

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, December 4, 2002**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 02/12/04

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: Prayers

THE SPEAKER: Good afternoon.

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

Please be seated.

head: Introduction of Visitors

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Mr. Defay, the consul general of France. He is accompanied today by his wife, Mrs. Defay. France is a significant trade and investment partner for Alberta with two-way trade totaling more than \$300 million last year. We co-operate in many different areas such as culture, education, and tourism. Alberta is home to a vibrant and active French community consisting of more than 300,000 people of French descent. I would ask that our honoured guests please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bienvenue.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, I'd like to introduce today three guests from Capital City Savings & Credit Union. Capital City Savings is a community sponsor of the School at the Legislature program, which gives grade 6 teachers from across the province an opportunity to relocate their classroom to the Alberta Legislature for an entire week. In the fiscal year 2001-2002, 500 students and 145 teachers and parent volunteers participated, and for this current year the program has been filled once again. Capital City has been an integral part of the program's success, and we're very grateful for their support. Seated in the Speaker's gallery today are Mr. Harry Buddle, chief executive officer; Mr. Peter Galloway, chairman of the board of directors; and Mrs. Jacqueline Broverman, community investment adviser. I would ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

head: Introduction of Guests

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Finance.

MRS. NELSON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today we have with us a group of 12 very dedicated people from the Department of Finance. They are here to observe question period in addition to having a tour of the Legislature Building. They are seated in the public gallery, and we have with us Rod Matheson, the executive director; Lowell Epp; John Forst; Frank Hanus; Mavis Harke; David Hinman; Chris Hoogewoonink; Sue Kitson; Mike Neuman; Dave Parker; and Marie Perpeluk. I would ask that they now rise and receive the very warm welcome of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Highwood.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Miss Lindsay Paulsen from Stavely, Alberta, which is in my constituency. Lindsay currently attends the University of Alberta and is working on a degree in science. She's also a member of the soccer team and

the rugby team and intends to work in the agricultural industry on her graduation. I would ask that Lindsay Paulsen, who is seated in the members' gallery, rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. BRODA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly 33 very bright young individuals from a school in Thorhild. They're grade 6 students. They're accompanied by their teachers Mr. Mike Popowicz and Mr. Larry Hryciw; also, parent helpers Peter Kochmarski, Mrs. Brenda Danbrook, and Mrs. Leslie Kwasny. I would ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HLADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 31 visitors from Rosedale school. With them is their teacher, Mrs. Kate Blackburn, and parents Ms Anne Wallis, Mr. Cliff Courtice, and Ms Betty-Lynn Morrice. Recently on their unit of Canadian studies they averaged 86 percent in the class. After an hour and a half of discussion and debate on Kyoto in their classroom, I'd like to just say that I think it was, actually, a higher quality than I've heard from some of our opposition. [interjections] Sorry. I'd ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 14 people joining us from NorQuest College. We have 12 students, and it says here that they're from Wetaskiwin and Stony Plain. They're accompanied today by their instructors Mrs. Pat McQueen and Mr. Bruce Huebener. I believe that they're seated in the members' gallery. I would ask them to now please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

REV. ABBOTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my great pleasure to introduce to you and through you 18 visitors from Thorsby high school. These students visited our Provincial Museum this morning and later will tour these historic hallways with their principal, Mr. Al Bratland. I would ask them all to rise and please receive the warm welcome of the House.

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

MR. LOUGHEED: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two introductions today. First of all, I'm pleased to introduce to you and to the members assembled two people from Fort Saskatchewan, Stu Hennig and his son Scott. Stu and Scott are the grandson and great-grandson of Rudolph Hennig, who was the MLA for the newly constituted constituency of Clover Bar from 1930 to 1935. Scott manages my Fort Saskatchewan constituency office. I'd ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce Dr. Gary McPherson. Gary was the chair of the Premier's council for the first 10 years,

and he's a leader in our community, an advocate for disability issues. I'd ask that the Assembly please welcome Dr. McPherson.

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

MR. VANDERBURG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you four guests today in the members' gallery. They're representatives of Alberta's nonenergy mineral industry. Visiting us today are Larry Kryska, president of New Blue Ribbon Resources; Mike Dufresne, president of APEX Geoscience Ltd; Brooke Clements, the vice-president of Ashton Mining of Canada; and, most important, from Whitecourt-Ste. Anne, my number one gold prospector and diamond prospector, Brian Testo from Grizzly Gold. I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill.

MR. MAGNUS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today it's a pleasure and a privilege for me to rise in my place and introduce to you and through you to Members of this Legislative Assembly a number of very, very special people to all of us. I mentioned these people last week in the Assembly. Let me say that they are the bravest, toughest, most physically fit profession in the entire world. It's also said that they're the only people crazy enough to run into a burning building. There are four representatives with us today, and I'd ask them to rise as I call their names – I don't see them in the members' gallery, so I assume they're behind me in the public gallery – Alex Forrest, who is the president of the United Firefighters of Winnipeg; Ken Block, the president of the Edmonton Firefighters Union; Gord Colwell, the president of the Alberta Fire Fighters Association; and Sean McManus, the former Canadian director of the International Association of Firefighters. No pun intended, but I'd like you to give them a very warm welcome.

MR. SNELGROVE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members a friend of mine from the city of Lloydminster. This gentleman is currently working with the Onion Lake First Nations in the capacity of economic development and is one of the many Albertans who believe that the future of the First Nations lies in the partnerships that we can develop with them and with business. I would like you to extend a warm Legislative welcome to Mr. Glenn Soloy, who is in the members' gallery.

Thank you.

1:40

THE SPEAKER: Are there additional members who have introductions?

DR. PANNU: Mr. Speaker, I have some introductions of guests.

THE SPEAKER: Okay. Please continue.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got two introductions today. I would like to introduce to you and to all members of the House an individual who's attempting through his work with the Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness to put a safe, warm, and affordable roof over the heads of about 2,000 homeless in the city. While most would rather ignore this fact, he and the coalition are highlighting this problem and finding solutions. The name of this guest is Jim Gurnett. I trust many of the members of the House either know him or know of him. So I will now ask Mr. Gurnett to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, my second introduction is a very special one. I'm thrilled to rise today to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly my very dear grandniece who is visiting with us from India. Dr. Rupeet Sandhu is here to write some exams that will enable her to go into graduate studies in the area of dentistry in either Canada or the U.S. She lives with her family in the capital city of Punjab, Chandigarh, and she's leaving tomorrow for a short visit to Vancouver before she returns to India. She's accompanied by my significant other, that is, my wife, Swinder Pannu, who is sitting with her in the public gallery. So I would now ask both of them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to rise and introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly a group of people who are with us in both the members' and the public galleries today who support the work that we do day in, day out, long days, so that we can serve the people of Alberta: staff from ministerial offices, ministerial assistants, special assistants, legislative assistants, the research branch for caucus, even members from the party offices, people who work very, very hard to make sure that the work is done for the people of Alberta so that we can do our jobs. There are too many to name individually, but I'd ask them all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Solicitor General.

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce through you and to you Dan McClelland, who is the president of AUPE. Dan is in the public gallery. We had a nice lunch of turkey sandwiches and pumpkin pie, and Dan tells me that's only the second time he's ever had pumpkin pie. I ask you to give him a warm welcome.

THE SPEAKER: Well, the section of the Routine known as Ministerial Statements hasn't been called, but before proceeding, hon. members, would the hon. members consider today just deviating from the Routine as normal to allow the leader of the third party and the leader of the government party to participate in this segment of the Routine?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: Ministerial Statements

Premier's 10th Anniversary as Leader

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak of an event that is very significant to this Legislature and to Alberta. Tomorrow, December 5, will mark the 10th anniversary of the selection by the Progressive Conservative Party of Alberta of its new leader and Alberta's 12th Premier, the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Speaker, when the party chose its new leader on that wintery day, very much like today, I don't know if its members fully realized that they were launching Alberta on a historic path, a path that is still being charted today, some 10 years later. This path has been one of prosperity, and it's been built with leadership. So far during the Premier's term Alberta has been a leader in eliminating its deficit and making deficits illegal under the law. It has been a leader in launching a debt elimination program and delivering on that program. It has been a leader in reducing personal and corporate taxes. It has been a leader in charting a course of health care reform to keep the health system sustainable.

The list of achievements of the Alberta government with our Premier is a long one, and it includes Alberta leading the nation in every significant economic category for most of the Premier's first 10 years in office. In fact, these achievements have been noted nationally, Mr. Speaker, and have led to the Premier receiving several national awards for political and fiscal leadership. Just last month, for example, he was the recipient of the Fraser Institute's T. Patrick Boyle award, presented for his work in improving the performance of the Alberta economy.

