As I said, there were programs that were in place through the lottery foundations, like the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife or the Wild Rose or the Historical Resources or the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, that granted operating funds to various groups to provide services for Albertans. As another way of doing this and in direct response to the communities' unwelcome feelings about the video lottery terminals and having them removed from their communities, we had the community lottery boards put in place. Although at the time I disagreed with how helpful those boards were going to be to the arts community because I felt that should come through a peer jury system and should be centralized or rather that the money should just be put in the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, in fact as far as the rural communities in particular have shown, the local decision-making was highly, highly prized. That has now been taken away, and anything that has been offered in this Assembly by the Premier or the Minister of Gaming or indeed even by the Minister of Community Development has not picked up on that element of localized decision-making.

4:00

Did it not please the government? Can we ever expect to see a program with local decision-making around disbursement of money again, or has that idea come and the government didn't like it and it's gone? Please let us know that, because many, many, many people are still trying to get these lottery boards reinstated and have every expectation and hope that they will be reinstated. This is a sector where people work hard enough, and they work hard to raise money so that they can spend what little is left of their time to

actually do what they wanted to do, whether that's create art or coach softball or help volunteer with the Boys and Girls Clubs. So I really don't want to see these groups wasting time if the government is never going to return to this.

Now, the Treasurer, to be fair, did say that they weren't going to return to it, and I guess my question is: why? This was a program that seemed to work. I'll tell you that taking a step back, it just looks like the program was put in place in response to a crisis around communities wanting VLTs out. The community lottery board program was put in to quell the crisis. The crisis has passed, and now the whole program is gone, and people cannot figure out why.

Nasty rumours start to rise to the surface. You know, is it because the decision was locally based and therefore there was no cheque for our provincial politician to hand out? I'm not making this up. This is what comes to me, and you've all received the letter saying that. People want to know why, and they have not ever heard the answer from this government about why those community lottery boards were taken away.

We've actually heard many answers. We've heard that something had to be cut from the Department of Gaming, and it was a low priority for the government, so that's what got cut. We've heard that if there's ever any money, well, it's not going to go back into those lottery boards again. But we don't really understand why they disappeared. How were they not serving? The community certainly feels that the boards were serving them. What is it about those community lottery boards that the government doesn't feel they were serving the government? You know, I've asked a lot of questions in question period over the last five weeks. I've tabled hundreds of letters now, I'm sure, from various groups making suggestions and asking for the lottery boards to be reinstated, and we're all still waiting for answers. I know there's agitation in the city of Edmonton from a number of groups that are coming together in a coalition to continue to work on this.

Ultimately, the bottom line is – and we're talking money here. There's \$50 million that is not going into the communities in Alberta right now. Fifty million bucks got cut, and that's directly related to what we're debating here this afternoon. That's directly related to the groups that get funding through Community Development, because these are sports groups and amateur sports groups and recreation groups, Big Brothers, Big Sisters. Volunteer organizations were getting money through the Wild Rose Foundation, arts and cultural organizations, historical sites. You know, they all got that money cut from them. It was money that was augmenting what was being done under the minister's department. So he really had the \$50 million taken out of his ministry more than anything else.

Certainly when I went to the rally at the city of Edmonton, the city hall there, one person was very clear and got up and just said: this is how much money is being taken out of our sector. It was something like \$11 million that had gone into that particular area over the three years that we'd had the money dispensed from the community lottery boards. That's a lot of money to come out of a sector with no sign of it ever going back in. So what did these groups do that they deserved that kind of punishment, that kind of kick in the head? How did they displease this government so badly that they would take a \$50 million hit? We haven't had any answers, Mr. Minister, and we'd sure like to have them.

I guess we're also looking for confirmation that the minister – you know, what kind of stance did the minister take when this came up in caucus? Was he defending the money that was augmenting the groups under his portfolio? In fact, it was under his portfolio that he lost the money, but the decision seems to have been made by the Minister of Gaming.

I think there's also a question that's now been made clear to a number of volunteer based organizations in Alberta: how much

respect and value does the government have for the work that they're doing? I'm starting to hear for the first time, although I've long advocated it, groups saying: "You know what? We're thinking about withdrawing our services, period. Why are we all knocking ourselves out to provide this? This," whatever they're doing, "is a service that used to be provided by the government. They wouldn't do it, so we took it on in the community, and we got the funding to do it but not all the funding to do it. So then we have to go out and raise money to augment a service that used to be offered by the government. Why are we doing this? We're knocking ourselves out here. Maybe we should just stop." I would be interested to see if anybody actually follows through. I doubt it, but they may.

The Alberta NHL teams initiative – that's on page 91, line 2.2.4 – refers to an outgoing expense of \$4.834 million for the Alberta NHL teams initiative. Now, I'm interested in what's happening with the accounting in this department, because it used to be that what we saw here was essentially net of any lottery funds. Any expenses for gaming proceeds were netted out before we saw the money in here. So why am I seeing an expense item now for these NHL teams? Has the accounting been changed here? The other place it shows up is in the Gaming budget under the bingos. Once again there's an expense line going out that we just think: where did this come from?

