

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: Tuesday, March 20, 2007

1:00 p.m.

Date: 07/03/20

[The Speaker in the chair]

head:

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. Grant that we the members of our province's Legislature fulfill our office with honesty and integrity. May our first concern be for the good of all our people. Let us be guided by our deliberations this day. Amen.

Please be seated.

head:

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today it is a great pleasure to introduce to you and through you someone who is well known to the majority of the members of this Assembly: Mr. Don Tannas, now seated in the Speaker's gallery. Don was a four-term MLA for Highwood, the constituency I now have the honour of representing. He served his constituents with distinction from 1989 to 2004. In 1993 Don became the first elected Deputy Speaker and Chairman of Committees of the Legislature, and he served on numerous committees and sat as chairman of various organizations over the years.

Prior to being elected to the Assembly, Don was employed as a teacher and principal for the Foothills school division until 1989, taking a leave of absence from 1969 to 1971 to work with CIDA as a teacher trainer in Uganda. To this day Don has a great empathy for Africa and has visited several times during the intervening years.

Now that he is retired, he serves as executive director of the Western Communities Foundation. Also, Don is well known for his charitable work, particularly with the High River Rotary Club, which he continues to pursue. Mr. Speaker, I'm also very pleased to tell you that Don is a very active member of the Highwood Constituency Association and keeps us right in line. I'm delighted to see Don back in the House, and I now ask that he rise so that all the members may accord him a warm welcome.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to this Assembly an honoured guest seated in your gallery. Julius Yankowsky is also no stranger to this Assembly. He served as the MLA for the Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview constituency for three terms, from 1993 to 2004. Mr. Yankowsky is presently enjoying his retirement and, of course, is keeping an active volunteering schedule. We're glad to have him join us today, and I would ask him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment.

Mr. Renner: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature a colleague of mine from the Northwest Territories. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the Hon. Michael McLeod, who is the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources. As you may or may not know, ministers in the Northwest Territories are multitalented. Mr. McLeod is also the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, and our relationship goes back

to the days when we were colleagues in municipal affairs as well. Accompanying Mr. McLeod is his executive assistant, Mr. Doug Pon. I would ask both gentlemen to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture.

Mr. Goudreau: Merci, M. le Président. Aujourd'hui j'ai le privilège de présenter en votre nom, à vous et à l'Assemblée, des invités spéciaux venant de la communauté francophone. Ils sont assis dans votre galerie et sont ici pour souligner la Journée internationale de la francophonie ainsi que les Rendez-vous de la francophonie, une célébration nationale annuelle de l'histoire et de la culture française.

Je suis heureux de vous présenter en premier lieu les membres exécutifs de l'Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta. L'association, connue sous l'acronyme ACFA, a son secrétariat provincial à Edmonton et chapeaute plusieurs autres organisations; donc, 14 bureaux régionaux ou cercles locaux à travers la province.

Présents parmi nous aujourd'hui sont M. Jean Johnson, président de l'ACFA, et M. Joël Lavoie, directeur général. J'aimerais également vous présenter M. Rhéal Poirier, directeur général de Francophonie jeunesse de l'Alberta, et M. Denis Perreux, membre exécutif du comité local organisateur des Jeux de la francophonie canadienne, qui auront lieu à Edmonton en 2008. Les accompagnants pour cette journée spéciale à la Législature est M. Denis Tardif, directeur général du Secrétariat francophone.

Je leur demanderais de se lever et être reconnus par l'Assemblée. Je vous invite à vous joindre à moi pour leur souhaiter une bienvenue chaleureuse.

Merci, M. le Président.

[Translation] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have the privilege of introducing to you and through you to members of this Assembly a number of guests from the francophone community who are here to commemorate the International Day of the Francophonie as well as Les Rendez-vous de la francophonie, a national two-week celebration of French culture and history. They are seated in the Speaker's gallery.