Throughout his term the Premier has also shown a strong awareness that in and of themselves economic achievements are of limited value. He has always stressed that the truest measure of prosperity is how a government deals with its people. In that area, too, our Premier has excelled. Alberta has developed the most comprehensive set of seniors' support programs in Canada. Its schools have produced students who rank number one in the entire world in scholastic achievement. It has produced more new jobs per capita than any province in Canada, and it has the best educated workforce in the country. With the Premier at the helm Alberta has worked hard to build strong, safe communities where diversity overcomes intolerance. It has designed effective programs to keep children safe and to reach children in need. It has taken an aggressive approach in fighting crime and to building a strong social safety net for those who need help. Common to all of these achievements is one factor: the leadership, the skills, the determination, and the compassion of our hon. Premier.

Over the last 10 years, Mr. Speaker, our Premier has rewritten the rules for political leaders in Canada. He has bucked conventional wisdom and chosen instead to listen to the voices of Albertans. He has removed political baffle from the dictionary in Alberta and chosen instead to always speak plainly and openly to Albertans no matter how difficult or how sensitive the issue. He has said no to the strictures of the old ways of doing things and chosen instead to try new ideas and new approaches when they hold promise. Like all good leaders the Premier has not tried to do everything by himself. He has always relied on the support and the guidance of his caucus and on the direction that Albertans have given him.

I should also note that members of the opposition parties both past and current have been part of the province's achievements over the last 10 years. I know the Premier would be the first to acknowledge that their input, their criticisms, and their dedication have made a very real contribution to the growth of this province.

1:50

Of course, when speaking of those who have given the Premier support over his first decade in office, the contributions of his family and especially his wife, Colleen, are foremost. Colleen is a true life partner for the Premier. All government members know that she is a constant source of inspiration and wisdom and love to him. She has also been a great help to all MLAs and their spouses, offering support and encouragement with great kindness and openness.

The accomplishments of the Alberta government over the past decade have been of a historic nature. Just as important, I know that there are more accomplishments to come under the leadership of this remarkable man. Our Premier realizes the job is never done. There are still issues to face, improvements to be made, and goals to be achieved.

Mr. Speaker, as I travel the province and talk to Albertans, I firmly sense that the people's faith in this Premier is stronger than it has ever been. Under this Premier Albertans feel confident about their personal futures and the future of this province. They feel secure, knowing that the issues that matter most to them are being handled properly. Most of all, they feel respect for this Premier, who has delivered on his promises.

Serving under this Premier has been one of the greatest honours of my life. He has given me the opportunity to serve this province in the best way that I can. For that I wish to extend my personal thanks as an MLA. As an Albertan, however, my thanks are far more profound. I want to express my thanks to him for what he has done and is doing to build a better Alberta. He has helped keep Alberta the best place in the world to live, and he has helped create a province that I will be proud to bequeath to my grandchildren. I know my gratitude mirrors the feelings of my colleagues in government and all Albertans in all regions of this province. Therefore, on behalf of members of caucus both past and present I extend our very warmest congratulations to the Premier on the occasion of his 10th anniversary in office.

May there be many more years of accomplishments, Mr. Premier. Finally, Mr. Premier, may you always know that your leadership has meant so very, very much to the people of our great province. Happy anniversary.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Official and Loyal Opposition.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the Deputy Premier on behalf of the Official Opposition. Pausing today to recognize the years of public service the Premier has given seems most appropriate on this the 10th anniversary of his becoming Premier of our province.

You, Mr. Premier, know more than most the demands of public life, the loss of privacy, the unending schedules, the family compromises, and the difficulties of keeping members of a political party headed in the same direction. Anyone who has made those sacrifices and that commitment to public service deserves recognition.

Mr. Premier, my party and I would pursue much different public policy directions from those you have followed in the past 10 years. Those differences aside, there has never been any doubt in our minds that you have worked hard and continue to put into practice those ideas that you feel will benefit Albertans, and it is for that effort that we join in marking today's anniversary.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader of the third party.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's not often that we get an opportunity to roast a sitting Premier on the floor of this House, so I want to thank members for the opportunity to get in on this barbecue. Love him or hate him, there's one thing you can say for his 10 years in the Premier's chair: never a dull moment. When historians close the book on our current Premier, I suspect they will find his record of political accomplishments decidedly mixed. However, one thing they will all agree on: the current Premier will certainly go down as one of the most colourful Premiers in this province's history.

"What are the secrets of this Premier's political success?" one might ask. Dumb luck has got to be one of them; that is for sure. It seems that no sooner did the Premier take office that oil and gas prices started going up. This guy really does have the horseshoes in his pants, Mr. Speaker. Another secret is controlling spin. One of the Premier's first acts upon taking office was to centralize the communications functions of government in his own office. He is the Premier who closed three public hospitals in the city of Calgary and was rewarded for it by taking Calgary seats away from the Liberal opponents in the 1997 election. Go figure. He is the Premier whose government made a total mess of electricity deregulation and covered it up with billions in rebates from the windfall

energy revenues, thereby paving the way for an even bigger victory in the 2001 election.

He is the Premier in charge of the wealthiest province in Canada, yet Alberta has Canada's lowest minimum wage and a growing homelessness problem. Here is the Premier whose government brought in a flat tax that dramatically shifted the tax load onto middle-income Albertans and gave huge tax breaks to the wealthiest 1 percent. To top it off, the government then turned around and hiked health care premiums 30 percent, which hits middle-income seniors particularly hard. Unfortunately, the so-called Alberta advantage has not worked for everyone, and this, too, will be part of this Premier's legacy.

One lesson I have learned is to never underestimate the sitting Premier. I might add that some former Liberals of the Assembly learned this lesson the hard way. Under that affable and aw-shucks exterior beats the heart of a hard-nosed politician with a steely resolve to always want to come out on the winning side of every issue. Mr. Speaker, you might vouch for that as well.

In my judgment the Premier has been on the wrong side of many key policy issues. This includes issues of expanding the role of private, for-profit health care, the Tories' erroneous tuition fee policies, and the current debate over the Kyoto protocol. Yet despite our disagreement over policy, the Premier fights hard and honourably for his vision of what he thinks is best for Albertans.

2:00

I wish the Premier well, though not too well, in his remaining time in politics. In fact, I'm pleased to offer the Premier my utmost cooperation and assistance in any efforts to ensure his speedy retirement from politics. Being an elected politician is not an easy life, Mr. Speaker, especially the constant demands on one's time and the invasion of one's privacy.

Let me conclude by extending my sincere best wishes to the Premier and his wife, Colleen, as we enter the holiday season.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you so much for allowing me to respond today. I want to begin by thanking the Deputy Premier and the other speakers today. After hearing the hon. leader of the ND opposition, my resolve to stay on is much greater than it ever was. You know, it's better to be lucky than to be sitting where he is. But I am deeply moved by the kind words and the display of support from all hon. members.

Needless to say, Mr. Speaker, the last 10 years have been very meaningful to me. I've been blessed with the opportunity to hold the best job one could ever hold in Canadian politics, and there has never been a day in my life that I have not felt thankful and extremely lucky, by the way, to be in this position.

It's certainly true that the last decade has been a very good one for Alberta. However, there were some tough periods for us amidst those successes, and indeed I allude to them very, very often, especially going back to '93 and '94, when I say that our days weren't complete without a protest. I must acknowledge the tremendous wisdom and support of this caucus and those members who served in previous mandates throughout those difficult times.

Like any successful team the achievements of this government over the last 10 years were made possible by a vision, and it was a vision shared by all of us and a commitment to achieving that vision. It wasn't a complicated vision; it was a commonsense vision. It was a vision of not spending more than you earn. Pretty simple. It was a vision of planning a program for the orderly pay-down of the debt,

much like all householders in this province do, Mr. Speaker, and it was a vision of really sticking to the core businesses of government.

You know, I often used to say and I still say today that there was a time when this government owned everything. We had barber-shops and restaurants and airlines and telephone companies and oil companies. You name it; we had it. When you look at the fundamental responsibility of government, it's to look after the core and key businesses of government: health and education and good infrastructure and safe communities, all those things that people expect of government.

Throughout the years I've been so very, very proud of the men and women of this caucus. They bring thoughtfulness to all they do, and they bring talent to all their work, so I thank them for all that they have done to help the team.

