

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

**Title:** Tuesday, February 25, 2003

**8:00 p.m.**

Date: 2003/02/25

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Please be seated.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**

head: **Second Reading**

### Bill 8

#### Health Foundations Act Repeal Act

[Adjourned debate February 25: Mr. Mar]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 8 is a notable act for its remarkable brevity. The entire operative portion of the act is six words long. I'm not sure if that's a record or not, but it must be getting close. Just to ensure that it's on the record, the entire bill reads: "The Health Foundations Act is repealed." It raises the question: why are we repealing this act, and what is this act about in any case?

The act was passed in 1996, and there was actually some substantial debate about the act at the time. The purpose of the act was the establishment of agent of the Crown foundations for regional health authorities and the provincial health board and the Alberta Cancer Board, and the idea of these foundations was that they would be set up to take advantage of federal tax laws that were in place at the time that would provide these foundations with special tax exemptions above and beyond what normal fund-raising foundations might have. In fact, donations to these foundations were given the same status as if they were donations to the Crown. However, the federal laws that made all of this workable and that provided these tax exemptions were later repealed, so these foundations created under the Health Foundations Act of 1996 no longer enjoyed any preferred status with regard to taxes and as a result no longer have a purpose for existing and, indeed, to my knowledge for practical purposes do not exist. Fair enough. We don't need the act any longer.

One of the controversial aspects of the act was to centralize a fair bit of power in the hands of the minister of health on the reasoning that the minister had the ability to co-ordinate the work of the foundations to maximize their effectiveness and efficiency, but there were, of course, some concerns about this. One was that it de facto put the minister in charge of quite a number of high-profile fund-raising foundations which he could then direct to cover off things that perhaps his department itself ought to be doing, and it also would create competition for all other fund-raising organizations and, indeed, would probably be very serious competition and somewhat of a threat to other health care fund-raising organizations. So I think that in many ways it's just as well that these foundations never really got off the ground.

We in the opposition – I wasn't here at the time, but a couple of my colleagues were – in fact voted against this bill in the first place. I know that may be a surprise, but we did. However, tonight we will vote for the repeal of this, and of course that's consistent. We didn't want these organizations in the first place, and there were various issues raised in the debate by the critic at the time, who was the Member for Edmonton-Glenora. We expressed concern that this was not good public policy that donors could not at all direct their donations. They were effectively giving their money to the minister, who could do with it as she pleased. We were, as I mentioned a few

minutes ago, concerned that it would undermine existing charitable foundations.

Now, the counterargument from the minister at the time, who is now the Deputy Premier, was that these foundations would benefit health facilities and programs across entire regions rather than individual facilities – these foundations were not tied to any one hospital or nursing home; they were covering the whole region – and that they would be able to use their special status as agents of the Crown. The government was perfectly clear in some of its intentions. I'm quoting here from comments made by the minister of health at the time.

... the minister has the authority to set definite priorities for the use of foundation funds in general to ensure that the work of the foundations is co-ordinated with the overall goals for the health system and to avoid duplication of effort with other agencies, confirming our concern that this was a highly centralized system.

As we predicted, these organizations never were useful. They never really got established. The legislation is now pointless, and I would in fact commend the government today for cleaning up an unnecessary bill and taking it off the books. So I know that I for one will be supporting Bill 8.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mrs. O'Neill:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will only take a moment because the bill itself is so brief that it requires a brief comment on it. What I want to say with respect to this bill is that it is obviously necessary because these Crown foundations are no longer serving a useful purpose if, indeed, they did at one time.

However, the reason I do want to comment on it is that we have a number of hospital foundations. I have one in my community that operates very effectively, fund-raises most specifically for truly needed initiatives that they sponsor and support within the hospital, and I would not want to diminish the strength of the efforts of those who work on those foundations and who, indeed, volunteer, I should say, on those foundations in order to enhance the delivery of health care within the hospitals.

I think it is important for clarification reasons if for no other that we identify those eight RHAs that established agent of the Crown foundations under the Health Foundations Act. We know that they are disestablished, but I'd like to read into the record that the eight were the Calgary Health Crown Foundation, the Capital Health Crown Foundation, the Chinook Health Crown Foundation, the Headwaters Health Crown Foundation, Health Region No. 6 Crown Foundation, the Keeweenaw Lakes Crown Foundation, the Northwestern Health Services Crown Foundation, and the Peace Health Crown Foundation.

