

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, May 6, 2003**

**8:00 p.m.**

Date: 2003/05/06

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Tannas in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the Committee of Supply to order. As is the rule normally with committees, we'll only have one person standing and talking at a time.

head: **Main Estimates 2003-04**

### Community Development

**The Chair:** Are there any comments, questions to be offered with respect to this? The hon. Minister of Community Development.

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Prior to beginning my remarks this evening, I would like to table with the Assembly the appropriate number of copies of the translation for that portion of my speech during which I'll be discussing the Francophone Secretariat. I realize that may be a bit unusual, but with your permission I wanted to assist *Hansard* and other members here with my brief comments in that regard. Thank you very much.

I'd like to begin by tabling these copies and by introducing some very special guests that I have the privilege to work with. In our gallery: Dr. Bill Byrne – please rise; he's our deputy minister – Mr. Rai Batra, our assistant deputy minister in strategic corporate services; and in that same area, Darlene Andruchuk. Thank you very much and, as well, thank you to my staff who are listening elsewhere.

Mr. Chairman, I'm really, truly honoured and pleased and privileged to have the opportunity to present the three-year business plan and the budget estimates for 2003-2004 for the Ministry of Community Development. I'll begin straightaway by turning my attention to the budget for '03-04, which shows \$647 million in total expenditures and reflects an increase of approximately 11 percent, or \$65 million, from last year's forecast.

Funding to the persons with developmental disabilities boards, or PDD as we commonly refer to them, will increase by \$37 million, or 9 percent, for a total PDD budget of \$443 million in '03-04. This will provide for growth in the number of PDD recipients, it'll assist also with salary increases for public service and contracted agencies, and it will accommodate growth in the complexity of individual cases. It is my sincere hope that it will also help speed up our intake and assessment process with the intention of minimizing any waiting times that certain individuals may be experiencing in certain parts of the province. We try to ensure that the 8,500 PDD recipients that we serve will have the opportunity to participate in the social, economic, cultural, and community life of our province to the largest extent possible, and I believe we are succeeding in that objective. It should be noted, Mr. Chairman, that last year 94 percent of those individuals receiving PDD services reported satisfaction with services being provided.

Another program area that we're particularly proud of is the Alberta Brain Injury Network, which will receive a \$2 million increase, for a total budget of \$4.5 million in '03-04 to help build on the success of last year, when a provincial network of support and outreach services to assist individuals with acquired brain injury was first established. I was very pleased to attend the first-ever annual Brain Injury Conference in Calgary on April 11, which marked the first time in Alberta's history that survivors, family members, and

service providers were given the opportunity to meet in a provincial conference fashion that was dedicated to brain injury issues.

Mr. Chairman, we're also making good progress in other areas within the broader disability portfolio. The gaps in service project, for example, is aimed at addressing the needs of disabled adults who do not fall into the current responsibilities for PDD nor into the Alberta Brain Injury Network. There is \$348,000 in additional funding this year for the gaps in services project, bringing the total budget for the gaps piece alone up to \$1.3 million.

We're also continuing our commitment to help the government in its ongoing dialogue with Albertans by providing quality co-ordinated and cost-effective communication services, with the transfer of responsibility and a budget of \$224,000 for deaf and hard-of-hearing contracts from PDD boards to the department.

Now I'd like to briefly review funding that comes to us from the Alberta lottery fund. Community Development's 2003-04 budget includes a \$19.8 million increase in funding from the Alberta lottery fund, and this total funding for my ministry from the Alberta lottery fund will now be about \$76.1 million. This funding supports provincial, regional, and community-based organizations and individuals through Community Development's five lottery-funded agencies.

The first of these five agencies is the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, which will receive an increase of \$7.9 million, for a total budget of \$29.034 million directly from the Alberta lottery fund plus a further \$500,000 from other revenue sources, for a total AFA budget of \$29.528 million. I want to point out, Mr. Chairman, that this is the first increase in provincial arts funding in about 14 years. We are very pleased with that, and I want to thank all of my colleagues for their support in that regard.

Of the \$7.9 million increase I referenced, \$2.9 million will be for arts organizations and individual artists, including a \$400,000 increase for Alberta's major performing arts companies, which we commonly refer to as AMPAC. The AMPAC organizations are Alberta Ballet; Alberta Theatre Projects, Calgary; Calgary Opera; Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra; Citadel Theatre; Decidedly Jazz Danceworks, Calgary; Edmonton Opera; the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra; and Theatre Calgary. Their total funding will rise to \$4.79 million this year. An increase of \$82,000 will go out to our eight provincial arts service organizations, which we refer to as the PASO group. These umbrella organizations provide services to provincewide memberships within specific arts disciplines. We also provide financial support for summer schools under this category. So the total program budget for this area will rise to \$1.392 million.

The third area of increase here will be an additional \$559,000 for what we call project grants, which will amount to a total budget in this category of \$1.74 million to assist approximately 600 individual artists and to enable the AFA to offer grants that are more appropriate for today's cost for art production.

The fourth and final area of increased arts funding will be for the Alberta film development program, whose budget will be doubled from \$5 million to \$10 million for 2003-2004. This funding will support Alberta's growing creative film and video community. More specifically, this increase will help ensure that film producers, individual artists, and related arts groups will continue to have the best possible opportunities to help them grow and succeed within Alberta's arts sector. The latest available information, Mr. Chairman, demonstrates the impact of a very positive nature on our provincial economy, which for 2001-2002 shows 2,377 film production employment opportunities for Albertans. It also indicates 44 made-in-Alberta productions, totaling 53 million dollars' worth of film production by Albertans in Alberta as a result of this program. Preliminary information for 2002-2003 shows about 70

million plus dollars in film production resulting from our AFDP program.

I will now address the \$2.6 million increase that will go to the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks & Wildlife Foundation, which is the second of our five lottery-funded agencies and whose total budget will rise to \$17.67 million directly from the Alberta lottery fund plus a further \$2 million from other revenue sources, for a total budget of \$19.62 million. This will include an increase of more than \$1 million in support for Alberta's provincial sport and recreation associations and will also provide annual operating support to seven additional sport and recreation groups that qualify for funding. As part of this \$2.6 million increase the development initiatives program will increase by \$184,475. The remaining increases will be allocated to various recreation and sport programs such as active living, future leaders, 3M national coaching certification, the National Training Centre, provincial team selection and training, and amateur athletic games.

The third of our five lottery-funded agencies is the Alberta human rights, citizenship, and multiculturalism education fund, which will receive an increase of \$203,000, for a total budget of \$1.265 million directly from the Alberta lottery fund, plus a further \$220,000 from other revenue sources, for a total budget of about \$1.4 million. Project funding is provided to organizations that foster equality and promote fairness and access to help Albertans participate in the social, cultural, and economic life of our province. The result will be more grants to community organizations for primarily our vibrant ethnocultural community, which is increasingly diverse in size and nature.

Additional educational programs and resources will also be developed in the areas of diversity, multiculturalism, and women's issues within my ministry. As the minister responsible I attend the federal/provincial/territorial meetings of ministers responsible for the status of women. We continue to work on issues of importance to women such as women's economic equality, women's health, and prevention of violence against women to mention a few. At these meetings we also receive and share information about gender-based analysis, and we are continuing our work on the changing work culture project. Later this fall, Mr. Chairman, it will be my great pleasure to host the next FPT meeting of ministers responsible for the status of women, likely right here in Edmonton.

#### 8:10

The fourth of our five lottery-funded agencies is the Wild Rose Foundation, which will receive an increase of about \$1.2 million, for a total budget of \$7.76 million directly from the Alberta lottery fund, plus a further \$737,000 from other revenue sources, for a grand total budget of \$8.5 million. This foundation, as we all know, exists to promote and assist volunteerism and to strengthen the relationship among voluntary sector leaders and government. These additional moneys will help them to create and implement a series of training opportunities, tools, and innovative training methods and overall to strengthen the capacity of the voluntary sector in Alberta. Included in this foundation's budget will be a \$600,000 increase that will go to the new voluntary sector advancement program.

The fifth of our five lottery-funded agencies is the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, which will receive an increase of \$1 million, for a total budget allocation of \$6.94 million directly from the Alberta lottery fund, plus a further \$216,000 from other revenue sources, for a grand total budget of \$7.2 million. These moneys will go to heritage programs and will reflect an increase in annual operating funds for major provincial heritage organizations and for preservation projects. Annual operating funds that we provide for major provincial heritage associations now total almost

\$1.7 million and include Museums Alberta, the Archives Society of Alberta, the Alberta Genealogical Society, the Archaeological Society of Alberta, and the Historical Society of Alberta. Also included in here is a \$125,000 increase for the Glenbow Museum in Calgary. In fact, total funding for the Glenbow will now reach about \$2.68 million in 2003-2004.

I also need to mention, Mr. Chairman, that my ministry receives and distributes Alberta lottery funding for certain specific onetime projects. For example, the city of Edmonton's centennial project in 2004 is scheduled to receive \$4.2 million over the next three years. The 2005 World Masters Games, also hosted by Edmonton, are scheduled to receive up to \$4 million from us over the next three years. Another example is the 2007 Western Canada Games, which will be held in Alberta in that same year. They will receive up to \$1.5 million over the next four years. One other example in this area is the 2004 Arctic Winter Games, that will be hosted by the municipal district of Wood Buffalo, or Fort McMurray as most of us know it. They will receive \$500,000 from us, again courtesy of the Alberta lottery fund.

Actually, there is one other very specific and significant event that I need to mention that we will be funding, and that is the Juno awards in Edmonton in April 2004. Our provincial contribution will be \$250,000 for this first-time-in-Alberta event.

I'd now like to address the Alberta 2005 centennial briefly, and I want to begin by pointing out that the bulk of the centennial legacy program funding will now be found in the Alberta Infrastructure budget, pages 228 and 299 of their estimates to be specific. But it's important to note, Mr. Chairman, that Community Development will continue to manage, administer, and otherwise oversee the centennial legacy grant projects for which we are responsible. This amounts to about \$25 million that we're looking at now that will be budgeted over two years for the centennial legacies grant program. On April 11 of this year I was pleased to announce 31 community-based and community-owned projects that will be receiving a total of \$19.1 million over these next two years, and I anticipate making additional announcements later this year regarding the remaining allocations.

As well, government-owned centennial projects will receive moneys for certain projects that include the Turner Valley gas plant historic site, Lougheed House in Calgary, the Provincial Archives in Edmonton, and a major new and renewed Provincial Museum of Alberta on its existing site in Edmonton. Several provincial parks will also receive centennial funding for improvements to interpretive centres. Other examples include the major renovations of the Jubilee auditoria in Edmonton and Calgary, which will result in very much improved facilities and a lasting legacy of our centennial year. Over \$32 million is budgeted in Alberta Infrastructure for this project over three years, which, again, my staff and I will be helping oversee. The Provincial Museum of Alberta will add another very significant legacy to our province's history, resulting in an internationally recognized facility of world-class standards. Of the approximately \$15 million budgeted over the next three years, \$1 million will be spent this year to formally begin the consultation and preliminary design processes.

I'd now like to turn briefly to public libraries. Community Development supports financially and otherwise 230 public libraries and seven library systems throughout our province. Operating grants for Alberta's library boards and the seven regional systems will increase by about \$1.3 million this year, for a total library grant allocation of about \$17.9 million. Mr. Chairman, this includes additional funding of about \$730,000 plus \$613,000 reallocated from funds held in previous years for establishment grants and special projects.

The increase that I've just alluded to really reflects a restoration

of the per capita funding amount that was reduced some 10 years ago, and I will acknowledge that it is not the increase we were all hoping for, but it is an increase nonetheless, and it is a positive start in addressing the increasing costs and needs of libraries throughout this province. The increase specifically provides for per capita funding increases from \$4.03 up to \$4.29 for public library boards and an increase from \$3.07 up to \$3.22 for library system boards in conjunction with an adjustment for population growth using the most current statistics available, that being the 2002 population listing.

Et maintenant en français. Le Secrétariat francophone a reçu une augmentation de budget de \$110,000 de la part du gouvernement fédéral à l'intention d'assister des communautés dans le projet du Musée Provincial et celui des Archives Provinciales. Le projet du Musée Provincial rendra accessible le programme des émissions du musée à la communauté francophone ainsi qu'aux écoles d'immersion en français. Le projet des Archives Provinciales vise à accroître les contributions de la communauté francophone aux collections. Il vise également à permettre la préservation et la documentation de l'histoire francophone afin de la rendre disponible aux travaux de recherche.

Merci beaucoup.

[Translation] The Francophone Secretariat receives an increase of \$110,000 in funding from the government of Canada for community-based initiatives, including the Provincial Museum project and the Provincial Archives. The Provincial Museum project will make programming at the museum available to school groups and tours from Francophone and French immersion schools. The Provincial Archives project aims to increase the Francophone community's contributions to the collections and help to preserve, document, and make Francophone history available for research. [as submitted]

Parks and protected areas is another very special area within Community Development, and my department is reviewing the provision of services at selected provincial parks and provincial recreation areas. We are negotiating the transfer of some sites to local authorities or to local municipalities as an alternative to closure. A number of sites are being reviewed for potential divestiture to local municipalities, and the proposed transfers are largely sites that are recreational in nature and are of direct economic benefit to the local communities in which they are situated. This is not a new initiative, because sites have been successfully transferred to municipalities in the past.