I also want to thank, as the hon. Deputy Premier did, the opposition parties and their members today for the work that they have done over the past 10 years. You'll never hear me say these words outside the Chamber, but Alberta's opposition members have helped shape the direction of the province in important and productive ways. Their diligence in keeping us on our toes has made good programs better and has brought distinction to them and to the democratic process. Mr. Speaker, if there's something I've always understood and, I believe, all of us in this caucus, it's that opposition, really dissent, is the essence of democracy. It is the fundamental underpinning of democracy.

Allow me as well to acknowledge and thank my wife, Colleen. You know, it's not easy to be a political spouse, but her personal support, encouragement over the last 10 years – well, actually over the past 22 years. She has been a constant source of inspiration to me, and I'm a better Premier and a better person because of her, believe me.

Above all, Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank Albertans for their hard work and contributions over the years. All of the successes of the past decade have been due primarily to Albertans themselves. They are very, very special people. They act with common sense. They demand no less of their leaders. They work tirelessly for their families, their communities, and their province, and here, as well, they demand no less of their leaders. I've never been more proud to represent a people who, to me, give off a sense of pride and a sense of community. It is a very, very proud community, a province indeed. Above all, Albertans know that the future of this province is exceptionally promising as long as they focus on what's important and continue to make the sacrifices that are occasionally necessary to keep Alberta strong. Being Premier of this province with its kind of people is for me a reward beyond measure. It really is.

I enjoy nothing more, as the Deputy Premier said, than traveling this province and meeting people and going into the local cafe and, well, still going into the local bar, although I have to have near-beer now. I've often said that the best part of my job is the opportunities I have to travel and to talk with ordinary Albertans. You know, it's a wonderful thing to do, and I know you've heard me say this before, but it cures you of dome disease. I've often said that the more time you spend under the dome here in the Legislature, the more susceptible you become to that disease, dome disease, and you start to think that unless it's happening here, it's not happening at all. It's when you get out and about and talk to Albertans that you find that concerns are different and that what concerns us here isn't exactly what concerns them out there.

So it's from these kinds of opportunities that I learn the most about what is going on in Alberta, what is really going on in Alberta, and what is on people's minds. If I have been able to bring some of that wisdom and sound input to the government planning table, then

I think I will have done the most important part of my job, and that is to listen to people and bring what ordinary people have to say back to the cabinet table and to the caucus table. I encourage all my caucus colleagues to do the same thing.

Finally, I want to thank members of the Legislature. I want to thank my staff and my constituency association. I want to thank especially the public service. It is a very fine public service indeed. I want to thank the many, many Albertans who have supported me both politically and personally over the years. On many occasions this support has made all the difference between success and failure. I will always remember the kindness people have shown me, and I'll always remember and appreciate so greatly the words that were said back in '93-94 that are still being said today. Those words were: don't blink; we know it's tough; stay on track; you're on the right road; stay the rails. Those kinds of phrases were so very, very encouraging.

2:10

On Friday I begin my second decade as Premier of Alberta. I believe that the challenges this province faces today are as demanding as those of 10 years ago. They're different challenges, but they are, indeed, very interesting challenges. We have the challenge of Kyoto and how we're going to deal with that. We have the challenge of health care. We have the challenge of achieving sustainability in education. We have the challenge of finding new and imaginative, innovative ways of doing our accounting in our finances to support these services. We have the challenge of maintaining a sustaining infrastructure. These are tremendous, worthwhile challenges, and I'm sure all of us will be so very, very proud to have as our epitaph nothing more or nothing less than: we provided good government. Nothing more or nothing less. So, Mr. Speaker, we have challenges. I also believe that Albertans' resolve to face those challenges has never been stronger.

So with great pride and gratitude I look forward to working together with this Assembly and with all Albertans as we continue to build a strong and prosperous Alberta. I want to thank you again for all your kind words today. This is a day, Mr. Speaker, I will never forget.

Thank you.

head: Oral Question Period

Private Member's Statement

DR. NICOL: Mr. Speaker, after all the celebrations I turn to what I consider to be a very grave question. Freedom of speech is the essence of democracy. When a member of this House is silenced, all those Albertans represented are also silenced. The very basis of democracy is that an elected member has the freedom to be heard. Yesterday the principles of democracy were removed from this House when the Member for Edmonton-Centre was denied her right of free speech. My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier apologize immediately and unequivocally for the actions of the government caucus yesterday?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I recall the question, and I recall my answer to the question as being one of saying that the question was insensitive, was irresponsible, and was stupid. I don't recall an unusual outburst of response from members of my caucus. I recall some outrage at the insensitivity of the question, but the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre was allowed to ask her question. As I recall, my answer was quite clear. I really don't recall what happened after that because I didn't give the question much thought, but I do recall hearing some comments of outrage that such an insensitive question should be asked in the first place.

DR. NICOL: Mr. Speaker, it was a private member's statement. The decorum of the House says that everybody should have a chance to speak. In that private member's statement I ask the Premier: will this Premier apologize immediately and unequivocally for the actions of the MLAs in this caucus, for their actions in this House yesterday?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I know that you require decorum in this Legislature, but that applies to both sides. When a question is posed in such a way that it elicits a response of outrage, then that can be expected, and I apologize for none of my colleagues in caucus who were outraged, legitimately outraged, by the question.

DR. NICOL: Mr. Speaker, it's obvious this government does not believe in freedom of speech and that it should be carried on in this House. I refuse to participate in the rest of this session. [The Liberal opposition members left the Chamber]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader of the third party.

Health Effects of Sour Gas

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Serious questions are being raised about an October 2002 Health and Wellness study into the health effects of short-term exposure to sour gas. The report concludes that there are no harmful effects of exposure to low levels of hydrogen sulfide gas for healthy people and animals. The principal author of this health ministry study is a toxicology consultant with extensive links to the energy industry, including dozens of appearances in support of oil and gas companies at EUB hearings. The same consultant is currently representing Manhattan Resources in their controversial application to drill sour gas wells in the Ardrossan area near country residential subdivisions. My questions are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Why did the Ministry of Health and Wellness contract a scientist who has worked extensively as a hired gun for oil and gas companies to author a study on the health effects of sour gas?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, the report's primary author, Dr. Donald Davies, is one of the most respected consulting scientists in the province of Alberta today in the area of toxicology. He is one of the few people who hold a certification from the American Board of Toxicology, which is, again, a rare distinction in Canada. He has done a considerable amount of work for both the government and the private sector, both for national and international agencies. The result is that he has an impeccable record of scientific expertise and integrity. He holds a postgraduate degree from the University of Guelph. He has served on national and international technical committees concerned with environmental risks. His committee work has included the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada and the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD. We're pleased that a scientific expert with the credentials and the background and experience of Dr. Davies and people of his calibre and experience have agreed to perform this review, whose results will ultimately help better protect the health of Albertans.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's not the qualifications of the expert in question; it's the judgment of the government.

To the same minister: by the same logic, Mr. Speaker, if the government was doing research into the health effects of tobacco, would the minister hire someone who has worked extensively as a paid expert for the tobacco industry?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, I think that I've answered the questions about Dr. Davies' qualifications, and if the hon. member wishes to challenge any of the qualifications that I've indicated, I wish he would rise and please indicate that.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader.

2:20

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last question to the same minister: why were peer-reviewed studies – I'll be tabling one of them later on in the House – including one recently published in the *Southern Medical Journal*, ignored in the ministry's report if not because they contained findings that contradicted the views of the author of the minister's study?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, I can't answer that question because I don't know which report he is referring to, but I can say that Alberta Health and Wellness drew from a distinguished panel of recognized experts to ensure that all of the reviews met exacting criteria for scientific accuracy and validity. Those included Dr. Brent Friesen, medical officer of health, Calgary health region; Dr. Paul Hasselback, medical officer of health, Chinook health region; Dr. Ingrid Vicas, medical toxicologist from Alberta's Poison and Drug Information Service; Dr. Randy Angle from Alberta Environment; Dr. Stephan Gabos from Alberta Health and Wellness; and Geoff Granville, a scientist from Shell Canada.

Federal Gun Registry

MRS. JABLONSKI: Mr. Speaker, I can think of many ways to spend \$1 billion instead of using it on an unaccountable, ineffective gun registry. There's health care, education, seniors, housing, day care, lower income taxes. Why does the federal government have a program that turns law-abiding citizens into criminals, like the farmers who carried a bushel of wheat across the border to a 4-H club who were arrested, charged, and thrown into jail? Will the federal government now throw a farmer into jail because he used a .22 rifle to shoot a gopher? Gun control laws in Canada have been very effective, as is education in gun handling and hunter training. A gun registry, however, has no hope of preventing . . .