Just so that we and everyone who is aware of this piece of legislation knows that we are not disestablishing hospital foundations, that are truly effective and very, very helpful in the delivery of health care in our communities and that are working so well, I'd like to take this opportunity to commend them for the work that they do in our communities, for them not to be confused with the ones that we are repealing through this act.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 8 read a second time]

**8:10**

### Bill 7

#### Real Estate Amendment Act, 2003

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

**Mr. Graydon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to move

second reading of Bill 7, the Real Estate Amendment Act, 2003.

The Real Estate Council of Alberta, commonly known as RECA, is responsible for the administration of the Real Estate Act. RECA consulted with their stakeholders on the proposed amendments and received their support.

The first amendment to the Real Estate Act is defining appraisers and including them in the licensing and regulating provisions. Appraisers requested that they be licensed and regulated by RECA in order to protect consumers against people performing appraisal services who are not qualified and have no liability insurance.

The act is also amended to allow RECA to take disciplinary action against former industry members within two years after the member leaves the industry. Currently RECA loses jurisdiction over industry members who are involved in disciplinary proceedings if the industry member withdraws their membership licence. When the licence is withdrawn, RECA must stop disciplinary proceedings. This allows former members to avoid responsibility for their actions and prevents RECA from bringing matters to conclusion.

Another amendment deals with the limitation period for prosecution of an offence. This amendment will provide that prosecution can begin up to three years after the date the offence is alleged to have been committed, a change from the current two-year limitation period. The additional one-year period will provide RECA with additional time to investigate cases where jurisdiction may otherwise be lost due to time constraints.

The last main amendment allows RECA to make rules requiring former industry members to retain their records for three years after they cease to be industry members. This provision will ensure that the records exist in case RECA investigates the conduct of former industry members for prosecution purposes.

The remainder of the amendments to the Real Estate Act in this bill are housekeeping in nature, Mr. Speaker.

With that, I would like to move that we close debate on this bill for this evening. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are you ready for the question?

**Dr. Taft:** Are we adjourning?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The chair would invite the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti to clarify whether you're closing debate, whether you are moving that we adjourn debate, or whether the question be called.

**Mr. Graydon:** Just adjourning debate for this evening.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

head: **Government Bills and Orders**

head: **Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Tannas in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'll call the Committee of the Whole to order.

### Bill 1

#### Premier's Council on Alberta's Promise Act

**The Chair:** As you may recall from the previous evening, we were on amendment A3 as moved by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods. Are there any further comments to be made with respect to amendment A3? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, indeed, I do have some

comments on this. At least speaking for myself, I am excited about Bill 1 and the possibilities that it holds for the children of this province but, as you know, feel quite strongly that it would be a far, far better bill with some more substance in it, and that's the reason why we're moving some amendments, including this particular amendment.

One of the things that I've been working very hard at the last month or so – well, for much longer than that but particularly in the last month – is visiting virtually all the schools in my constituency and meeting with all the school councils. At one of those meetings we were told that in the Edmonton public school system only 68 percent of children who enter kindergarten or grade 1 reach grade 12. In other words, 32 percent of schoolchildren in the Edmonton public school system drop out. I was shocked at that figure. At this state of Alberta's development, at this state of our economy, at all the information we have of this being an information economy, to think that 32 percent of children drop out of school before reaching grade 12 was dismaying. I have also heard anecdotically that Alberta has one of the highest dropout rates in the country. Again that's a surprise to me and a cause of great concern if it's true. This is a terrible reflection on the future of our province, and indeed it's a poor reflection on the current state of our school system and our ability to meet the needs of the great, great majority of children.

There's been some recent research come out of Australia, dramatic economic research on the importance in investing in children. It's so dramatic that in the last decade a lot of core theory on economic development is getting revamped, and it's becoming formally recognized that the traditional notion that the way to develop an economy was to invest in capital is in fact outdated. Investing in factories and machinery and equipment and infrastructure and so on was the traditional model for economic development, but that model is being left behind. It's being left behind because of outstanding research done on what actually drives modern economies, and what drives modern economies turns out to be the level of education of the people.

The lesson from that is that it's much more valuable in the long run to invest in education than it is to invest in factories and machinery and equipment. You get a onetime return on investing in factories or machinery and equipment or infrastructure. It raises you up to that level, and then you stop there. After all, that's all there is at that factory. The machinery and equipment makes what it makes; it doesn't make anything more. But if you invest in education, you get a multiplying return on your investment. The well-educated person continues to learn and learn and learn and develop and develop and, as a result, throughout their entire life contributes more and more and more to the wealth and to the welfare of their society.