Mr. Chairman, I do regret that we do not yet have the success we were hoping to have in attracting the new provincial dollars that we need to reinvest in our parks infrastructure renewal and upgrading program, but I will remain optimistic about our pursuits in that regard. This year's budget for this area is \$29.36 million, or it could also be interpreted as \$46 million if you look at the way those numbers come together because of some of the transfers and other obligations of a financial nature. I know that I have a lot of work to do with my staff to maintain and to improve, where we can, our parks infrastructure needs because these parks and protected areas provide enormous benefits to our citizens and to the tourism industries.

I want to quickly highlight a few changes to our business plan. We conducted a major review, and the result is a business plan that is more strategic, less operational, and more valuable as a tool to guide program decisions. The business plan also identifies relevant measures of progress toward achieving the ministry's goals as well as the budget allocated in pursuit of these goals.

Previously the ministry had five core businesses. These have been collapsed into three that better reflect the full scope of the ministry's activities and purpose while at the same time highlighting commonalities across the ministry's divisions. As part of the overall

revisions we also conducted a comprehensive review of my ministry's performance measures, and our performance measures will continue to be effective in that they are relevant, understandable, and focused on the ministry's sphere of influence and do meet management information needs. I am pleased to note that the ministry now has 15 performance measures as opposed to 27 last year. Some measures, Mr. Chairman, were far outside the influence of this ministry, and they addressed global issues related to perceptions of quality of life but not the ministry's role in delivering services that affect quality of life. No new measures were added, but you will see that nine of the key performance measures were updated with revised wordings.

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion, I am proud of the quality of programs and activities undertaken by the Ministry of Community Development, and I am exceptionally proud of the individuals who work collaboratively with me and with communities across the province to help realize our vision of a vibrant province where Albertans experience fair opportunity and the quality of life to which they aspire.

This concludes my formal remarks, Mr. Chairman. I would be very pleased to entertain questions and to answer as many of them as time and knowledge and note work will allow, and I will be pleased to respond to others in writing. May I please ask members who anticipate asking questions that they provide a page number first and then a line number or an element number and also tell me if they're referring to the business plan or if they are referring to the estimates plan?

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

8:20

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. There's an old comedy routine called Slow Talkers of America, and tonight, given the hon. minister and myself being so aware of the enormous breadth of this particular department, you are about to hear the fast talkers of America. So I'm just going to get right into this given the wonderful overview that we've just had from the minister.

I'd like to thank the staff that are appearing in the galleries tonight and giving the minister support. I think it's no surprise that this is where my heart lies, and I certainly appreciate the fine work that the staff do in supporting the minister and supporting the ministry.

This is indeed the best ministry in my opinion. This is what makes Alberta home. It's what makes Alberta fun. It's what makes Alberta inspiring, beautiful, gives us our history, tells us our stories and makes us human, and has us uphold other people's humanity. It's a very important ministry in my opinion.

The minister very kindly offered this afternoon to have me give him in advance some of the questions that would have required a great deal of detail to allow him to be able to give me these responses orally tonight, and I have utterly failed. In trying to get my own notes together, I neglected to phone his staff person, and therefore it's my fault.

Now, what I'd like to do tonight, as I have done with other ministries, is address things more or less in clusters. The clusters I have are arts, sports, volunteers, human rights, historical sites, libraries, the effect of bingo changes, a short question on Grant MacEwan College and interpreters for the deaf, general financial questions, women's issues, and the legacy projects. That, Mr. Chairman, is just what I have to say about this ministry. We also have my colleague from Edmonton-Ellerslie to speak and ask questions about parks and protected areas and my colleague from Edmonton-Riverview to talk about PDD and support for persons

with disabilities. So I was kind of joking about fast talkers but not really.

I'd like to start out by talking about some of the feedback that I get every year around budget time from the arts communities. I put out a general e-mail just saying: "I'm going into this budget debate. If you have a question or a point you wanted to raise with the minister, what would it be?" These are artists. They're never short on what they have to say. So I've just gone through, and there are a couple of highlights I'd like to put on the record for you, Mr. Minister, which you can have a look at sometime in the future at your leisure or that your staff can review. These are coming from people like festival producers, from freelancers, artistic directors, festivals, as I said, small theatres, a PASO, and some nonprofessional or semiprofessional organizations as well, so actually not a bad cross section from the arts community.

I want to start out by saying how important it is to everybody that there was in fact an increase into this area, into the department overall but specifically into the arts, and I'll talk about the other increases as I get to them. The \$3 million that's going specifically into arts and the \$5 million going into film development is a very small amount of money that will have enormous spin-off. This is a good deal for government, and I wish to put it on the record and urge the minister to continue his fine work and continue to encourage his colleagues to support him in increases next year and the year after. I will make no bones about this: after 14 years without an increase \$3 million is not catching us up. Let's be clear about that. We need another \$3 million next year. As a matter of fact, what the community had been advocating for for some time was an \$8 million increase, and that was not including film funds. So we have a ways to go here, but I do appreciate the support of the Treasury Board and of cabinet and of the caucus for getting the increases that in fact were realized. This year you will see the payoff for this.

Now, some of the points that I wanted to raise. We continue to get comments that it's the artists that are subsidizing the arts in Alberta. Most artists working flat out are making \$10,000 or \$12,000 a year and are subsidizing by working in other jobs, so it is the artists that are continuing to subsidize the arts.

Some people note that the government and AFA are weak partners in the effort to create and sustain a vibrant arts culture in the province, that the arts have been seriously underfunded and underserved for a decade. We've started to catch up. As I said, we need to continue that. Without civic, federal, and community support that's currently sustaining a stressed-out cultural sector, Alberta would have very little in the way of cultural expression.

A point I've made before and I'll continue to make, Mr. Minister, is that if there is no government leadership for support of the arts, there will be no corporate following. In fact, we now have the stats to show us that. The corporations and business have not stepped up to the plate in support of the arts in the same ratio as they exist, corporate giving is well below the national average in this the richest province, arguably, in Canada. A big part of that, I think, is a lack of leadership and direct funding from the government. If they don't put it in, why on earth would the corporations follow suit? It must not be a very good deal, yet the minister and I know that it's a very good deal. So the more that the government can show leadership there, the better off it will be for everyone.

The arts community should not be focused on fulfilling the role of business in the community. The primary benefits of the arts are the creative thinking and inspiration, the lasting artistic legacy. We're certainly aware that the arts continue to be not an economic driver but a creator of a vitality that draws in the economic drivers.

There's a strong feeling that gaming and lottery dollars are no longer being disbursed to the arts community in equitable, effective

means, and a great deal of that has to do with the loss of the community lottery boards. The proportion of gaming revenue coming back to the arts is ridiculously small against the whole amount of money that's brought into the province through gaming efforts, and seeing as that's where we started with gaming, that it would go to quality of life and particularly into this department, it is vastly inequitable.

The AFA formula grants for presenters are not working for certain festivals, particularly those that bring a lot of people in, like the Street Performers Festival, the comedy festival, anybody that's bringing in a lot of performers. It doesn't seem to be working as well as the old grant formula, so you might want to have a look at that or perhaps talk to some people that are working directly in that area.

The whole idea of the one grant per organization rule really needs to be examined. I don't know where this is coming from, Mr. Minister, but I think this is going to cost us dearly in the long run. Somehow there's this idea that the arts are scamming or double-dipping or doing something nefarious in having accessed different pots of money to support their endeavours, but when you figure what our demand of them was and where they started from – you know, they started by saying: well, produce a theatre season, but we want you to produce a theatre season with X number of new plays in it. Well, that's an additional amount of money and additional investment and required an additional pot of money to be accessed. Cutting it back now to this one grant per organization is restricting what the organizations themselves can do, and it's also starting to restrict programming and artistic collaboration. I think we need to look to that.

One person is noting the curbing of the ability of arts organizations to respond to special presenting opportunities because project grants aren't available. If you get a project grant, you don't get an operating grant. Why would you go for a project grant? So it's eliminating that level of new endeavours, of exciting new projects, of new work, possible collaborations, new things being brought into Alberta for us to have a look at.

Others note that growth and innovation have been stunted due to a lack of the funding increase over the last 10 to 14 years. It's not even keeping pace with inflation. It's forced companies to spend more time securing funds and less being able to actually produce the work that they're there to do and to nurture their artistic product and their artist.

A comment around the labour market tactics. I've brought up a number of times with the Minister of Human Resources and Employment that we continue to really underpay people here and we just lose them. We get them, we train them, and they just cannot sustain a livelihood. We lose them out of the sector. We're wasting time and resources here, and that's not a good idea in a province like Alberta, that wants to look at moving towards being a smart province.

### 8:30

We need to look to the funding for festivals. For example, the Fringe Theatre is a 2 and a half million dollar a year company. It's in a category of its own, and they are restricted to a \$60,000 grant for the entire organization. They provide three streams, if you will: the largest theatre festival in North America, a very successful and artistically credible theatre for young audiences, and they're providing a venue that is in use by a number of other organizations. For all of that, \$60,000 is not in keeping, and this is because there was a cap originally before this minister was in there. The cap was raised, but there hasn't been enough money to bring the level of funding up. So that's quite inadequate.

There was quite a campaign over the fall to keep the funding for the Artstrek program, and I've now heard from them that in fact they did get a small increase in their funding. Thank you for that, Mr. Minister, and for listening to the many, many, many people who wrote to you expressing their appreciation for this program. I went through that program in the early '70s along with many others who I know benefited from it. So it's definitely worth the money that is invested in our young people.

I think there are some additional problems around funding and around what could be described as a dysfunction with the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. They've tried for many years to shuffle things around to try and do the best they can with not enough funding, but at this point I think there may need to be a return to the drawing board and a relook at that organization, that agency, and the duties that it performs on behalf of the ministry. There is a great deal of dissatisfaction in the community around that group. I don't know if the agencies feel safe to say that out loud, but they're certainly saying it to me, and I'm free to say it to you. But there's a great feeling that that agency is no longer serving the communities and that it's more interested in sustaining an organization, sustaining an administration, than it is in working towards assisting an artistic product and artists.

We continue to have this I think ridiculous go-round with funding and eligibility requirements. To tell someone that you're eligible for 25 percent of your revenue but no one ever gets that – nobody gets that 25 percent, so why do we keep saying it? Last year I talked about making groups jump through hoops for not very much money. It's the same issue that I'm raising for you again, you know, that nobody gets the 25 percent, and supposedly when the one grant came in and nobody could or would apply for project grants, the formula was increased from 20 percent to 25. But nobody's getting it. For one organization, an excellent organization – very well run, no deficit, never has had, totally aboveboard, very cautious in their spending – the best they can get is 66 percent of that 25 percent.

So, you know, let's be honest about what we're doing here. If it's never going to be 25 percent or not in the foreseeable future, then let's be honest about that and work from it. It's very hard for these organizations when they don't even find out. They have to submit a budget with the projected grant included – of course, they can't figure out what it's going to be, but it ain't gonna be 25 percent – and they don't receive confirmation from AFA for their following season's grant amount until mid-June. Now, most of them start their fiscal year in May, April, June, but you're well into your planning cycle at that point. You should have booked your theatre; you should have contracted your artists by then. So that's very late to be hearing what's going on there, and the government would never allow anyone to do that to them. Why do they insist on enforcing that on other organizations?

A number of agencies noted the difficulties with increasing costs, especially venue costs, because of increasing costs around electricity or energy costs, electricity and heating, and what a strain that's causing for them, especially those that are trying to manage some of these spaces. Some groups talked about what's happening with the Jubilee auditoria and how the rates have gone up there. As the minister knows, those two venues are now going to be out of commission for groups, and there's no assistance for the groups that can only produce there. I'm still concerned about the Edmonton Opera because the Winspear is not suitable for them. They have to get a huge venue where they can get a couple of thousand people in to do their three or four performances. Where are they going to go? The Shaw Conference Centre, the AgriCom? That's what they're going to have to look at, and there's been no assistance offered to them and recognition of how much money that's going to cost them

to have to go to a different place to produce. I think that the cost of restoring the auditoria should have included some sort of recognition of cost factors for those groups that have been punted out of there for a couple of years.

Okay. So that's the funding issue. I've talked about the dysfunction of the AFA and the problems around that.

Very quickly, a question about the Film Classification Board. I'm just looking for an update here. How many people are currently working in the film classification area, and are their votes weighted equally? At one point the chairperson I think sort of had two votes, and then there were two additional people who each had a vote. I'm looking to see what the situation is currently with any weighting of the votes and how many people are actually doing film classification.