THE SPEAKER: Hon. member, please. This does not fall within the jurisprudence of this Legislative Assembly.

The hon. Member for Wainwright.

Seniors' Housing

MR. GRIFFITHS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the representative of a constituency with one of the largest ratios of seniors to nonseniors, I understand that seniors' housing is a growing concern within the province. My first question is to the hon. Minister of Seniors. What does the minister have in place or propose in the near future that will help our communities to provide adequate seniors' housing facilities so that seniors can age in place and in grace?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. WOLOSCHYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to point out that the Ministry of Seniors currently provides support to well over 24,000 seniors in some 8,000 lodge units. Another 14,000 seniors are in self-contained apartments that are supported by the ministry. The support we provide, I might point out, reaches all four corners of the province, with over half of these units outside the seven major urban areas.

In recent years, however, in keeping with the member's point, the government has identified a need for additional supportive housing units for seniors who wish to live longer on their own and, as you indicated, in grace. We had two programs: the senior supportive housing initiative program as well as the healthy aging partnership initiative, in which about \$50 million was invested in capital grants over the past three years. These grants helped leverage an additional \$112 million, the end result being some 1,650 additional supportive housing units directed towards low-cost housing for seniors with low income.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that what we're doing is quite significant, and I might point out to the member that I continue to request to my colleagues the reinstatement of both SSHIP and HAPI so that we may continue with this fiscal condition permanently.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. GRIFFITHS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is to the same minister. Realizing that the provincial government has limited funds and realizing that the provincial government cannot be responsible for every need that our communities have, the community of Castor in my constituency provided your department a plan to go out on their own and borrow money to build facilities to meet the desperate seniors' housing needs in that community but were advised by your department against doing such.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. member, please. Brief, to the point.

MR. GRIFFITHS: Can the minister explain why a community with initiative was stopped by your department from meeting the needs of its community members?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. WOLOSCHYN: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I might point out that the housing provided by that particular housing body is directed to low-income seniors, which means that the amount of rent that can be charged is limited. They intended to borrow 100 percent of the cost. In the mind of this minister that could have made the project unsustainable, and if they wish to proceed with it, I'd have to get written assurances from the participating municipalities that they would in fact underwrite this particular project.

MR. GRIFFITHS: My second supplemental is to the same minister. Can the Minister of Seniors indicate if he foresees any options or potential solutions that may diminish the growing problems and conflicts that are arising between seniors, communities, and your department?

MR. WOLOSCHYN: I think, Mr. Speaker, that what we have been doing up to this point has been very effective. What we will continue to do, hopefully, is work in partnership with the lodge authorities, with the municipalities, with nonprofit groups, with for-profit operators to ensure that seniors of all income levels have appropriate choices with respect to their lodgings.

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

Family and Community Support Services Funding

MS DeLONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that our Alberta government emphasizes helping children and families in need and

in partnership with local municipal governments, also given that there is a great growth in population in Calgary, my question today is to the hon. Minister of Children's Services. Particularly on FCSS funding in partnership with the municipal authorities what was the past year's total provincial funding amount and projects specifically for Calgary?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MS EVANS: Thank you. Last year we increased to full funding all of the FCSS, family and community support services, across Alberta. In its 35-year history we have never before fully funded at the request of the municipalities the preventive nature of this 80-20 split; in other words, 80 percent from the province, 20 percent from the local. Mr. Speaker, \$57 million have gone out to municipalities, and in Calgary that was an increase. They now receive some \$17 million for their family and community support services.

Mr. Speaker, this has been a good-news story in Calgary, because many of the projects that will help them deal with issues like family violence, children's needs, keeping the community safer will result because of the additional funding from Children's Services supported by this government.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MS DeLONG: Thank you. My supplemental question is also for the Minister of Children's Services. Recently, questions from my Calgary constituents have been raised about a reduction in FCSS funding. Would the minister please shed some light on this concern?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MS EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, there has been a 55 percent increase over the past three years in the funding in Calgary, but I would suggest that perhaps because of some of the discussion in the media about possibilities in reduction of funding for social services needs by the city, it resulted in some confusion about what was in actual fact going on. We have been very happy to work with the city, and most recent reports are that not only the mayor but the city council have been very supportive of retaining this funding. It is an increase over the past three years.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's really important that we focus on the opportunity to build community capacity so that children at risk will have other places to go: Boys and Girls Clubs, Catholic Social Services. An absolutely stalwart assistant of Children's Services is the Salvation Army in the city of Calgary, who has done a great deal to build the capacity in communities and help the families help themselves. All the churches have been of great support. This type of preventive funding that we have got in Calgary has made a difference for the people of Calgary and is showing some results, particularly in some of the areas.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MS DeLONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The new Alberta Response model strives to provide supports to children through their immediate family and extended families. What role will FCSS play in the new Alberta Response model?

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, the question from the Member for Calgary-Bow is very insightful and actually right on target as to what is the crux of the challenge for social workers and community members alike, and that is to make sure that we don't simply scoop

up children and try and take them into child protection but that we, in fact, help the community help itself so that children and families at risk get that support.

2:30

The biggest role to help us with the Alberta Response model will be to network between those that care for children in crisis situations and the people that are working on the so-called soft side of the agenda in the city of Calgary and look for ways and means of supporting them in their work. I'll give you an example. Social services workers today work with the city of Calgary police on a pilot project in northeast Calgary to go out and make sure they measure the degree of crisis before either party acts. We have many teams that are building with the United Way and with the Calgary health authority to find ways of working in communities to make sure that we defuse gang relations so that we, in fact, enhance the capacity of families to seek help. I think Calgary is on the leading edge with the work that's being done through the Minister of Justice on HomeFront, working to build the capacity so that families who have perpetrators of violence within them are getting support almost immediately.

So to the hon. member opposite: I truly believe that if we keep working with Children's Services' networks through family and community support services, both being funded by this province through Children's Services, hand in hand we'll get a better support network so that we won't be taking kids into care without giving communities and families the chance to show their sense of responsibility in addressing children and family needs. I thank the hon. member for an excellent question.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, I have 11 members who still want to participate today, so we're going to accelerate this with shorter questions, briefer answers.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, then the hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan, then the hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

Seniors' Programs

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Among the hardest hit Albertans by this government's inaction on high power bills are seniors. The New Democrats have heard many stories from seniors on fixed incomes struggling to pay power bills that have skyrocketed since deregulation. One senior from Fort Saskatchewan, whose letter we tabled yesterday, tells us that the power bills have gone from \$35 per month to over a hundred dollars all because of deregulation. To the Minister of Seniors: can the minister tell this House and advise seniors already struggling to cope with the rent increases at nursing lodges, health care premium hikes, and rising drug costs, not to mention the many other ways the government nickel and dimes them, how they can cope with huge increases in power bills?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. WOLOSCHYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to clarify a couple of things. Our programs are directed to low- and moderate-income seniors. With respect to the premium increases there are some additional 8,000 seniors who were put on the protected list, if you will, so they would only pay a partial or no premium at all. With respect to lodge accommodation increases, the rent increases there, the power bills would have absolutely no effect on those

people. Additionally, we increased the supplement to the folks on seniors' benefits in the long-term care facilities to ensure that they weren't adversely affected.

With respect to the others, yes, it is a concern of this minister and of this government with respect to the impact of all rising costs including electricity prices. Although we do not have a program specific to electricity, there are some areas of this province where the rates are higher, some where they're lower, so it's not a universal impact. So we have to be focused as to where we're going. I would say, Mr. Speaker, that any seniors who are for whatever reasons under extreme financial stress have the opportunity to apply for assistance through our special-needs assistance program.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question again to the same minister: when will the Premier do his job and sell seniors' priorities to government instead of trying to sell government priorities to seniors?

MR. WOLOSZYN: I can only say this much: that is one of the most ridiculous statements I have heard in this House. This is the only province in the country, the only area, that has a ministry dedicated to seniors. The priorities of this government are focused on seniors as well as all other residents of this province, and I think that that statement wasn't even a question. It was just, I guess, Mr. Speaker, an indication that you've let the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona have too many questions.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me ask the same minister my last question. Given that we are hearing from seniors who are complaining about seeing their bills increase by 60 percent, can the minister tell us what he is doing to bring the bills of these seniors down?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. WOLOSZYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do apologize to the member for my last comment in that retort. It was inappropriate. I do apologize.