I'm sure that all of us can reflect on our own personal experience. I'm 47 years old. I remember slide rules in high school and even in first-year university, and then I remember how amazing it was to see calculators come along and then, of course, computers, desktop computers that today we laugh at but 20 years ago were astonishing. Well, each one of those pieces of equipment is gone. The money that was put into those slide rules is completely gone. The money put into those calculators is gone, and the calculators are gone with it and so on for each generation of computer. But for me and for, I'm sure, all of us here what we acquired in learning to use that equipment serves us over and over and over, and we build on that and grow from that.

8:20

That's just a simple illustration of how investing in learning and education and human capacity pays off so much greater than investing in capital. That illustrates also the kind of reasoning

behind this proposed amendment to Bill 1. We want the Premier's Council on Alberta's Promise to actually have a written commitment, a legislative commitment to develop recommendations to attain an 80 percent completion rate for students entering primary education to finish secondary education.

Now, I think that if anything is weak in this amendment, it's that we're aiming too low. It still means that we are prepared to accept that 20 percent of kids don't even get grade 12. I think that's aiming way too low, although it would be a substantial improvement over what we have today. But if we are to move ahead as a society and as an economy, then we need to commit and we need to commit fully and vigorously to increasing the completion rate of grade 12 and to reducing the dropout rate from school. We'll see better income. We'll see better health. Nothing correlates with health so closely as good education. We'll see a stronger economy, human capital that will go on producing and expanding generation after generation, and ultimately we'll have better citizens.

Mr. Chair, I would very, very much like to see this amendment adopted in Bill 1. I can't imagine why we wouldn't do it. We're not particularly committing the government to any unusual expenditure, we're leaving the recommendation wide open to any time frame, and we're setting a target that is perhaps too low and not too high. There's no reason that I can see not to support this amendment. So I would urge every Member of this Legislative Assembly – every member – to support this amendment and make Alberta's Promise really stand for something.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Evans:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Speaking to the amendment, I want to just point out that quite from the beginning in the development of Alberta's Promise both industry and the nonprofit organizations, the United Way in Edmonton and Calgary, the Alberta United Way, spoke quite specifically to us to the point that they did not want us to attempt through Alberta's Promise to usurp any other authority of any other body that was performing acts of support for children and youth and families. To that extent, while the intent of this amendment is admirable, it actually would be an amendment that maybe should be more appropriately vested in the School Act or something in which the government provides accountability – and we're accountable to Albertans – and can effect that accountability.

Alberta's Promise and the council that is appointed therein is a wonderful collection of leaders throughout the community that have come together to provide supports and additional supports for their own activities and for the activities of other nongovernment organizations that, in fact, enhance the quality of life in communities for children, youth, and families. In my view, although the intent of the amendment is, as I've said, commendable, it is out of sync in this particular piece of legislation that addresses the rules of conduct for the council and is not prescriptive particularly to any one segment as to how they should conduct or research and provide recommendations.

Now, ultimately, Mr. Chairman, the council, in fact, may do just that: may decide that within their mandate under promoting Alberta's Promise it could be extended to providing guidance for government on the well-being of children or individuals or organizations and raise awareness. They may wish to do that, but that should not be prescribed in the legislation. They should be encouraged to come forward with their own attitudes of what they believe to be possible.

I believe the difficulties encountered in other jurisdictions where they have had Ontario's Promise or some parts of the United States

where America's Promise has run into resistance is when there's a top-down dictum as to what should be done rather than a bottom-up generation of what is presented. I think that if you look very carefully at the membership of the council, you will note that people from all parties have been appointed to the council, people with leadership characteristics and qualities not only in the corporate scene but in the nonprofit sector, and these people, I am sure, will be quite capable of generating those initiatives that they believe to be attainable. This is not a working group. The secretariat is funded by the government of Alberta. That has been identified.

So although the hon. member opposite and the amendment that's proposed have very commendable ideals, this piece of legislation is not the place to insert this particular amendment. It's compelling a council that has not yet begun to an order of business that should be quite properly the government's order of business, and they should be looking at what they believe they can do, as I've said, from the grass roots in support.

If I may remind the hon. member of one more thing, I think right from the very first the reaction of the opposition has been: are you using Alberta's Promise as a vehicle to take over responsibility from the government? No, we are not. They are a different part of the village of responsibility and the Alberta community overall, and the government should quite properly still establish standards and maintain those standards in places other than in this particular act, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry on amendment A3.

**Mr. Bonner:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It is a pleasure to rise this evening to speak to the notice of amendment on Bill 1, the Premier's Council on Alberta's Promise Act. I have to say right at the outset that I'm in favour of this proposed amendment, and I'm in favour of it for many, many reasons.

