

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, November 25, 2002**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 02/11/25

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please be seated or take your seats, as the case may be.

head: **Motions Other than Government Motions**

Travel Assurance Fund

508. Mr. Amery moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to introduce legislation to establish a travel assurance fund to compensate airline consumers who do not receive travel services purchased from a registered travel agency due to the agency's bankruptcy or insolvency.

[Debate adjourned May 13: Mrs. O'Neill speaking]

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

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to finish my remarks from last spring with regard to Motion 508, the Travel Assurance Fund. It seems to me that it's the federal government – and it's the role of the federal government, not the province – who should be looking at this issue. We know that it is their jurisdiction. We also know that they are the ones who have the ability to make it an equitable opportunity for all of us across this country, and they should be the ones to bring forward real reform and, certainly, solutions to a situation that is not perfect for the consumer.

Mr. Speaker, I once again would like to stress that I appreciate the motive of the hon. Member for Calgary-East, and I do hope that he is able to respond to some of the concerns that I raised last spring. If he does, then I would be pleased to reconsider my support for Motion 508.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Our rules do call for up to five minutes for the mover of the motion to conclude debate. The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to offer my closing remarks with regard to Motion 508, the Travel Assurance Fund. As I was saying last spring . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: I remember.

MR. AMERY: I'm sure you remember that.

Since the events of September 11 the attitude we have toward travel in North America and around the world has changed. People are afraid, and air travel has dropped dramatically. Mr. Speaker, as a result, the last couple of years have been extremely tough on the airline industry, including many of Canada's air travel providers. In 2001 we witnessed companies like Canada 3000 and CanJet go out of business, leaving hundreds of air travelers, including countless Albertans, stranded around the world.

Currently, Mr. Speaker, Albertans can protect themselves by purchasing cancellation insurance; however, cancellation insurance does not protect them from the airline going bankrupt. Certain credit cards can also insure the purchases they make; however, many Albertans don't qualify for these cards, or as many people in my constituency do, they prefer to use cash.

AN HON. MEMBER: Why?

MR. AMERY: They have a lot of it.

Albertans are also protected when making Internet purchases from Alberta companies; however, many Albertans are still uncomfortable buying items over the Internet, especially purchases as expensive as airline tickets. At the present time, it seems to me, all that the majority of air travelers can do is follow the financial stability of the travel company they use in order to guarantee that they receive the flight they have paid for. I believe that Albertans and all Canadians deserve better protection than this.

Mr. Speaker, Motion 508 would provide Alberta consumers with an assurance that the plane ticket they purchased will take them to their desired destination. It is my hope that a travel assurance fund would also help foster confidence in the beleaguered air travel industry. Consumer confidence is a wonderful thing to have. A travel assurance fund as proposed in Motion 508 would be financed entirely by Alberta's registered travel agents, including any administration costs.

I want to make clear that the fund would not cost the taxpayers a single cent. The government of Alberta would not act as operator or financier. Mr. Speaker, I believe that this government has the responsibility to protect Albertans from events like the bankruptcy of Canada 3000. A travel assurance fund would ensure that the thousands of Albertans who use the airline industry would be able to travel in confidence and security.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to close, and I would like to thank all the members who spoke for Motion 508 and urge all members to support this motion.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 508 lost]

Confined Feeding Operations

509. Mrs. Gordon moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to work with the Alberta Agricultural Research Institute in researching the use of cost-effective technology to assist farming operations in alleviating nuisance-causing odours from barns used in conjunction with confined feeding operations or other related farming practices.

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

MRS. GORDON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Time is a wonderful thing. Fourteen months ago, after speaking with several of my producers in my constituency, I brought forward this motion. At that point in time, this was a very, very important motion.

Since that time, a lot has happened in dealing with confined feeding operations, and I thank this Assembly very much for what transpired here several months ago when we put into place legislation that would help those that were involved in what was known then as intensive livestock operations and are now considered confined feeding operations, where we moved the regulatory control beyond the municipal level to be dealt with in a different realm. It has worked for the most part to the good, although my producers tell me today that the waiting time on the applications is getting considerably more and more, and it's something that we're going to have to deal with.

But at that point in time, this motion resulted in the fact that one evening I sat and listened to a public hearing advertised and promoted by Lacombe county to deal with their applications to do with intensive livestock operations, and there were over 650 people present at that particular open house. One of the things that struck

me that night is that most people concerned about confined feeding operations, intensive livestock operations, with the number of particularly hogs, because Lacombe county has a number of hog producers, was the fact that the smell from these operations was the number one concern of people, neighbours, various communities, various municipalities. That was their number one concern. This is the reason for this motion. This motion, in essence, encourages the government to focus funding and expertise through the already existing Alberta Agricultural Research Institute to develop cost-effective technologies to eliminate excess waste odour from Alberta's livestock farms.

Now, I know that this is easier said than done, but in today's world with everything we can do on the scientific end, on the medical end, we should be able to come to terms with odours, and this is something that my producers have long wrestled with. Way back, as I talked about earlier, when this whole intensive livestock or confined feeding operation issue came to a head, many of my producers told me that the first concern from the public was odour. Certainly, after odour there was environment; there was water; there were a whole lot of other things. But initially what you see is what you smell, or what you smell is what you see, and as a result people were very concerned about a hog operation being anywhere near them. So I thought that if we could work with what is already in place through the Alberta Agricultural Research Institute to try to come to terms with this, we would be better served. I understand that they are working somewhat to this end and hope that this motion would prompt them along, that we could rapidly move towards seeing something that would satisfy everyone.

8:10

Now, the hon. Member for St. Albert just told me a few minutes ago that she'd be glad to speak on this motion, but she has no hog producers, so she can't. I feel very badly about that.

One thing that we all can say in this Assembly is that what has happened over the last number of months if not years is that Canadian farms, Alberta farms are increasing in size, and urban centres are certainly expanding much more into what were previously known as rural areas, and the need for livestock waste management and odour management has certainly increased.

Confined feeding operations – we now call them CFOs – have become a prosperous business in Alberta, or they certainly were until what happened this summer with the drought, and they also have a great need for feed and hay. More and more applications are being submitted and approved for these operations each and every year. First and foremost, when you talk about a hog operation that is going to be near you or close to you, the first thing most people say is: what are we going to do about the odour? I had several producers during the discussion that took place prior to the legislation being passed – people just did not understand that the odour was part and parcel of the overall farming operation. As a result, most people want to right away say: we don't want it near us, by us, around us, or among us. However, if we are to continue to eat pork and other animal – no, by-products is not the word. I have to say pork because Lacombe county is the number one pork producer in all of Alberta, and it's not something I'm going to sit down and say, "Hey, this isn't good," because it's good.

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, sorry to interrupt. We have a couple of ministers and one in particular who for the moment will not be named who seem to feel it's their right and their privilege to speak whenever they want, no matter how loud their voices: one

in the middle bank and one at the far end. I would just . . . [interjection] Hon. member, if you don't stop interrupting and carrying on as if you're the only important person in this House, then we'll have to name you.

The hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler.

MRS. GORDON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Would it be a pun if I said that those ministers are hamming it up?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The problem with having too many children in here sometimes is that you can't keep them quiet. We might ask all hon. members to remember their obligation, and that is to allow the person who is recognized for speaking to speak without all of these interruptions, no matter how funny you may think you are.

The hon. member.

Debate Continued

MRS. GORDON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Currently there are certainly gaps in knowledge pertaining to understanding the difference between health concerns and nuisance-causing odours. I remember one young fellow, a producer of mine, that wanted to put in a new hog operation, and basically at that point in time, before the government stepped in and legislation was passed, he was told to put in biofilters, a technology that at that time was still unproven, and he requested repeatedly: how can you tell me if this is what I should be putting in? There was a tremendous cost to these biofilters, and nobody could tell him that this was the end-all, be-all.

So I guess this is actually the crux of what I'm coming to. I think that somebody along the line has to say: if you're going to put in a particular system, a certain technology, we have to ensure it's the best one that's available and will certainly help the odours and the nuisance-causing concerns of the neighbourhood and the neighbours. We also have to tell these producers what the cost is going to be so that they can figure this into their overall business plan when they are thinking that they are going to increase what they are doing or start initially.

There's presently no standardized method of measuring odour. However, there are several methods of odour-control science being developed worldwide. It's my understanding that although they've wrestled with a lot of problems over the last several years, many European countries have finally come to terms with this, and they do have some technology that they believe is state of the art and will stand the test of time. So what I'm saying is that I want the existing research facility that deals with Alberta agriculture to take a look at some of these and possibly say, "Yes, this is good," or "This isn't good," and let's move ahead that way.

We'll never alleviate livestock odours. I remember years ago traveling up highway 2. This was even before I was a rural person, because I used to live in Calgary, Alberta. Traveling up highway 2, it was the smell of money. Now it's just the smell, and that's unfortunate because it's still very important not only to the producer, not only to the community, but also to the Alberta economy.

So I ask you to support me in asking the Alberta Agricultural Research Institute to take a look at this and tell us: what is the best thing for our producers? What kind of technology can they put in their barns to alleviate odour as much as possible? We're not going to do away with it entirely, but at least it's a start, and some of my producers would really appreciate it.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to enter into the debate on Motion 509, nuisance-causing odours from intensive livestock operations. [interjection] Perhaps that member would like to say that just a little louder.