I am pleased to introduce executive members of the French Canadian Association of Alberta. The association, commonly known as the ACFA, is the provincial umbrella organization representing all francophones, with a provincial secretariat in Edmonton and 14 regional or affiliate chapters across the province.

Here today are the president, Mr. Jean Johnson; the executive director, Mr. Joël Lavoie; Mr. Rhéal Poirier, executive director of the Francophone Youth Association of Alberta; and Mr. Denis Perreux, executive member of the local organizing committee for the National Youth Francophone Games, that will be held in Edmonton in 2008. Joining them on this special day at the Legislature is the executive director of the Francophone Secretariat, Mr. Denis Tardif.

I would ask them to stand to receive the usual warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [As submitted]

head:

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Liepert: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly five very talented young Alberta students. But before I do, I would just like to provide a bit of background.

Since assuming this portfolio, I've visited a number of schools in the province, and without exception at every school I go to, I've just

been incredibly impressed with the artwork of our students. So beginning today, some of that work is going to be displayed in my office in the Legislature, and it's my hope that soon the walls of my office will be covered with Alberta student artwork and that it then spreads out into the hallway and maybe down even into your offices, Mr. Speaker. I encourage every hon. member to come by our office and enjoy this great artwork.

Today with the Premier we had the pleasure of unveiling the first five pieces of student artwork, including a sketch by one of our grade 6 students of the next hockey superstar, Sidney Crosby, which happens to be hanging in my office over the fireplace. Today I would like to ask the Alberta student artists seated in the gallery to stand as I recognize them. We have Ashley Lougheed from Louis St. Laurent school, Christian Comeau from St. Boniface school, Cassiel Pedro and Joshua Dipnarine from Virginia Park school, and Victoria Barnay from Edmonton Christian school. They are all accompanied by their very, very proud parents, their art teachers, principals, and other family members. I would ask if they would all stand and be recognized and warmly received by this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How do I beat an introduction by the Ed. minister? But I think I can do it.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly guests from grade 6 of the Heritage Heights school in my Highwood constituency. This is a new school, just opened this last fall, and a week from Friday the hon. Minister of Education and myself are going to officially open this school, and a beautiful school it is. Let no one in the world say that we don't have some new schools because we do, and this one's a great one.

Mr. Speaker, the total number of students, I believe, that we have with us today is 39. They did have an enduring trip coming up; I think they got some roads that weren't great. I would like to introduce their teachers Mrs. Alison Rattai, Mrs. Ada McIvor, Mr. Bill Cunningham, and parents Mrs. Roxanne Gibbard, Mrs. Cindy Mooney, Mr. Leonard Johnson, Mrs. Debbie Hagel, Mrs. Kristyn Hall, and Mrs. Toni Bouvier, who just happens to be my niece and whom I'm very proud of. She has her daughter Brooklyn with her in that group today. I would please ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

1:10

Ms Tarchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two representatives of the Alberta College of Social Workers. As I mentioned yesterday, March 18 to 24 is National Social Work Week.

The Alberta College of Social Workers does an outstanding job representing the social work profession in Alberta. It advocates for policies, programs, and services that serve the best public interest. Through its membership activities the college establishes and maintains standards that promote skilled and ethical social work practice. I'd like to ask Lori Sigurdson, professional affairs co-ordinator, and Rod Adachi, executive director and registrar of the Alberta College of Social Workers, to rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. McFarland: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure today to introduce to you and members of the Assembly a couple of guests

that we've got up here from Champion, Alberta. Dick and Izzy Ellis have been lifelong residents of the village. They're very involved with the community, and Dick is heading up the Vulcan waste management authority. He's come up with a wonderful idea on how to dispose of all the waste that we have throughout the counties, and I hope he's had successful meetings with a couple of the ministers in attending the AAMD and C. I also know that they're looking forward to a tour that your staff will have for them to see this magnificent historic building. Dick and Izzy, would you please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne.