I listened intently as the minister made some comments about the makeup of the council, how this was made up of members from all parties and that these were leaders of various different organizations in the community. Obviously, there must be some names attached with this council, and if the minister, please, could table in the Legislature a copy of the members of that council, I'd be very interested to see who's on that council. Thank you.

Now, then, when we talk about recommendations to attain an 80 percent completion rate for students entering primary education and finishing secondary education, I think that is a very good goal. As the Member for Edmonton-Riverview said, if anything perhaps that goal is set too low. But we have to be consistent, Mr. Chairman, on what we do in this province. We currently have achievement tests for our students in this province. They are administered to all grade 3, grade 6, grade 9, and grade 12 students, and we have acceptable standards. We want 85 percent of students that write those exams to pass those exams. We also set a goal of 15 percent of those students to reach the honours standing. This certainly was a directive that came out of the department of education and probably from the ministerial level down, so this wasn't grass roots when we look at achievement tests in this province. This was a top-down situation, and of course the debate still continues to go on as to whether we are making the best use of the results from those achievement tests. When we look at what was just recently released by the Fraser Institute as to the rankings of schools in this province, the cry from educators across the province was not in support of the findings that the Fraser Institute came up with, and I was happy to see that some school boards did not have that information released so that their schools could be ranked.

8:30

Now, then, as well, when we talk about a target of an 80 percent completion rate, I think where we have to gain a lot of encouragement, Mr. Chairman, is from the article written in the *Edmonton Journal* today by Paula Simons when she was talking about I believe it was North Edmonton school and how they had children with high needs that entered their school at the kindergarten level and how they worked with those students, how over a three-year period they have been able to dramatically increase the reading ability of students in grade 1, how children who write those achievement tests in grade 3 have drastically increased their results, that there is a greater number of students passing those achievement tests and doing quite well. For a high-needs school such as North Edmonton it certainly indicates that when we make that a primary goal, we can attain those goals. If we do that on a provincewide basis, then we will see results, and we will see more and more students remaining in school.

I had the opportunity, as I've mentioned before in this House, to visit parliamentarians in Great Britain last fall, and one of the interviews we had was with a Senator and former Member of Parliament of the Republic of Ireland. One of my questions to him was: what effect did your education policies over the last four decades have on the economic success and the turnaround in Ireland today? He said that, without a doubt, when they had the opportunity to expand their economy, to make their deals with the multinationals and whatever, these multinational companies never would have looked at the Republic of Ireland if they didn't have a very highly educated group of people, a wealth of resource there that they could count on to move Ireland from a have-not to one of the more successful nations in the world. Of course, it wasn't only education, but this certainly was the foundation. This was the basis that they used, and this was what multinational corporations in this world counted on when they moved their industries to Ireland.

I truly believe that level of education is certainly one of the major, major goals of the particular bill, the Premier's Council on Alberta's Promise Act, and it is so important that if we are to make this a goal of the province, we look at the formative years, when these students are first entering our public school system, that we provide them with all the tools and all the resources necessary in order that they get off to a good start. I think that when we have a goal such as an 80 percent completion rate, this is something that's going to ensure that we get students off to a very good start in school. We know that we are investing in the future when we do these types of things, and this would add a lot of teeth to this particular bill.

I would urge, Mr. Chairman, that all members of the Assembly support this amendment.

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to propose another amendment to Bill 1. I've got the copies here. It's approved by Parliamentary Counsel, and we shall proceed. I'll just wait a moment while the amendment is distributed.

**The Chair:** We'd invite the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview to move his amendment, and it will be known as amendment A4.

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that Bill 1 be amended by striking out section 4(1) and substituting the following:

- 4(1) The Council consists of  
 (a) the Premier,

- (b) those members appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council on the nomination of the Premier, and  
 (c) an equal number of members appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council on the nomination of the Leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition in consultation with the leaders of the other opposition parties represented in the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Chairman, this motion is clearly intended to remove partisan concerns from the Premier's Council on Alberta's Promise. I think we would all agree that when it comes to the welfare of our children and to making a promise to them and to their future and to the future of Alberta, we all need to rise above partisan issues, we need to strike a balance, we need to strive to represent all Albertans, and that's the purpose of this particular amendment. We frankly don't know who's going to be on this council, and undoubtedly they're good people. They may well include some members from all political parties; we have no idea. But the fact of the matter is that the members of this committee need to be nominated through a variety of sources.