So I'm interested in why there's no corresponding revenue line coming in that corresponds to that. There's just an expense line going out. I know that the government was going to take off its administration fee. Where does that administration fee amount of money turn up, or is it rolled up inside this \$4 million? If the minister could let us know how much the department, whether it's his department or Gaming or the general revenue, expects to make from their administration fee on administering this lotto, that would be helpful.

I'm also wondering what kind of accounting will be used overall for this new item. What kind of policy has the government developed to show this? What sort of monitoring and evaluation is in place? How often will it be monitored? When will it be revisited? How is the integrity of it all ensured? [interjection] I'm still talking about the lottery tickets, page 91, 2.2.4, Alberta NHL teams initiative.

I'm wondering actually how this turns up as a program here. It turns up as an expense, but where exactly is this program in terms of a line item in the budget? Is this the whole project unto itself, or is it part of something else? I mean, it's showing up under Community Services, and it's just showing up by itself. So what's the program? Is there anything else that goes with it? Why is this just showing up here? I guess I'm looking for – you know, when you have to go and account to the Auditor General, how are you going to describe this program and describe the monitoring and evaluation of it?

Funding for women appears on page 110. Now, the minister and I have had a couple of conversations about funding for women. I know it sounds facetious, but I'm dead serious about this. In fact, I look at our conversation last year around this, and in a written response I got quite a long explanation of what's being done. Essentially that looks to me like it's coming out in three categories: advising the minister, funding programs through the multiculturalism and human rights fund, and handing out of material. But I don't get a sense as I read through what the minister says is being offered . . . [Ms Blakeman's speaking time expired] I'll come back for part 3.

4:10

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm happy to be back to respond to the Community Development estimates. Now I will go through some of the issues that we have in more detail.

I'd like to start in program 6, parks and protected areas, 6.0.1. We

see some reduction in the program support budget there, Mr. Chairman. It's gone from \$315,000 to \$215,000. Now, in comparison to many other budgets in this government, those are paltry dollars and paltry changes, but they certainly are very important to the people who see protecting our parks as really an essential service of the government, and particularly in program 6 . . . [interjection] I don't have the page in front of me. You can give me the information later. Program 6.0.1. It's the program support budget.

Program 6.0.2. How will parks policy and planning be affected by the reduction in budget from \$3.492 million to \$3.442 million, particularly in a year when we see that there are going to be some expenditures that are out of the ordinary, Mr. Chairman, and particularly I refer to proposed legislation and the work that the minister states in his business plan he'll be doing on the G-8 summit. Definitely reductions.

This is an area where dollars are very tight anyway and have been for a long time. This department relies heavily on volunteers to support the park system throughout this province and just recently acknowledged many of those volunteers with recognition during Volunteer Week, which was a good thing. But it's a tight area in terms of money and support, and we're seeing what looks like a fairly significant reduction in the budget. We want to know how planning is going to be affected and how services are going to be affected in that, particularly when we see money that's going to be pulled out in some of the areas.

Program 6.0.3. I'd like to know what capital projects were paid for from the \$2.961 million spent under parks operations in 2001-2002. If we could have a detailed list of that and the dollars spent beside that list and the projections that you see in the three- to five-year range on that, that would also be very helpful to us.

How will the 57 percent reduction in the capital projects budget affect park attendance? We've had this discussion here in this Legislature many times, and we've had the minister stand up and say that it really doesn't affect attendance, that attendance is generally going up, but we see that that's not exactly true. There have been some fluctuations. There has been a huge outpouring of concern about quality of parks, particularly as it relates to infrastructure and particularly as it relates to upgrading facilities. So if the minister could comment on that.

Probably the second biggest outcry I've ever had on environmental issues in this province was when this government shut down the little roadside parks that were throughout this province and which provided great support for travelers and destination visits for families. What happened there was a tragedy. We saw some communities take over the operations of those roadside parks after the fact, and they've been for the most part successful, but we still are missing the kind of interconnected link that we had previously. So if the minister would comment on that.

Do they have any intentions of ever reopening any of those parks and once again linking the province in that kind of a manner? Many people would pull over into those parks to take a break from driving large distances in Alberta, large distances to get across this province to other provinces that you may be visiting, and those parks provided often very beautiful and often necessary stops for people.

If the minister could tell us how the department is going to achieve 118 percent increase in dedicated revenue for parks operations. Do we see some big price hikes coming downstream? Is it going to be increased fees or increased attendance that we see here? Lots of complaints from people who started to pay for firewood. People weren't as concerned about paying for the firewood as they were concerned at the prices they had to pay for such a small amount of firewood, Mr. Chairman. So are we going to see more increases on that side? I'm not sure what else they can

charge a fee for, and I would like to point out that most of the people I've talked to believe that the increased user fees in parks are just another tax grab, another hand in the pockets of Albertans who like to enjoy the outdoors. So if the minister could respond to that, we would expect it.