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly three individuals from the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta, of which I'm very proud to serve as chair. Seated in the members' gallery today: Mrs. Jean Dreger and Mrs. Diane Caleffi, both of Calgary, both well known to the Calgary caucus members. Both are volunteers who serve tirelessly on this council ensuring that Alberta seniors have an advocate and a place to turn for advice. Seated with them is Dianne Laird, the manager for the Seniors Advisory Council, my right arm and a very dedicated individual with the Seniors Advisory Council, and I'll tell you that she's very, very sharp. I am proud to work with them as their chair, and I'd like to ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona.

Mr. Lougheed: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to the members assembled the authors of the book *French Canadians in the Political Life of the Province of Alberta, 1891-2005*. Seated in the gallery are Dr. Ernest Mardon, his son Dr. Austin Mardon, and they're accompanied by friend Arthur Lau. I would mention also that Austin is a member of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. They're seated in the members' gallery. I'd ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am so very, very proud this afternoon to be able to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly an absolutely amazing group of young people. I have with me today a grade 5 class from Keheewin elementary school in the south part of Edmonton-Rutherford. These students on their own initiative undertook an exercise to write me with their concerns about global warming and climate change. As a result of those heartfelt letters, our Leader of the Official Opposition included comments from their letters in his alternate throne speech, and they were here today to share some of their ideas in terms of addressing the issues of global warming and climate change.

I'd like to ask all 23 students to rise. They are accompanied today by a number of adults: Ms Lorraine Boggs, the principal of Keheewin school, which incidentally is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year; their grade 5 teacher, Ms Cindy Pang; and teacher helpers Joy Procinsky, Debbie Ainsley, Leslie Clarke, Jeanette McDonald, and Carol Wilson. I would ask them to all please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you members of the school of Neil M. Ross, 51 students, two teachers, and five helpers: Mr. Brett Arlinghaus, teacher; Mrs. Cathy Bagdan, teacher; parents Mrs. Cathy Traynor, Mr. Tony Gannon, Mrs. Dianne Hajek, Mr. Ed Karl, and Mr. Daryl Wright. Would they please rise and receive and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Dawn Freeman and Karen Mykietka. Dawn and Karen both reside in my riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. They serve as the editor and managing editor of the *Rat Creek Press*, both since 2004. The *Rat Creek Press* is a community newspaper that serves north-central Edmonton, including much of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. Their goal is to highlight community news, activities, and recreational opportunities as well as local residents and businesses to support the growth of a strong, vibrant, well-connected community.

I would like to thank Dawn and Karen for the important contribution the *Rat Creek Press* is making in our community, and I would now ask that they rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this House members of the Council of Alberta University Students, or CAUS. These guests met with the NDP caucus this morning and briefed us on the state of postsecondary education in Alberta today. They provided us with valuable recommendations, and in our opinion these merit the most serious consideration of the members of this Assembly.

I would now ask each of my guests to rise as I call their names and ask my hon. colleagues to hold their applause until each has been introduced. David Cournoyer, chair of CAUS and VP external of the University of Alberta Students' Union; Samantha Power, president of the University of Alberta Students' Union; Emily Wyatt, president of the University of Calgary Students' Union; Julie Labonté, vice-president external, University of Calgary Students' Union; Joanne Luu, vice-president administration, University of Lethbridge Students' Union; Duncan Wojtaszek, executive director of CAUS. I would now ask that they receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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Members' Statements

The Speaker: Hon. members, before I call upon the first of six to participate, 18 years ago today, on March 20, 1989, the citizens of the province of Alberta went to the polls. There are three members in this Assembly who were elected for the first time 18 years ago. So let us congratulate the hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater, the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake, and the hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House on their 18th anniversary as Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

Let us also wish happy birthday today to the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie

Mr. Ducharme: Merci, M. le Président. Aujourd'hui, à l'occasion de la Journée internationale de la francophonie, c'est un plaisir pour moi de présenter à la Chambre une explication d'un événement canadien qui s'appelle les Rendez-vous de la francophonie. Neuf millions de francophones se rassemblent à la grandeur du Canada sur une base annuelle pour célébrer les Rendez-vous de la francophonie. Cette année les Rendez-vous ont lieu du 9 au 25 mars. Durant cette période de temps on célèbre les communautés francophones afin de promouvoir la langue et la culture française tant par ses activités sociales et ses célébrations que par sa dimension humaine et communautaire.