This is an issue that I have talked about for a long time, so of course I am happy to support the sponsor of this particular motion. We know that this motion is going to cost some money, but this is money well spent in terms of the long-term investment of this province, I believe. There are some remarkable things being done.

AN HON. MEMBER: Tax and spend.

MS CARLSON: Tax and spend. Well, it's one of your own colleagues who brought forward this particular motion which is going to cost money. There are some times when a dollar spent today saves you a lot of money and a lot of grief down the road, and I think this is one of those particular instances. If this province is going to continue to pursue intensive livestock operations, or CFOs as they're now called, they need to invest some money in ensuring that the people who are not directly involved in those industries can enjoy a lifestyle which we advertise as being supported here in Alberta. That means a lifestyle where you can smell the air and it smells fresh, a lifestyle where you can drive down the road and not hit a patch of road where the stench is so strong that you just want to turn around and turn in a different direction. As this member has stated, this is particularly a problem with hogs. There is no doubt that that is a smell that takes some getting used to, that neighbours to these operations should really never have to get used to in that degree.

So we do need to spend some time looking at those kinds of strategies. There are countries that have already done this. Holland, for instance, has the largest per capita investment in intensive livestock operations on the globe, the most densely populated areas combined with intensive livestock operations, and they don't have a smell problem. Why is that? Because they have invested in advanced technology. Their per capita operating costs for the operations are higher than in Alberta, and that is why we see so many people from that country wanting to come over here and spend their investment dollars in this province, because it's a low investment cost as compared to their own country of origin. But we've got to get with the program here and make sure that we make these facilities and the surrounding areas livable for workers and for people in the surrounding areas, not just because, Mr. Speaker, we don't like the smell but also because there are health risks associated with that kind of air contamination and we have to be concerned about this.

8:20

Dr. Rudy Zimmer in his article *The Right to Farm, Not the Right to Harm* in the September/October 2002 edition of *Alberta Doctors' Digest* points to air quality issues as a potential health risk. In his words, "There have been a few community-based studies suggesting health effects [on area residents] similar to that of workers, and reduced quality of life." So we have to talk about how we can start to eliminate those. We know already from air studies that have been done in the northern quadrant of this province that we have some associated health risks with air contamination, and I would suggest that this could be a problem with intensive livestock operations in the future too.

What we didn't really see from this member when she talked about her motion was the sort of technology that she had in mind. I know that I have seen some really great examples. In Europe they sell in-vessel systems which take the waste products immediately

and put them in a contained unit, separate out the methane, so that's a salable product, potentially, back into the grid. It takes the water out of the rest of the product and has that as a by-product and then has a very dry by-product as a result of that, which is easily made into compost or other kinds of fertilizer. There is a company operating in Calgary right now that takes this waste product from both hogs and cattle, and it has a drying kind of format to it which reduces it to a pellet form as a fertilizer. It is completely odourless, Mr. Speaker. I think everyone in this Assembly would be very, very impressed with the product. In fact, I was so impressed with the product that I sent some samples of it to the minister of agriculture so that she, too, could take a look at what companies are doing on their own with very little support for research and development. We know that it's hard for these companies to keep going if they don't have some research support until they can get their product to market, so I heartily support that kind of investment in research and development.

There are many other ways that we have seen being tried and true. I know that in the Vegreville research centre this is a high priority for them. They're doing some excellent work out there, and we certainly support that. We have seen all kinds of processes where the open pits are capped or they're emptied quicker or other products are added to them to reduce the odour. We've seen a huge increase in composting over the years, which is a low-cost and very effective way to manage this product. I have spoken on the record before about being against spraying for a variety of reasons. Odour is one of them, but the concentration that we get now in heavy metals in areas that have been continuously sprayed over the years is a problem.

I see that our colleague who introduced this motion would agree with some of those statements. So those are the kinds of things we have to take a look at, not yesterday's technology and yesterday's treatments but tomorrow's and those for the next few decades. What is going to make us an industry leader? We don't just need to be the lowest cost producer. We need to be industry leaders when we talk about the management of the total system and its relation to the rest of the province and the people who live in this province.

So for all those really good reasons I'm very happy to support this motion and certainly hope it gets the support of the House. If it sounds like it's not going to, then we do expect to stand on this one, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. McFARLAND: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to also join in the debate on Motion 509, which, as the Member for Lacombe-Stettler indicated, urges the government to work through "the Alberta Agricultural Research Institute in researching the use of cost-effective technology to assist farming operations in alleviating nuisance-causing odours." I along with two other members of this Assembly today – the Minister of Transportation, past chair of the Alberta Agricultural Research Institute; myself as a past chair; and our current chair, the hon. Member for Dunvegan – am very proud of the proactive approach that the past and present board members of ARI have taken with many of the new technologies and research that they've prided themselves on looking at in terms of leading edge technology. I would also like to express my gratitude to the hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler for bringing this motion forward, since it does address a very important topic that impacts the noses of many of us from time to time in Alberta.

Like so many other people of my generation, Mr. Speaker, I've seen a province transformed from a largely agricultural province to

the modern, multifaceted, industrial powerhouse that it is today. However, we all know that agriculture is vital to this province. It's one of the four pillars that contributes to our economy, and it's a cornerstone of Alberta's history and culture. Just as our province and our country have evolved over the years, so has agriculture.

We often hear the term "agribusiness" these days. Farming is no longer just about the family farm with a few cattle, a few fields where you grew barley and oats, some wheat, or some canola. Quite to the contrary, we have entered into an era where many huge conglomerates own vast tracts of land, and today many farmers lease or rent their farmland. There are also instances where farmers enter into large co-operatives and have their crops marketed jointly. Here in Alberta we also have the intensive livestock operation, or confined feedlot operations, as they're now called. In Little Bow, for instance, we have the largest total number of CFOs, including Feedlot Alley, which many of you have heard about in the paper, which is located in the county of Lethbridge. In each of these cases, Mr. Speaker, we're dealing with farming on a very large scale. The family farm may still come to mind for a lot of people when they think of farming the way it was 50 years ago. However, that kind of family farm is slowly becoming a thing of the past. For farming to be successful, size does not matter, not because of desire as much as necessity.

In any event, as the size of individual farms and farming operations has grown, I think it's fair to talk about farming being on a bit of a collision course with the urban landscape. Our cities and towns are growing steadily. Both Calgary and Edmonton are quickly approaching the 1 million inhabitants mark. In addition to, shall we say, Alberta's natural birth rate, there's little doubt that the strength of our economy is attracting people from both near and far from outside this province. Our garden, the farm, has become smaller geographically, but our production output has increased greatly. With such growth, Mr. Speaker, it follows that there's also going to be an increased need for housing. People need somewhere to live.

AN HON. MEMBER: Our garden?

MR. McFARLAND: Yeah. Our garden, the place that grows all our food products, is shrinking. As a result, our towns and cities are gradually expanding into what were previously rural areas, or the garden, as one of the members asked. At the very least, they're getting closer and closer to these farms and to the rural areas. There's even a term for this phenomenon that we commonly call urban sprawl.

Mr. Speaker, as Alberta's rural landscape changes, many city residents are moving into areas traditionally dominated by agriculture. Many people moving into rural areas have not been exposed to farms before. Today they may be located within short distances of some very large animal facilities. Going back to the idea of the family farm, some people want farms to look nice, but they don't want to deal with the reality of farming, including some noise and some smell. Generally speaking, where there's a farm, there's going to be at certain times of the year certain amounts of smell. However, it would be wrong to think that it's just our new neighbours who have had a bit of a rude awakening. So have many of us who have spent a good portion of our lives on or near these farms. While we're quite used to the smells associated with farming, make no mistake about it. They are stronger and sometimes more plentiful than ever before, an example I'm sure many of you may have experienced yourselves as you drove the highways of Alberta shortly after harvest. How many here have driven by a crop – they may not have actually realized it, but it was a canola crop that had been

swathed, combined, and you suddenly have this funny smell enter your vehicle? Well, actually it's the decay of the plant stem that's starting to rot. I've actually sat with people in a vehicle who thought it was animal by-product smells, and it actually came from a naturally occurring decay process within a plant, which many of us use to put in our fry pan in the morning when we're making pancakes or frying an egg.

8:30

Other people have a misconception about odour. I can relate it this way: the story of the fly who flew into a barn. He noticed this pungent aroma, and he saw a pitchfork standing in the middle of a pile of manure on the floor of the barn. Well, he thought: aha, here's supper. So he flew down from the pitchfork, and he gorged himself on this great feast, and he tried to get back up on the pitchfork, but he couldn't because he was too full. Well, the moral of this story is: don't fly off the handle when you're full of manure.

In the same context, maybe some people at times tend to think that there's nothing about odour that's good, that it's always bad, and maybe they should look for the root cause of it. Mr. Speaker, as far as I can tell, the reason for this has to do with what I mentioned a minute ago. The family small farm that makes us wax nostalgic doesn't exist to the same degree that it used to. Today farming is increasingly becoming a matter of large-scale operations. Farms are not the same as they were a half-century ago. For farmers their kids' shoes cost more, just like they do for everyone else. It costs more to go to movies and send kids to university, just like everyone else. But the prices that the farmers receive for their products historically – like meat, like milk, like grain – haven't kept up with inflation, and they've been forced into ever larger, ever bigger farms as a scale of economy just to keep the farm afloat.