Cultural spaces. I asked last year about the Cultural Spaces Canada program and whether the government was looking to match any of the \$80 million, \$13 million of which is available for Alberta-based organizations. The written response from the minister was that they're getting their money from somebody else. There seemed to be no commitment from this department to go in and help agencies that are trying to recover that. I'm questioning again this year to see whether there's any money that's targeted for that or available for that or that the ministry is setting aside to support agencies that are seeking those federal funds.

Just following up on the dysfunction of the AFA board, last year I had asked the minister and he'd responded in writing that the AFA board is revisiting a number of guidelines and things in March. So I'm looking for any update, anything written, anything oral that the minister can give me on policy around the AFA decision-making process, granting process, application process, deadline process, anything they can give me that's new here.

The under-30 survey that was done for Culture Steps Forward: Setting the Stage for Human Resource Development in Alberta's Culture Sector, which was mainly a funding project of the Human Resources and Employment department. I'd like to know what concrete steps the Minister of Community Development is taking to work with the Minister of Human Resources and Employment to move the concept of cultural workers and workers in a cultural sector forward as far as labour market development programs. We're missing out here, and I know that the minister can figure out a way to take advantage of that program and what's being offered or what's potential under that program.

Okay. Industries. The film industry. Well, the cultural industries that we have are recording industry – the minister has already talked about the Junos – film industry, book publishing. I'm missing one.

**Dr. Taft:** Magazines.

**Ms Blakeman:** Publishing. Thank you.

A very good survey recently came out commissioned by the magazine publishers, and that industry is actually looking pretty good. All of those industries seem to be coming along quite well, and we were certainly taking a large step forward with the film industry. I know that the minister is just as worried as I am about what the feds are going to do if they withdraw funding from the film industry. I could just wring their necks frankly. You know, from where we've managed to come back to in Alberta, this is most disappointing. Anything I can do to assist the minister in wringing their necks, literally, I'm happy to do.

**8:40**

**Dr. Taft:** Figuratively. Figuratively, Laurie.

**Ms Blakeman:** Oh, I'm sorry. That's right. Not literally. Figuratively. Oops.

But I am . . . [Ms Blakeman's speaking time expired] There's not enough time to do this department.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll just respond briefly to a couple of the issues because I know that there are many other speakers who want to get into this particular debate.

To begin with I think the hon. member's passion for the arts area as with several others is much appreciated by the arts community and certainly by me as the minister responsible for that area because it's a passion that quite frankly I share and I know that many, many members if not most in this Assembly also share because it does have impacts throughout the province on all of our citizens.

The festivals that she alluded to, Mr. Chairman – and I don't have all the amounts and figures and so on in front of me, but according to a note I had jotted down here, I think that last I saw, we funded about 36 different festivals across the province, including some that the hon. member mentioned: the Fringe, the Street Performers, Jazz City. I guess the Folk Music Festival would fit in there, the Lethbridge Children's Festival, the St. Albert Children's Festival, the Blueberry Bluegrass Festival, and on and on they go. So we do provide somewhere in the order of \$700,000 or whatever to that area last I saw, but perhaps that's not enough. Nonetheless, it is a point that I will pass on to the AFA for a relooking at.

The \$3 million increase, however, that is going purely to the arts area will be distributed as best the foundation board is able to. I do acknowledge that it's not a huge increase, hon. member, and I think everybody here would understand that, particularly given the decade and a half or so that we've been waiting. Nonetheless, we are doing the best we can with what we've been given, but I will undertake to the House and to the member asking the question that I will put forward a request again for relooking at that situation also to see what can or can't be done in upcoming budgets. I can't make any promises, hon. member, but I think you know where my heart lies, and I will do my best.

I am pleased that you are pleased and that other members are pleased with the \$5 million that did go to the creative film community because that is truly a great growth industry for us and for arts in general in this province. I, too, am very upset and concerned about the rumoured \$25 million cut which the federal government has announced it would be making, but I'm equally encouraged by the rumour that says that it may be reversed. It's just a rumour, hon. member. I did write to the federal minister responsible. She knows my feelings about this, and I'm hoping that there might be the rescindment which I alluded to in question period I think it was last week.

The issue of artists subsidizing the arts is one that really caught my attention, and I know exactly what point the hon. member is making here. Having lived as an artist for several years myself, I had my share of spaghetti dinners, and I know what that feels like. Still, I think it's important to point out that while the operating grants that we provide and the grants to individual artists and other forms of grants are available through the AFA, Mr. Chairman, we do see a lot of other areas in government which provide funding for arts infrastructure. I realize that's not the exact funding that the hon. member is talking about, but I think that when you roll all of that into the mix, we're not quite as well off as we'd like but we're not as bad off as it sometimes seems.

For example, the centennial grants program. I remember being at the announcement when we announced \$2.5 million for the Citadel plus \$2.5 million for the Fringe, the Arts Barns updates. So that has

an impact on the arts area, although it doesn't help with the specific point of arts employment or arts engagement, which I think is more where the hon. member is coming from, nor does it offset their costs of operating. It helps them with infrastructure and with building, and I think that the corporate side of the equation, which the hon. member referred to, may be dropping off in some parts, but I don't think we're doing all that badly in this province.

What I do see, however, is increased competition for those same dollars because you have a lot of the traditional funders who would have been funding artistic and cultural endeavours now being asked to fund more health-related endeavours or educational-related endeavours or environmental-related endeavours, so that point is certainly not lost on me. But we do have a number of examples where fortunately we do have a fairly thriving corporate sector in this province. I would like to think that it's largely because of the very friendly economic climate that our government policies and other departments provide.

I would say this for the record: according to the last statistics that I looked at – and I would hope that all members would remember this – for every dollar of government moneys that we put into the arts sector, you can expect an economic spin-off of about \$6 to \$15 in return. I think that goes back to the StatsCan report of about 1995 or 1996. I remember it quite vividly, and it made a lasting impression on me.

The loss of the community lottery boards: as the hon. member would know, they were replaced by the community initiatives program, albeit for a lesser amount of money. Nonetheless, that funding was restored to about \$32 million.

I will undertake to examine again that issue of the one grant per year only for the arts organizations. I think that is a significant factor, and I don't want to see opportunities for collaboration, artistic growth, artistic development being compromised because of one of those kinds of policies. Having said that, however, I think everyone here would know that we don't have as much money as is always requested by the arts and cultural community, so the AFA board is doing the best it can with what it has. There is always room for them to look over their programs, and I can tell you, hon. member, that they will be meeting very soon. I don't know if it's in a day or two or three or in a week, but their next board meeting is coming up in May, so I will take your comments from *Hansard* and I'll present them directly to them. I'll have them address them to me in a discussion, and then I'll let you know what the outcome is of all of that.

The other comment, very quickly, is in general about eligibility funding criteria and the issue of the 25 percent eligibility factor, which the hon. member raised. This, too, is something that I can appreciate. If they are expecting and applying for a 25 percent grant because they know full well they're eligible for it and they are not receiving it because it's being prorated or marked down, I would agree that that is unfair to the organizations applying. Again, it's a question, however, of us not having unlimited funds to work with, so I think the AFA responded in a way that they saw fit. I will undertake to pursue that one more aggressively, hon. member. I don't think I pursued it as aggressively as I would have liked to last year, but I will look at this differently this year. I just don't know what the outcome will be because I'm working with a board of very creative and individual thinkers there that have a lot to offer, and they have gained quite a bit of experience over the years.

The final point with respect to the Jubilee auditoria and the rates going up, I guess there were expectations that the rates would go down. Unfortunately, the cost of living is going up, and we're all well aware of that. I am sensitive to the issue of those organizations that are being displaced from the Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditoria.

rium and also from the Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium, and I have had meetings with them collectively and/or individually several times.

As the member would know, I have inherited this particular turn of events, but I am supportive of the renovations that need to be done to these nearly 50-year-old structures. The improvements that are coming about have been done in consultation with not only the arts groups affected but with the arts community and user groups in general. When we're finished those renovations, which will be approximately \$16 million of government dollars in Edmonton, \$16 million of government moneys in Calgary matched by about 10 million plus dollars from the foundation that has been established by the two friends-of organizations, we will truly have an incredible facility with far improved sight lines, better ventilation systems, better acoustics, and all of that kind of stuff.

There is the downside, and it is unfortunate, but the groups by and large understand that this is short-term pain for some long-term gain. I'm not saying that they're happy about it, but unfortunately I don't have any budget moneys to compensate for that displacement. I wish I did, and if I did, I would take a look at how we might get to that stage, but unfortunately we're not there.

8:50

The film classification question. I believe there are three individuals who work in the film classification area, and I can get you more details about the rest of the question, which I didn't have a chance to jot down.

The Cultural Spaces Canada program. You know, I'm going strictly by memory here, hon. member, but as I recall, there was an allocation made to the province of Alberta. I don't want to be held accountable for this, but it seems to me that it was about \$700,000 that was apportioned for Alberta. I don't know if there's somebody that could help me out with the more exact number on the Cultural Spaces, but there was something in that order that either was already brought to the province and spent or was to be spent. I'm not sure, so I'll check into it and give it to you further.

The last point – and then I'll sit down – was the possibility of a cross-ministry initiative, at least that was what it sounded like to me, with respect to the Alberta Department of Human Resources and Employment. I was looking earlier, hon. member, at the cross-ministry policy initiatives we already have in place, and I note here that we have an aboriginal policy initiative, we have an Alberta children and youth initiative with the Minister of Children's Services, we have an economic development strategy cross-ministry initiative, and we have a health sustainability initiative, and so on. But I don't see one with AHR and E. So I will have that discussion with the hon. minister from Alberta Human Resources and Employment to see more fully what it is that you had in mind to help move the labour development issue in the arts area forward. I'm not sure what it'll result in, but it's an interesting idea.

I was struck by the incubator that is going into Leduc for Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. In fact, I talked to my deputy minister about it, and I said: wouldn't it be wonderful if we had an incubator program for the arts and cultural area? I think it would be a great idea. I don't know how we would do it, but I realize that that one was funded by the government through the Alberta Value-added Corporation. It's a good one because it will help the producers learn the trade, and they learn marketing techniques, and I think I heard somewhere that there's an average of about 100 new agriculture products that come onstream in this province as a result of initiatives like that. I think that's tremendous. But to liken it to the arts area, I think we could see the same thing potentially in this area. Why not? It would be an innovative idea, and I will take it for what it's

worth and see what I can do with it. I don't know where it will go or what support it might have, but I will give it some consideration and visit it with appropriate ministries.

I've just received a note on the film classification from a staff member, and I'll get back to you further with that. I'll take my seat and allow more questions to come, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** Before we recognize Edmonton-Centre, I wonder if we might have consent to briefly revert to Introduction of Guests.

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of this House a young man that we're very proud of, my son Jeremy. Jeremy's here in Edmonton this week with the RCMP training in their helicopter for search and rescue. He's the son that everybody wishes for. I'd ask him to stand and receive the traditional warm applause of the House.

head: **Main Estimates 2003-04**

**Community Development** (*continued*)

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

**Ms Blakeman:** That's a proud mom.

Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. Just a couple of things to recap on points that the minister raised. You know, he talks about additional funding that comes into the arts, and I have to put him on the hot seat a bit on that one because I know from running arts organizations that you run your eye down the list of grants, and it's really come from your own fund-raising activities for the most part and from different levels of government. So any infrastructure money that comes, really the difference that makes to cultural product and to artists just means you're working in a less drafty location or a nicer location, but, you know, it's not putting artistic product out there. The one exception to that is that there are some artistic endeavours that we can't get into because we don't have the space for it. I know that I heard a plea from Heather Redfern at Catalyst Theatre around that, and I think she's applying for Cultural Spaces money so that they can improve their space and what they're able to offer.

The minister is absolutely right. In my time in the arts the biggest competitors in fund-raising now for the arts community are the health sector and the education sector, and that I will put right back at you because I think that clearly reflects what's happening for funding from government in the health and education sectors, not on the minister's plate specifically but certainly on the government's plate.

Again, around the CIP program, the community initiatives program, let's be fair here. There's less money available overall. There is a cap on the grants of \$75,000. Over a certain amount it had to be matched, so that's additional effort from the organizations to come up with more money and more effort to match the funds that are available there, and there was less money in the pot total. So it's quite a different program and comes nowhere near to replacing what we had with the lottery boards.

I'd like to move on now briefly to talking about the sports. Again, very glad to see an almost \$2.6 million increase in the sports. A couple of questions. I noticed the expected money going to the NHL

teams is up, and I was wondering what would make the minister believe that's a flow-through. Where am I seeing that? I'm sorry that I don't have the vote number for you on that, but it is the NHL ticket money. There it is; sorry. Page 74 of the budget estimates, 2.2.4, and there's an increase there going from \$4.834 million to \$5.750 million. Is that money coming directly from gaming, or what is giving the ministry the belief that they're going to make 900,000 and some dollars more through that flow-through initiative? What's making them think that that's going to be more money?