Les Rendez-vous contribuent à renforcer les liens entre les anglophones et les francophones du Canada et favorisent un plus grand respect entre ces deux communautés de langues officielles. De plus en plus nos municipalités albertaines se joignent aux Rendez-vous en tenant des cérémonies pour reconnaître leur communauté francophone. Parmi ces municipalités cette année on compte Red Deer, Lethbridge, Edmonton, Grande Prairie, Rivière de la Paix, Falher, et Fort McMurray. Félicitations à ces municipalités.

Vibrante comme elle l'est, la communauté francophone célèbre sa langue et sa culture tout au cours de l'année par l'entremise de festivals de la chanson, festivals de film, carnivals d'hiver, et j'en passe. J'aimerais profiter de l'occasion pour inviter tous mes collègues à connaître la communauté francophone en participant aux événements qui ont lieu dans leur circonscription pendant l'année.

Merci, M. le Président.

[Translation] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today on the occasion of the International Day of the Francophonie it is my pleasure to provide the Assembly with information on a wonderful Canadian event called Les Rendez-vous de la francophonie. Nine million francophones get together for the annual Rendez-vous de la francophonie, which runs this year from March 9 to March 25. During that period of time attention is focused on francophone communities, with the idea of promoting French language and culture as much through community and human relations as through social activities and celebrations.

Les Rendez-vous contribute to the reinforcement of links between francophones and anglophones in Canada by fostering greater respect between the two official language communities. More and more of our municipalities are joining in Les Rendez-vous by holding ceremonies to recognize their francophone communities; for example, in Red Deer, Lethbridge, Edmonton, Grande Prairie, Peace River, Falher, Fort McMurray. Congratulations to all of them.

Vibrant as they are, francophone communities celebrate their language and culture throughout the year through music and film festivals, winter carnivals, and other celebrations. I would like to take this opportunity to invite all my colleagues to get to know the francophone community and to take in some of these events in their own ridings throughout the year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [As submitted]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

1:20

Cremona Cribbage Champions

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize and congratulate the Cremona Legion cribbage team of Diane Davies, Jack Borton, and Bill and Donna Kidd, who have recently won the Alberta-Northwest Territories provincial championship for team cribbage. To achieve this feat, they first had to win tournaments in Cremona, Carstairs, and Cochrane. They will soon be on their way to Halifax, Nova Scotia, where they will compete for the national

championship from April 27 to April 30. I understand that some of them are watching today, and I know this Assembly will join me in cheering them on and wishing them all the very best of luck as they compete for this national championship.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Trojans Girls Wrestling Team Gastroparesis

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Wrestling for recognition. Today I'd like to speak about two types of wrestling events. While both forms of wrestling matches are fought by individuals, the support they receive in their struggles is dramatically different. The first type of wrestling is the more traditional form of Olympic wrestling, which I had the pleasure of coaching for over 20 years. Therefore, I was extremely pleased to hear of the recent successes of 15 members of the William Aberhart high school Trojans girls wrestling team from the Calgary-Varsity constituency, which I represent. Thirteen of the 15-member team qualified to wrestle at the provincials. The girls' achievements are the result of their personal commitment and the support of their dedicated coaches, team, schoolmates, and families.

In contrast, across this province thousands of Albertans are engaged in a different type of wrestling match. These Albertans are grappling individually with the limited resource support of their second mortgaged families against the debilitating effects of gastroparesis. While gastroparesis, a motility disorder which prevents an individual from properly digesting their food and therefore being constantly on the edge of vomiting, has yet to be cured, it can be managed.