However, with respect to what we are doing, I must stress to the hon. member that we are working with seniors who are under financial stress. Programs are income tested, and quite frankly whatever we can do to help them, we will do. We are reluctant to start focusing on any particular area. I might point out that special needs looks after the low-income seniors' dental, optical, home repairs, appliance support, as well as any things that we can't even sometimes think of that they require for their day-to-day comforts. Again, I must stress that if there are seniors who are in this area of, you know, not being able to pay their bills, we do want to hear from them.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, followed by the hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan.

Chronic Wasting Disease

MR. DUCHARME: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Elk and deer producers in Alberta continue to focus on establishing a fresh venison meat industry. In order to process the meat for human consumption, all harvested animals must be tested for chronic

wasting disease, or CWD. Producers are complaining that the CWD testing process takes too long, and this delay may cause them to lose contracts with butcher shops requesting fresh venison carcasses. My questions are to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Can the minister explain to me the CWD testing process?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, it does take about seven to 10 working days for this testing process. The average is about eight days. It takes about five days to actually perform the test. If a head comes in frozen, that lengthens the test by a couple of days. There is no question that we have been short of people in this area, and we have staffed up as much as we can get the expertise to do this. It is an issue for the industry. We've talked about how we can change that and hopefully get it down to five to six days, particularly in the cases where they do have these markets at butcher shops, in particular, for fresh-slaughtered meat. So we'll continue to work with the industry and try and get that time down to a reasonable amount.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. DUCHARME: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: is the minister aware that an American scientist has developed a testing program for chronic wasting disease that is performed on live animals?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Yes, Mr. Speaker. This is actually very exciting news for the industry. I'm sure that all members know that today in order to do a test on an animal, the animal has to be dead because you do the test on its brain, and it's not too popular with the elk to be alive while they do that. This test has great promise. The difficulty is that it hasn't been approved yet by the USDA and/or Canada. So there will be some fairly rigorous testing. I think this is one of the opportunities that we might broach to our American colleagues that we do a joint testing. I certainly will be talking to the Canadian government responsible in this area and saying: because it's such a critical test for the industry, could we possibly do some of these protocols together and save some time and get a test, if it proves out, for the live animals?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. DUCHARME: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the cervid harvesting preserve public debate, elk and deer producers often heard that their animals were domesticated animals. Can the minister tell me when these cervids will be recognized and treated as domesticated animals in government laws and regulations?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I don't want to dash anybody's hopes in this Legislature, and the minister responsible for sustainable development may want to supplement, but I just have to be honest with producers. I do not see making them a domestic animal an option, not when wild elk and deer live outside those fences. I think it would be extremely difficult to do this, and I certainly would not hold it out as a hope for the industry right now.

2:40

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, I now have a list of 13 hon. members who want to participate in question period today, so could we go back to brevity for everybody: brevity of question, brevity of answer.

The hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan, followed by the hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

Energy and Utilities Board

MR. LOUGHEED: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Currently in the rural area of Strathcona county there's a great deal of concern being expressed by residents about natural gas exploration and pipeline activity. Residents wonder why the government allows such activity near their homes and why their MLA or the minister does not intervene and instruct the EUB to stop the drilling and the pipeline activity. Could the minister responsible clarify the relationship between his department and the EUB and explain how the current regulations were formulated?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This organization, which has been around for well over 50 years, is a quasi-judicial board. It operates independently of government. Its appointments are made by OC, but it has over the period of 50 years developed an independent history of making regulations, of interpreting government policy, and then once they make these decisions, those decisions come into force and come into effect. They work under two fundamental principles: a no harm test and working in the broader public interest of all Albertans.

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, if the residents are dissatisfied with the process or with the ruling of the EUB, to whom do they appeal?

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, once an Energy and Utilities Board decision is rendered, there are two methods of appeal. One, you can go to the Alberta Court of Appeal, but first you must obtain leave to appeal from a court justice to confirm the seriousness of your application. Secondly, you can appeal to the Energy and Utilities Board itself by applying either for a review or a rehearing. If there was an error in law or fact, if new evidence becomes available, then a formal review would take place. The board may uphold, vary, or rescind its decision at the end of a review. They are doing something rather novel as well. They have an appropriate dispute resolution mechanism that does use an independent mediator that can be selected by two parties.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. LOUGHEED: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister consider a review of regulations such as notification distances, especially as they impact landowners and adjacent residents?

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, I would be more than pleased to entertain that suggestion, as it is clear evidence of an MLA who's in touch with his constituents. They have brought up some issues that can be important to how an organization interprets its policy, interprets its regulations. It is a government's responsibility to establish policy, and I certainly will take that advice.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

Nonfuel Mineral Resource Industry

MR. VANDERBURG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's well known that Alberta relies heavily on oil and gas development. However,

the province has an excellent potential for the development of a nonenergy mineral resource. It seems the discovery of a commercial mineral deposit, whether it be diamonds, gold, base metals, or uranium, in northern Alberta, and in Whitecourt-Ste. Anne possibly, is very likely. My questions are for the Minister of Energy. Would the minister consider assisting this industry in developing a strategy to attract investment in Alberta's nonenergy mineral industry?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. SMITH: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In short and clearly the answer is yes to that question. In fact, diamonds may indeed, as I've said before, be a province's best friend. We have also looked in areas where the economic benefit to all Albertans can be enhanced by developing a nonfuel mineral strategy that, one, streamlines our administration – we've worked on that – two, improves geological information on minerals, and establish a cross-government team to establish strategies to meet these commitments. So we do have a mineral development strategy. This is the first step.

MR. VANDERBURG: The minister talked about the economic impact. Do you have any idea, Mr. Minister, of the economic impact that an active mine would have in this province?

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, very quickly, the full evidence of economic impact of nonfuel mineral development is unknown but needs to be brought forward with further exploration, further delineation of where these products can be found, where these minerals can be found. I'm seated next to an individual who has the presence of kimberlites in her constituency, in the constituency of Lesser Slave Lake, and in that area. We need more exploration. We need to find more ways. Just to the north of us there are diamond mines being developed that will replace Australia by Canada as one of the four largest diamond producers in the world.

MR. VANDERBURG: Mr. Speaker, new investment is key to this industry. Would the minister support the availability of flow-through funds for mineral exploration?

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, I would be more than pleased to support mechanisms that I can bring to this government through the standing policy committee system for consideration by cabinet and caucus, anything that would help enhance and further the exploration and development of the diamond industry and the nonfuel mineral industries of this province. That would include products such as tax credits, a generic royalty process similar to what we have in the oil sands, and other mechanisms that could be put together by good meetings, constructive relationships with the Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne and his advisory committee.

Provincial Nominee Program

MR. SHARIFF: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Health and Wellness announced that up to 75 foreign health care professionals would be recruited to immigrate to Alberta under the provincial nominee program. My question is to the hon. Minister of Economic Development. Can the minister tell us if the provincial nominee program, otherwise referred to as PNP, has proven itself effective to date as a way to help address the shortage of skilled workers in Alberta's economy?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. NORRIS: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The short answer to the member's question is yes.

MR. SHARIFF: Mr. Speaker, could the minister advise if this program is being used by Alberta employers outside of the major cities?

MR. NORRIS: Again a very simple answer would be yes. To date, Mr. Speaker, we've had under the program a number of applications, in excess of a hundred from various different employers. Most, if not all, are outside of Edmonton and Calgary, 70 percent of those being small businesses with 50 employees or less, and it is addressing the chronic skill shortage in Alberta caused by a white-hot economy.

MR. SHARIFF: Mr. Speaker, my final supplement is also to the same minister. If this is a pilot program, when will a decision be made about the long-term effectiveness and the strategy of this program?

MR. NORRIS: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's an excellent question, and I would like to take a few more minutes to answer that. The PNP allows the provincial government the ability to speed up immigration in conjunction with the federal government, as everyone knows, and the program has been very, very successful. It was a two-year pilot program. We had the ability to approve up to 400 people a year with an open end on the contract with the federal government if it was going well. The hon. Minister of Learning and I work on this jointly, and our initial response to the program has been so strong in finding people from as varied backgrounds as bread making to iron pipe laying to Shumka dancing that we will be continuing this program when it expires in two years' time.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Medicine Hat.

Trucking Regulations

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As railroads are closed, goods are being moved more and more by trucks which are beginning to dominate our highways. It seems that as our roads deteriorate, we continue to allow trucks that are bigger and heavier than are allowed in the United States. A trucker tells me that B trains are only allowed a short distance into the States and have to unload onto rail cars and turn back. Railways maintain their own roads, whereas huge trucks break up our public roads and continue to contribute little to their repair. Also, I continue to hear concerns about mechanical safety of trucks on our roads. My questions are all to the Minister of Transportation. Would the minister tell this Assembly why he allows such huge, heavily loaded trucks on Alberta roads?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There, of course, are a number of really good reasons why we do allow heavier trucks on our provincial highways. One is the larger the truck the more weight they can carry and the smaller the unit cost of transporting those goods, which allows, of course, for better competition in terms of selling those goods and services.