I have questioned the minister and corresponded with him about the Masters Games in 2005. I am specifically looking for a commitment from the minister that there will be a contract that will involve some portion of the money coming from the provincial government to the Masters Games 2005, a contract that sets out expectations and outcomes expected for a cultural component. I was impressed with the work that the federal government has in place around contracting for athletic endeavours and the money that they put into the cultural component. We can easily piggyback on the work that they have learned, and I think that we need to because I was not entirely happy with what happened around the last one we had, which has totally gone out of my head. Two years ago. Totally gone out of my head; I'm sorry. If I can remember it, I'll come back to that one.\*

The minister mentioned the health and fitness aspect of amateur sports, and a question that I've raised with the Minister of Gaming and I'll raise again here is: why is there such a struggle for adult recreation and athletic organizations to secure licences to hold bingo and casinos to raise funds to offset the cost of their programs? It seems to be a real problem for those organizations to get access to that money, and I think that we need to address that. So, again, it's a cross-departmental initiative, but I'd like to see the minister being aggressive on this one if he can. Again, I'm happy to see the extra money that's going in there. Much needed, and a huge payoff as far as health and wellness for our citizens plus general well-being and stress reducers and all of those things, so congratulations on that.

Moving to the volunteer sector. Again, a small increase there of a million and something. Glad to see it. The board developments section that is in Community Development, particularly those that go out to facilitate conferences and workshops – there are a number of staff in that department that have developed quite an expertise, and I'm wondering how many facilitation projects has the staff from Community Development been involved with in the last year, and how many are they expected to be involved with this year? How many staff and subcontractors or people brought in from outside are involved with that, and how much money is paid back into the ministry when those services are used by other government departments or other organizations?

A couple of questions around human rights, page 100 in the business plan, the section that's called Protect Human Rights, and Promote Fairness and Access. The '01-02 budget was \$5.7 million, the '02-03 budget is \$4.5 million. Then we're going to \$4.8 million, and it stays at \$4.8 million across the three years of this business plan. I'm wondering: what caused the dip from \$5.7 million to \$4.5 million? What reasoning does the ministry have behind settling on the \$4.8 million as a reasonable amount of money or an adequate amount of money to be funding the protecting human rights and promoting fairness and access sector?

**9:00**

I have a standard series of questions, which I think the minister already has his hands on, that I tend to do every year around the human rights cases. I'm looking specifically for the number of cases that were brought to the Human Rights Commission, the number of cases that were received or accepted for review and work by the

Human Rights Commission, the number of cases that went forward to the commission, the number that were settled, and the number that are outstanding.

I also have noticed quite a difference in the profile of the Human Rights Commission over the last several years. Could the minister please give me some general comments on whether there has been a deliberate change in policy as far as the profile of that particular commission or whether it's just been a sort of general erosion or lack of attention to detail or lack of love from somebody? Why am I seeing less profile from that particular commission? There's quite a change: less advertising, fewer posters, less visibility, fewer staff people sent to conferences, et cetera, so overall a general downgrading in the Human Rights Commission and its visibility in the community.

Historical sites. Specifically, I had a request to raise an issue around a property built by John C. McDougall in 1912-13. It's been put up for sale by the province, and I'm questioning whether the minister would be willing to look at a provincial designation for this house. This is the son of the original McDougall. That original McDougall house was destroyed, so this is the son's house. It's the only one that we have left, and the province has put it up for sale. It is on the B list of protection for the city of Edmonton, but they are really not in a position to upgrade that to an A list, and it's quite possible that the property could be sold and demolished and we would lose McDougall house, the son's, the second one. It's not the original one. The original one is gone. It's the one built in 1912-13. So I'm hoping that I can turn the minister's attention to that, and hopefully we can get some protection provincially under the auspices of the minister for that house. It would be a shame to lose that out of Edmonton's historical archives or historical buildings.

The libraries. There has been, as the minister noted, a small increase to both the systems and to the individual libraries. It has not gotten us back to where we were. It has not restored us to where funding would have been if we'd continued with regular funding. What is the plan that the minister has to get us back to some operating level of not adequacy but excellence over, let's say, the next five-year period?

The next question is around the effect of the bingo changes. I'll come back to that one.

I've had a request to raise the issue around the Grant MacEwan interpreter training programs. There has been a proposal to restructure the ASL/English interpreter program through Grant MacEwan Community College. They were approaching my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar for assistance in advocating on their behalf. They believe that the ASL/English interpreters are helpful in better integrating deaf and hard-of-hearing people into the inclusive mainstream, and as the interpreters are better trained, more deaf people have easier access to pre- and postsecondary educational institutions. They would like to keep an interpreter program in Edmonton. Now, I understand that this is probably not the minister's area of influence, but anything he can do to support this program is appreciated.

The legacy grant program. When the minister was talking about the \$25 million, can I just confirm that he was talking about the \$25 million that is in fact under infrastructure? Could he please confirm that there are no additional funds aside from the infrastructure funds that are under his department currently? I'm questioning that because we are two years out from this celebration. There does not seem to be any money, or any specific grant pot of money, for those organizations that were looking to do activities that were non brick and mortar and that were looking for financial support for those projects. Can the minister please confirm this or, if I'm wrong – and I hope I am – tell us where this money is and how they apply for it, under which department, what deadlines are involved, et cetera?

\*See p. 1551, left col., para. 9, line 4

I'm also looking for philosophically, if there is no additional funding, if there's just the bricks-and-mortar infrastructure funding for the legacy program, why the government has made that choice. With the 75th anniversary there was provincial funding to support communities doing historical books on their area. They weren't large grants, but they were helpful to communities as an impetus, if nothing else, to do the project. I'm curious as to why there is nothing specific that seems to be available this time around for the 100th birthday. We're only two years out. That's not a lot of time.

I'm moving on to women's issues. I hear what the minister is saying around gender analysis, which I find very interesting. When I first raised that in this Assembly seven years ago, I was laughed at. Now it rolls off the minister's tongue. How interesting. I'll take it as a good thing that we've moved through to that. I am interested in what the gender analysis is that the ministry has done on the programs that are available that are offered by other government departments. I continue to be concerned that there are systemic barriers in place that are not being identified that are stopping women from accessing other programs in government, and I would like to see a comprehensive analysis done by the staff people under the ministry to check that the government is being as accessible as possible.

#### 9:10

In just doing some cleanup in the few minutes that I have left here, I'm wondering what the minister is looking at doing around sports and the funding of the snowmobile trails and whether there would be any increased funding in support of a trail system or whether the minister has approached his colleague the Minister of Economic Development and tourism for these multi-use trail systems or specific to a snowmobile trail system. Right now they are looking for a stand-alone trail act. They feel that they're dealing with 23 different legislative acts and would prefer a one-window approach. They're also looking at a mechanism to protect the trail base through some disposition of some kind for recreational corridors so that the development and maintenance investment is protected and the trail is secure from year to year. I'm wondering: could we get an update, please, from the minister on the Alberta Trail Net system and where negotiations are for that trail system progressing through Alberta and linking to the Canada trail system?

Where is the province in developing a mechanism to limit liability to not only trail operators but landowners for recreational purposes – I think this is occupational liability that they're looking at – to have the province develop consistent trail guidelines and standards across the government and to acknowledge and support the trails which are established along secondary highway right-of-ways so as not to sever the connectivity of established trails? The Snowmobile Association is feeling that they're under threat for existence because of the outrageous insurance premiums or unattainable insurance coverage for volunteers because of the programs they're trying to offer, and they're looking for support to do that, especially legislative mechanisms. That's a larger topic for the minister, and he may want to respond in writing on that one.

I think I'm within seconds of losing my time, and I've covered almost everything on the list. I'll have to come back on the bingo changes and some of the specific financial questions, but I know that others want to get a chance to get up.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you very much. I remember the hon. member's opening comments about the school of fast talk or

whatever it was, and she has certainly put a lot on the record here. I'll address some of it now and perhaps will follow up in writing on some of the others.

The first issue was with respect to the four cultural industries. I would agree that overall they're doing not too badly. The film industry in particular is doing very, very well, as we know, and this injection of dollars there will help them a lot. I should say, hon. member, that that increase in funding came about in part because of an economic impact analysis that had been done, and it showed them and us and everyone else exactly what that impact was not only from an economic basis but also from a cultural, artistic, and development basis. That's one reason why when the Alberta Recording Industry and its president, Garry McDonall I think at the time, came to me a couple of years ago and said, "We really need to do something in this area," – well, being of musical background first and foremost myself, I'm very sensitive to that area – I agreed. So we studied it for about a year or so and tried to figure out how to do it, and we put about \$30,000 toward an economic impact study in the recording arts industry, and that will help them.

I have said publicly that the next one I'll be looking at is what can be done in the magazine and periodical publishing side as well as in the book publishing side. I'm not sure what we can do there, but I am willing to take a look at that particular point.

The other issue is with respect to the competition of dollars that I referenced and then I think the hon. member rereferenced. I realize that there are many, many different projects that require different types of funding, but I think that specific to the health care area, where our provincial contribution is now over \$7 billion, which is about a third of our total budget, we need some corporate partners to help accomplish some of the projects which they are bringing to the table.

One excellent example of that is the Alberta Heart Institute. Now, I was in the Sikh community here, as I have been almost every weekend, not long ago when this particular project was talked about, and the Alberta Sikh community is now doing a specific fund-raiser for the Guru Nanak Dev healing garden, which I know the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona also knows about. Perhaps others do as well. So they will be looking for dollars from the community for that project, and it's a good one. But, again, there are only so many dollars available. The same thing can be said for the bone and joint centre of excellence that'll be coming up in Calgary, the Stollery children's centre, and the list goes on and on. So these are all excellent projects, but it does create a healthy competition; I would agree.

The issue of capping of \$75,000 in the CIP program, or the community initiatives program, that the member referenced. I realize there is a cap there, but by the same token the Minister of Gaming, as I recall, will have some review of your comments, and I think he's going to have some flexibility to take a look at some additional projects and perhaps lift that cap where it might be appropriate. I don't know what his exact intentions are, but I'll certainly raise that point for him.

The other point that the hon. member mentioned was with respect to NHL teams, and I want to just comment that the Alberta NHL team initiative, which appears in the ministry estimates, Mr. Chairman, on page 74, does in fact reflect flow-through-type dollars. To answer the member's question, it's Alberta Revenue, or specifically the Minister of Revenue, who actually collects the tax that is levied on NHL players for games played in Alberta.

The \$5.75 million that appears in the estimates is really the projected proceeds that we expect will be split evenly between the two dynamic hockey teams that we have, those being the Edmonton Oilers and the Calgary Flames. The proceeds less a small amount of

administrative costs will help these two teams remain competitive in what we call a small-market environment until the NHL and the players sit down and do their collective agreement negotiations, which I think is coming up in 2004-2005. So in the first year what you'll see, because it's a new program being set up, is probably in the order of about a \$350,000 to \$400,000 administration type of deduction off that flow-through amount, and in the next year it'll be less than that. We have some putting together to do in the first year; there are a lot of setup costs, in other words. So that's a comment on the NHL teams issue. I don't know if there's anything else specific to what the hon. member mentioned in terms of the line item. I think she cited 2.2.4. Is that right, hon. member? So I think that sort of covers it, but if not, I'll review your comments and see if there's more fleshing out that needs to be done.

With respect to the World Masters Games I do share the member's passion for wanting to include a specific component for the arts and culture segment of society within those Masters Games. I think I answered this question in the House for the hon. member before, although I don't remember vividly exactly what it was that she was asking. I think it was similar. But I will assure the member that there will be a strong arts and culture component to the World Masters Games. I think it will appear in the contract, as you indicate, and since I am sitting on that board of governors, I will ensure that there is a portion that goes toward helping out that particular sector as we did with the 2001 Worlds too. It was the same type of arrangement.

I should tell other members of the House who are interested in this particular issue that for virtually all of the major sport events that we as a province participate in and fund through the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks & Wildlife Foundation, we also build in by contract a cultural component, and we provide money from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts for that component, be it whatever percentage amount. So we do that very consistently, and I see no reason not to do it with the World Masters Games event as well.

9:20

The issue of health and wellness that was mentioned and the struggle that adult sporting groups have with respect to accessing casinos and bingos is an issue I've spoken directly with the Minister of Gaming about. I've spoken with the Minister of Justice about it, and I've raised it at the FPT tables. I can't remember; where were we for the last sport one? Was it Ottawa or somewhere? Quebec? Bathurst? Thank you. Bathurst, New Brunswick. We got stranded, in fact. I'll remember it better next time. I did raise this issue, and it seems to me that there is some degree of complication with respect to the fact that that particular industry is regulated. I think it's under the Criminal Code of Canada, if memory serves me correctly, and as a result I have to deal with it at the federal level more so than at the provincial level.

I have received a very powerful lobby from some local groups and organizations here. The Alberta Sport Council I think is the one in particular. I took their exact argument and their exact notes with me to the federal table, and I have to tell you, hon. member, that I didn't get a very warm reception, because I couldn't get it on the formal working committee agenda yet. But it is coming for a larger discussion. Again, I don't know what the outcome will be, but I was quite passionate about it because it seems to me that under the current rules we have the ability to provide for casino licences and bingo licences and whatever else for the one- to 17-year-old crowd. Then we start again at the 65-year-old-plus crowd, if memory serves correctly, but we lose this huge opportunity of that major group in between.