If the increases we see coming here are from increased fees, then how has the minister projected that this will affect attendance? We know that there's always a cost-benefit ratio and that in supply and demand chains there is some pressure for pricing, and I would expect that the minister has done those kinds of calculations and has some reasonable expectations. When does he expect to roll out the information to the general public on increases? We haven't seen anything yet. This being April 30 and the May long weekend being early this year, about two weeks away, Mr. Chairman, if we're going to see some increased fees that are going to affect people's plans for that long weekend, then we should know about it fairly quickly. If we're seeing the price expectation in increases from increased attendance, could the minister tell us what marketing or communication plans are going to be used to accomplish this? Is there some magic answer that we haven't heard about yet that the minister has under his hat? If he could share that with us, we would very much appreciate it.

Can he tell us if particular parks are expected to have more growth than others? Which ones and what information base are they using to ascertain that, and are there any decreases expected? That would be good information for us. If he could tell us, too, what expenses were covered by the \$300,000 from lottery revenues in 2001 and 2002, that would be very helpful.

Goal 5 for the ministry. For that, I refer the minister to the business plan 2002-05 on page 92. The goal is a great goal, one that I certainly agree with, Mr. Chairman. It's "preserving, protecting and presenting Alberta's parks and protected areas." Now, there's no doubt that this minister has a way different interpretation of what that means than I do and than what most of the environmental groups and individuals who are keenly attached to following environmental issues would say is their goal. Preserving has quite a different connotation. To me preserving and protecting means for the next 100 years. It means establishing baseline data so that we know what we had, what we have now, and what we will have in the future. There is no baseline data in this province on these issues. [interjection] Page 92 of the business plans. That's what I have. Goal 5, "preserving, protecting and presenting Alberta's provincial parks and protected areas." Sorry. I jumped from the budget. Now I'm into the business plan. So if he could give us his own perspective on what achieving that goal means to him and how he presents the information to his caucus and to the decision-makers on the front benches. It would be helpful for us to know exactly what his perspective is.

I was quite surprised to read this year, Mr. Chairman, and have certainly contemplated approaching this in question period — hopefully we'll get some fairly timely answers on it so that we don't have to go there and we can just do this in budget debate. We for sure want to know the time lines for developing new legislation as indicated under the strategies on page 92. That was a big surprise to me. We've seen what the minister would call the successful completion of a parks strategy, less successful from many people's perspective in this province. We saw the allocation under special places of new parks areas, but many of those parks that were legislated are very small. In fact, the footprints covered by those parks are not sustainable from an ecological perspective. We've had this discussion quite a few times here. The grizzly bear park isn't large enough to sustain one grizzly bear. Well, I see the minister doesn't like that very much, so certainly he'll be able to respond to that.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: I have some staff here who are trying to hear.

MS CARLSON: Oh, okay. They can't hear me? Perhaps we need a little more co-operation from other members. At any rate, you can read it in *Hansard*. It doesn't have to be responded to today. It can be responded to in the future. That's just fine with me. [interjection] They don't turn it up. No, there's no paper. This is as loud as it gets. Sorry.

4:20

DR. TAYLOR: I've heard you speak a lot louder than that.

MS CARLSON: Well, I was severely provoked, I have to tell you, Minister of Environment, and you know that if we get enough heckling happening, we could easily go there. I know that this chairman doesn't have much of a voice today, so if you were to heckle and I were to respond, he would have to interrupt, and that wouldn't be very nice to him.

DR. TAYLOR: Well, that's perfect for me then; isn't it?

MS CARLSON: Yes. Well, you just keep that up and we're going to be going there in a much louder voice very quickly, and you, Minister of Environment, had your opportunity to respond during your estimates. It is now this minister's opportunity to respond, and we have what we feel are some very important questions and issues that we would like addressed in this area.

In terms of the new legislation, can you tell us what acts are going to be consolidated? Will it affect some of the outcomes of special places? We're still not satisfied with special places. Some of the allocations we felt were wrong. There weren't enough allocations in some of the areas of the province. Some of them aren't large enough to have ecological integrity. Since the establishment of some of those special places we have seen conditions change in the province, the actual conditions and criteria that were used to decide how big or how small some areas should be. I'm thinking particularly of areas in the north where the committee members used the criteria given to them which encompassed industry stipulations in terms of commitments made to industry on how big places could be. I'm thinking particularly of Chinchaga. Well, subsequent to that, one of the allocations is gone, so there is a case to be made that the committee should reconvene and reallocate Chinchaga based on new information. So I would like the minister to respond to that. Is that a possibility in that area? He knows and I know that there is still a huge lobby from that area. They make a very legitimate case for having that area enlarged, particularly from a sustainable ecosystem perspective. So we'd like to know if that's a possibility.

In terms of the legislation we want to know acts that are going to be consolidated and if that's what's happening and what the consultation process for the consolidation is. People get very nervous when this government tries to change legislation around parks and protected areas. I remember the last bill we had in here two or three years ago now. It was Bill 15, that ended up getting pulled, Mr. Chairman, because people in the province became quite upset at the way the legislation was drafted and the way it was presented. At the end of the day there was a huge outcry against the bill, and it got pulled. So I would caution the minister that before he goes forward with any new legislation or consolidations, he put in place an extensive consultation process that does more than guide people to the answers that he wants, that he do something that encompasses and incorporates all stakeholders in the group, and I include in that consultation process industry for sure, First Nations people, environmental concerns, municipalities. They all have a

legitimate claim to being a part of the process and any changes in legislation for parks and protected areas.