New technologies have made it possible for farmers and ranchers to handle more animals on the same amount of land. These concentrated animal operations produce more manure, which means stronger odours. The little red barn and a subsistence number of livestock aren't nearly as common as they used to be. Farmers are not insensitive to these concerns. They're looking for ways to reduce agricultural odours cheaply and effectively. Many products on the market claim to reduce or eliminate odours by altering the microbial makeup in either the digestive system of the hogs or in the manure storage tanks, but as with so many other things this is an area where bogus or at the very least highly inflated claims abound.

There are a few reliable methods that are worthy of further exploration, and I think we're now going to get into some of the so-called details of the debate. Among them is soil injection. While not suitable for all soil types, this is a technique that's been used for decades. Instead of spraying manure directly on fields, a special tillage device incorporates the liquid manure underground and covers it so it never sits on top of the soil, and it disperses the odour.

Most everyone is familiar also with composting, at least on a small scale. In this process Mother Nature is in charge, letting micro-organisms break down the manure, and the finished product does not emit strong odours. However, the process of composting is often time consuming, so large-scale composting isn't always going to be feasible.

Another process called controlled anaerobic digestion, or biogas production, significantly decreases agricultural odours, although it requires machinery and technical knowledge. In biogas production manure is placed in a closed tank under manipulated environmental conditions. The organisms living in these conditions break down the manure, making it smell less offensive. This reduced-odour manure . . . [Mr. McFarland's speaking time expired] I'm out of time, and I'm sorry. We've got lots to go.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I wonder if the Assembly would grant consent to briefly revert to Introduction of Guests.

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**

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

MR. CENAIKO: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this Legislature a great friend of mine whom I've known for some eight years, having been a member of the Calgary health region board. Howard Waldner is the executive vice-president and chief operating officer for the Calgary health region. He's in the Legislative Assembly tonight on his first visit to the Assembly, so I'd like to recognize him and ask him to stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: **Motions Other than Government Motions** (continued)

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands. [some applause]

MR. MASON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, it's indeed a rare honour to be applauded by members on the other side of the House.

I must say that I have some research notes, but I left my reading glasses at home, so unfortunately I cannot see the facts clearly. Therefore, I have some sympathy for the members opposite tonight. So my comments will be necessarily, therefore, quite brief. [interjections] Well, Mr. Speaker, at least they're awake.

I want to indicate, first of all, that while I support this motion, I feel that some perspective on it is in order. This motion comes after a bill that was debated in the last session of this Assembly that took away the authority from local jurisdictions to cite these large industrial agricultural operations and basically gave the power to the government to approve them. So the government, in doing that, clearly set a course for the expansion of industrial style agriculture in this province. The Premier, of course, as I would never want to not point out, indicated that the number of hogs in this province should dramatically increase, I believe somewhere from 1 million or 2 million to around 8 million.

So the policy has been set. The expansion of this industry is already under way, and the hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler, of course, was at the forefront of fighting for those changes. Now we have a motion to study the impact of what has already been done. So having approved and set a course, now we're going to study the effects. Now we're going to study how it is that we're going to actually clean up the mess.

So while I support this, Mr. Speaker, I have to indicate that I think that things are not being done in the right order. If people were concerned about the odour – and, certainly, we talked at great length about it, and I remember some of those debates – then this motion should've been passed first, and the studies should've been done before the government decided it was going to launch itself on the path of massive industrial hog operations in this province with their well-known impact on groundwater and on nuisance odours that affect people for miles around.

Now, one of the members has talked about changes in the countryside, and those are quite apparent for anyone that wants to see, but it's not just a matter of city folks who can't cut it in the country. It's a matter of a qualitative change that's taken place.

When I attended a meeting of people in Red Deer some months ago to talk about this issue, it was a mass meeting. There were hundreds of people in the room, and I found that many of them were, in fact, farmers. It was the farmers that were concerned about this development. They were concerned about the impact on their operations and on the quality of life of themselves and their families. So it's clearly something that is of significant concern to rural people, not just city people who might be driving down the highway and occasionally run into a wall of smell.

8:40

Mr. Speaker, I really want to just put on the record once again my concern with the overall direction of the province which necessitates this motion. That's really the issue, as far as I can see. Without proper research, without proper thought, without proper consideration for the quality of life of people in this province, the government, in my view, is recklessly headed down a path of massive industrial agricultural operations. There are jurisdictions in the United States and elsewhere where this path has been followed and has resulted in a significant deterioration of the natural environment and of the quality of life of people. So I think that that's really the source of the problem.

Mr. Speaker, I'll just conclude my remarks with that. I believe that the problem with this is that it's really trying to close the barn door after the smell has escaped, and I think that it's unfortunate that the government proceeds in a reverse order to what it ought to in solving some of these matters.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before recognizing the next member, I would just remind the hon. member that these are private members' public motions, not government motions.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

MR. CAO: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure for me to rise this evening to join the debate on Motion 509, which urges the government to work through the Alberta Agricultural Research Institute in developing the use of cost-effective technology in alleviating nuisance-causing odours from farming related practices.

Yes, Mr. Speaker and hon. members, my constituency of Calgary-Fort borders on farmlands and is also the home of several animal product processing operations. I support this motion as I feel that Alberta's growing agricultural industry could benefit from developing technology which would allow livestock farms to be located in close proximity to residential development. As Alberta increases in population, we have become more concerned with the challenge of melding rural farming communities with sprawling urban suburbs, and as our cities grow, more rural land is being developed, placing people's homes closer to farms and other agricultural practices.

Alberta is an agricultural province in which the intensive livestock industry is becoming more prevalent through its known prosperity for farm operators. As a government we have developed regulations that these farming practices must abide by in order to maintain operating licences or gain eligibility to develop a confined feedlot operation. Many of these regulations are related to controlling the livestock conditions and impact on the environment around the farm. Though these regulations exist, there is currently little regulation regarding farming odour, particularly odours caused by livestock operations. Many farms practise what methods they can find to contain the livestock odours and ensure they are not presenting a hazard to the residents around them, but presently little is available in terms of cost-effective and well-researched options for farmers to alleviate the nuisance-causing odours of confined livestock waste.

I commend the hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler for bringing forward Motion 509 in the hope of creating a consensus that odours caused by livestock operations are potential nuisances. Like all provinces in Canada we have standards and regulations about how close farms and livestock areas can be to the nearest neighbour, which has provided us with enough buffer room to enable both farming and residential growth to continue. However, as we continue to grow, these farms should not be jeopardized because they are encroaching on residential areas. The agricultural sector is an important part of our economy, and it should be able to grow simultaneously with our urban centres.

We have acknowledged that something must be done in order to help residential neighbours of farms enjoy the property and not be continually disturbed by farm odours. In 2001 the Agricultural Operation Practices Act was passed, legislating that farmers must turn manure nutrients into their soil within 48 hours of application and that animal waste is to be stored in a standardized container regulated by size and needs of farming practice. Such legislation is outstanding. This helped decrease the impact on neighbouring properties and enhanced courteous farming practices around the province. However, it doesn't alleviate future problems.

Confined feeding operations are growing in our province, and if we are going to plan for growth in this sector, we must look into developing appropriate methods of dealing with intensified odours coming from these operations because of the sheer volume of livestock. We are all aware that there are odour nuisances associated with farming practices. What we must also consider are the health and environmental concerns associated with farming practices coming into close proximity of residential homes. These are very real concerns, Mr. Speaker. If we look at how fast the population of southern Alberta is increasing and the residential land use expanding, I believe it is quite possible that we may reach a point of urgency in the near future. It would only seem logical if we were prepared before this happens as opposed to scrambling when we are faced with an emergency.

We are not certain how severe the health risks are related to such odours. However, we are aware that livestock operations do emit poisonous and noxious gases. Currently we have the luxury of separating these farms from residential communities. It would be a shame to cut short the economic growth taking place in the vibrant agricultural sector because we have no superior system available for farmers in Alberta to farm close to expanding neighbouring communities.

We must explore our options. European countries have much the same climate and farming operations as we do here in Alberta. By looking into other examples of odour-reducing systems, such as those used in Denmark, we could develop an appropriate system more specific to Alberta's needs, reducing farm odours and possible hazards associated with them. I believe research in this area is an important step for advancement and opportunity for Alberta's technological sector as well. Although our climate and farming practices are similar to those found in the countries that have managed to develop the technology, there are differences which would mandate the need to research a way to modify it to Alberta's specific needs.

There have been tremendous advances around the world in capturing the biogas produced by livestock farming and changing it into enough energy to sell into the energy grid. This would be a wonderful advancement for our future, Mr. Speaker. We would benefit from this technology by the investment of our Alberta resources and by modifying it to Canadian farming needs.

I support Motion 509. Mr. Speaker, I believe it would be a proactive step by this government toward our current nuisance

farming odour as well as ensuring that our province has a system that would properly deal with the health issues caused by the poisonous and noxious gases created through livestock farming practices. It is imperative that we think of the future. We are expanding in our population. It would make real sense to develop the technology to ensure that the Alberta livestock farming sector is not jeopardized but growing and prospering in the future.

I again commend the Member for Lacombe-Stettler on this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

8:50

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan.

MR. LOUGHEED: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to rise today and speak to Motion 509. This motion deals with the concerns of many people, both urban and rural, and it's a motion that I will be supporting. Motion 509 encourages the government to focus funding and expertise on the development of cost-effective technology to eliminate waste odour from Alberta's livestock farms.