Calgary-Varsity teenage constituents Thomas and Jennifer Keith-Ferris, aged 15 and 17 respectively, along with 23-year-old Krysta Livingstone, a Medicine Hat resident, have had their quality of life returned to them through the implanting of a GES device, a gastric electrical stimulation device, which has been approved federally but not provincially. Because no medical facility exists in Alberta and since the Alberta government does not cover the costs of either the travel or the treatment of this disorder, many families cannot afford the life-restoring implant costs. Once again I'm calling upon this government to restore and increase funding for motility research, to stand in the corner of the thousands of Albertans wrestling unnecessarily with the debilitating effects of gastroparesis. Please support the efforts of Dr. Christopher N. Andrews, a gastroenterologist specializing in gastrointestinal motility disorders, based out of the Foothills hospital and associated with the University of Calgary.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Calgary Maple Sugar Festival

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last weekend there was a very sweet event in Calgary, the annual Maple Sugar Festival, le Festival du sucre d'érable, celebrating the unique Canadian tradition. During the era of the aboriginal people in eastern Canada they would make an incision in the trunk of a maple tree with a tomahawk, and a piece of wood was then inserted, serving as a spout to gather the sweetness of nature. When the people from France learned of this tradition, the tap hole was made with a small axe, and a wooden reed was installed, allowing maple syrup to gather in a wooden container. Around 1885 the wood reed was replaced by a metal one, and from then on the tap hole was made with the help of a steel gauge. Around 1890 the wooden pails suspended to the tree by a nail made their appearance to gather every drop of the sweetness. So that's the history part.

This Maple Sugar Festival is now part of Canadian culture. I'm very pleased that the celebration of this original eastern Canadian tradition is now in modern times in Alberta, in the far west of Canada. Indeed, it's now from sea to sea, a *mari usque ad mare*. The sweet event in Calgary was offered in an array of lively festivities in an atmosphere of family *joie de vivre*.

I want to commend the event volunteers, performers, and organizers, mainly from francophone groups.

J'aimerais remercier les volontaires, les artistes, et les organisations qui montent annuellement cet excellent Festival du sucre d'érable, apprécié par les gens de tout âge.

I want to recommend that everybody should attend this festival in Alberta each year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Continuing Care Accommodations

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The recent controversy surrounding the Holy Cross long-term care centre in Calgary is a deeply troubling example of the government's long-standing refusal to deal with substandard care, that is too often provided to our seniors and Albertans with disabilities in this province. Indeed, it shows the devastating impact of creeping privatization in continuing care. Albertans know that the profit motive in long-term care leads to exactly the same results as it does in any other kind of health care service: higher costs and lower quality. Private operators have a vested interest in keeping down the cost of labour and services in order to maximize profits on their shareholders' behalf.

Perhaps the most pernicious way that the profit motive is being implemented in seniors' care is the conversion of long-term care facilities to assisted-living centres. This is a growing and serious problem for many Alberta families. Not only are the expectations of care lower in assisted-living centres, but residents can receive essential care services only if they can pay for them out of pocket. All too often families are forced to pay thousands of dollars per month to maintain respect and quality of life for their aging parents or disabled loved ones. A system-wide shortage of continuing care spaces means that people who should be in long-term care are forced to wait and pay in assisted-living facilities. Meanwhile, long-term care facilities in Grande Prairie, Jasper, and other communities are expected to be closed and replaced by assisted-living lodges, where the same residents will simply have to pay more.

The minister of health should put an immediate halt to any further conversion of long-term care facilities to private, for-profit assisted-living centres. The NDP opposition will continue to push this government to take real action to ensure that Albertans have access to safe, affordable, high-quality continuing care. Guaranteed delivery of safe and high-quality care for our seniors and others in need requires immediate action to improve standards, properly monitor facilities, and end creeping long-term private care.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table a petition, the first of many, with 88 signatures on it. This petition urges the government of Alberta to "prevent the development of the Sherritt Dodds-Roundhill coal gasification project until the expressed consent of the families . . . in the affected and surrounding areas is obtained" and, furthermore, urges the Alberta government

to “develop a comprehensive energy plan that uses our abundant energy resources to develop a green and sustainable future.”