We would hope that before he goes forward with that, we see that strategy tabled and discussed, if not in the Legislature then at least available for discussion before it goes forward. This is a goal listed in this year's current budget and doesn't have any time lines on it. My expectation is that the minister would be expecting to be moving forward quite quickly on this, but we haven't heard a single thing about it yet, and the first month of the year is gone. Eleven months may seem like a long time to bring forward new legislation, but, Mr. Chairman, it isn't, particularly in this regard. So if we could get some information on that.

He talks here, too, in the business plan about a new strategy "for managing an expanded parks . . . system with reduced funding." How will that be developed? You know, that's pretty innovative if he can do it. Certainly I like to see out-of-the-box thinking happening here and new strategies, but it hasn't really been this government's track record. It seems to be that they're able to cut quite well, but then the management side seems to suffer, and here we're talking about an expanded parks system. So that'll be a rabbit out of the hat, I think, but maybe I'm wrong, and I stand to be corrected on that one. So we want to know what the time lines are for that, and is this part of what will be presented in the new legislation?

Also in the business plan they talk about "a 're-investment strategy' for recapitalizing and sustaining . . . facilities." How is that going to happen in light of the 57 percent budget cut for some of the programs there? We've had the discussion in question period about some of the infrastructure or lack thereof or how it's falling apart at this time, and we're really seeing an infrastructure deficit in parks and protected areas. I'm happy to see this in the business plan and I hope it happens, but we'd like to see a game plan under which that will be happening. So what areas are you focusing on? Which ones won't you be doing, and what criteria did you put together to establish what the priority areas were? If we could have that information.

Under the plans to do a resource inventory, there's a reference to "priority parks and protected areas." We need to know which of the parks and protected areas are considered priorities. Do you have a list showing the ranking for all of the park facilities? How are the priorities determined? Is it based on the number of visitors or facilities available or the significance of the animal habitat? For us that is a key criterion that should be incorporated into the decision-making and unfortunately seems to be absent in past decisions. So if we could have some information on that, it would be very helpful, Mr. Chairman.

Once again to go back to the strategies, they were interesting to take a look at this year. It says that the facility operations contracting methods will be reviewed "to improve public service and effectiveness." We've seen a wide range of effectiveness and quality of contracting since this was privatized, and I'm happy to see that they're going to be doing a review. Once again we have a list of areas that we're concerned about. Will the minister tell us the specific aspects of the contracting-out process that are of concern? Where is the current system ineffective? How is the department measuring effectiveness of the contracting methods? What contracting methods are used? What's the time frame for the review? How will improvements of public services be measured? How many complaints has his department received on parks that have been contracted out? Do they do a before-and-after scan in terms of how comfortable users are with the system and whether they're pleased with the kind of service that they're getting? If he could talk to us about that and provide any data that they have, I would very much appreciate it.

Can the minister tell us what the time line is for developing a new visitor satisfaction performance measure, and is anything being used at this time? There must be some way that the government judges customer satisfaction, and we'd sure like him to share it with us.

Thank you.

4:30

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

MR. BONNER: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I have a number of questions and concerns that we have on that, particularly in respect to persons with developmental disabilities. In doing so, we are looking at people who have challenges in their life. They certainly have to have some assistance in order to even fit the goals that we've established in this particular department. I'm happy to see that we do have an increase in the budget, and this will definitely help out.

Now, then, the amount of funding the PDD boards have – Edmonton, Calgary, northeast, southwest, et cetera – the amount they receive is set out in the 2002-2003 budget estimates. There's a line item for each board. These numbers, however, do not reflect the true amount of money the PDD boards receive. The minister even said on April 23, 2002, "In fact, we're just working on finalizing right now what those exact amounts will be." So if the minister could please provide us at this time those accurate numbers that he didn't have at the time the budget came out and if the minister could explain how the PDD boards are supposed to be able to provide stable, dependable services to PDD clients when they don't find out a whole month into the current fiscal year what their funding is going to be . . .

MS BLAKEMAN: Yeah. It's tough to budget.

MR. BONNER: Yes. It is very difficult to budget.

As well, the PDD boards are having a lot of difficulty creating their business plans when they don't know the amount of money that they are receiving. So another question I do have for the minister: why were changes made after the budget estimates were made public, and why was the department so unable to provide these numbers in time, when the budget estimates were made public? What steps has the minister taken in looking ahead to improve the budgeting process to ensure that this doesn't occur for these boards next year?

The PDD budget assists approximately 8,000 Albertans, and this number is increasing, Mr. Chair, by approximately 400 per year. So we are getting in the neighbourhood of a 5 percent increase in the number of persons with developmental disabilities per year. When we look at this increase in the number, even with the funding increases, several boards are projecting deficits this year. The Edmonton board is projecting a deficit of \$6.8 million, and the Calgary board claims that the 5 percent increase in the budget which they got will mean a \$3 million deficit for them. Again it seems that even with the increase in funding in this particular budget, these boards are going to face financial difficulties this year and of course will not be able to provide the services to their members that they would wish.