As a Legislature we should be encouraging this focus in Alberta's research community for a number of reasons. Chief among them are the intensifying nature of livestock production and the increasing movement of people past the traditional boundaries of our cities and towns. One only has to look at the recent census numbers to confirm the movement of people into historically rural areas. Back in March the latest census data confirmed that between '96 and 2001 the Canadian population grew by about 4 percent. Alberta, in particular, saw an influx of people from other provinces, an increase in population of approximately 10.3 percent, more than double the national average.

The census was also revealing about where people were actually living in those different regions. Almost four out of every five Canadians are living in an urban area of 10,000 people or more. More relevant to us today, metropolitan Calgary had the highest growth rate of any major city, increasing almost 16 percent to about 950,000 people. Edmonton's population grew by an aggressive rate of about 8.7 percent, making the capital and Calgary among the five largest cities in Canada. All told, Alberta can boast eight of the 25 fastest growing communities in the country.

With such high population growth it's only natural that city limits will expand further into the frontiers of rural Alberta. Cochrane and Strathmore, for example, are the first and third fastest growing communities in Canada. In my own particular constituency of Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan we see the community of Sherwood Park growing rapidly and the surrounding area of Clover Bar expanding rapidly as well, with acreages being built up all the time. Full quarter sections and full half sections are being developed with dozens of houses and up to 40, 50, 60 houses per quarter section.

With this growth come problems, problems that go beyond infrastructure and the time it takes to commute to work. As people continue to move to these acreages, we see more and more conflict between the traditional rural farming practices. These farm communities, where about 70,000 primary producers live and work – in fact, those producers are leading the nation in innovation and in quality of their product. If we consider Alberta's situation, where we have only 10 percent of Canada's population, through our farming practices we contribute a greater proportion than that 10 percent of farm cash receipts. About 23 percent of farm receipts come from primary agriculture. That's the contribution of Alberta. We look at a total of \$7.4 billion in farm cash receipts for the year 2000, and about 60 percent of that is from the sale of livestock and livestock products.

These figures translate, Mr. Speaker, into Alberta being the largest

beef producing province in Canada. In fact, our province was leading the nation in cattle production as well as cattle and calf inventories, at one time 6 million head. With the recent drought and sell-off we're not sure what those numbers are currently but somewhat less than that now perhaps. We also produce over \$176 million in the poultry and egg industry and over \$318 million in dairy production.

These huge livestock industries contribute a great deal to our provincial economy and, in fact, to our way of life, but the problems come when the by-products of agriculture begin to conflict with that interface of the urbanization of the rural area. I'm sure that a number of our rural members have often heard from constituents complaining about some of those issues where conflict occurs. As our population increases, so too will the issues surrounding the tension between the right to farm and the changing nature of rural Alberta. We already see, through the Agricultural Operation Practices Act, how it was necessary to protect producers from unnecessary lawsuits due to perceived nuisances. If the government can take a proactive approach to not only protecting producers but also trying to diminish some of the irritants, I think we as legislators will have done our job in this matter.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's possible to reduce some of the nuisances of production. In November 2001 the Alberta Agricultural Research Institute presented a workshop on manure in co-operation with the Alberta livestock industry development fund and the Alberta crop development fund. The workshop gathered the group's expertise and knowledge on manure science, focusing on issues such as agronomics and manure management, odour, and treatment techniques. Nine research projects were proposed, showing that the research community can respond to the concerns of our times.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, the world agriculture community has been developing several methods of odour control to help producers. In Europe a trend has developed to convert agricultural waste into a source of energy and a better by-product which does not harm the environment and that fertilizes without pathogens and odour. Closer to home new digestion systems are being developed where micro-organisms convert waste products into methane, or biogas, in a controlled and regulated manner. The energy produced can be used for heat or electricity. Currently, there are about 25 of these digestion systems operating in the States. Pilot projects in Canada, however, for the most part show that they were not economically viable. However, recent significant advances in the technology have made today's systems more feasible. A number of systems are currently running in Canada, including one in Saskatchewan and another near Lethbridge.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the people in my own constituency who have taken the initiative and done some research and have moved toward improved agricultural practices. I'd commend the Scotford colony for their hog operation and the new techniques that are being involved on the colony with the recent new operation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I hate to interrupt the hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan, but the time limit for consideration of this item of business on this day has now concluded, and you'll get a chance next Monday.

9:00

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

Bill 36

Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2002 (No. 2)

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader on behalf of the hon. Minister of Finance.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Yes, indeed, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. On behalf of the hon. Minister of Finance I'd like to move second reading of Bill 36, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2002 (No. 2).

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Happy to have an opportunity to speak to appropriation Bill 36 this evening. It's always a cause for great concern when we see these requests for big dollars coming in in supplementary supply motions, and in fact what we have here this year is the second one for this particular year. So when you have to ask for so much money, this time \$822.853 million, that's a lot of money. It's nearly a billion dollars.

This is the second request in a year, and where do we find the bulk of the dollars going to? This year the bulk of the dollars are going to pay for some different kinds of weather-related kinds of events, extreme weather-related events, be they forest fires or be they droughts – in fact, \$641 million is being asked for to cover that – extreme weather events to be paid for by a government who does not support climate change. You have to ask yourself the question . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No correlation.

MS CARLSON: "No correlation," we hear from all over the Assembly, yet I would refer the members in this Assembly to the comments made by Jeremy Leggett, who wrote *The Carbon Wars* and who talks about some other world leaders, Mr. Speaker, who have begun to recognize that, in fact, there is a correlation, going back as far as the late '80s and early '90s. He quotes a number of people, including someone who this government has long held up as a fiscal role model, and that would be the U.K. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who when giving a speech to the Royal Society in London summarized her concerns when she stated that "we may have unwittingly begun a massive experiment with the system of the planet itself." Not one known for eco-doom-mongering but speaking directly in reference to massive extreme weather events that were costing her government money. One of these days this government will wake up and smell the coffee, but it in fact for the most part . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Smell the burning forest.

MS CARLSON: They'll smell burning forest. That could be exactly what happens, Mr. Speaker.

But, in fact, what's happening is what I've been saying for a long time. Business is on the ball with this issue. They're in the game. It's governments who are lagging behind. In the epilogue to this particular book this author says that while governments stall, business attendees are making headway, that since Kyoto new and positive atmospheres have built up in negotiations, and that the atmosphere was more of business opportunity than legislative threat. Not if you listen to politicians, Mr. Speaker. That's where the legislative threat is heard. We hear that day in, day out in this Assembly and with the massive propaganda campaign that we see from the government. Industry is now saying: how do we do this?

Government says: why should we, because in fact it can't be factual.

So what will happen, Mr. Speaker, is that we are going to continue to see increased funding requests in supplementary estimates because this government has the blinkers on, and they cannot see the forest fire for the trees. They have blinkers on that just keep them looking in one path. What's happening is that they don't budget

enough for disaster relief in this province and haven't for at least the past five years, Mr. Speaker.

Even though the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development in response to the Member for Edmonton-Riverview last Thursday talked about this government using five-year rolling averages to determine how much money they should be allocating to forest fires, when we take a look at the numbers and we do the math, which is not all that tricky, we find out that that isn't exactly accurate. In fact, for the last five years they have been coming back and asking for substantial dollars because when they actually go to fight the fires, they spend significantly more money than what was budgeted for. This year they've come back for money for the fires not once but twice. What can we anticipate happening next year, Mr. Speaker? Exactly the same thing.

In this particular budget \$229.2 million, lots of extra money for fires. If I recall correctly, it was about the same as the request for the first supplementary estimates, and that is in addition to what they budgeted for. So what's the problem here? The government can't really divide by five and figure out how much it's going to cost them or they run three-month budgets rather than three-year budgets, as they try to tell us about, or they just choose to rely on supplementary supply as a part of their budgeting process so that they don't have to truly invest any time or energy in long-term planning. It's a poor way to manage a province, and it's a poor way to manage nearly \$21 billion in revenue that this province takes in every year.

One of the members on the government side today said that this government doesn't have a revenue problem; it has a spending problem. That's exactly right. When you can't budget properly, you run bloated governments, inefficient, ineffective governments who say all the right things but don't practice what they preach. Mr. Speaker, that is really a shame because this truly is an outstanding province. This truly is a province that takes in more money than any other province per capita in this country. We are blessed by a largesse of riches which we see squandered every single year, and that's a shame not only for those of us living in this province at this time but for those who will come and for the children whom we are supposed to be leaving a legacy for. It doesn't happen in this particular province.

We see great examples of this when we take a look at supplementary estimates. Lots of money to the farm assistance program, the farm income disaster program, and the crop insurance. Our leader is on record repeatedly talking about how to better implement those programs and make them more efficient and effective, not the least of which is getting the money into the hands of the people who need it in a timely fashion, which, in fact, did not happen again this year. So not only do they have to come back for more money, but they can't manage it once they get it, and that's a problem. Our leader has talked about the Liberal farm cost of production insurance program for many years. That is an excellent option, and one that he and the minister of agriculture have talked about and that would have certainly got money into people's hands sooner when they needed it.

We see all kinds of ongoing problems come up on the farms. I haven't heard yet in this discussion of supplementary estimates any good projections for how some of these large outstanding issues are going to be dealt with next year in a manner that is more efficient and more timely than that one that we have seen so far. I am hoping that before we actually vote on this particular bill, we're going to see some of those answers come forward, Mr. Speaker, because it is a lot of money, nearly \$1 billion, and doesn't seem to be well thought out in terms of how they have requested the money, how they have budgeted for it, or how in the world you could ever benchmark when you ask for these kinds of dollars every couple of months.