I noticed that when it came to discussing the previous amendment, the Minister of Children's Services made a comment that we don't want top-down dictums. Well, the way this bill stands right now and the provisions it has for appointing members feels very much like a top-down dictum. The Premier: you can't get much higher than that in Alberta. The Premier chooses who is going to be on this council. We'd like to end that top-down dictum. We'd like to split up that responsibility and follow a model that's already established in another part of our legislative process, which also, like children, needs to be beyond partisan politics, and that's the commission examining electoral boundaries. In that particular commission, the chairman is appointed by the Premier, and two members are nominated by the Premier, and two members are nominated by the Leader of the Opposition after consulting with other opposition parties. Exactly the same model. And the whole point of that is to get beyond the perception and the reality of partisan politics. That's why we're making this amendment.

8:40

We all know to the point of almost a cliché that it takes a village or a community to raise a child, and we want to ensure that all members of that community are represented, so that's the spirit in which we propose this amendment. We hope that it's taken seriously by the government. There are no costs. There are no risks. There are only benefits, the benefits of improved public credibility and the benefits of a broader base of support and membership.

So, Mr. Chairman, I recommend this amendment to all members of this Assembly. Thank you.

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Chairman, in compliance with comments made previously, we'll certainly be prepared to provide a list of the names of the council. Might I just say one thing? Anybody who wants to bring forward to the council a name that would like to serve on the council is quite able to do so. The criteria for selection has not been one of partisanship or political expertise. It has frequently been those people that lead organizations, lead corporations, leadership with the United Way, leadership with Lakeland College relative to early child development, and in fact we invite people to come forward. To enshrine this type of process would seem to imply specifically that there has been an emphasis on the governing party over any other appointments.

So I just draw to the member's attention, although this has not been formally launched in Alberta, that it's planned for some time later when the Children's Forum is available, while the newly appointed executive director and the vice-chairs do some work with

the corporations. Maybe ultimately this would be something that would emanate from that group itself, but quite honestly I think you'll find, Mr. Chairman, that once the names are circulated, this House will be very satisfied that the appointments that have come forward here and the people that have come forward, yes, may be friends of the governing party but, yes, are indeed friends of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. So I don't see the necessity for this particular amendment.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Dr. Massey:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to support the amendment. The minister has made a couple of comments this evening that have put the opposition at a considerable disadvantage, her comments that the names of the council do exist. I think that if we had had those names, then our amendments might have been quite different, but without that and without the second item that the minister just commented upon – and that's the kinds of criteria that will be used in selecting council members – as I said, I think the opposition is operating at a considerable disadvantage. We're trying to make sure that Bill 1, a bill that we support, is the very best that it can be, and given that we don't have those names and that we don't have those criteria, I don't think we have any alternative but to proceed with our amendments.

I think the amendments themselves are sound. I mentioned before in second reading on the bill that if you look at America's Promise, there was great effort undertaken to make sure that the bill was nonpartisan. They had President Carter, Nancy Reagan, Gerald Ford. They had a good mix of council members who spanned the political spectrum in the United States, and I think that that's important, particularly with this council. You know, we've been fairly enthusiastic about the council. We've expressed some reservation that it not take on the legitimate function and responsibility of either Children's Services or the Learning department or any other department of government, that the government fully accept its responsibilities in those areas and that this is an embellishment, if you would, a furthering of the interests of those departments. So I think that with that minor reservation, we have been very, very supportive of what's before us.

If you look at the amendment and the assumptions that it's based on, the membership must be beyond criticism, and I think that that's just a given. If the council is to operate in the way that it's been presented to us, there can be no question as to the goals and the motivations of the council members. I think that's important. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview made a comment about a government committee. Now, I thought I heard him say the learning commission, but I think he was talking about the Electoral Boundaries Commission.

The learning commission that we have today is dramatically different from the learning commission that reported to the government in 1972, and it's different dramatically in terms of the membership and how that membership was arrived at. The 1972 commission on planning in education was made up of members of the community who were known for their success in other fields and known particularly for their independence of government. So we had a president of the University of Lethbridge. We had a vice-president of planning at the university, Wally Worth, as the commissioner. There was someone from the judicial system. The government of the day bent over backwards to make sure that that previous commission was very independent.

That's not so with the present-day learning commission, and it, I think, is unfortunate. I believe that the commission is working very hard. It's going to come up with some good recommendations, but

if it doesn't or if the important things that have been relayed to that commission by parents and by Albertans are not included in the report, there's going to be always the suspicion, the nagging thought that somehow or other the commission was playing out the government's mandate and heard what the government would like to hear in its deliberations. I think that's why it's important that this amendment be passed and that the membership, as I said, be beyond criticism.