2:50

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, this gives another meaning to bigger is

better. If you look at all other modes of transportation, they are following the same strategy, following the same economies of scale: longer trains, larger planes hauling freight in the province. So the bottom line is we're doing whatever we can to ensure that we're still competitive in the world markets.

MR. YANKOWSKY: To the same minister: have you given any consideration to imposing a road maintenance tax on trucks to help pay for damage caused by trucks on our public roads?

MR. STELMACH: Actually, this question with respect to if there's fairness, by the time you calculate the amount of fuel burned in the large trucks, the fees that they've paid – the licence fees, the permits – they more than offset the use of the highway. In fact, I would say that about 40 percent of revenues that come to Transportation in terms of fuel and that come from the large trucking industry. So, quite frankly, they do more than cover the cost of using our Alberta highways.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Would the minister inform this Assembly regarding the roadworthiness of transport trucks on Alberta highways? Can Albertans feel safe sharing our roads with large trucks?

MR. STELMACH: Mr. Speaker, I believe the question was with respect to safety. Undoubtedly, the large trucks have the best safety record compared to any other vehicles on Alberta highways. Given the kind of competitive climate, insurance costs, et cetera, most carriers ensure that their drivers are properly trained and do go through a more strenuous protocol before they do obtain a class 1 driver's licence to operate these big trucks.

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

Train Derailment

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Environment. I'm advised that during the night last night a train derailment occurred just southwest of Medicine Hat on the CPR main line through the Crowsnest Pass, and in conjunction with that derailment I understand that there was a fire. My question to the minister is: can the minister advise this House if toxic fumes, poisonous fumes, resulted from that fire?

DR. TAYLOR: The member is quite correct, Mr. Speaker, and I do have a special interest in that because it's in my constituency of course. We had people on-site with handheld monitors shortly after the accident had happened, and, no, there were no toxic fumes.

MR. RENNER: Could the minister advise if any residents or livestock in the area were at risk at any time during that fire?

DR. TAYLOR: Because of the quick action, in fact, Mr. Speaker, four farmhouses were evacuated. I'm not sure of the total number of residents, but four farmhouses were evacuated, and the folks from those houses will be back in their houses probably by now.

MR. RENNER: Finally, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: what will be done to ensure that there's adequate cleanup of the environment so that the residents need not worry about future concerns regarding the spill?

DR. TAYLOR: Certainly, Mr. Speaker, Alberta Environment will be

making sure that the cleanup is adequate. We have rules around the way things have to be cleaned up. We've had two people on the site already, and we will continue to monitor that site.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, followed by the hon. Member for West Yellowhead, and then I'm going to call on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Equalization Payments

MR. McCLELLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Finance. Regarding the Kyoto protocol it would appear that two of the provinces most aligned with the federal government are Quebec and Manitoba, both provinces who stand to gain significantly under the accord due to their hydro potential and both of whom benefit significantly from government equalization. My question: why are Quebec's and Manitoba's hydro resources not considered in the same manner as Alberta's hydrocarbon resources in determining the equalization formula?

MRS. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, that's a very good question. In Quebec and Manitoba their hydro corporations are Crown corporations and, therefore, don't contribute to the overall tax mix of the country. In fact, in both cases they're highly in debt, I believe, as the Minister of Energy is reminding me. So they don't contribute to the tax framework of the country or the tax contributions that are made to the federal government by the corporate entities. In Alberta we enter into lease agreements with oil and gas companies who, in fact, are taxed on profit as a corporation. So they contribute, but one Crown does not tax another Crown.

MR. McCLELLAND: To the same minister: is this fair?

THE SPEAKER: Sorry. This is really not for opinions.

MR. McCLELLAND: Okay.

To the same minister: why does Alberta transfer so much more to Ottawa than we get back, an amount that equals, by 2000 figures, about \$2,400 per Albertan?

MRS. NELSON: Well, Alberta has always been a contributor to Canada, and we have never held back from being a player that has considered Canada as a country and as a family. This last year our contributions net to Canada will exceed \$9 billion.

We did a little look back, Mr. Speaker, to see what that meant to the average Albertan, and lo and behold we again discovered that Alberta contributes more per capita than any other jurisdiction in the country. In fact, this last year Albertans have contributed \$2,890 more than they received back in transfers to the federal government. That's a very large contribution to a federal government that is bent on trying to destroy the economy of the province that actually contributes to the well-being of this country.

So I think Albertans have to be very much aware that they are, in fact, the economic drivers of this country, and to put that in jeopardy by outrageous policies such as Kyoto is unbelievable, to ruin the economic well-being of not only Alberta but this entire country.

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

Alberta Supernet

MR. STRANG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are all to the Minister of Innovation and Science. I've been

questioned by numerous people in Alberta wondering what the progress is of our Alberta Supernet.

MR. DOERKSEN: Well, Mr. Speaker, that is a very important question, because the Alberta Supernet project is one of the most critical projects that we have undertaken for a long time in this province to extend rural development. That point was brought home to me in a recent visit to a small manufacturing company who designs circuit boards on their computer. They get that circuit board manufactured in Calgary, but they want to send it via the Internet and currently can only do it through a dial-up connection. Their request to me was that that harms their productivity to an enormous degree. They have to dial up at nighttime, send that circuit diagram down the slow speed. It takes it all night. With high-speed broadband they can send that in probably a minute or less.

Mr. Speaker, the progress on Supernet is continuing. There are two aspects. The base network, which combines the major centres of Alberta, is progressing very nicely. There is dark fibre being purchased and bought as per our agreement. In the extended network, which will be more of an impact to the rural community, there are some delays in the project, but we fully anticipate that the entire project will be completed mid-2004.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. STRANG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental question is to the same minister. Are municipalities included in building the Supernet?

MR. DOERKSEN: Mr. Speaker, we have heard from municipalities over the course of a few years about their wanting to be involved and connected via the Supernet. When we initially negotiated the contract, we made sure that they were included with respect to having the same rates that we would guarantee to the government of Alberta operators. However, the connection charge from the Supernet point of presence to their door has been an agreement reached between the two contracting parties, either Bell West or Axia, at a very reasonable rate.

3:00

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. STRANG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental question is to the same minister. Can the minister tell me when the schools of West Yellowhead are going to be hooked up to the Supernet?

MR. DOERKSEN: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Member for West Yellowhead is one of the most ardent supporters of this project, and I can't tell him today specifically when the connections will be at the West Yellowhead schools, but in view of my earlier answer, there have been some delays, but the contract provisions to have the entire network built by 2004 will still be met.

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

Homelessness

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're making a bit of history here today.

The most recent homelessness survey has indicated that over 1,900 Edmontonians are homeless. My questions are to the hon.

Minister of Seniors. Why has the government left 67 million federal housing dollars lying on the table for over six months now all because the minister doesn't have a heft in cabinet to match those dollars and announce a program to immediately build new, safe, and affordable housing units?

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to point out that the Alberta/Canada affordable housing agreement is directed at low-income working people for their housing. Yes, we would like to get the program going. We are currently working with all seven municipalities plus remote housing areas of northern Alberta, and as soon as the money is available through this government, which I hope will be fairly soon, we will be moving.

But I must point out that in announcing a program, having the dollars announced means nothing until you have the plan in place and you're prepared to implement the plan. We're currently working on the plan. When it is ready to go, the program will proceed.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When will the minister announce these concrete plans to build new affordable housing units, that are so badly needed in this province? When will it happen?

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Mr. Speaker, I think I have just announced that we are working with all the municipalities plus northern Alberta communities to try to get moving. Now, this is not short term. This is a four-year plan, and we have to ensure that not only do we have our money in place, the federal government's contribution, but, indeed, participation from non-profit organizations, municipalities, and the private sector to maximize our investment.

DR. PANNU: My final supplemental to the minister, Mr. Speaker: will the minister commit to providing funding that fully matches the \$67 million federal commitment, and if so, within what time frame?

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Mr. Speaker, when I signed the agreement in June of this year with the minister responsible, there was a commitment for matching funds. I've just indicated that this is a four-year program, and it will be varied across those four years depending upon needs and fiscal availability.