So hoping that we hear some outlines from perhaps the Minister of Finance tonight on how the entire government will start to deal with these budgets in a truly fiscally conservative manner with proper management and an effective way of putting forward a future debt payment program where we can start to see infrastructure paid for on the kind of basis that is sustainable rather than this feast and famine kind of approach we have now. For a government that likes business so much, I can never understand why they would fund infrastructure the way they do, because what happens is that when you take all the money out of infrastructure, out of maintenance and repair, and out of new buildings or new roads that are required in the province, people are out of jobs. Companies go bankrupt. Then when you dump a lot of cash back in, trying to catch up on what is now a systemic deficit in infrastructure, what happens is that we don't get the best quality possible at the best possible price because now you've oversaturated the market. People get into bidding wars and construction is delayed and then there are cost overruns, and that isn't an effective way to manage an economy.

9:10

Business asks from this government the same as municipal governments ask, and that is sustainable, dependable funding that actually runs on a three-year term, not a three-month term, so that they can do their planning and so that they can be effective and efficient in the way they spend and manage their money. We could only ask that our provincial government could show that kind of leadership, and I would heartily applaud any attempts they make to move in that direction. But so far, for the past 10 years, not so good and not much to cheer about.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The chair, before recognizing the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands, would remind all members that under the new rules, Standing Order 29, the mover of the bill or motion and the second speaker are entitled to 20 minutes. Then following that, each speaker has 15 minutes with up to five minutes of question and answer. So just a reminder of that.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands.

MR. MASON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak to the supplementary estimates, and I want to concentrate on the same question that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie raised. The provincial government is spending quite a bit of money, Mr. Speaker, to communicate, to use the term loosely, with Albertans on the question of climate change and the impact of the Kyoto accord on the economy of Alberta. Now, they have not researched in any detail these economic costs. The Pembina Institute has done I think one of the best studies so far on the economic costs of climate change and has found that at the most it would reduce the increase in the economic output of this province by 1 or 2 percent over a period of years.

So the question comes about the economic costs which are contained here. We are seeing, Mr. Speaker, the first inklings of the long-term economic cost to this province of not doing anything about climate change, and we're beginning to see increases on a regular basis for drought relief in this province and for the costs of fighting forest fires. It's my view, as well, that the water problem in this province will soon reach the point where it is a barrier to further economic development generally and specifically to further economic development in the agricultural sector. Quite simply, Mr. Speaker, it's obvious to anyone who has two eyes to see that this province is drying out. It is drying out. I think that that's increasingly obvious.

So here we have again in the supplementary estimates increased unbudgeted expenditures for things like drought relief and forest fires, and the government is not sharing a long-term view of the economic costs of not doing anything about climate change with Albertans. I believe that it's possible that potential economic losses related to the oil and gas industry in this province can be offset very, very successfully with technological developments. I think that technology can get us past many of the difficulties which may arise as a result of reducing our dependence on fossil fuels, but it will be only a matter of time before economic losses in the other sectors outstrip any potential losses in the petroleum industry.

I have here, Mr. Speaker, a letter dated October 22 to the Premier by a number of eminent scientists in Alberta led by David Schindler. It's signed by dozens – dozens – of scientists, professors emeritus, associate professors, assistant professors. There are actually attached to this letter four pages of signatures of eminent scientists in this province. I'd just like to read to members some of the contents of this letter because I think they bear very much on these expenditures that we're being asked to approve tonight.

Contrary to the views often portrayed by the press and industry spokespersons, there is little disagreement in the scientific community on climate warming. The Royal Society of Canada, the Royal Society of London, and the US National Academy of Sciences have all taken strong positions on the global warming issues. Virtually all scientific models agree that we are faced with 1-2° Celsius of additional warming by mid-century, and considerably more by the year 2100 . . . The current scientific consensus on global warming is now greater than, for example, the general consensus in the 1960s that humans could reach the moon, or the consensus in the early 1940s that we could create atomic weapons.

Temperature records show that in southern Canada, considerable warming has already taken place on the western prairies. Increases in temperature since the early 20th century have been from 1 to 3° Celsius at various prairie locations, including those where increased urbanization cannot be a confounding influence. The resulting increases in evaporation have without doubt aggravated the drought conditions that currently plague the western prairies. With further warming, desertification of these areas may occur.

Desertification. That means it turns into desert, Mr. Speaker.

There has been much publicity [generated] about alleged economic losses that will be suffered by the oil and gas industries if Kyoto is ratified and implemented. But losses that will be suffered by other resource sectors if climate continues to warm must also be considered.

The scientists go on to say, Mr. Speaker:

Of particular concern is the fate of agriculture on the western prairies, which contain 60% of Canada's agricultural land. Both historical records and paleoecological studies show that the western prairies have experienced prolonged droughts in the past, at frequencies of roughly 25 years. It is very likely that drought patterns will continue in the years ahead. But this is the first time that other factors will amplify the effects of drought. Climate warming is causing increased evaporation. We have populations of humans and livestock numbering several million in the western prairies, and a large irrigation program. We may already be seeing the combined effects of climate and evaporation on water supply. Predictions are that Canada will be importing, not exporting wheat this year.

Listen to that.

There is a shortage of food and water for livestock. The effects of climate warming on agriculture in western Canada will certainly cost tens of billions of dollars. Compensation payments and crop insurance payouts this year alone amount to over two billion dollars in Alberta and Saskatchewan. The federal government dispensed 22 billion dollars in farm relief between 1985 and 1991, mostly the result of the 1988 drought, according to Statistics Canada. Such costs can only increase with a warming climate. Recent analyses

predict that by mid-century the arid and semi-arid areas of Alberta and Saskatchewan will increase by 50% if climate models are correct.

MR. LUKASZUK: And the sky will fall.

MR. MASON: Yes. Well, you know, he believes that all of these scientists are Chicken Little, and one day he and his constituents are going to be crushed by a giant piece of falling sky, and that's for sure.

Mr. Speaker, the scientists go on to talk about forestry.

In the late 1980s and 1990s, the incidence of forest fire doubled in Canada compared to the 1960s and 1970s, burning a area equal to 80% of the province of Alberta during this 20 year period. In the worst fire years of the 1990s, the CO₂ emitted by forest fires almost equaled that from burning fossil fuels in Canada. The area burned was enough to turn our boreal forests from a "sink" for atmospheric CO₂ before 1980 to a "source" of carbon to the atmosphere in the 1990s.

9:20

Now, Mr. Speaker, we talk about our forests as being a protection against the emission of CO₂, something that absorbs the CO₂, that is produced by animals and by industrial activity. But what the scientists are saying is that as the country dries out, the forests burn so quickly that they are actually putting more carbon into the air than they take out. That is of considerable concern if

there are still huge amounts of carbon in the trees and forests of the Canadian boreal forest that would be released by increased forest fire. If climate continues to warm, there is a great potential for forest fire to amplify the effects of fossil fuel burning, resulting in warming that is beyond the predictions of climate models. Already, the costs of fighting forest fires in Canada average over 500 million dollars per year, with little effect on the amount of forest burned. The costs of fire suppression, lost revenues to the forest industry, evacuations of towns, and health impacts of smoke are likely to be extremely high. There will also be increased damage from disease and insect infestations, and direct effects on forests such as dieback due to warmer, dryer climate. Climate warming will increase the problem of freshwater for the prairies, and the water that remains will decline in quality. Already, wetlands are dry and many lakes have lost most of their water. Summer river flows are already flowing at 20-60% of historical values. Some communities have already lost their groundwater supplies, and have built or are proposing pipelines to our already overtaxed rivers.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that we'll be considering a bill dealing with that in this fall sitting.

These pipelines appear to cost on the order of thirty million dollars each. Costs of water treatment, water conservation, and watershed protection will also increase.

It goes on to say that it's just a few examples of the effects of climate warming and concludes that the scientific community is broadly of the opinion that this is a most serious issue to be dealt with by governments here at home and abroad.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to indicate that I believe that the expenditures contained here, these extraordinary expenditures, unbudgeted expenditures, represent just the tip of the iceberg for the expenditures which will be required, which will balloon, which will mushroom over time. We tend to think of nature in terms of equilibrium, that if something gets pushed over on one side, it gets stopped by something and then a new equilibrium is reached. That's not necessarily the case in the area of climate change.

The example of the forests is one. As things dry out, more fires release even more CO₂, so it has a tendency to accelerate rather than to bring it back into balance. Similarly with the melting of the polar ice caps and with the snow cap that exists in the world. That reflects

an enormous amount of sunlight back into space, Mr. Speaker. As the amount of snow on the earth's surface decreases as the size of the polar icecaps shrinks, less of the radiation is returned to space, more is absorbed within the atmosphere. So you have a tendency for the effect of global warming to accelerate rather than to come back into balance, and it can in fact be a most dangerous situation.