I think another assumption is that three or four heads are better than one. These are leaders in our province and political life that we've asked to be part of the council member selection, and I think that that's one way of ensuring that the very best Albertans are appointed and that none are overlooked because of a political stance they've taken or some other stance that they've taken that somehow or other may have offended the government.

I think that if you look at whose interests are served by the amendment, it's clearly and foremost children. We're ensuring as much as we can in this process that this is an all-party, nonpartisan endeavour, and I think that's in children's best interests, that there won't be other agendas played out by the council, that the intent as put forward in Bill 1 of getting youngsters off to a good start, making sure that they're safe, providing them with a mentor is really the focus of the council.

**8:50**

So I think that the goals of the Premier's council, the interests, are best served by this amendment. I think that if you look at what the gains are by passing this amendment, the council will take on a new legitimacy that it won't have if the members are appointed solely as they're outlined in the bill right now. Legitimacy for the kind of work that is envisioned for the council, I think, is extremely important. They have to be seen by the public and the corporations and the volunteer groups and the service clubs that they approach and hope to enlist in their projects as a very legitimate council. There are going to be some of those groups who will be very reluctant to put forth effort if in any way there's any perception that they are endorsing a particular political stance or a particular political party. That kind of association with a political party will be enough to prevent some organizations from working with the council as one would hope they might do.

I think that the amendment is a sound one. Maybe when we see the council members, our fears will be allayed. Maybe when we see the criteria that were used in selecting those members, our fears will be allayed. But putting this into the bill assures us that that will happen, and I think it just is sound appointment practice.

Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview on amendment A4.

**Dr. Taft:** Yes, on amendment A4, Mr. Chairman. I'd just like to respond to the minister's comments of a few minutes ago. They illustrated to me exactly why we want this amendment. There was a real sense that everything about this council so far has occurred behind closed doors. She speaks about people who are chosen, people who are nominated, about the processes for nomination. To our knowledge all of that's occurred behind closed doors. There hasn't been a public process that I'm aware of. It hasn't been open to anybody but people presumably in cabinet to discuss, maybe in the backbenches of the government, but beyond that, extremely limited. And that exactly proves the point of why we want this amendment. Let's end the closed-doors construction of these committees.

She referred in her comments to members of this council being leaders of corporations, leaders from the United Way, a college president or something like that. I'm not convinced that those are the people who have any monopoly on how Alberta's Promise should be fulfilled. Maybe there'll be a native elder. Will there be a native elder? I don't know. In fact, I'd like to ask the minister: when will she table the names of the people who are going to be on this council? Will it be tomorrow? Would it be even tonight? Could she go back to her office, get the list, and bring it out here so that we could have a proper debate?

**Ms Evans:** I'm in the unflattering position of not having it available to me tonight, but I could certainly table it tomorrow. It was not something that I felt was going to be critical to the debate but will certainly provide that list tomorrow. I would really hesitate to try and give it to you from the top of my head because there are over 60 names, Mr. Speaker, but it could be tabled tomorrow.

**Dr. Taft:** I appreciate that gesture from the minister, and I'll accept it. As you can appreciate, it would have been nice to have had it, say, when the bill was tabled. Anyway, we didn't know the number. If there are 60 members on the council, it's a much larger council than we expected. I hope there will be members on it who are, for example, poverty advocates, maybe people with medical backgrounds, neurodevelopmental specialists, people like that. So we would like once again to bring this whole process out from behind closed doors. As my colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods said, that's the only way that this council is going to have public legitimacy.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

**Mr. Bonner:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, just a few comments on amendment A4. I think that if we did see the 60 names, it would certainly alleviate a lot of the apprehension that we have in the formation of this particular council.

As the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview had mentioned, we don't have to have community leaders to know the issues. If we are going to have a council that represents all children in this province, then we certainly need a good mix, and I couldn't help but overhear the Minister of Transportation's comment that we should have a farmer on the committee, and I think that would be ideal. It's certainly someone who would know the issues facing farm children in this province, and they would be a welcome person on this committee. Even after teaching for 27 years I would never want to claim that I know the issues that are faced by farm children. So I think that would help us out as well.

I also must say, Mr. Chairman, that for this being the flagship bill of the Premier, I would hope for a lot more input from government members, and I'm sure that as we move through Committee of the Whole, there will be a lot more participation discussing this particular bill so that Albertans will know what their feelings are, where there is open discussion here in the Assembly, and that those good comments that are made in caucus and in meetings with the ministers could also be brought out. It would certainly allow a lot of credibility to this council.