Could the minister tell us how many of the boards are currently projecting deficits for the current fiscal year? Can the minister tell us how many PDD boards are taking on new clients and the number of net new clients each PDD board is taking on? If these boards are not taking on all of these requests, what happens to these people that just don't find a slot with any of these boards?

Could the minister please tell us whether PDD boards will be

allowed to run deficits this current fiscal year? Also if the minister could inform us what direction his department or other PDD boards are going with eliminating their deficits. Will the minister provide copies of any documents in which the department sets out its directions to the PDD boards for eliminating their deficits? As well, will the PDD boards be allowed to borrow to finance their deficits?

Now, then, I know that the PDD boards would certainly want some assurance from the minister that they will continue to receive adequate services when they face such large deficits. What assurances can he give to the boards that they will continue to receive adequate services? The boards are quite concerned as well that, you know, they might have to implement cost-cutting procedures to come in on budget. What I would like to know is how the minister expects to keep the promise he made to the PDD clients on October 22 that, and I quote: no one who qualifies for service under the PDD program will be denied that service.

One final question in this regard: how does the minister respond to the statement from the Edmonton PDD board's document entitled *Framework for Sustainability*, which states that currently the demand for service is greater than the dollars available?

We did have an opportunity a while back, Mr. Chairman, to meet with the Edmonton Deaf-Blind Society, and they indicated that they have a number of concerns. Certainly some of their greatest concerns were around the issue of interpreters, an adequate number of interpreters. We did have some people from the rural boards as well that attended the meeting, and certainly one of their major concerns was the whole idea of trained interpreters. Especially in the rural communities the opportunity to have a trained interpreter is more difficult than in our major centres of Edmonton and Calgary.

As well, Mr. Chair, they went on to indicate to us that trained interpreters are also very, very expensive. In our three-hour meeting I believe the bill was somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$200. They required two interpreters. These people work very hard, particularly when they are in that group setting where they're servicing a number of different individuals. So again cost is a huge factor when we start looking at interpreters. What others have attempted to do, Mr. Chairman, is use interpreters that aren't necessarily trained. So what these people would like to do is to see some type of a code of ethics for interpreters. I'm wondering if the minister has given any thought to developing a code of ethics for all interpreters and what we could do in that particular case.

4:40

Now, then, with interpreters there is a national certification process, and evaluation is done at a national level. We do have training here in the city of Edmonton, Mr. Chair, at Grant MacEwan Community College, and what the deaf and blind community would like to see is a longer program of training for people attending the program at Grant MacEwan Community College. So my question for the minister would be: is there any room for a review of that program at Grant MacEwan to see if that program is fully meeting the needs of persons with developmental disabilities?

Other information that they gave to me was that there certainly aren't enough interpreters. In Edmonton we have 64 active members and only 50 in Calgary, and as I mentioned, there certainly is a great need for trained interpreters in our rural areas. The Connect Society is also very critical. It's a referral service. It's been active in Edmonton for two years. What happens is that for deaf people that do go to work, businesses will hire deaf people but they certainly aren't prepared for the costs associated with an interpreter. Certainly this is critical, for example, for people that are going to job interviews. If they have to foot the bill for an interpreter for, say, even an hour job interview, then that certainly puts them at a huge disadvantage when they are out looking for employment.

Other areas where interpreters are critical to deaf workers is in the job training process and certainly being there to help interpret safety procedures and as well any new procedures that come along in the business. This is one of the areas where employers are reluctant to pick up those costs for interpreters, and certainly it is something that the deaf person has a great deal of difficulty with for themselves. So they see a great need here for interpretation.

Now, something else that I wouldn't have thought of that they brought to our attention was the fact that even – and this happened to be getting close to the end of February in RRSP time – having specialized people that can sign to offer advice to these people when they are purchasing their RRSPs is a huge problem for these people.

So there are many, many issues here that they have, issues that I hope I will get a further opportunity to ask the minister about. Thank you very much for these at this time.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thanks. Jeez, this is great. I'm going to be able to get all my questions in. When I last was up speaking I was talking about the programs for women and an exchange as a result of last year's budget debate between the minister and myself on what programs are really offered. I think in fact, based on what I'm seeing, that there really aren't any specific programs that are offered. What I was looking for was advocacy, and that is not offered.

The minister at one point talks about the advice that he is given when he goes to the federal/provincial/territorial meetings of ministers responsible for women's issues, and I'm interested in what the message is that he is carrying forward from Alberta and giving forth to the other provinces, the territories, and the federal government. What is that message that he's taking? Could I see the minutes of the meetings or whatever is occurring there so that we know what he's saying to others about what's happening around programs for women here in Alberta?

I'm also wondering if the minister has done any work in advocating to his colleague the Minister of Health and Wellness on midwifery and having midwifery covered under health care services. I'm looking for an answer on that.

Just before I move on to the next topic, I know that two more questions came up for my colleague from Edmonton-Ellerslie right after she sat down. Would it be all right for us to submit those questions in writing to the minister and have them answered? The minister is nodding in the affirmative to me, so we now have that in the record.