The rationale for it is: well, most people over 18 or 19 are now

working for a living, and they don't need these kinds of casinos and bingos to support them. Well, I would argue that a little bit differently. I think we lose on the continuum of a good habit that gets started that sometimes gets lost. Some of us are able to stay active better than others, and some of us wouldn't mind a little bit of encouragement. So I did put that agenda item forward. I don't have a response yet, and I'm not sure what success I'll have, but I just wanted the member to know that I have referenced it in that context.

The issue of board development facilitation. I agree with the member. We do have a lot of expertise through Community Development, specifically through the Wild Rose Foundation and the community services volunteer area within that department, and we are frequently asked to help facilitate a number of different board development programs and/or in the case of government of Alberta projects things like the various summits. I remember vividly the Alberta Future Summit, which I had a very large role in working on. Our staff did an incredible job, as they have done in many other areas. I'll try and find out an exact number for your answer as to how many staff members we have there. I don't recall how many, if it's one or two or three. We don't have a whole bunch of people doing it, but the people we do have are very dedicated and committed. Nor do I have an exact number of how many different types of development facilitations we may have done over the last year or two.

I would now turn quickly to the issue of human rights in the province, and I know the member had indicated that she'd likely be pursuing this. The thing that I would tell you before I get into the specific answers, hon. member, is: what we've noticed with the complaints that are coming in is that they are becoming more and more complex, I'm told, and the legal nature of the human rights work that is being presented is also becoming more challenging. As the member will know, the Alberta Human Rights Commission is totally independent from government. They are very arm's length, so I don't have the ability to exercise any ministerial prerogative, if you will, over the decisions that they make. Nonetheless, the most frequently cited area, as I recall, is employment.

For the number of complaints that were opened and closed in 2002-2003, those statistics go like this. The commission opened 835 complaints in 2002-2003, which is about 63 more complaint files that were opened in that time frame than for the previous year. It's 151 more complaint files opened than the average number opened in the previous four years, in fact. The basic complaints are very wide-ranging in nature and affect individuals with disabilities, and some of them have wound up in higher courts of appeal, as the member knows. Harassment and violence and all kinds of other things are tied in here. It's a very sensitive area, obviously. Nonetheless, in terms of the cases closed in the 2002-2003 year, which is the latest statistic I have, hon. member, 835 were opened in '02-03, and 772 were closed in the same year. So that left us with about 63 ongoing files that had varying complexities.

I should tell you, hon. member, that I received some information on this. I know that we have about 40 full-time staff working there, and we have a very low staff turnover in that area. It's a very dedicated group of people who serve there. But here's the point I wanted to make if I can find it in my notes here. There were something in the order of 10,000 or 11,000 hits to the web site for a given month, with an average time spent of about 10 to 15 minutes. It tells me one thing. Well, it tells me a lot of things. It tells me that there is an increased awareness of human rights in this province and perhaps an increased need for human rights investigations and so on, but I think that's a good thing. I think it's a very good thing for people to take advantage of that. As I indicated, about 80 percent, which is the majority by far, of the complaints coming in are employment related.

Now, there are other questions that I think the hon. member asked. I couldn't do the shorthand fast enough; otherwise, I'd provide the answers. But I'll look at it and take a look at what the specifics are and get back to you.

On the issue of human rights visibility, or the commission's visibility I think you mentioned, as the hon. member probably knows, we have the Human Rights Commission, which investigates, reviews, and decides on complaints, and then we also have the Advisory Committee on the Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Education Fund, which is a grants-making body separate from that one, but they sort of work together on a lot of these ideas. The visibility piece is a good one that the member mentioned, and I think you will see some increased visibility relatively soon on the multiculturalism education side. I'll talk to the commission people through the deputy about what they might or might not be able to do with increasing the Human Rights Commission side of that visibility. We've received quite a few calls and inquiries from our multicultural/ethnocultural community with respect to the same issue, and that is the visibility of it. So we are going to be doing something about that very soon. I'm working with the chair of the Advisory Committee on the Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Education Fund, the Member for Calgary-Montrose, on a new initiative that will be coming up very soon which he is championing, and that's a good thing.

One other thing that is doing a lot, hon. member, to help increase the visibility, as you say, or the awareness of the Human Rights Commission is that they recently partnered with the Alberta chambers of commerce. I don't know if you're aware of that, hon. member, but you know the awards that we used to do down at city hall? We'd have a gathering and typically, not to criticize, we'd get 60 or 80 people out. It was a good group of people who care a lot about human rights, but it wasn't getting out far enough into the community. So I compliment the Human Rights Commission in Alberta for taking that initiative of the awards ceremony and working it through with the Alberta chambers of commerce to have those presentations done in the presence of and with the co-operation of the chamber of commerce groups. As we all know, those are largely our employers. So it seems to be hitting the nail squarely on the head for the type of stuff you're talking about, and it ties in very well with what I said earlier, that about 80 percent of the complaints we get are employment related. So what better audience could you want? I think that is a very key point, and I congratulate them once again for doing it.

9:30

On the McDougall house designation, as the hon. member knows, it's a good question she's put forward, but there is a process in place with the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, and I'm sure that they will read through *Hansard* and see what can be done about considering that place for possible designation. I'm not aware of exactly which house it is that is being referenced. I certainly know the McDougall story in part, and I've met some of the offspring from the original McDougalls, but I don't know anything about the province necessarily owning it or necessarily putting it up for sale. We'll try and track that down. If the staff who are listening could undertake to jot that down, we can follow up on it.

The issue about libraries. What has been restored, hon. member, is the per capita rate. It was \$4.29 back in 1993, and it was cut to \$4.03 for the operating grant part of public libraries. What we were able to do this year with our own moneys in Community Development is restore the per capita grant for public libraries' operating costs from \$4.03 back up to \$4.29, and we're also using 2002 listings, so that makes a very large difference to those communities.

Now, some are benefiting more than others. For example, I think the public library in Edmonton will be getting something like \$245,000 more or thereabouts, and the Calgary public library will be getting probably slightly more than that because they have a larger population. Nonetheless, that's a good thing.

The Grant MacEwan project for the benefit of the deaf and hard-of-hearing community. I knew that the member would be asking this. Actually, I was expecting Edmonton-Gold Bar to ask it, but I was pleased that the Member for Edmonton-Centre asked on his behalf. What I can tell you is that I did speak with the Minister of Learning about this a week or two back when it was first brought to my attention, and my staff did a little follow-up in the meantime. We are continuing our commitment to help our government improve our communications with Albertans by providing quality, co-ordinated, and as cost-effective as possible communication services with the transfer of the responsibility for deaf and hard-of-hearing contracts from PDD boards directly to our department.

Now, that doesn't speak to the education piece, which I think is what the hon. member was asking about. That part I will refer to the Ministry of Learning for follow-up because in regard to sign language studies at Grant MacEwan College, I believe it's the Minister of Learning that is responsible for it.

I know that there's a need to continue bringing onstream trained, qualified individuals who have that particular skill. At many functions that I go to now, I see sign language interpreters. In fact, we had one in the House this afternoon, just behind the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and up in the gallery, who had a group for whom she was interpreting. It's an exhausting job, it's a highly skilled job, and I would certainly support anything that we can do to continue . . . [Mr. Zwodzesky's speaking time expired]

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Lord:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure for me to be able to rise this evening to ask a number of questions, actually, of the minister as well. Clearly the minister may or may not be able to answer them fully this evening, perhaps just a few comments, but perhaps he could get back to me later on some of the more complex issues.

First, I'd like to start by thanking the minister for the hard work and dedication that he's shown in this department. I do get a lot of positive comments, actually, from constituents and other people. The minister has built quite a reputation in a difficult and very diverse portfolio. When you cover everything from special places and parks to the arts community to sports, human rights, and the list goes on, clearly it's a difficult portfolio with a lot of demands and a lot of people asking for money and obviously a very limited supply of money.

The first question that I'd like to put to the minister is in regard to the arts. Of course, we've heard quite a bit about the Victoria school for the arts in Edmonton, a proposed \$60 million in funding and quite an exciting project for Edmonton. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark of course has been quite involved in that. I'm wondering what role, if any, Community Development might be able to play because, obviously, with all the publicity that Edmonton is getting with this exciting project, there are many in Calgary asking why Calgary doesn't have a similar project, and why can't we start something, and would the Community Development portfolio have anything to do with fostering that or perhaps helping promote or get something started there?

This subject of course has been bantered around for years. As alderman for ward 8 on city council, part of ward 8 was Victoria Park, which has a Victoria Park school not dissimilar, in fact, to the

Edmonton project, a beautiful old sandstone that was closed by the school board, lots of exposure, right at the front door of the Stamped grounds. It's been proposed that it would make a great school for the arts. Or better yet, I guess, from my perspective now, King Edward school, which is located in Calgary-Currie, again a beautiful sandstone school recently closed by the school board.

That actually brings me to a third question that I'm wondering about in terms of centennial projects, because in addition to looking at King Edward school as perhaps a great location for a school for the arts, there is a question about the fact that there's no proper bell in the bell tower at King Edward. Never has been; a little bit of historical trivia there. When Bible Bill, William Aberhart, was the first principal, a bell was ordered for King Edward school back at the turn of the century, and it was ordered from a foundry in England. Unfortunately, that bell was shipped on a ship called the *Titanic*, and consequently Bible Bill didn't get his bell. So a lot of people have been talking about a potential centennial project and were wondering whether funding is going to be available or not in that area.

My third question. Because some of the headquarters of the film development industry in Alberta of course are currently located in Calgary-Currie as well, I do get questions about funding for the film and movie industry. Particularly, the recent announcement of a potential \$25 million cutback from the federal government is causing considerable consternation within the industry across Canada. I'm wondering if the minister's department has thought of if it actually occurs and if there is some fallout there, would there be any opportunities, I guess, for Alberta? Is there any way we can look at that as potentially drawing people to Alberta that maybe have been located elsewhere in the country? Toronto, for example. While it's bad news overall, sometimes there's a silver lining in the clouds. Have we looked at whether or not there are any opportunities there? Has the department looked at that?

The fourth issue, certainly of major interest to us in Calgary right now as well as people in Edmonton, is the centennial program, which includes the upgrading of the Jubilee auditoria in Calgary and Edmonton. Now, I know that the funding for centennial programs is found in Alberta Infrastructure for this project, but my question here focuses on the refurbishing which is going to be managed, apparently, by Community Development. I'm wondering if the minister can explain to us any significant change or changes that might take place that would affect current users and audiences. Of course, there's been a good deal of concern from some of the current users as to where they might go in the interim during this period of refurbishment because it may be financially ruinous to them if they do not find a suitable location to be able to go to.

I guess the final thing I might ask the minister to comment on – he may not be fully prepared to lay out the whole program – of course is the issue of the finishing of the special places and parks across Alberta and the recreational corridors review committee which recently turned in its report, one which was ably chaired by the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul and which I also had the pleasure, along with my colleague the Member for West Yellowhead, of turning in a report on. We're wondering if there's been any progress, direction, or where more work needs to be done in that regard. If the minister could perhaps comment on that as well.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll move through this as quickly as I possibly can. The first question from the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie pertained to the Victoria school of the arts and the upgrades that they're getting with the \$60 million grant

that was undeferred recently and what role Community Development can play in that regard.

Well, we don't play any role with respect to those specific moneys, but I'll tell you what we do through our Alberta Foundation for the Arts that impacts that whole area of artistic development. We'll be providing about \$29 million this year for arts overall, including the film component. Here's what's critical to know about that. It's where those grants are going and the impact they're having which in turn helps feed and bolster what Victoria school for the performing arts is doing. I have a great affinity for it because I used to teach there, and I happened to teach languages and music and drama and so on. So I was there when the television program started, and I'm very tuned in with what they're doing.

**9:40**

The types of grants that we provide through the Alberta Foundation for the Arts courtesy of lottery dollars provided by the Ministry of Gaming include study grants; operational assistance grants; festivals, which I talked about earlier; specific project support grants; commissions – we buy artwork and stuff like that; we give out awards such as literary awards, which will be given out this coming Saturday for example; various competitions we fund; and we fund summer schools. So there's a lot of that, and much of it is youth oriented.

We also have a fairly active program, the name of which just escapes me right now, where touring groups are able to go to different schools with their productions. I recall seeing the production of *Snow White* by the Alberta touring alliance or something close to that name. That's not the proper name; I've just lost it momentarily here. Now, we provided them some grant funding, and they take that production and tour it out to all the schools, and we're talking anywhere from about grade 4 up. So they have a tremendous impact through grant dollars we provide, and that does impact students who get interested in it and will perhaps go on to the Victoria school of performing arts. Why isn't there one and can't one be done in Calgary is a good question. I don't know the answer to that, but I do know that we have a centre of performing excellence here in the Victoria school.

I can't help you, hon. member, with the King Edward school bell. I don't know that project, but the simple answer to whether or not centennial funding would be available in the coming year is: not at this time. We don't have any capacity for additional dollars yet, but there are a number of people who are asking me that question, so I will put the question forward through our process and see what happens.