So, in closing, Mr. Chairman, I want to say that we do have a great diversity of people in this province. We have great diversity of needs for these children, and we also have to have people on here that are going to know and understand the challenges faced particularly by the disadvantaged children of this province and what it means to some student whose parents perhaps are on minimum wage

and looking at a \$4,000 bill for tuition. We have to have people that understand that and not the presidents of corporations for whom \$4,000 for tuition really isn't very much. So I do look forward to seeing the list that is going to be provided by the minister.

I think this is an excellent, excellent amendment, and I would urge all members of the Assembly to support it. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler.

**Mrs. Gordon:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. We're talking tonight about the Premier's Council on Alberta's Promise Act. The Premier stood in this Assembly several days ago and talked about the need for the province to look after children. The minister across the way I have known for I hate to say how many years. She and I served together municipally. We worked together through the AUMA when she as a member of the AAMD and C wanted to be part of the AUMA, and she became such. This minister is so committed to children. I don't know how you people can stand up here and say that you want to know the membership on this committee. When I walk into my community, whether it be Lacombe or Stettler, I look at those individuals in my community that are doing good for my community. I don't ask them what political party they belong to. I don't ask them what church they go to. I just know that at the end of the day they give. And they give from the heart.

9:00

Now, I can tell you that the Premier of this province, along with his wife, has been committed to children since he began as Premier, and this Minister of Children's Services will pick the people that can give from their heart, and "give" is the operative word. They will be the people that are in the best position to surround themselves with people that can give. I'll tell you something. I don't care whether they belong to your party, whether they belong to that party farther over there, or whether they belong to our party. I don't care what church they belong to, what community they live in. If they can give for the benefit of children, that's what is important.

Your member there from Edmonton-Glengarry said that this is an important piece of legislation. Well, let it be an important piece of legislation. Debate the people that are on the committee after they've had the first meeting, after they've decided what they want to do, after they've gone to the communities they represent, after they've gone to the corporate sponsorship, after they've put the dollars in place and decided what they're going to do for the children of this province. Well, hello? Get a life, get real, and get on with it.

We have in place something that is very important not only to Alberta but to the rest of Canada. Let's be proud of what the Premier has done, let's be proud of what that minister has done, and let's all get behind it and say: yes, this will work.

You know, many, many years ago your former leader – and I respected him greatly – Laurence Decore, when I was mayor of Lacombe, paid me a visit and said: Judy . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Hon. member.

**Mrs. Gordon:** . . . hon. member for whatever I was then, why don't you run for our party? I debated. But I'll tell you what, folks. Once in a while it would be nice in this Assembly if you supported something that we stood for. I'll tell you that in the eyes of Albertans and in the communities I represent, this piece of legislation is something you should support, and you should support it heartily because it means that children will be looked after, that children will be considered. In Lacombe I've got community leaders who'll get behind the Premier on this bill. Where the Minister of Transporta-

tion comes from, people in business there and community leaders will say: hey, I want to be part of this.

**Mrs. Ady:** Calgary-Shaw will.

**Mrs. Gordon:** Calgary-Shaw will. Even if they need schools, they'll still get outside. [interjections] And I know that the Solicitor General's people are always willing to look after and consider the needs of children. So it would be really nice in this Assembly one day if we had a bill that went through without amendment and the entire Assembly said: hey, let's together as Albertans endorse and support this.

You want to know the makeup of the committee. The minister said that she'll give it to you tomorrow. That should be good enough for you. It's good enough for me. And I'll tell you; I'm sure that when she tables that list tomorrow, I'm going to say: gee, I'm not sure what political party that person belongs to. But I'm going to know that they're corporate citizens. I'm going to know that they can encompass this, embrace this particular bill, and at the end of the day we will see results and we will see children better off in this province because of Bill 1, the Premier's commitment, the minister's commitment, and why not this entire Assembly's commitment to looking after the future needs of children.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. [interjections]

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, once everybody regains their good manners and allows you to speak.

**Dr. Massey:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I certainly respect the views of the Member for Lacombe-Stettler, and I think that the member's record in the Legislature since I've been here is one that has been working in the interests of children. But I would remind her that the opposition has a particular role to play in this Assembly. Part of that role is to oppose when that's appropriate, and part of that role is to try to make things better. We've said that we're going to support the bill. It's in the spirit of making things better that we have presented the amendments that we've had before the House.

The Member for Lacombe-Stettler talked about having worked with the minister. Well, I happen to have worked with the minister too, on the Alberta School Boards Association a long time ago and have great respect for the kinds of things that she wants for children in this province. It doesn't mean that those ideas should be acted upon uncritically. I think, also, that if the Member for Lacombe-Stettler checks the record, she'll find that the opposition has voted with the government 75 percent of the time. It's on the 25 percent, you'll find, that most of the debate is taken up.