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today again I am rising to table a petition, signed by 80 residents in Edmonton, which reads:

We, the undersigned residents of Edmonton, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to complete, as soon as possible, the overpasses and interchanges at the locations where the Anthony Henday Drive (Edmonton Ring Road) intersects Lessard Road, Callingwood Road . . . and Cameron Heights Drive.

Thank you.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Bill 22

Alberta Investment Management Corporation Act

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 22, the Alberta Investment Management Corporation Act. This being a money bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, this bill allows for the separation of Alberta Investment Management from the Department of Finance into a stand-alone provincial Crown corporation. The legislation also balances operational independence with the highest standards of accountability and transparency.

[Motion carried; Bill 22 read a first time]

head: 1:30 **Oral Question Period**

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

Municipal Waste-water Infrastructure Assistance

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Premier challenged me to provide evidence that this government has committed millions of dollars to the water transfer from the Red Deer River to the project at Balzac, so I will. If the Premier checks page 18 of the supplementary supply estimates from just last August, he'll find a line that commits \$4.8 million “to support a project in the Municipal District of Rockyview that includes a horseracing track and an equine centre.” This matter has been extensively debated in this Assembly and approved by a vote of this government over the objections of the opposition. To the Premier: will the Premier now admit that this government has approved millions in spending on this project?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, the hon. leader kept talking about a secret deal. I said: present the evidence of a secret deal. The supplementary estimates were of course debated here in the House, and it's no secret. It's a matter of the record, and he finally found it.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: All right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [some applause] Prop him up, guys; prop him up.

To the Minister of Agriculture and Food: since this money is under the jurisdiction of his department, how much, if any, of this money does the department plan to spend?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Groeneveld: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes. As the Premier said, I've been waiting for this question for quite some time. He just hasn't quite got down to me yet. This came out of a program that's designed for municipalities, and we've had this program for close to nine years now. It's designed to assist municipalities with costs for water and waste-water infrastructure. It's for new projects that benefit our economy and grow our agriculture processing industry. Only municipalities are eligible for this funding.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Well, thank you. So let's focus in, then, on the specifics of the deal concerning the Balzac water transfer. Again to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. I will assume that there's more than just a verbal arrangement between the government and Rocky View on this one. Can the minister tell this Assembly and all Albertans: what are the terms of the deal under which this money will be spent?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Groeneveld: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are no specific terms of the deal. This is a program that we've had around for nine years, as I've said. They qualified for the program, so when they get their proper approvals, the money will be forwarded to them. At this particular time the money hasn't been forwarded to them because all the systems are not a go yet.

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

Racing Entertainment Centre Project

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A freedom of information request to the Department of Infrastructure and Transportation has informed us that there are 1,800 pages of documents relating to the Balzac water transfer in this department's files – 1,800 pages in one department. None of those have been made available to us at this point, but they indicate that a lot of work has been undertaken by this government on this water transfer. To the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation: given the intense public interest in this issue, will the minister make the 1,800 pages of the documents public, or does he intend for them to remain secret?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I don't know anything about the 1,800 pages. I do know that there have been some applications for water that my predecessor had actually rejected and said that they didn't meet the criteria.

I don't know exactly why the person that runs FOIP in the department wouldn't – if there is some reason that we cannot give the information out because it implicates a third party that wants to say, “We don't want that information out there,” that's up to whatever the rules are in FOIP on whether or not they give out those.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I suggest that the minister does his homework a little more extensively. Thank you.