I'd also like to point out that, yes, we do have a serious concern for the homeless both in Edmonton and Calgary, but in addition I'd like to say that for the past three years this government has been taking the lead in combating that issue. We've put in about \$3 million a year directed strictly at the homelessness problem, which has leveraged some \$73 million from the federal government and non-profit organizations. That has translated into some thousand spaces already plus another 800 planned, so in three years we've got 1,800 spaces. Quite frankly, it's virtually impossible to predict the number of homeless from year to year.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, although it seems that we've reached certainly the largest number of questions and answers we've had in this particular fall session, 15 members, I do want to apologize to the following members for not being able to get them into the question period today: the hon. Member for Red Deer-North, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul, the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw. If memory's in place, I'll certainly be recognizing you tomorrow with respect to this.

Before going on to the next item on the Routine, might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**

(*reversion*)

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, we've been joined by a guest in the members' gallery, Mr. Arthur Kroeger. Arthur Kroeger has a long and distinguished career with the federal government. He's probably most famously known in this Legislature for two reasons. The first one would be the Kroeger-Estey report, which we regret was not implemented fully, Mr. Kroeger. Secondly, one other distinction that I'm most proud of: he is the brother of my predecessor, the hon. Henry Kroeger, who served in this Legislature for many years. Could we ask Arthur to please stand and receive the very warm welcome of this House.

head: **Recognitions**

Trochu Meat Processors Ltd.

MR. MARZ: I rise today to recognize the 2002 recipient of the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada award of excellence in agri-food export, Trochu Meat Processors, and its president, Mr. Ray Price from Trochu. This national award for excellence recognizes achievement in areas that are key to the success and growth of agriculture across the country. Award winners exemplify the direction and leadership that governments and industry are taking to make Canada a world leader in agriculture.

Trochu Meat Processors is a role model of success for the agri-food sector in the province. Mr. Price and Trochu Meat Processors have pioneered vertically-integrated hog production from gate to plate. Since 1994 Trochu Meats has custom produced hogs for processing and export to Japan. Their export sales achieved \$24 million in 2001. This is a company that started out in the '60s, and I pounded some nails in the first hog barn that they ever built.

Would you please join me in congratulating Trochu Meat Processors and Mr. Ray Price on their achievements in the agri-food export industry.

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

Lindsay Thurber Raiders Volleyball Team

MRS. JABLONSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am standing in the House today to recognize the outstanding efforts of Red Deer's Lindsay Thurber Raiders senior high school volleyball team on winning the provincial championships. Ranking as the number one team in the province and defending their provincial title from last season, this team of 12 young ladies demonstrated their talent and tenacity on the court. Facing the very talented Harry Ainlay Titans of Edmonton in a rematch of last year's final, the Lindsay Thurber Raiders concentrated on returning to Red Deer once again with the provincial championship trophy. A special congratulation to their coach, Kirsten DeZutter, who played a major role in taking this team to the top.

Please join me in congratulating these provincial champions: Justine Barthel, Saralyn Raugust, Jen Atkinson, Julie Young, Amanda Steen, Raelene Purnell, Taryn Holmes, Azadeh Boroumand, Sarah vanDoesburg, Krista Hennigar, Ashley Fleming, and Cailey Gray. Congratulations, girls.

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

Dr. Gary McPherson

MR. LOUGHEED: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize and acknowledge the contribution of a good friend of all Albertans, Dr. Gary McPherson. Dr. McPherson was the first chair of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. As the current chair of the Premier's council I am pleased that Gary has agreed to lend his name to a new award that will recognize outstanding leadership or achievement by individuals, public, private, and not-for-profit organizations for enhancing and enriching the lives of persons with disabilities. The council is also pleased that Gary has agreed to serve as honorary chair of the committee and will provide his insight and vision in the creation of this recognition of excellence.

From the inception of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities in 1988 until his departure in 1998 Gary as the chair of the council encouraged the involvement of all Albertans in the process leading to the inclusion of persons with disabilities into all aspects of community life. Gary's leadership and his vision of full citizenship are grounded by many of the universal values that are at the very heart of community and private life.

Thank you, Gary, for your vision and leadership.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader of the third party.

Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the context of well over 1,900 Edmontonians homeless, 130 of them children, with over 2,000 families on waiting lists two to three months long for low-cost housing, I stand in this Assembly today to recognize a coalition of people doing real work towards alleviating this desperate situation. The Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness in its campaign called Home Sweet Home is calling for funding in the form of a 1 percent solution, a small part of the government surplus from both the federal and the provincial governments, to eliminate the shameful fact that in the richest province of the country there are people living on the streets of our cities.

For six months this government has dithered and delayed, failing to announce an affordable housing program despite the offer of \$67 million in matching funds from the federal government. As Senator Roche has noted, shelter is a basic human right, and governments have a duty to ensure this right. I would urge the government to immediately move forward with a program to build new safe and affordable housing.

My thanks to the Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness for the hard work in highlighting this provincial disaster and for putting forth workable solutions to end it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

3:10

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

Alberta Summer Games

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to recognize an outstanding sporting event, the Alberta games, as well as the city of Camrose, who hosted the Alberta Summer Games this past August. The Alberta Summer Games is Alberta's largest multisport event and is held every two years. It showcases Alberta's top young athletes who range in age from 12 to 17. In August of 2002, the city of Camrose did a marvelous job in hosting approximately 2,800 athletes, coaches, and officials participating in 17 different sports.

Hosting the Summer Games is nothing new for the city of

Camrose. Since the inception of the Alberta games Camrose has hosted three Seniors Games, one Winter Games, and now the Summer Games. The success of the games in Camrose can be attributed to the hundreds of dedicated volunteers and staff and to the tireless work of Dale Toogood, who did a marvelous job as chairman of the winter games and now the August Summer Games.

I'd like to ask all members to join me in congratulating both the Alberta games for its continued success and the city of Camrose for its continued support of the games and Alberta's athletes. Thank you.

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

Ramadan

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today marks the last day of the holy month of Ramadan. Ramadan is a very important event for the 600,000 Muslims in Canada and some 1.2 billion Muslims living worldwide. It is the month in the Islamic lunar calendar during which Muslims have an opportunity to reflect upon themselves, pursue their devotion to God, and exercise self-control.

Ramadan is a month of fasting. Muslims are expected to abstain from food, drink, smoking, and other pleasures from the break of dawn to sunset. Fasting is a way of developing sympathy for the less fortunate and learning to be thankful and appreciative for the gifts that we receive. Fasting is also beneficial to the health and provides a break in the cycle of rigid habits or overindulgence. It can be said that Muslims think of it as a kind of tune-up for their spiritual and physical lives.

The holiday is a time of intensive worship, reading of the Koran, charity, compassion, and purification of one's behaviour and deeds. It is also a time when people of other faiths can learn more about the faith of Islam and the Canadian Muslim community. At the end of Ramadan comes the most important of the Muslim holidays, Eid-al-Fitr, the festival of fast-breaking.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to close by wishing Alberta's 75,000 Muslims an Eid Mobarik and a Salaam Aleichem. Peace be with you.

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

The Hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek

MR. HUTTON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize a very fine colleague of mine, the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, who has demonstrated depth of character and hard work and continues to be an outstanding Solicitor General. Although there has been a huge media and opposition storm of late, she continues to represent her constituency well and works hard on her government duties with poise and grace. I would ask all members from the government to recognize the Solicitor General.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Calendar of Special Events

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, as we are now into December, let me also remind members of the following events. December 5 is the International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development; December 6 is the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women; December 7 is International Civil Aviation Day; December 7 is also the Santa Shuffle, that's the fun run for the Salvation Army between Edmonton and Calgary; December 1-7 is National Safe Driving Week; December 10 is Human Rights Day; December 15 to December 31 is a Holiday Fire

Safety Campaign; December 18 is the International Migrants Day; December 22 is the Festival of Carols Day; and for the Minister of Economic Development, December 25 is Christmas Day and December 26 is Boxing Day; and December 29 is the International Day for Biological Diversity.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

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

MR. MASYK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition signed by 197 Alberta residents. It's requesting that the Legislative Assembly "leave the Edmonton Norwood riding with its present boundaries."
Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

REV. ABBOTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, the hon. Minister of Environment, I am pleased to present a petition that urges the government of Alberta to "remove abortion from the list of insured services that will be paid for through Alberta Health."

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

MRS. JABLONSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm presenting a petition with 271 signatures asking the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to "remove abortion from the list of insured services that will be paid for through Alberta Health."