I appreciate that Calgary-Currie is the headquarters for many, many film and video companies. I have been there. I have toured the site on a couple of occasions. I am very impressed with what's going on there, and I'm devastated, as you are, with the rumoured cuts to the Canadian television fund by the federal government. What I would tell you in response to your question, hon. member, is this: if they cut that \$25 million out, we will lose six of the seven major television projects that were scheduled to occur in this province, and that's why we're fighting very hard. That will have an economic impact of somewhere between \$10 million and \$20 million in dollar terms.

It'll have a far greater impact on eroding the delicate and fragile and highly mobile film infrastructure community of crews which we rely on not only for our own indigenous productions but that a lot of offshore companies rely on when they come here. It's not only the mountains and the badlands and the beautiful long, sunny, clear days that we offer here that attract these film producers from around the world, whom we do not fund by the way, but they come here because

it's economical for them to do business here, and they can pick up a crew – a sound, film, lighting, et cetera, crew – like that. But we have to do what we can to ensure that that infrastructure remains there, and that's why I've written to the federal minister asking her to rescind, and I hope that she's done that.

The Jubilee Auditorium upgrades. I've answered part of that before, but I would just tell you very quickly that the two Jubilee auditoria, based on what I last saw from the architects, have confirmed that they're going to provide a better house handling system for air flow. They'll be reraking; in other words, reinclining the theatre space where the audience sits for better sight lines. They'll be improving the acoustics. They will be improving the foyers that about the viewing area and a number of other things.

Anyway, they've really got quite a lot in mind, which is why we have to close both places down for an extended period of time, likely about a year, to get it all done. It's not something we could do piecemeal. We looked at trying to do that. It's nothing we can do in a phased-in approach of a month here, a month there. It has to all be done at once, and we've reviewed that thoroughly.

My final comment is with regard to special places, and I was getting to that when the time ran out and I was trying to answer the Member for Edmonton-Centre's questions in that regard because she did reference snowmobile trails. I will give her a longer answer in writing on this.

I know that the Recreation Corridors Legislative Review, that was done by the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul, who chaired it, along with the Member for West Yellowhead – and I believe the Member for Calgary-Currie was also involved – did an outstanding job, had consultations throughout the province with hundreds of groups, including letters, e-mails, phone calls, and so on. They've dealt with a lot of very sensitive issues impacting the whole issue of recreation corridors. I can't remember the exact number right off the top of my head, but it seems to me that we have about 15,000 kilometres of trail already throughout the province of Alberta. Some of them are better linked than others. There are gaps in a few places, and I know that they are looking at how to address that while also bearing in mind the very highly charged and sensitive concerns that a lot of individuals have in some of the other areas.

It's not a huge problem for us in the larger urban centres, and it's not a huge problem in places like the trail that goes from St. Paul, maybe, to Elk Point. I just forget. Iron Horse or something like that it's called. It's a wonderful trail because it's built on an abandoned railway line, as I recall. I toured that one; we drove it, actually. It was fantastic, absolutely incredible. We went through all the fences, locked them all up behind us and so on.

I am impressed with what the committee has put forward. I'll have the report coming onto my radar screen very soon, and I'll be responding to that and taking it through our process.

Suffice it to say that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre mentioned the need for more snowmobile trails. I would agree. I think we do need some of those. They have to go in areas where they are permitted to go, and there is an upkeep factor there that we look for local groups to help us out with. But I want to go on record once again saying that we are not going to be looking at or helping out with trails or whatever in those areas where a local municipality hasn't first given the okay for them to occur. That is something that currently exists as a right within the Municipal Government Act, I believe it's called, the MGA. That right will remain that way. It is not our position as a provincial government to overstep what's in municipal legislation. Those people wanting trails in different areas will need first to have the approval of the local municipality in the instances that apply.

With that, hon. member, I think I will take my seat so that others can ask any questions they might have.

**Dr. Taft:** I will quickly get some issues up about PDD, which, after all, accounts for a good majority of the minister's budget, and there will be other questions which we will provide to the minister in writing because we have many other issues to cover, shall I put it that way.

I'm on page 91 of the estimates, funding for PDD boards. One of the problems with PDD boards in the past has been that in fact what appears in the budget is not what finally gets provided to the boards, and it's a parallel problem to what happens to the regional health authorities. Their planning process is behind the fiscal cycle. Can the minister explain to us whether these current estimates are really what's going to finally be provided to the PDD boards, or if not, when will those figures be finalized? Indeed, what is the budgeting and planning process for the boards, and how does that fit into the budget cycle? I think it's the case that some boards don't get their budgets and business plans finalized until well into the fiscal year, which in my view is poor management.

Last year a number of PDDs were concerned about deficits. The funding levels this year rise by about 8 percent, but that's about what they rose by last year, and last year they had deficits, so I'm concerned that this year they may have deficits again. So how many boards are projecting deficits this year, based on their plans right now? Interestingly, how many are taking on new clients? More importantly, what is the net number of new clients? In other words, each PDD board loses and gains some clients as the year goes on. What's the net increase in clients expected to be? Will PDD boards be allowed to run deficits this year? Is that a possibility for them? If not, what direction does the minister expect to give PDD boards if they are projecting deficits? I'm trying to go very quickly here because I know the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona has some issues he'd like the opportunity to raise as well.

**9:50**

When it comes to waiting lists for PDD services, which have come up in question period a couple of times recently, what is being done to streamline the intake process for PDD clients? Is the assumption there that this process is as efficient as it could be, or could we perhaps improve that, streamline it and speed it up?

I will send a number of other questions to the minister in writing, but one other set concerns the Eric Cormack Centre, just a few blocks from the Legislature. There are plans or rumours of plans going around that the Cormack Centre may be phased out or closed down. What are the future plans? The minister is shaking his head. Either he's puzzled or he's just saying no. Anyway, perhaps he could provide it in writing so we don't consume too much time here. What are the future plans for the Cormack Centre? How does it fit into the long-term plans of PDD?

The rest of the questions here I will submit to the minister in writing, and I'm sure, in fact, that he will respond in writing. I'd like the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona to have a chance too.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Hon. minister, I've got about four or five other people on the list.

**Mr. Zwodzesky:** I just want to say that I will provide the answers in writing, and I'll defer to the next member.

**The Chair:** Okay. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood.

**Mr. Masyk:** Thanks, Mr. Chairman, and I appreciate this opportunity, to the minister. The minister recently announced along with His Worship Mayor Bill Smith that Edmonton would be hosting the

2004 Junos. Will the minister explain how this fits within the ministry's business plan and how the provincial contribution is being funded?

If I may add also, the Community Development budget includes a \$19.8 million increase from the Alberta lottery fund for the arts, recreation, sports, human rights and citizenship, education, cultural diversity, volunteerism, and heritage programs. In the Community Development business plan one of the challenges identified is "increasing demands generated by community needs within the arts and culture, sport and recreation, and voluntary sectors." How is this ministry going to address these challenges?

Thank you.

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Again, Mr. Chairman, just for the record and in deference to time and other members who have questions, I'll undertake to respond in writing to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood, and I thank him for those good questions.

**The Chair:** Okay. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan, followed by Whitecourt-Ste. Anne. Edmonton-Ellerslie: yes, okay. I've just got a question mark, so you're in there.

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to start by complimenting the minister for his diligence in answering questions and his agreement to answer questions in writing if they're submitted, if he can't put them all on the record now. I want to thank him also for a detailed answer that he gave to one of my written questions some months ago. I appreciated that. That had to do with the Human Rights Commission's waiting times.

I may put three specific questions on the record now, and the minister can answer them along with others that may come from me in writing. Minister, one of your responsibilities, of course, is to preserve and protect the cultural and natural heritage of Albertans. I presume this includes sites of heritage value in urban areas as well. In my constituency is an area that's come under increasing pressure from the university's expansion eastward, and the community league has been very, very concerned about the potential for university encroachment and, therefore, in the long run the disappearance of this historically very, very important area of Edmonton, Alberta. I wonder if the minister can let me know what kind of help Garneau community residents can expect from his department as they make attempts – and they've been doing it for a long time – to protect the area because of its heritage value and historical significance. So that's one.

The second quick question, again about the Whyte Avenue damage by fire some months ago. You're aware of it. I was in Montreal just about two months ago, and someone stopped me on the way and said: "I saw you on the TV. You are the MLA for that area that got burnt. Oh, my goodness." So, again, are there any resources available from your department to help the community and the property owners there to restore the area that was burnt down so that the general significance, both commercial and cultural, of Whyte Avenue can be restored and preserved? There's the second question.

The third one, Mr. Minister, has to do with a natural area that needs protection. I have been presented petitions here from Calgarians in the hundreds over the last month and a half. The area in question is the Evan-Thomas provincial recreation area, and the petitioners of course have been asking that this area plan be revised so as to disallow any further commercial or residential development in and around it, including the Kananaskis valley, and to redesignate this Evan-Thomas provincial recreation area and adjacent unprotected public lands and expand them as a provincial park.

So I hope that you'll be able to address those questions specifically because they have become my concern. Two of them come from my constituency. The third one is, of course, that Calgarians have been sending us lots of petitions on it.

I will cede my turn to some other members who might want to just raise questions, and I'll be forwarding some questions to you in writing.

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Once again, Mr. Chairman, I'd be happy to undertake to provide those in writing. I have the answers. I know the answers, as I did to the previous questions, but so that others can get their questions on record, I'll cede the floor to them.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan.

**Mr. Lougheed:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, we know that your department is responsible for the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities and has been very receptive to the discussions that have taken place over the last while, especially about the Alberta disability strategy that council members put together over a period of several years, actually, and then released back in December of 2002.

The disability strategy, as you know, identifies eight major objectives that the council members believe the community has expressed as their priorities to move forward as soon as possible. Briefly describing them, those priorities would be to increase awareness and to ensure that their daily living needs would be met. The removal of physical barriers is important. They would like to see a streamlined appeal system. They feel that there should be more individualized support, something that the community has termed a community supports model.

In addition, improved access to education at all levels and the need to separate income support from disability support. One of the aspects of this that's probably most poorly understood by members of the general population is that not only do members of the disability community need those income supports, but they in fact need additional supports, depending on their disability, to get going in the morning, get off to work, just even to get started on their day, and those requirements may consume a large portion of any funding that they may receive.

Then the eighth priority that the council members believe needs to be addressed is employment support. It's been said many times in this House that the best social program is a job, and that certainly applies to the members of the disability community. The goals of the community are to attain full citizenship, and full citizenship is a platform which stands on four different legs, four different pillars, those being . . .

10:00

**The Chair:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan, but pursuant to Standing Order 58(4), which provides for not less than two hours of consideration for a department's proposed estimates unless there are no members who wish to speak prior to the conclusion of the two hours, I must now put the question on the proposed estimates for the Department of Community Development for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2004.

Agreed to:

Operating Expense and	
Equipment/Inventory Purchases	\$633,497,000
Capital Investment	\$1,262,000

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's been a very electrifying evening so far. I have no doubt it'll continue that way. However, I would move that the House now rise and report the estimates of Community Development.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Lougheed:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2004, for the following department.

Community Development: operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$633,497,000; capital investment, \$1,262,000.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Would all those who concur in this report please say aye?

**Some Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed?

**Some Hon. Members:** No.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The motion is carried.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**

head: **Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Tannas in the chair]

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

### **Bill 29 Law of Property Amendment Act, 2003**

**The Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Dr. Taft:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise to ask the sponsor of the bill, the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, if she has had an opportunity to address some of the issues that were raised by me in second reading.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Ms Graham:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, as the sponsor of Bill 29 I'd like to make some comments, and perhaps I would commence by just restating the purpose and the effect of the amendments in Bill 29. Quite simply, the main purpose of these amendments is to level the playing field for the mortgage insurance business in Alberta. The amendments are designed to ensure that the two mortgage default insurers operating in the province at the moment, being the Canada

Mortgage and Housing Corporation, which, as we all know, is a federal Crown corporation, as well as GE Capital Mortgage Insurance, Canada, which is a private-sector company, will operate under the same foreclosure rules under our Law of Property Act.

Our Law of Property Act, Mr. Chairman, sets out amongst many other rules governing property transactions in Alberta the statutory authority for lending institutions on property foreclosures. The general rule is that lending institutions can't sue a borrower for any shortfall on a residential mortgage once the property goes into foreclosure, and the lender is restricted to the property only, regardless of the value of the property and whether or not there is a shortfall. But there is an exception to this general rule, and that exception favours CMHC on all of its mortgages. So the intent of these amendments in Bill 29 is to extend this same exemption that CMHC enjoys to GE Capital Mortgage Insurance, Canada or any other mortgage insurance provider that might enter the market in Alberta for high-ratio mortgages only.

As members may recall, the definition of a high-ratio mortgage will be determined at a later date by regulation after further consultation with stakeholders and various other industry players is conducted. I can add that under the Bank Act a high-ratio mortgage is currently defined as a mortgage where more than 75 percent of the value of the property is financed, and that may well be the definition that is adopted in Alberta for the purposes of these amendments.