A simple, straightforward question to the minister: exactly what has been done by the Department of Infrastructure and Transportation on the water transfer to Balzac?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, as I stated yesterday, as far as I know, there have been no deals done. I know that we had an application from the MD of Rocky View. It didn't meet the criteria, and it was turned down. Other stuff that was done, I will tell you – I shouldn't say that; I do know of another thing that happened. Ivanhoe Cambridge has been working with our department on whether or not they can have access into the property. Our department is doing their due diligence and making sure that all safety is adhered to. They're talking about interchanges and things like that, and the experts in our department have to do their due diligence and see whether or not it can be done.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This time to the Minister of Environment. Please just answer the question. Given the minister's detailed knowledge of and support for the project at Balzac, did this government review the memorandum of agreement between the MD of Rocky View and the developers before it was signed?

Mr. Renner: Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated many times before, the responsibility for reviewing the information is borne by officials within my department. I expect my officials to review all relevant information before they come up with a final recommendation, which has not taken place at this point.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Environmental Policy

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure today to ask some questions that were inspired by the grade 5 class of Keheewin school in Edmonton-Rutherford. They're here in the members' gallery. In a series of letters expressing their concern about the environment, the emotions and concern and conviction that was displayed by these letters remind us through these children of the reason why we must work together to put the environment first. To the Minister of Environment on behalf of Lindsay from Keheewin school concerned about waste: when will we see a provincial blue box program to promote recycling?

Mr. Renner: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's a good question. The issue comes down to the role that government plays in encouraging people to take issues regarding recycling seriously. At this point in time the government continues to support municipalities in both financial form and from an expertise perspective in encouraging further development of recycling programs. A province-wide program, frankly, I think is not that practical because it needs to be coordinated at the local level by municipalities.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Emma and other students expressed great concern about deforestation, especially in our northern forests, saying, I quote: without trees we can't breathe, and without trees all the carbon dioxide will stay in the air; clear-cutting

causes more water pollution and higher costs for water treatment. To the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development: can the minister tell us if he will stop clear-cutting practices in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Renner: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'll take that question on behalf of the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. There are very clear plans in place in the province of Alberta with respect to forestry to ensure that we do not compromise in any way the watershed system that is so dependent upon our forests. I can assure the hon. member and the student who asked the question that issues related to water and the watershed are paramount in decisions regarding forest management.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another issue discussed by the students today with our members is that we need to stop burning so much coal and fossil fuels and encourage more solar, wind, and other renewable energies. To the Minister of Energy: can the minister tell us why we do not give the same incentives to renewable energy that we give to the fossil fuel industry?

Mr. Knight: Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that there are very good incentives in the province of Alberta for all energy projects, including renewable and, we're hoping, alternate energy. We continue to work. As part of the mandate that I've received from the Premier of the province of Alberta, we will develop an integrated energy strategy, and the integrated energy strategy includes all of the above. Fossil fuels are a base for Alberta. On top of that we will have very aggressive wind power; we will have hydropower; we will have green power with biomass: all forms of energy.

1:40

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the third party.

Employment of Children

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Premier confirmed that the Conservative government was asleep at the wheel with respect to major policy changes that would have seen 12-year-olds working in Alberta's bars. Flash back to 2005, and you will recall that this Conservative government approved major policy changes that allowed for children to work in restaurants without permits, and this change was made without debate in this House and without public consultation. My question is to the Premier. Why did the government turn back the clock to the 19th century with respect to child labour laws and allow children to work in restaurants?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, I don't know what the hon. leader is trying to get to, but yesterday I was very specific, I think, spoke very plainly, that after the minister responsible, the Solicitor General, and myself heard of the planned policy change, we put an end not only to 12-, 13-, 14-year-olds working in bars but all minors. So for the matter of the record, all minors: no working in bars and lounges in the province of Alberta.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, the Premier seems to believe that any boneheaded policy decision by this government is okay as long as he reverses himself once he gets caught. The members opposite ought to put down their copies of Adam Smith and try picking up Charles Dickens. The number of children working in restaurants in this