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by 52 Edmontonians petitioning the Legislative Assembly to urge the provincial government to "reinstatement the Community Lottery Board Grant Program, its Boards and annual funding of at least \$53.3 million."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

THE CLERK: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 37.1(2) I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk on behalf of the hon. Mr. Mar: response to questions raised during Oral Question Period on December 2, 2002, by Dr. Taft, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, and the Alberta Cancer Board annual report 2001-2002. Pursuant to the Regional Health Authorities Act, Chinook health region annual report 2001-2002, Palliser health region annual report 2001-2002, Headwaters health authority annual report 2001-2002, Calgary health region annual report 2001-2002, David Thompson health region annual report 2001-2002, East Central health annual report 2001-2002, WestView regional health authority annual report 2001-2002, Crossroads regional health authority annual report 2001-2002, Aspen regional health authority No. 11 annual report 2001-2002, Lakeland regional health authority annual report 2001-2002, Peace health region annual report 2001-2002, Keeweenok Lakes regional health authority No. 15 annual report 2001-2002, Northern Lights regional health services annual report 2001-2002, Northwestern health services region annual report 2001-2002, and the Alberta Mental Health Board annual report 2001-2002.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Three quick tablings today. First, a news release that I issued earlier today entitled: A call to Albertans to remember victims of violence: Observing the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. The day occurs on December 6. Speaking out and taking action against violence is something we must all do.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, a letter of congratulations that I have sent today to the 2002 world ringette champions, that being, of course, Team Canada, an event that I was pleased to participate in at the opening ceremonies, and I know our Deputy Premier also had the pleasure of attending one of the games and enjoying it.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, a letter I've sent to a constituent, Elisabeth Trudell, who was recently named the grade 5 light music champion by the Alberta Society of Pipers and Drummers. Her family is very proud, especially her dad, Bernie, and so am I.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Seniors.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first one is with respect to question period on November 27 regarding a question from Edmonton-Centre about an age-related benefits committee. Unfortunately, no matter how we researched it, we couldn't find what was being referred to as an age-related benefits in Alberta committee.

The other tabling, Mr. Speaker, is also with respect to a tabling done yesterday by the Member for Edmonton-Centre where she inferred that the rent supplement program is on hold. I might restate clearly that the rent supplement program is alive and well.

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

MR. McCLELLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to table today on behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud the required number of copies of three letters from Colin Andrichuk, Ruth Mryglod, and Weslyn Mather regarding the protection of the Bighorn wilderness area.

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings today. The first one is appropriate copies of the scientific paper that I referred to in my question to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Its title is: Exposure to Reduced Sulfur Gases Impairs Neurobehavioral Function. This paper is written by Dr. Kaye Kilburn, MD, Los Angeles, California. Just to draw attention to the significance, the office says that "the most surprising finding was that even moderate occupational exposure and insidious downwind environmental exposure to H₂S can cause permanent impairment." So that's one.

3:20

The second tabling, Mr. Speaker, is a letter from Mr. and Mrs. Hugh and Margie Jones of Ponoka, dated November 26, 2002, addressed to the Minister of Infrastructure. These members of a nonprofit group called the Central Alberta Women's Outreach Society are concerned with the huge increase they are required to pay to the Department of Infrastructure for renting a storage room at Michener Centre.

The third tabling, Mr. Speaker, is a letter from parent council president for Sherwood school in Edmonton, Ms Lisa McNutt, dated November 23, addressed to the Minister of Learning. She's expressing her frustration and disapproval at the way the government

is ruining the education of thousands of Albertan children through underfunding.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Point of Order
Abusive Language

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, business arising out of the House yesterday had to do with at least one outstanding aspect. The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar rose on an alleged point of order. The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar cited Standing Order 23(j) in alleging that the leader of the third party had directed an unparliamentary phrase at him.

Review has been undertaken of the Blues yesterday and *Hansard*, and we've been unable to find any proof of such a statement. All members know that the rules of order and decorum as published by – at least one of the rules we use in terms of the Canadian *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* states that if the chair has not heard the offensive word or phrase, and if the offensive language has not been recorded into debates of the *Hansard* in this case, the chair cannot be expected to rule where there is no record.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Royal Assent**

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor will now attend upon the Assembly.

[Mrs. McClellan and the Sergeant-at-Arms left the Chamber to attend the Lieutenant Governor]

[The Mace was draped]

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, while we await the return of the hon. Deputy Premier and Her Honour, might I take this opportunity to extend to all hon. members the very best for the upcoming season. Make it safe; make it happy; make it enjoyable; be kind to those you love; and particularly be kind to your children.

Might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**

(*reversion*)

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

MR. SNELGROVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and a Merry Christmas to you too, sir.

I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly a small group of students and their teacher and supervisor from Tulliby Lake, which proves that numbers don't matter; it's quality that counts. Their teacher today is Mrs. Sandra Lawson, and they're accompanied by Mr. Allan Belsheim. These young children have been given a fantastic tour of the facilities. As I ask them to rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly, I want to also thank the staff you have in the Assembly for the terrific job they do of escorting the many, many students and people through the facility. Thank you very much. Would you please rise.

head: **Royal Assent**

(*continued*)

[The Sergeant-at-Arms knocked on the main doors of the Chamber

three times. The Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms opened the doors, and the Sergeant-at-Arms entered]

THE SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise, please. Mr. Speaker, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor awaits.

THE SPEAKER: Sergeant-at-Arms, admit Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

THE SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Order!

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, Lois E. Hole, CM, and Mrs. McClellan entered the Chamber. Her Honour took her place upon the throne]

HER HONOUR: Would everyone please be seated.

THE SPEAKER: May it please Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly has at its present sittings passed certain bills to which and in the name of the Legislative Assembly I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

THE CLERK: Your Honour, the following are the titles of the bills to which Your Honour's assent is prayed.

- 25 Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment Act, 2002
- 30-2 Adult Interdependent Relationships Act
- 31 Security Management Statutes Amendment Act, 2002
- 33 North Red Deer Water Authorization Act
- 34 Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta Amendment Act, 2002
- 35 Teachers' Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2002
- 36 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2002 (No.2)
- 37 Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Act, 2002
- 38 Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2002 (No.2)
- 207 Alberta Wheat and Barley Test Market Act

[The Lieutenant Governor indicated her assent]

THE CLERK: In Her Majesty's name Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor doth assent to these bills.

HER HONOUR: I just wanted to take this opportunity to thank you all, to wish you the best of the season, and to say how much I have enjoyed being the Lieutenant Governor of this province. You've all made it very nice for me. You make it a joyous position, let me say, and I can't thank you all enough for the kindness you have all extended to me and the way you treat me. I'm the luckiest Lieutenant Governor in Canada. So to all of you, may I thank you very much, and I wish you a very good season.

3:30

May I just say to you, just so you know, that my husband is not well. You should know that he is having a very difficult time, and we know that the time is fast approaching. However, I know that you all feel for me. I know that, and I thank you for it. And life goes on. I have to say that years ago I had a friend who was 33 years old who died of cancer and left three small children. That to me is a tragedy. Losing my husband will be very difficult, but he lived into his early 70s. He saw his boys grow up, accomplish things. They graduated from university; they took over the business and did better at it than Ted and I. So that in itself has got to be great. I know that

Ted has received many accolades for it even though now he doesn't even remember that he had a farm or any part of it. He still knows me and knows the boys, but that's about it.

I wanted you all to know personally, and I thank you again because you have made me feel like I am the luckiest person in the world. Thank you. [applause]

THE SPEAKER: Your Honour, go knowing full well that all the prayers of all of the members of the Assembly are with both Ted and yourself. God bless.

HER HONOUR: Thank you. I'd love to give you all a hug.

THE SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise, please.

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, the Lieutenant Governor and Mrs. McClellan left the Chamber]

[The Mace was uncovered]

THE SPEAKER: Please be seated.

Hon. members, in the ensuing days it would also probably be helpful for hon. members to just tidy up their desks a little. We will have a number of youth parliaments in here in the next period of time, so your office and systems and the like. These young people that do come in and use the Chamber do not open desks or anything like that, but just your own thought process with respect to it would be helpful.

Hon. members, it may very well be that the hon. Deputy Premier is having tea with the Honourable Lieutenant Governor, so perhaps I'll call on the hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. After this afternoon and the visit of the Lieutenant Governor nothing more need be said.

head: **Government Motions**

Adjournment of Session

34. Mr. Hancock moved:

Be it resolved that when the Assembly adjourns to recess the fall sitting of the Second Session of the 25th Legislature, it shall stand adjourned until a time and date as determined by the Speaker after consultation with the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

[Government Motion 34 carried]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Government Motion 34, just passed by this Assembly, I move that the Assembly stand adjourned.

[Motion carried; pursuant to Government Motion 34 the Assembly adjourned at 3:38 p.m.]