So we have, Mr. Chairman, a double standard operating in the province in a two-company industry where the legislation favours one company over the other, and in this province certainly the philosophy of this government and, I think, most Albertans is that we do not like to see a government agency having a competitive advantage over a private-sector competitor.

I'll now try and respond to the questions that were raised during the debate at second reading. It's my recollection that the Member for Edmonton-Riverview wanted to know some data on the mortgage delinquency rates in Alberta and was wondering if those rates were higher in this province than in other provinces. I can advise that according to data received from the Canadian Bankers Association, the delinquency rate for Alberta residential housing in 2002 averaged .4 percent of all residential housing in the province. This percentage was the third lowest in Canada, behind only Quebec at .3 percent and Ontario at .3 percent as well.

**10:10**

The Member for Edmonton-Riverview had also wanted to know the reason for people defaulting on their mortgages. This is the best information that I've been able to obtain, and this comes from GE Capital, its experience with defaulters in 2002. Of those cases where the cause of default was known – and I'm sorry that I don't have the total number – 80 percent of those defaults resulted from misrepresentations made by the borrower at the time the mortgage was granted. I would expect that that would largely relate to ability to pay and not being straightforward on that point. This means, then, that only 20 percent of GE's known defaults resulted from true hardship cases such as unemployment, death, illness, marital split-up, and those types of reasons.

The hon. member also wanted to know what the impact of our existing legislation had been on GE Capital as it operates in the province, and it is the belief of GE Capital that some borrowers are choosing their company based on a negative selection process, meaning that some mortgage brokers, lawyers, and other financial intermediaries are actively promoting the deficiency judgment protection on GE Capital insured mortgages to borrowers. So this has resulted in GE Capital insuring the higher risk, higher ratio mortgages, contributing to GE Capital having a higher delinquency rate in Alberta than it does in the rest of Canada.

The member also wanted to know about CMHC's policies when people have lost their capacity to sustain a high-ratio mortgage and defaulted on the mortgage. We approached CMHC on this, and they advise that through their approved lenders they have a comprehensive program that provides advice and financial assistance to borrowers experiencing financial hardship, the object being to keep borrowers in their homes of course and to resolve any real or potential default. While CMHC has the ability to pursue or sue on the covenant or debt, the decision to proceed is made only after careful review of both the circumstances leading to the default and the financial capacity of the borrower.

Even after the decision has been made to pursue the debt on the covenant and judgment has been obtained against the borrower, CMHC's collection policies require an ongoing review of the borrower's financial circumstances and their ability to repay the debt. GE Capital advises that it has a similar policy. It has a default management program called workout, which allows lenders, borrowers, and GE Capital to work together to try to keep borrowers again in their homes after falling on hard times. Some of the workout program options include arranging for a partial payment, increasing the amortization period, arranging for an interest rate buy-down, and deferring payments.

I believe that the last question the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview raised was: is it likely that the proposed amendments will result in GE Capital lowering its interest rate? I'd have to advise that that is not likely insofar as CMHC and GE Capital offer the same mortgage default insurance rates across Canada regardless of the region. Currently GE Capital is experiencing a higher risk for less reward in Alberta. GE Capital would need to offer the same interest rates as CMHC in order to compete with CMHC, but as GE Capital is incurring a higher risk in Alberta, it is incurring a higher risk in Alberta because it can't sue for any outstanding balance.

[Mr. Lougheed in the chair]

I believe I commented in second reading that leveling the playing field would certainly introduce competition, and it will. We don't anticipate that it will lower the interest rates for the reasons that I've mentioned, but it will in all likelihood cause new products to be introduced in the marketplace which will benefit consumers. There has been previous evidence of this because prior to 1995, when GE Capital entered the Canadian market, CMHC had a virtual monopoly at that time. When GE Capital entered the Canadian market, it did introduce two new products, which CMHC subsequently also introduced, and that was the very popular portable mortgage insurance program and the default management program, that I spoke about a few moments ago.

Because of the amendments which are proposed and should they be adopted, which we hope they will, GE Capital does plan to offer all of its products that it offers in other places in Canada. It plans to offer them in Alberta on the same loan-to-value ratio used in the rest of Canada. If the amendments are not adopted and don't come into force in Alberta, it's quite likely these products may never be offered in Alberta, or if they were, they'd be offered at a lower loan-to-value ratio than in the rest of Canada.

The two new products GE Capital plans to launch this year and hopefully will launch in Alberta are the home equity line of credit product, which allows borrowers to use their home as security to get a high-ratio mortgage that acts like a line of credit, which will reduce a person's borrowing cost by only being charged standard mortgage interest rates rather than the rates associated with the typical unsecured lines of credit. The second product is known as the second home product, and it allows borrowers to obtain high-ratio financing on a second home.

That, I believe, in a general way covers the questions raised by the members for Edmonton-Riverview and Edmonton-Gold Bar. I believe Edmonton-Ellerslie stated that she didn't understand why it was necessary to make these amendments because she thought the level playing field was already available, and I hope I've been able to establish that it isn't unless we make these changes.

Those would be my comments for now. I'd be willing and pleased to answer any other questions that hon. members may have.

**The Acting Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have one question for the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, the sponsor of the bill. The point of this bill, the Law of Property Amendment Act, 2003, Bill 29, is ostensibly to level the playing field. My question has to do with whether or not CMHC and its competitors, in this case GE, really operate in exactly the same markets to start with, and I'll put it in the form of a question because I'm not entirely clear about whether or not my understanding is sound.

GE Capital Mortgage Insurance as a private-sector operator I think has the freedom to reject clients if it feels they are too risky. Naturally, as a private business it makes decisions based on the degree of risk it's willing to take. CMHC, on the other hand, may not have total freedom with respect to basing its decisions entirely on the level of risk involved. If that, indeed, is true, then it would seem to me that CMHC and GE are really not comparable. When we ostensibly attempt to level the playing field, what will it exactly mean if the companies operate in slightly different markets and have a different market structure in which they operate? So will the bill really serve the purpose of leveling the playing field, or will it in fact tilt the advantage in the direction of GE? That's the question.

Thank you.

10:20

**The Acting Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Ms Graham:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. While it may well be true that CMHC and GE Capital don't have exactly the same business, they certainly do compete in the residential, high-ratio mortgage business, which is what these amendments are designed to address, the double standard that exists there. So when you say, "Does CMHC have the same freedom to reject borrowers as GE Capital would?" it's my understanding and my belief that there are lending guidelines and a formula for determining whether a borrower qualifies for financing. It is my understanding that they're very comparable for both companies, but there is certainly no requirement that CMHC must accept a borrower unless they meet the lending guidelines. These two companies are competing in the same markets, so I would expect their guidelines are very comparable. I hope that helps answer the member's concern.

**The Acting Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Lord:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a brief comment. Usually when we hear a bill that proposes that we allow private-sector companies to actually compete and allow a level playing field for private-sector companies trying to compete against a government monopoly, there's a huge hue and cry in the opposition and so on. I think it speaks volumes about the popularity of CMHC that so many seem to be in favour of this bill. I certainly strongly support it. I hope all members will. I think it will prove to be a very big success for Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The clauses of Bill 29 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Chair:** Opposed?

**Some Hon. Members:** No.

**The Acting Chair:** Carried.

### Bill 34

#### Livestock Industry Diversification Amendment Act, 2003

**The Acting Chair:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

**Rev. Abbott:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to rise this evening and take this opportunity to speak on Bill 34, the Livestock Industry Diversification Amendment Act, 2003. I'd like to take this opportunity to correct some fairly glaring errors brought up by the opposition in second reading, not about the act under discussion but about the diversified livestock industry as a whole.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie was quite critical of the consultations that we did with the industry concerning what became Bill 34. Mr. Chairman, there were many hours spent ensuring that this met the needs of the industry and of those affected by the industry. The hon. member is correct about one thing. The Canadian Wildlife Federation was not consulted on this legislation. Instead, the following Alberta-based groups were consulted: Alberta Fish and Game Association, Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Métis Nation of Alberta Association, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Alberta Veterinary Medical Association, Alberta Professional Outfitters Society, Alberta Elk Centre, Alberta White-tail and Mule Deer Association, and Confederacy of Treaty 6 First Nations.

The member is right again. The Canadian Wildlife Federation is a strong critic of hunt farms, but Bill 34 is not about hunt farms. In fact, it reinforces this government's stance against hunt farms at the current time. On more than one occasion the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie incorrectly referred to deer and elk farms, the focus of this legislation, as hunt farms. Now, the hon. member opposite should know that hunt farms are illegal in Alberta. These are domestic cervid farms, not hunt farms. Domestic cervid farms.

The changes to the legislation specifically allow only the registered owner of the farm to slaughter the animals and only for personal use. We want to make it easier for diversified livestock producers to provide deer and elk meat to their families without going through the involved process of transporting deer or elk to an inspected abattoir that handles these animals.

For the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie to continue to confuse hunt farms, which are, as I said, currently illegal in Alberta, and diversified livestock operations is misleading. Let me reiterate. Previously deer and elk could only be slaughtered at licensed abattoirs in accordance with the Meat Inspection Act. This created considerable hardship for deer and elk producers who wished to slaughter their animals for their own personal use. However, it did ensure that all animals were slaughtered in accordance with the rules governing slaughtering and processing of carcasses that were going to be sold. The changed legislation will now allow the person who is the licensed operator of the cervid farm to slaughter the animals on

his or her own farm for personal use, which is to say, the same privilege that is given to all other livestock producers in the province.

I would like to clear up a couple more misleading statements made by the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie. She seemed confused about the changes that are being made to LIDA in regard to penalties for diversified livestock producers who allow their animals to escape into the wild. While there hasn't been a single case of an Alberta diversified livestock producer releasing their animals into the wild, these penalties are being strengthened, not weakened, in order to prevent something like that from happening in Alberta, Mr. Chairman.

The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie also mentioned that the Alberta government has paid millions of dollars to game farmers as compensation for the eradication of their animals when they get diseased. Well, this is plainly not true, Mr. Chairman. Although we have experienced CWD in the province, we have been able to isolate and control it, which is a huge credit to this industry.

Not only that, as the hon. member should know, animal diseases and compensation fall under the mandate of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. That is a federal Liberal agency. If – and heaven forbid it happens – there is an outbreak of any animal disease in Alberta, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency is responsible for compensation, not the province of Alberta.

Now, the majority of changes that are being made to the Livestock Industry Diversification Act are administrative ones that will make it easier for diversified livestock producers to do business in Alberta. These include allowing cervid farm operators to submit their records and reports to Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development either electronically or through hard copy. This amendment fits in with the Alberta government one-window approach and makes it easier for producers to keep their paperwork in order and to do business better with less operation time and expense, Mr. Chairman.

There have also been changes to the eligibility for a licence to operate a cervid farm and allowing ribbon branding of the carcass. As I said previously, the carcass is ribbon branded with ink to identify it and ensure that the provincial and federal approval stamps are evident. Now, current levels of inspection and food safety standards provide adequate levels of protection to ensure that meat from wild big game does not enter the meat market unlawfully.

I disagree with the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands on a number of issues, but most glaringly, Mr. Chairman, I disagree with his misinformed assessment of Bill 34 and its effect on the cervid industry. Bill 34 is a step in the right direction for an industry that deserves our support, and I know that this industry is working hard to meet any challenges they face.

I encourage all members to support this bill. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

10:30

**Ms Carlson:** Well, Mr. Chairman, the Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar tried to be a bright bunny, but all he did was extend the speaking time on this bill significantly because now, of course, I have to challenge all of the very silly statements he was making.

Let's talk about whether this is a bill that introduces hunt farms or not or dresses up a hunt farm in a legislatively acceptable manner for people who own these cervids on their property to get rid of them, to slaughter them.

**Ms Blakeman:** It's mutton dressed up as lamb.

**Ms Carlson:** It is mutton dressed up as lamb; there's no doubt about that.

And if the minister of health thinks that he is going to sit here and try and get me to shorten my comments otherwise, I won't. It absolutely is not going to make any difference to me at all to have him sitting here on the Liberal side of the House, where he actually belongs.

That was a pretty quick vacating. Come on. You could've lasted for a couple more lines. I was just getting warmed up.

Well, let's start at the beginning, Mr. Chairman.

[Mr. Tannas in the chair]

**An Hon. Member:** In the beginning.

**Ms Carlson:** In the beginning, absolutely.

**An Hon. Member:** Adam and Eve.

**Ms Carlson:** Well, that's what they tried to do with these hunt farms. They tried to create a new industry in this province, but the problem was that it was a snake directing all of the activities, hon. minister, and they made a huge mess of it in this province. What happened was that we had friends of many government members who wanted to participate in this particular industry with the hopes that they were going to make big, big dollars, and many people have actually talked about this industry as having participated in something very similar to pyramid schemes.

What have we got at this stage? We have an industry that doesn't have a market. Now, what's happened is that the animals, particularly the elk, who used to be very valuable for velvet and other interesting body parts, had the market fall out from overseas countries, and there hasn't been the same kind of demand. So what's happened is that all these people are growing these . . .