The temperatures on Venus, which has an intense cloud cover, are in the order of 600 to 800 degrees Celsius. The effect is not caused by its closeness to the sun. [interjection] Well, if people want to laugh, they can laugh. Mr. Speaker, Venus has an extremely high temperature. The reason for that is because of its atmosphere, not its proximity to the sun, and it has experienced what's called a runaway greenhouse effect, which means that the effect rebounded upon itself many times. So Venus is, of course, uninhabitable, and it's possible . . . [interjection] How is it you don't know, hon. minister? It's 800 degrees.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. members, this is not a back and forth operation; it's one member speaking at a time, other members listening or being quiet.

MR. MASON: Now, I know that talking about Venus is just a little bit too far out for some of the hon. members here tonight, Mr. Speaker. I only raise it to indicate that notions about equilibrium in matters of climate change are just assumptions and that there is such a thing as a runaway greenhouse effect, which many scientists have predicted is possible on the earth if the present trends continue for too long.

That's something that maybe is beyond what people want to really consider at this point, Mr. Speaker, but I do think that Dr. Schindler's report is, in fact, a serious one, and I'd be happy to entertain any questions.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: We have three or four people who have indicated to me that they are desirous of asking questions. That will mean that we'll be down to about 30 seconds for a question and about 30 seconds for an answer.

But before we go, may we have agreement to briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

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

MR. CENAIKO: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It again gives me a great deal of honour to introduce to you a number of young people that are here this evening sitting in the members' gallery who are with the PC Youth executive: Blake Robert, the president of the PC Youth executive as well as a constituent of mine, as well as Virginia Linkletter, Ashley Geis, Harrison Gallelli, William McBeth, and Dana Lea. If they'd like to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Bill 36
Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2002 (No. 2)
(*continued*)

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The list is as follows: the hon. Member

for Drayton Valley-Calmar will be followed by the hon. Member for Castle Downs, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. In asking of questions, you'll have to be succinct and similarly the answers on this part of the budget debate.

REV. ABBOTT: Mr. Speaker, out of respect for all the other members that would like to ask a question, I will defer to them.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The next one on the list is Edmonton-Castle Downs.

MR. LUKASZUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are few gases in this world more noxious than those just emitted by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands. However, I would like to ask him: does he suggest that instead of helping out our farmers with the effects of weather disasters, we transfer the wealth from Alberta to Third World countries and tell them that this will help our farmers in the long run?

MR. MASON: Mr. Speaker, I quite frankly have no idea what the hon. member is talking about.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. It's yours.

MR. McCLELLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Edmonton-Highlands brought the supplementary estimates over to the Kyoto accord and climate change, and I'm wondering if the Member for Edmonton-Highlands will advise the House: in his opinion, is the Kyoto accord primarily environmental or primarily wealth transfer?

9:30

MR. MASON: Mr. Speaker, I didn't speak about the Kyoto accord. I talked about the cost of not dealing with climate change and with CO₂ emissions. That's what I spoke about.

MR. McCLELLAND: On questions and comments, then, the Member for Edmonton-Highlands was not speaking to the Kyoto accord, was speaking to emissions which may or may not cause environmental catastrophes, which have a direct implication on the public purse. So my question again is: in the Member for Edmonton-Highland's opinion is the current environmental accord that is being considered by this Legislature as well as the national Legislature primarily concerning emissions, carbon dioxide, or wealth transfer?

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

MR. MASON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would submit that the Kyoto accord depends on the implementation formula. Those are all matters that need to be negotiated between the provinces and the federal government, and I believe that if the provincial government here takes an active and strong role in fighting for Alberta's interests within the context of those negotiations, the Kyoto accord implementation can be fair to all provinces and share the burden. Our position has always been that the penalties ought to be based on consumption of fossil fuels, not on production, and that formula would ensure that Alberta's industry is not unduly impacted relative to the rest of the country.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, as the time goes.

MR. McCLELLAND: Thank you very much to the member representing Edmonton-Highlands. At the Global Policy Forum representatives of the Heinrich Boell Foundation, which is affiliated with the German Green Party, made the case that the planet desperately needed resources for redistribution to Third World countries and the best, the most effective way to raise these resources was through a carbon tax or through the so-called Tobin tax.

MS CARLSON: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: A point of order. Do you have a citation, Edmonton-Ellerslie?

**Point of Order
Relevance**

MS CARLSON: I do, Mr. Speaker. I refer you to *Erskine May*, page 378, relevance. I'm wondering what this member's relevance is in the question he's asking with regard to the estimates, which were in second reading this evening.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think I'll hold that in reserve. I was wondering the same thing myself, hon. member, but that's primarily referring to questions in question period. This is a brand-new process that we're entering into; that is to say, allowing the free flow during debate of questions from members that are generated spontaneously. They don't know that that particular item is referenced in *Erskine May*, so I'll just take that under advisement and come back later for other things.

In the meantime, I think time has probably just about run out for the hon. member in any event.

MS CARLSON: Then I have a point of clarification on that.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I'm sorry. I didn't hear. Was that a comment, a question?

MS CARLSON: Mr. Speaker, in terms of your comments on this point of order I have a clarification.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Okay. Clarify.

MS CARLSON: The reference I referred you to on page 378 of *Erskine May* deals particularly with relevance in debate, which I assumed this to be, not to other types of questions.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford on the point of order.

MR. McCLELLAND: Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to accept admonishment to be relevant, and then I'll take my place and conclude the question rapidly. So admonish me to be relevant.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: All right. I give up. I'll admonish you to please stay relevant to the debate, Edmonton-Rutherford.

Debate Continued

MR. McCLELLAND: The Member for Edmonton-Highlands would know, then, that the preceding comments before the interruption would lead directly to our capacity to make our estimates without a

supplementary estimate. So would the Member for Edmonton-Highlands inform the House how after the application of a carbon tax Alberta's economy would be affected so as to be able to continue to make the payments to fund the carbon tax?

MR. MASON: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member would like me to stand here and say that I support a carbon tax, and I'm not going to do that.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Edmonton-Centre, now we're in the debate on the bill.

MS BLAKEMAN: I hope so.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Good. You have the floor.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you very much. There were three issues I wanted to raise in conjunction with this second reading of Bill 36, the appropriation act for supplementary supply. A number of people that have spoken before me have raised the point and have gone into much more detail – therefore I don't feel that I need to do that – but I think it's worth noting that we already had budgeted amounts for farm disaster relief, for fire fighting, and for flood disaster. Therefore, the appropriation amounts that we have before us in the sum of \$652 million are additional expenses, supposedly unanticipated expenses, and I'm raising the issue of how these could be unanticipated.

I think that on one side of that debate is the issue of disastrous or calamitous weather events and climate change and on the other side is being able to properly budget for what should be expected during any given year. I've raised the issue of additional expenses coming through at supplementary supply for fire fighting in the past, and I would venture to say that if we looked back on the percentage of correct figures that have been in original budgets for fire fighting, at this point the department should have a better idea of how much it actually costs given the number of times they've had to approach this Assembly for supplementary supply for those areas. So whichever reasoning the government wishes to use, I wish it would pick one and stick to it.

But they do keep coming in front of us. I think that every fall and, in some cases, every spring and every fall we've had supplementary supply estimates brought before this Assembly, which I think is a very sad comment on the ability of this government to control its budget and to adequately anticipate what we'll need to expend figures on. That comment is certainly backed up by the Auditor General's comments on the difficulties that are created and the expectations that are created for departments and for staff when they know that they can come forward to their minister for supplementary supply every year and that in all likelihood they will be able to get that supplementary supply. It sets up a very poor precedent and an expectation that they'll always be able to get more money whether that should have been coming in the original budget or not.

I do note that the Member for Edmonton-Riverview had challenged a number of the ministers as to whether they recognized these calamitous weather events as having any connection to climate change, and the ministers were not willing to admit that. I think time will prove this side of the House right on that in the long run.

It is a significant amount of money when we're asked to do it, and I do have issues and complaints about the budgeting process of the government to be that far off. We're talking almost a billion dollars in total in supplementary supply requests in front of us. That's part of the second issue that I was raising: this habitual and accepted process of coming before the Assembly asking for additional funds. With all the resources this government has, we should be able to get closer to actual budgeted amounts.

9:40

The last set of issues. I did have a fairly good exchange with the Minister of Community Development around the \$3.7 million for the transfer of the Western Heritage Centre. In response to our exchange I've had some contact from people in Cochrane who've raised some additional questions. I did send those questions over to the minister, and of course it can't be expected he would know the answer to these off the top of his head. I thought he might have some staff on that could quickly look some things up. He's aware of these questions. I'll just put them on the record. In fact, he has provided me with some responses already.

The situation we have with the Western Heritage Centre was that this was a huge white elephant. I think there's a strong argument that the centre really didn't have the support to be built in the first place or certainly not built to the size that it was built to, which has always been my feeling. I felt that the original museum was a more reasonable size for the amount of tourist activity that could be expected. Nonetheless, there was a huge banquet and convention facility that was built along with it, and frankly the tourist numbers have just not supported what was envisioned by the group that managed to talk both the provincial government and the federal government into money to build this larger facility.

So it has limped along for seven or eight years. It's been in trouble pretty much from day one. There were a number of attempts to come back to the government for bailout, and in fact they were successful a couple of times, I think. Finally, they got turned over to the friends-of organization in '98 or whenever that was, when most of the historical sites did assume responsibility through a friends-of society. That friends-of society, of course, was not able to keep the organization going. It's just far too big a facility for the actual numbers that were coming through.