Okay. I'd like to go on to the FTEs. Now, the minister indicated that 83 FTEs are being cut from the department and then sort of seemed to indicate that that was kind of okay because it was attrition, but attrition is many things. That can be someone just leaving the job because they're going on to something else, and that's indicating that the job in fact, you know, once it's vacated, won't be refilled. I don't see that as a particularly good thing. It's not as though that job was really slated to be phased out necessarily. I'd like to know exactly which program areas are losing staff and how many FTEs they're losing.

Now, I'm aware that, as has happened many times with the Department of Community Development, we've had huge programs moved into the department which then become the focus of the department. For example, we had seniors added in four, five, or six years ago, and everything else, all the arts and culture and sports and recreation and other activities, got subsumed underneath the seniors, and that's where all the focus and activity was generated. Now we have the PDD and persons with disabilities moved into the department. They're responsible for the lion's share of the budget in the

department and also the staffing. For instance, they have about 1,400 staff working in that area compared to significantly fewer staff working in all the other areas combined. So I would like to know exactly where those 83 FTEs are coming from, down to, you know, the program that is losing an FTE.

Now, I wanted to look at the highlights, and that's appearing on page 98 of the estimates. This is interesting, because as I look through this, a lot of what is being put forward as a highlight is in fact the department's core businesses. So I'm a little concerned that there's a misunderstanding about what's going on here.

I look at

continue to provide financial support to human and social service non-profit organizations and build organizational capacity in the voluntary sector so that its members can engage in community development activities and initiatives.

The term "capacity building" is one that we're recognizing nationally now as a result of the Broadbent report on the voluntary sector. That was really capacity building meant to help an organization achieve the resources, the ability to take in information and kind of move into the new millennium. So what exactly is being anticipated when the minister talks about a highlight of "organizational capacity in the voluntary sector"? What exactly is expected under this? What are the implications for this strategy, and how is this knitting into the Broadbent report and what was being recommended there?

Also under the same highlights:

Develop a communication strategy to increase public awareness and understanding of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, and undertake adjustments to new Alberta Foundation for the Arts programs that were introduced in 2001-02 based on community feedback.

Can the minister expand on what he's intending to do here? It sounds like things aren't going well and that you need a good communications plan to make everybody think they're happy the way it's written here. So I'm sure the minister would like to have the opportunity to put forward what he thinks is going on here. In other words, is this a public relations solution to something, or in fact are there additional things that are going on here?

4:50

Another highlight:

Continue to support the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation so that approximately \$6.2 million will be spent on promoting and supporting community-based heritage initiatives across the province.

Isn't this what the minister is supposed to do? Isn't this what the ministry does do? So why is that a highlight? What new relations could have been developed with the federal government in context of its very large commitment to arts and culture in the last year that might be included under this highlight? I mean, are there alternative funding sources available to work with the feds? What's being anticipated here? Why is it turning up as a highlight? It just looks like a core service to me. If it's more than that, then let's hear what it is.

"Further the development of a Collections and Exhibits Infrastructure Management System to effectively manage essential elements of the ministry's infrastructure." Okay. What's this for? Is it only the various artifacts and exhibitions that we own, or does this also include the building or the shelving or the glass cases? What's anticipated here? What is the time line for developing this management system? How far along are we going to get in this year? Is this a multiyear project? What exactly is this all about?

"Develop a business resumption plan to address potential interruption or loss of essential services in keeping with the government's commitment to ensure services for Albertans." Now, I'm assuming that this is in response to the September 11 crisis and part

of overall government planning. Exactly what services have been identified under the Department of Community Development that would be connected to reintegration of essential services? What services specifically is the minister talking about here?

The last bullet is:

Participate in overall government planning for, and plan, coordinate and implement Parks and Protected Areas Division involvement in support to, the G8 Summit in Kananaskis Country.

I'm wondering how much money is expected to be spent by this department for the G-8 summit. What exactly is the department involved with in overall government planning? What sort of return are we expecting from the G-8 activities? How much time and resources have been spent by the department thus far? What other departments have been consulted with as far as what Community Development is doing with the G-8?

Now, I notice, moving on, in the fiscal plan book on page 60 that we're looking at quite a few fee increases. We're looking at fee increases in every possible area. Adult, senior, youth, family, annual pass, and corporate pass for Community Development museums and historical sites. We're also looking at Cypress Hills provincial park. Water rates per month are now going to range between \$10 and \$100. That's up from \$3. Grazing fees per animal unit month: from 95 cents to \$1.20 go up in this fiscal year to \$1.39 to \$2.79. We've got application fees, again under Cypress Hills provincial park, that used to be \$2 to \$10 going up to \$10 to \$50. Bus tour fees, again a number of adult/youth divisions. Adults are going from \$4.50 to \$6.50 and for youth, \$2.25 to \$4.25. Also interpretative services: where there was no fee for adults, it's now \$6.50; where there was no fee for youth, it's now \$4.25. So considerable increases in fees in almost every area.