So I reject the member's notion that the opposition should accept the bill and blindly vote for it. I think that if it's a good bill, if it can be made better, then that's our job. It's not just the job of the opposition; it's the job of every member of this House.

Just one last comment, I guess, Mr. Chairman. No one in this House has a corner on the market in terms of speaking for the interests of children – I don't believe that for one moment – and no one in this province knows everything there is to know when it comes to appointing councils such as the one that's being proposed here. We have argued for an open, accountable appointment process, and we've argued for some mechanisms to be put into the bill that would make the council more accountable. Those are completely appropriate amendments for the opposition to introduce, and I'm not quite sure what berating the opposition accomplishes.

Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

9:10

**Dr. Massey:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We took the opportunity earlier today to pass over to the Minister of Children's Services some additional suggestions in terms of what we thought might make Bill 1 a stronger bill. I believe it was a member of our staff that passed those suggestions on to the minister, who has courteously enough agreed to consider them and to judge their appropriateness for incorporation in Bill 1, and we thank her for that and look forward to any suggestions for change that are in concert with the kinds of things that we proposed during debate.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's been an honour to discuss this bill. I appreciate the passionate debate that has arisen from time to time. I wish there was more of that in this Assembly.

We have tried to take this bill and make it better. We've proposed amendments that would have delivered at least one nutritious meal a day to schoolchildren in this province if they needed it. We proposed an amendment that would have committed a promise to increasing the number of children who complete grade 12. We've discussed issues about child poverty here. We have brought amendments forward to try to make this bill better. Unfortunately from our view, those amendments have all been defeated.

I do look forward tomorrow to learning the members of this council, the criteria by which they were chosen. No doubt they were very good, but I would like to point out to the Member for Lacombe-Stettler and all other members here that as my colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods said, no one of us has a corner on the market for nominating people who know a lot about children. It is, in fact, with the notion that the legitimacy of this council could be strengthened by having more than one source of nomination for the members that we've brought that amendment forward.

I have no doubt that perhaps to the surprise of the Member for Lacombe-Stettler, we will be supporting this bill. We've said that from the beginning. All we wanted to do was make it better. It looks like none of the changes we've proposed will be accepted. That doesn't mean that our compassion and our commitment to children will diminish one bit.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

**Mr. Bonner:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, also, would like to make some closing comments at this particular time. One of the comments I would like to make is that, certainly, being a resident for many, many years and being associated in one way or another with the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, I can assure this Assembly that there is nobody more concerned about the children of this province than this gentleman and nobody that has put more into his life's career and goals to support the children of this province and to try to make education a better place for all students so that each child could be the best that they could be.

I look here at a 2001 public consultation by the Alberta School Boards Association, Shaping Young People into Good Citizens. In doing this, they had extensive public consultation. One of the questions was: who participated? They were

very successful in getting feedback from a large number of individuals and organizations. Feedback was gathered through a number of vehicles including: an online survey, an Ipsos Reid omnibus poll, direct contact with elected officials and provincial associations and local consultations at the school and school system level.

There was extensive consultation on what to do with children in this province. Some of the findings, particularly what Albertans agreed were the skills students need in order to become good citizens – and I will just quote a little bit of this, Mr. Chairman.

There was strong agreement among respondents regarding those aspects of citizenship that were the most important for young people to learn. Skills such as: critical thinking skills . . .

So we don't want our children in this province to blindly follow; we want them to question. We are in trouble when people in this Assembly cannot question. For any member to suggest that I should follow – I'm sorry; whether I'm a member of government or a member of opposition, I will question. It is critical.

What are the other skills students need to become good citizens? These, by the way, were responses from many people and extensive consultation in this province. They need problem-solving skills. So how do we solve problems? By taking the word of one person and saying that this is the way it will be? I was never brought up that way, I never taught that way, and I think my students are much better because they were allowed to think for themselves. They were allowed to question. I certainly was not threatened by their questions, and I would hope people in this Assembly aren't threatened when we do question. As well, they should have social skills, and leadership skills were identified as critical for young people to have if they were to become good citizens.

That is what we want for this bill, Mr. Chairman. We want it to be the very best it can be, and for any member to suggest that the people that are in this Assembly as part of the opposition tonight are not true citizens, are not truly concerned about the youth of this province is totally wrong.

Thank you.

[The clauses of Bill 1 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Stevens:** Mr. Chairman, I move that we rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Ms Graham:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration and reports Bill 1. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in this report?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Stevens:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move that the Assembly stand adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

[Motion carried; at 9:19 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.]