So now the friends-of society just walked away from the facility in 2000, handed the keys over, I think, as of January 1, 2001. Now the government has got this facility back on their books that they don't really want. So there has been some lengthy consultation and a tendering process to accept proposals from the community and commercial interests as to what is the best use of this facility at this point, and there is a proposal from the town of Cochrane.

What's happening is that in Cochrane they've been led to believe that this facility would get turned over to the town of Cochrane for a very nominal fee, carrying with it no debt whatsoever. I've been trying to confirm that that, in fact, is what's going to happen with this facility. There has been debt attached to it in the past, and I've never been able to get what I felt was a straight answer coming out of the government as to exactly how that debt was either paid off or written off the books, or was it deducted from grants that were being sent out to the organization? It's never been really clear whether there's a debt attached to the facility or not attached to the facility, and I'm trying to determine that. In other words, I'm trying to confirm that when the province hands this over, does it retain any lingering debt that it, in fact, is absorbing that perhaps should be transferred to the town if the town is accepting this asset?

So the first question is: what liabilities, including debt, and what assets comprise the Western Heritage Centre as the government is ready to hand it over today? What are both sides of that balance sheet? What was the society's debt to the provincial government? Was there anything outstanding from the initial construction phase, and was there any debt left over from the nonprofit society's operation of the centre and the museum? Again, was that written off by the government? Was it clawed back from grants that were being issued to the organization, or is there still some sort of debt attached to the land? So is the government handing this asset of the Western Heritage Centre and the Cochrane Ranche over debt free with no

liens or encumbrances on it? Has the province done a title search to determine whether there are any additional liens against the property?

Now, I did ask the minister, and he has responded that the town of Cochrane could apply for operating grants for the Stockmen's library, which is an integral part of this centre and a very important one, I think, to all Albertans but particularly to southern Alberta. It's really an outstanding collection of literary work from the stockmen and certainly around the early parts of our province. Could the town of Cochrane be applying for an operating grant for that library? Or if we want, call it a museum. The minister, of course, has responded that to apply as a museum, that really goes through the Alberta Museums Association, which is a PASO, a provincial arts service organization, which receives its money from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts or through Community Development's access to lottery funds, and then the Museums Association disperses the money. So that's really up to the Museums Association as to whether they think that facility qualifies appropriately for grant material. That minister has already given me that information.

Further, if we were trying to look at it as a library and whether it was eligible as a library, they would have to become part of the library system; in other words, a full operating public library through the town or whatever setup there was. They might be considered for funding then through library grants.

So we have a bit of a unique situation here where, in fact, it is a collection of literary material. It's not part of the public library system, so it's not considered a library and not eligible for library grants as such, and it would have to change the way it operates in order to be eligible. Although it's an antique collection of writing, it's not considered a museum either. So we have an interesting situation there with an asset that's been collected and donated to the citizens of Alberta that isn't really fitting comfortably into any category and appears not to be eligible for any kinds of grants under the current situation.

Those were the questions that I wanted to get on record. I understand that the minister will have his staff endeavour to get me answers to that. I will ask for expediency with that as the vote for the town of Cochrane, whether or not to proceed with this proposal, is next Monday, December 2. So if I could possibly get information that I could forward down to them before then, that would be very helpful.

I've been involved with this issue of the Western Heritage Centre for six years actually, since I got elected, and I have to say that on behalf of Albertans I'm glad that what's turned into a burden is no longer on the books of the government, and therefore it's not the responsibility of Albertans. On the other hand, certainly some parts of what's in that centre, not the building per se but the artifacts and the Stockmen's library and certainly the artwork, are an asset and were donated so that all Albertans could enjoy them, and we want to ensure that they will be looked after appropriately.

There's nothing special about the building itself. It's not an antique. It's not a historical site as such, but it houses certain artifacts that are important to us. So, you know, if the town of Cochrane accepts this, I hope they're well aware of what they're accepting, and I am trying to clarify that they're not accepting any kind of hidden debt. Conversely, if the government has now accepted debt that was incurred and it hasn't really showed up and it hasn't been answered accurately in response to the many questions I've asked about the debt issue around this particular centre, then shame on the government for hiding that one. I certainly asked the question a number of times, not to the current minister, to the previous minister.

So those are the issues that I wanted to raise during second

reading of Bill 36, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2002 (No. 2), and I will note that it is the second time we have a supplementary supply act in front of us in 2002. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: If the hon. members will bear with me for a moment, we have a little bit of a problem in that the hon. Deputy Government House Leader, who also is Minister of Community Development, has been asked a series of questions which he might attempt to answer. However, the rules of the House, since he is the mover of this bill, are that when he stands to answer questions, that closes debate. So we can have that in order to close debate, or we would have to seek unanimous consent to allow the minister to answer the questions without triggering this other provision. [interjections] Okay. The debate.

Are there any questions? No questions. Any further debate? Well, now we do have it. The hon. Minister of Community Development to close debate, maybe answer the questions.

9:50

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There being no other persons wishing to speak at this particular time on this particular bill, I would like to acknowledge the questions that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre has provided. First of all, I don't think it's accurate to say that the Western Heritage Centre is in any way, shape, or form a building or a piece of property that the government doesn't want. This is not a question of trying to unload it. This is a question of the local committee, local citizens there wanting to try and somehow retain the centre for its original intended use, and this has come to light over the last year of meetings that I've had with them in this regard.

Now, in attempting to address what the community wanted by way of preserving the site for that original intention, it's actually the town of Cochrane who came to us and asked whether or not they might be able to put forward some kind of a solution. So it was not the case where we went to the town asking them. They came to us and said: hey, this is a centre that's valuable and important to us; it houses all the things it does; it provides the kinds of functions that it does. So they were trying to work out a community-based solution, and I agreed with that. I said: that would be wonderful if you could work out a community-based solution.

Obviously, the society that had the very good intentions of running the centre fell into financial hardship. It did not attract the numbers, which the member knows, that had been anticipated, so it became financially unviable for the society to continue operating it. As well intentioned as it was, it just didn't work out. So that having been said, they turned over the keys, as you know, which was also something we didn't ask for. Nonetheless, we inherited the keys, so we're the keeper of the keys.

I want to put to rest one other issue, and that's with respect to any debts that might be lingering or whatever. To the very best of my knowledge and from the recollections that I have – and I will, hon. member, get you more details on this, as I sent you in the note – there is no truth to any kind of a loan obligation that exists that we're aware of. Okay?

Now, I don't think there's anything there that hasn't been cleared up or cleared off or one way or another addressed, so the proposed deal, if you will, between the government of Alberta and the town of Cochrane, should it proceed, goes ahead free and clear. There is nothing there that anyone is hiding or holding back or whatever. So that's that question.

With respect to the library issue what I did indicate to the hon. member, Mr. Speaker, in response to her written note to me a few minutes ago – could the library on site there apply for funding? I believe I indicated that if they meet the criteria or whatever for public library funding and they apply through the municipality to

join the local regional library system and they have the blessing of the municipality, then, by all means, they are welcome to apply and ask to be considered for the per capita rate, which at the moment is about \$4.03, and the regional library also gets \$3.07 or thereabouts over and above that. So that possibility may exist if they wish to proceed and if they meet specific criteria.

I think the member herself has accurately summed up the position of the question regarding the museum. That is entirely under the purview of the Alberta Museums Association. They have a membership list, and they have their own criteria. We provide a block grant to the AMA, the Alberta Museums Association, and then they in turn pass it out to their members on an individualized basis.

So I hope that addresses some of the concerns that the member had. There are some other specifics that I know she wants some detailed answers to, and I will endeavour to provide those to her in very, very short order.

Let me just close by saying that the town of Cochrane has recognized the value of the Western Heritage Centre as something that they want to build on, something they want to maintain, and something that they want to convert into a multi-use centre for many different citizens' uses, including a theatre. I think they also want to have a seniors' drop-in centre. In fact, they want to move their municipal business into that particular centre and do other things there as well, including maintaining as much of the original purpose and intent as is humanly possible. They're very dedicated to that purpose, and I do wish them well with it.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, that's probably enough for now, and I'll revert to the chair.

[Motion carried; Bill 36 read a second time]

Bill 35

Teachers' Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2002

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Minister of Learning it's my pleasure to move Bill 35, Teachers' Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2002, at second reading.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to make a couple of comments about Bill 35. First of all, to thank the government for taking the substance of this bill out of the miscellaneous statutes act and presenting it to the Assembly as a stand-alone bill. I think that had it appeared in miscellaneous statutes, it would have set a precedent that we might live to regret. So I thank them for having it as a stand-alone bill.

It's a part of the faith agreement that was undertaken by the government, the Alberta School Boards Association, and the Alberta Teachers' Association that resolved the dispute and saw classrooms returning to normal in the province. It's a good piece of work, and we're delighted that it's here and are very happy in supporting it.

[Motion carried; Bill 35 read a second time]

Bill 34

Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta Amendment Act, 2002

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader on behalf of the hon. Minister of Seniors.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to move on behalf of the hon. Minister of Seniors Bill 34, Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta Amendment Act, 2002.

In doing so, I'd just like to make a couple of very brief comments, if I could, and that is that the essential purpose here is to allow for the extended time in the chair, if you will, beyond the current six-year maximum for the person to occupy that chair position. As members in the House will know, it is a position occupied by an MLA of this Assembly, someone who is doing a very good job, from Calgary-West.