Why is this happening? Has it been a long time since there was a fee increase? When was the last fee increase, by how much at that point? Are we seeing large increases because there hasn't been a fee increase in 25 years? What's the reasoning behind this other than — you know the accusation that's coming — this is just a money grab, a tax increase from the government? Especially with museums and historical sites I was under the understanding that the friends-of groups were taking the gate. So are they the ones that are asking for this fee increase, or is this what the government has decided is going to happen? Who's getting this money ultimately with the fee increases that are detailed here? Is that coming into Community Development's budget, or is it going into the operational budgets of the friends-of groups that are now operating the various museums and historical sites around the province? So I'm looking forward to an answer to that.

Sorry; I missed a couple. William Watson Lodge cabin fees and serviced campsite fees are also going up but not by very much. A \$5 to \$10 increase there.

Now, the last thing is, oh, film classification. I'm wondering what's happening in the film classification branch. I know that at one point there were three people that were looking at the film classifications, but I believe that the chairperson had maybe two votes, so they could almost overrule or at least tie what was happening. Then I heard a couple of years ago that it was down to one person or perhaps that the chairperson of the film classification unit had even more votes and could really sway how things were going. So can I get a report back on the status of that, please?

I'd also be interested in whether the number of films that they are in fact classifying has increased. Has there been a volume increase? How are they dealing with that volume increase? Do they work longer hours or get paid overtime? Are there more of them now, or do you have a volunteer board that assists them? How is all of that being managed? It's kind of a little-known subject but one that I'm just trying to get an update on.

Just in finishing, then, another couple of updates based on the correspondence back and forth between the minister and I resulting out of the last go-round here. Last year there was \$54,000 under program 3, Human Rights and Citizenship, used to complete the development of a case management system called the consolidated human rights information system. This was to assist the Human Rights Commission to manage inquiries in human rights complaints, increasing the efficiency. I'd like an update on that, please. How is it working? Generally, what's the evaluation of it?

I had also had a couple of go-rounds with the minister about a \$246,000 increase under strategic corporate services for the minister's office. Now, the minister responded that it included services for finance, human resources, business planning, performance measurement, et cetera, et cetera. The increase was used for a negotiated salary adjustment and onetime priority projects. So when I questioned this further, I got a response that said that in fact \$137,000 of this \$246,000 was "related to 68 FTEs supporting the Strategic Corporate Services" and was used for settlements. That is what it was costing them. Then the rest was for these onetime priority projects

used to accommodate unexpected cost pressures that may arise throughout the year. Unexpected cost pressures could include variations in Workers' Compensation Board premiums and Long Term Disability Insurance rates, and increases in central services such as Imagis, insurance, and the Alberta Corporate Services Centre.

That response came from the minister, dated July 30. So at that point, we were already three, four months into the year. That's a significant amount of money that was set aside in that budget for things that might happen. So the ministry must have expected they were going to happen, and I'm just wondering how that all worked out and whether that in fact is carrying forward. I get a little nervous when I see "one-time priority projects." That's what flagged it for me. What was the big priority there? I didn't understand the wording and what seemed to be of such importance for that.

I looked to see whether the Auditor General had made any comments or recommendations to the Department of Community Development. Nothing of consequence that needs to be brought up and see if there needs to be improvements for the next year, so that's a good sign.

5:00

I know that my colleague just missed a couple of questions on PDD that I'm just going to get on the record here in the last couple of minutes. Going back to page 98 of the estimates, Highlights, the first highlight says that the minister will be allocating \$407 million for PDD and implementing "selected Strategic Directions from the Building Better Bridges" report. Which strategies exactly will the ministry be implementing, and what is the cost of each of those from that \$407 million?

Also under Highlights: undertake a "review of the Protection for Persons in Care Act." What exactly will the process be? What is the time line for this? Is there anticipation that there would then be an amending act brought in? Obviously not this spring, so are we anticipating an amending act to the Protection for Persons in Care Act for next fall?

I'm also interested in what the consultation plan is. Who will be involved in this? Is it going to be by invitation only? Will it be like the current consultations going on right now for victims of crime, which is by invitation only and behind closed doors? Although the public is paying for all of this, they don't get to know who's invited to talk about it or indeed what the proceeds of it are, which I don't think is a very good sign. I don't think taxpayers should have to pay for stuff that is all developed behind closed doors. So what's the

consultation plan there? Who is going to be consulted with, and why?

I appreciate the minister allowing us to get so many questions on the record. I recognize that this now means a lot of work for the staff to go through *Hansard* and pick out all the questions and the comments and get back to us in writing. I thank them in advance for that work, and again I would – and this is really putting the pressure on – appreciate as speedy a response as possible. I'm expected to vote on this in an appropriation bill in a couple of weeks, and it's hard for me to do that when I don't have the answers to my questions. I didn't pick the scheduling of this particular department. So I'll do the best I can if I can count on the department staff to do the best they can.

Thanks very much. I know the minister will probably want to make some closing remarks here. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know there are some colleagues on our side of the House who also wanted to rise, so I'm going to cede my place and allow them to get their questions on record as well. There are so many questions that have been raised already. I stopped around question 80, and I know they went on. So we'll just pick them up from *Hansard*, and I guess we'll have to provide written responses sometime over the next couple of months. I'm sure it will take us all of that, probably, to get the detail that they're asking for. I will try and look at some of the generic issues, members for Edmonton-Centre and Edmonton-Glengarry, so that you can feel a little bit comfortable about your upcoming vote. I'll endeavour to do that. I hope we can provide some of the answers for you.