I should also add that the Seniors Advisory Council has been a particularly effective council, Mr. Speaker, because they not only work very hard with seniors groups in different locales across the province, but they also provide a very valuable liaison directly with the government, which helps in the creation of policy directions and in the creation of services. It performs a valuable role in helping to monitor and provide a voice for the constituent group involved.

So I'm pleased to move it at second reading on behalf of the hon. Minister of Seniors.

10:00

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to Bill 34, the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta Amendment Act, 2002, in second reading. As the minister mentioned, the purpose of this bill is singular. It's really amending the original act so that the chair of the council may serve as a member of the council for more than six consecutive years.

I listened intently to the minister's presenting remarks because I was hoping to get an explanation as to why it was felt that it would be a particularly good idea to have a chairperson in place for more than six years. I always find it very interesting that members of this government are very clear in their feelings that the federal government have been in place for far too long and are out of touch with people, et cetera, et cetera, and we're talking about an eight to a 10-year time frame there. So here we have them saying: no, no, no; we want longer than a six-year time frame when we're talking about the appointment of one of our own members. I've looked at the record of the individual that's being considered here, and although it's obviously not specific to that person, I think we can safely subtitle this particular bill as the Calgary-West memorial appointment bill because it is the Member for Calgary-West that would be able to take advantage of this extension.

Again, I listened carefully to the minister who moved this bill to see whether there was any anticipation of how long, how open-ended this would be. In fact, it is totally open-ended; there are no restrictions being put in place. So given this particular government's proclivity to get comfortable and stay in positions for an extended period of time, one presumes that this member would stay in this position as long as she was elected. I'd like to know the reasoning behind that.

Is there some advantage that's being anticipated by the government to having an individual stay in the position for an extended period of time? Is it the familiarity with the individuals on the council? Well, that can't be the case because all the other council members do have to abide by the two-term, no-more-than-six-year appointment. So having your chairperson there for an extended period of time doesn't get them any more familiar with the appointees to the board because, in fact, the board members are changing and turning over.

Does it give them any better understanding of the legislation? Well, there isn't a tremendous amount of very, very specific

legislation in this Legislature pertaining specifically to seniors, so I don't know that you need an extended period beyond the six years to become very familiar with the legislation.

Now, I can be corrected on this, but my understanding is that with this appointment comes an additional salary amount. I look forward to having the specifics of that laid out, if I may put that question before the members here and perhaps have the minister or someone else respond to that. I do have to wonder: is this just to enhance the financial well-being of the one member who has the appointment? Should it not be shared about with some of the other backbenchers who would like the opportunity to talk about seniors' issues? Or is there some particular reason why this one individual would be the beneficiary of that?

Again, I'm not absolutely certain about this, so please correct me if I'm wrong. My memory was that there was a time with the Seniors Advisory Council when the chairperson was not an MLA; it was a member of the community. That's my memory from when I was with the Advisory Council on Women's Issues. They never had an MLA appointed as the chairperson for the women's advisory council. I'm pretty sure I remember a time when there wasn't an MLA that was appointed as head of the Seniors Advisory Council. So I'd be interested in getting clarification on that, please. If it did change from a nonelected person, a member appointed from the public at large, to an MLA, what was the reasoning at the time to be doing that? And I think a question about whether that reasoning is still relevant today.

So we have a very thin bill before us with one purpose, and that is to extend the ability of one person to serve as the chairperson of the Seniors Advisory Council for a period longer than six years, and there's no cap on that. Seemingly, they could sit in that position for as long as they were elected. I'm looking forward to the explanation from the government as to why they feel this is necessary, why they don't think that a turnover, a change, or having someone else in that position would be a good idea.

I'll tell you one of my concerns. As I've looked through the various proposals that the current chairperson of the council has brought forward, I noticed that certainly in the earlier days she seemed to have been more successful in having her motions and bills accepted by the House. As we get further along, we get things that are not being accepted by the rest of the House. The one that I'm thinking of in particular is from 2000, I think. Sorry; I'm just trying to refresh my memory here. She wanted the House to establish a committee that would look at establishing standards of care. So it wasn't even taking the more courageous step of asking the House to approve the creation of standards of care for seniors in institutions; it was simply to create a committee that would start to look at this. I don't think that motion passed, and I was very disappointed at the time that it didn't because it struck me as, you know, pretty reasonable and fairly innocuous.

Yeah, there it is, Bill 203, Residential Care Housing Committee Act, which was defeated in Committee of the Whole. That was in 2001. So, indeed, although there were some successful motions that came forward in '98, '99, 2000, 2001, when we actually look at the private member's bill in 2001, it did not gain the support of the government members, which really surprised me at the time and continues to surprise me. So I'm wondering if perhaps a change isn't warranted here to bring in some fresh blood or new enthusiasm or new insight, that would perhaps have resulted in a more successful bid to have this bill or a subsequent bill passed.

So in principle I don't object to the idea of the extension of this term, but I do have a number of questions that have not been answered about why the government considers this a good idea. I'm looking for far more explanation and support and rationale for this

than certainly exists in the bill or we've heard from the sponsoring member. I did run this by the leaders in the seniors community. They were concerned that there was more to this bill than in fact there was. When I explained what it was, well, they didn't have a lot of comment, although they did wonder: why the extension? Why was that six years not enough? What was the rationale or the government reasoning behind wishing to extend that indefinitely?

10:10

So we're all asking the same question: what is the rationale behind that? What is being anticipated here? What's to be gained from having the same person serve in that position for an extended period of time? I mean, I notice that even on the front bench, we don't have ministers that serve in the same ministry for – I think six years would be a very long time for a minister to be in any given ministry. If that doesn't even happen on their front bench, why is this being anticipated for the chair of the advisory council on seniors issues?

As I say, in principle I don't necessarily object to this, but I would really like to hear some more explanation before I'm willing to support this bill or willing to urge my colleagues to support this bill. So I look forward to some explanation and perhaps some give-and-take while the bill is in Committee of the Whole.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are you ready for the question? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

REV. ABBOTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is: given that the hon. member earlier today said that she's been a part of this . . .

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. member is perfectly free to ask a question of the third speaker of the evening. The hon. member just referenced was the second speaker, and you're not allowed to ask them questions.

[Motion carried; Bill 34 read a second time]

Bill 33

North Red Deer Water Authorization Act

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

MRS. JABLONSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and move Bill 33, the North Red Deer Water Authorization Act, for second reading.

Ensuring a healthy and sustainable water supply for all Albertans is a top priority for this government. Although Mark Twain said that whiskey is for drinking, and water is for fighting over, Albertans would not stand by and watch their neighbours go thirsty when they could provide a supply of safe drinking water. The communities of Blackfalds and Lacombe are in immediate need of water, and this is why this is a very important piece of legislation. Ponoka and the First Nations at Hobbema are also in need of a sustainable, safe municipal drinking water supply to meet existing and future demands. Bill 33 will ensure that these needs are met. Specifically, this act allows treated drinking water to be transferred from Red Deer to Blackfalds, Lacombe, Ponoka, and the First Nations at Hobbema.

This bill is driven by members of the community. The North Red Deer River Water Users Group, consisting of members from Blackfalds, Lacombe, Ponoka, the First Nations communities of Montana, Samson, Ermineskin, and Louis Bull, Ponoka county, and

Lacombe county, is requesting a licence to allow for the transfer of treated drinking water to provide municipal water supplies to these communities.

The North Red Deer River Water Users Group held open houses in Red Deer, Drumheller, Lacombe, and Camrose during September 2002 to provide interested Albertans with information about the proposal and to solicit input. In addition, the water users group has worked closely with various stakeholders to ensure that all points of view have been recognized and addressed. Results from both the meetings and a questionnaire distributed at the meetings show that the majority of Albertans who participated in the consultation overwhelmingly support this project and are mainly satisfied that the environmental effects of diverting treated water are minimal.

Mr. Speaker, this is normally a very straightforward procedure that doesn't require an act of the Legislature; however, the Water Act specifies that water transfers between river basins must be approved by this House. The amount in this transfer is for the needs of these communities, and there is sufficient water in the Red Deer River to support this licence and future allocations. There's also enough water for existing licences for the natural ecosystem and to support our apportionment agreements with Saskatchewan and Montana. Also, while there are ecological risks associated with transferring raw water from one body to another, in this case the transferred water will be treated drinking water, not raw water, so there would be little risk of transfer of biological organisms between the two river basins.

Mr. Speaker, public consultations conducted by the North Red Deer River Water Users Group in Lacombe, Red Deer, Drumheller, and Camrose showed support for a licence that would provide an assured and safe drinking water supply for these communities. So, in short, this act allows us to meet a clearly defined need for a drinking water supply to these central Alberta communities in a safe, sustainable way and in a manner approved of by the people who will be affected.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to say that we recognize that many small communities across Alberta are facing similar situations, and we need long-term solutions. The Department of Environment is currently leading the development of a provincial water strategy to ensure that we continue to have safe and sustainable drinking water supplies now and in the future.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 33 is community driven and makes economic and environmental sense. With the support of this House the people of Blackfalds, Lacombe, Ponoka, and the First Nations at Hobbema will rest easy knowing that they will not have to fight for this life-giving resource of water, and they will be grateful for the good sense of their neighbours and leaders. Mark Twain, you can keep your whiskey and fight for water, but this province of Alberta will ensure a healthy and sustainable water supply for all Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate on Bill 33.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another productive day, and therefore I would move that the Assembly do now stand adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 10:18 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]