Mr. Chair, I will respectfully cede my place then. I've got answers to most of the stuff that I took notes on, but it would take far longer than the nine minutes remaining this afternoon to provide those, so I'll cede the floor to some members from our side.

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

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to take a moment to address the issue of the Community Development department. While I acknowledge, as others have, that this is a department that attends to a broad range of services and programs that we provide as a government, I would just like to take this opportunity to highlight a couple of things from the perspective of my constituency of St. Albert.

I had the occasion just last week to attend a board meeting of the regional PDD board of our St. Albert Association for People with Disabilities in St. Albert. At that meeting certainly what was identified was the challenge that the board has in dealing with the intake that is projected and that in their awareness will come in the future. I would just again like to echo the concerns that were expressed there, that this is indeed a concern for them, as I know it is a concern for the department. It is a challenge, but I'm willing to find ways, working with the department, to see if we can't respond to those requests.

I would also be remiss if I didn't mention the fact of our historic sites and museums. I'm proud to say that we have a museum in St. Albert, and we have several historic sites. We also have several arts and heritage sites and programs and endeavours and facilities that I believe are indeed those which define not only our history but our present and define our respect for the past and that which created definitely our communities and respect for those who built them.

I do have a concern, as expressed in the plan, for our foundations,

which administer a number of grants to individuals and to associations requesting their assistance through the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, the Wild Rose Foundation, and the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation. I just wanted to say that I'd like to take this moment to commend those associations for what they do with what I would acknowledge and I think the minister would also acknowledge is a very limited amount of dollars. They lever matching dollars admirably in our communities, and again I'm very happy to see that in the business plans we are looking at an increase to those foundations eventually so that they may fulfill the requests they receive and be able to do that with the ability with which they have been doing so in the past.

One other point I wanted to make was with respect to the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife, which seems to be a very encompassing foundation, very broad and diverse in many ways. However, while we are looking at the initiatives and the recommendations from the Premier's Advisory Council on Health, I'd like to highlight the fact that within the activities of the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife division I think they have already put in place initiatives that we should mine as we look at how we will implement healthy lifestyles and an effort certainly to return to the individual their own personal responsibility for an active lifestyle in order to maintain a healthy life ultimately.

So I don't have much further to comment on the estimates here, but what I do want to say is that I think that what the department does is exceedingly admirable, and any way in which their supports could be increased would indeed only multiply and increase the good work that they do. I want to say on behalf of the citizens of St. Albert that indeed I think they reach in many ways into my community in a very productive and enriching fashion.

Thank you.

5:10

THE CHAIR: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know there are only a couple of minutes left, so I'm just going to take this time to thank my staff, some of whom are up in the gallery there. They came hoping to hear the questions firsthand, but I think they'll have to read them in *Hansard* because it's almost impossible to hear up there. The speakers of course are primarily facing away from the members' gallery, and from time to time we do have a few other conversations that are occurring. I was able to hear the questions because I ordered an earpiece halfway through, and I took many, many pages of notes.

I also thank the members opposite for their questions and also my colleague from St. Albert. It's unfortunate that time doesn't permit to address all of these questions. I don't think there's any point, quite frankly, in even starting, because it'll look like I'm picking some favourites, and they're all my favourites. So I'm just going to say thank you again to the staff and to the questioners and make a commitment to provide the written responses as quickly as we can. There are so many. I'm not sure where we're going to start, but we will give it our very best go.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to everyone for their continued support of the many good initiatives that Alberta Community Development has undertaken and particularly those new ones into which we're going. Thank you for your support, which was indicated throughout various parts of the different speeches.

THE CHAIR: After considering the business plan and proposed estimates for the Department of Community Development, you are ready for the vote.

Agreed to:
Operating Expense and Capital Investment \$569,568,000

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIR: Opposed? Carried.

MR. HANCOCK: I'm not sure, Mr. Chairman, but I think this is the time when I rise to ask that the committee rise and report the estimates of the Department of Community Development and beg leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I wonder if we could have consent for a brief introduction of visitors.

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**
(*reversion*)

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

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I didn't want to take time to do this introduction during the valuable time of debate, but the people I do need to introduce to you are very valuable to the debate, so I'd like to introduce them now. If they would rise as their

names are called and remain standing so that all of us can properly acknowledge these very dedicated people with whom I have the great privilege of working: Dr. Bill Byrne, Rai Batra, Darlene Andruchuk, Ian McKinley, Pam Arnston, Judith Barlow, John Kristensen, Mark Rasmussen, David Steeves, Jim Menzies, Garry Donald, Kathy Telfer, Bill Strickland, Cheryl Robb, Andrea Collins, O.J. McLean, and Pam Boutilier. These are just part of our fine staff. Thank you, all.

MR. JOHNSON: 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.

Community Development: operating expense and capital investment, \$569,568,000.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Does the Assembly concur in this report?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn until 8 this evening, at which time we return in Committee of Supply.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:15 p.m.]