**An Hon. Member:** The other body parts.

**Ms Carlson:** The other body parts. Yes. [interjection] Would the minister like to participate in that part of the discussion? Perhaps. Well, that'll be interesting to get her perspective on it.

At any rate, when the market falls out, we've got now many hunters who've got investments in these animals, and they've got investments in property and building structures and so on, and the requirements for investments on their properties have significantly increased. Why? Because of chronic wasting disease. It's become a big problem in some other provinces, not so much here so far but in other provinces, so the regulation in terms of how to ensure that these game farm animals are kept separate from wild animals has intensified.

If anybody knows the industry, they'll certainly know that deer and elk can not only run fast but can jump high and are able to jump over many of the fences. The problem with that is that if these game farm animals get mixed up with critters in the wild, chronic wasting disease gets transferred. It's controllable on game farms, but it's very, very hard to control once it gets into the wild, and this has been a particular problem in Saskatchewan. So as a result of that, these farmers who've had the prices drop out of their market are now facing increased costs.

In addition to that, they have herds that are aging. So they don't know what to do with these animals, because they can't sell them to anybody like they used to. There used to be quite a high and interesting market for breeding purposes of some of these older animals, and now they don't know what to do with them. What they wanted to do was start hunt farms. There was a big kerfuffle about that in this province. I went to a lot of those meetings, and those

were very interesting meetings to go to. At the end of the day that wasn't allowed in this province.

So, then, how to still help out these friends who have this surplus of product and have nowhere to go? Well, in the short term the solution was to slaughter the animals and have them tested for CWD, and what that does is that that kicks you into a number of rebate programs for animals. What did we have happen last year in this province? In 2002 4,984 animals were tested, which is a fourfold increase from the year before. Testing for chronic wasting disease became mandatory in August for any dead elk or deer on a game farm. So this is one way of culling the herds, and the next way that we're taking a look at is exactly what this bill has introduced doing.

So while it may not be a hunt farm specifically designated, Mr. Chairman, it specifically defines and creates legislative action over the keeping, slaughtering, transporting, and selling of cervids. The Member for Drayton Valley-Calmor says: only for family use. Well, I don't know how many elk you can eat in one year, but I come from a family of 10 people. You know, if we went through two cows and one wild animal, like an elk or a moose, a year, that's all we could eat, and those were in the days when people had big servings of meat every day. So there aren't 4,984 families in this province for killing all of these cervids. Who killed them, and where did the meat or the other body parts or the antler pieces go? That's the question, that this is the beginning of a hunt farm process just dressed up and called another name.

**Ms Blakeman:** Mutton dressed up as lamb.

**Ms Carlson:** It is absolutely mutton dressed up as lamb.

So, then, in addition to just these ones, the 4,984 animals we're talking about here, there were another 1,057 animal heads submitted last year by hunters participating in a voluntary program to check for chronic wasting disease among wild deer and elk. So now the problem is even getting larger. They need a way to legislatively, legally introduce a way to cull the herds and get rid of these animals. It has nothing to do with providing just enough meat to put on the plates of the families. As much as you would like to mislead this House into saying that that's the case, it isn't the case.

What's the cause of this? It has nothing to do with meat on the table. A lot of it has to do with drought. If there isn't any feed, if you can't sell your animals to anyone else for breeding purposes, if there's a lesser need for body parts, what are you going to do with them? Well, if you can't continue to rip off governments by subsidizing the slaughter of the animals, then you need some kind of legislation that will allow you to do it. So that's exactly what we're seeing happen in this particular case, Mr. Chairman, in spite of what that member who introduced this bill would like us to believe.

Is this the right place and the right way for this market to go? Well, it's a very questionable situation because chronic wasting disease is not going away, Mr. Chairman. Alberta had its first two cases of this disease detected last year, an elk from a ranch northwest of Edmonton in the spring and a white-tailed deer from a ranch in the same region last fall. So it's there, it's spreading, and how are they going to manage it? If it spreads any more than this, there could be a huge panic in the regions, and that would be a problem.

I remember when the announcement was made that CWD was found. They wouldn't tell us where. Now, you've got a lot of hunters, you've got a lot of outfitters out there taking a look at bagging wild animals, and they don't know if they're guiding people into an area where chronic wasting disease has become apparent. So that was a real issue for us last year. We heard a lot about that from outfitters in the region, and to this time we haven't heard that there's any actual source for the disease in either of these cases. So we

would look forward to having that answer. Perhaps the hon. member who's got all the other answers has that answer too, and it would be very interesting to hear.

Chronic wasting disease is a very bad disease to have in animals, Mr. Chairman. It's a fatal infection. What it does is destroy the brains and the nervous systems of animals in the deer family, which of course includes elk. It's in the same family as mad cow disease, but so far it's not been shown to spread to humans. Now, we can just begin to think of the implications of a disease that's very like mad cow disease if it takes hold in this province. What will that do to the meat industry as a whole? What will it do to the budding wild meat industry being sold and becoming more acceptable in retail outlets and in restaurants and so on?

What does it do to tourism? It has a significant impact, I would suggest. Who wants to go to England with mad cow disease everywhere and be worried about walking around, tramping around on the grounds for walks or hikes or whatever kinds of activities you might be pursuing. They're not going to come to Alberta either. Alberta is just starting to really work on increasing the number of dollars generated by tourism. We've been relatively steady for at least the past decade in that area, and we're starting to see the numbers climb for a lot of good reasons, not too many that the government can actually be responsible for but for a lot of good reasons, not the least of which is that Alberta is a wonderful place to go, and many people are finding that out.

**10:40**

But what happens if we see more outbreaks of chronic wasting disease and people start making a more verbal link to it and mad cow disease? It could completely decimate our tourism industry, and given the fact that we're going to be competing with West Nile disease and some of these other diseases that we've heard about recently, we certainly don't need to add this to the list. That would be truly a disaster for this province. We don't want everyone who leaves the borders of this province to have to clean their feet off in airports and as they cross borders. That would be remarkably hard on tourism and economic development in terms of all of the kinds of different conventions that we have here throughout the province. The problem is that these farms are all over the province; they're not just located in one area. While we've only seen the disease in this one area, it certainly could be in the locations where the other hunt farms are. So that's a real problem.

People think that a way of culling their herd, so a way of getting rid of almost 5,000 animals just from these hunt farms in a year, is to take them in and have them tested for chronic wasting disease. It's a huge burden on the system, the government labs, to complete the testing. So it's a manpower issue; it's a money issue; it's a resource issue from how the labs are backed up and has become quite a problem. Generally you get the results on testing an animal within eight to 10 days, and that's been something that farmers have been complaining about. They think that they need the results faster than that, Mr. Chairman, but with the kinds of resources that are dedicated to this right now, that's all they can do. The provincial labs are not prepared at this time to speed it up, and that could be a problem. If we see more cases of chronic wasting disease, in eight to 10 days the spread of the disease could be phenomenal. You know, what happened in England is that they just moved into the farms and quarantined them and started burning. We don't want that to happen here.

So definitely we need to see a speedier testing process be developed. The U.S. has got one. This province likes to copy a lot of the things that the U.S. does, so they should be in contact with the Department of Agriculture and find out about the improved, quicker

forms of testing for CWD and then put in some sort of a screening process so that we don't see another 5,000 animals tested this year. The question is, Mr. Chairman: if they just have to take in a part of the head when they do the testing, what happens to the antlers, and what happens to the other interesting body parts that there's a market for? Do they keep them until the animal has been tested and cleared and then look to market them elsewhere, or are there any kinds of restrictions on that? Can they just send those parts off?

One thing we don't have the answer to is the question of how affected the antlers are by chronic wasting disease. Are those separate and distinct in terms of the disease transfer? I don't think that question has been answered in here. The tests we have now can only be done on dead animals, so we need to develop some sort of criteria to determine whether we need to test as many as were done last year. One out of 100 of a herd? One out of 10 of a herd? Every one that you want to cull out? Is there an age requirement? We haven't heard any of that information. Those specifications have not been developed now.

I'm sure, Mr. Chairman, that people in this Assembly will be very interested to know that there is the possibility of a live test for deer, and they have to test the deer's tonsils. So it's theoretically possible to do live tests on animals, but I just can't see those labs moving into these ranches and somehow immobilizing the animal so that they can test their tonsils. Currently in Alberta the only option is really on dead animals.

The source, like they said, remains a mystery for this particular farm, but the Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar says that he knows the answer, and that could be because the farm is in his constituency. So maybe he can clarify that. While we're at it, maybe he can clarify what has happened in Saskatchewan and if there's been any spread here. [interjection] No. You don't think there will be? I don't think there will be either because I don't think he has those answers. I think some clever researcher wrote him a very nice speech for this evening, but I don't think the member himself has the answers.

Alberta has 192 deer farms with a total of just over 11,000 deer, and it has 460 elk farms with almost 43,000 elk. Alberta and Saskatchewan are now home to most Canadian game farms, which is a change from a few years ago when the majority of game farms used to be in the States. After taking a look, what they actually had there were combination hunt farms and game farms. They would raise some of the animals to use the body parts and the antlers, but there was also the potential to have a hunt farm there. Because of the hue and cry from the general public and the spread of disease on those farms, they have been virtually eliminated in the States, making Saskatchewan and Alberta home to most of the game farms not just in Canada, Mr. Chairman, but certainly in North America.

So far chronic wasting disease has been found at 40 Saskatchewan farms and in seven wild deer in the province. So we certainly hope that that particular disease doesn't spread here. That's been one of the excuses that we have heard for why these particular herds have to be culled in the way they are, but the better answer and the cheaper answer for the government, Mr. Chairman, is to bring forward Bill 34, the Livestock Industry Diversification Amendment Act, 2003, and that's what we see here tonight. Then we also see the Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar talking about the reasons why he thinks this particular bill should be justified. It's a problem I see as he has introduced it.

Now, Mr. Chairman, because we are in committee, what I'm going to do is do a section-by-section analysis of the bill.

**Ms Blakeman:** No. No. You've done such a good job.

**Ms Carlson:** Oh, yeah. Well, we haven't even got there. You

know, the Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar has just challenged me to participate fully in the debate tonight, Mr. Chairman, and I'm very pleased to do that. [interjections] Well, maybe because of the desperate pleas of my own colleagues, I'll just put a few questions on the record that we hope that he answers in third.

Section 5: why the time change for registering the cervids? So if he could answer that. Section 9: why is the change happening here, and what circumstances does the minister see making provisions for the setting free of animals? Section 12: will the minister's registration period in section 5 be sufficient to ensure that these animals are registered before they're sold? If he can answer those questions in a short and succinct fashion now or when we get to third reading, then I'll be able to hold my colleagues back from all fully participating in the debate at third reading, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

**Rev. Abbott:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do thank the hon. member for her questions, and, yes, I will take her up on that offer. I will try to clarify some of these issues in third reading. Thank you very much.

[The clauses of Bill 34 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Carried.

10:50

### Bill 31

#### Local Authorities Election Amendment Act, 2003

**The Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

**Mr. Graydon:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. During second reading there were some questions raised specifically and mainly dealing with special ballots, and I would like to put on the record some information I asked for and received from the Chief Electoral Officer.

Now, the reason I went there is that the provisions that we're proposing in this act mirror the provisions of the Election Act that govern the rules that we conduct elections by for provincial elections, so I thought that that would be a good place to go for some information and ask if there had been any problems experienced during provincial elections with special ballots. The Chief Electoral Officer's staff replied that they found the special ballot process to be very effective, to facilitate the voting process, particularly for electors working, traveling, or studying away from home or electors who are hospitalized or incarcerated and electors who find it physically difficult to travel to the polls and electors who are involved in the election administration or campaign processes.

The Chief Electoral Officer also reported very good results and positive feedback from those people using the special ballot process. Usage continues to increase as people become more and more aware of the availability of special ballots in provincial elections. The staff also claim that the process is easy for electors to follow, that the secrecy of the vote is protected. There is an element of security in that documentation is retained which verifies who voted, certainly

not how they voted, but there is a record of who filed a special ballot, so it's verified who did vote. The system is also very transparent in that the voters' names are added to the list of electors, and that list can be viewed by candidates following the election.

So, certainly, the changes that we're proposing bring it, as I mentioned, in line with the Election Act, which we operate under provincially and has proved very successful in those elections, and that's why I think that they will prove effective as well in local authority elections.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks. I appreciate the sponsoring member making some attempt to address the concerns that were raised around special ballots and making good use of provincial resources to go and check with the Chief Electoral Officer, but certainly the concerns that were raised around some of the experiences – I think it was Edmonton-Glenarry that raised the issues – came out of a provincial election, so the issues we were raising with concerns around special ballots were springing from a provincial example. So although we certainly value the special ballot process provincially, there are some concerns here, and I think we're making the same mistakes or not repairing them in what's being brought forward under Bill 31, the Local Authorities Election Amendment Act, 2003.

A couple of things specifically. The way people are able to request the special ballot needs to be fairly narrow and focused; in other words, either in person or in writing but not to get to, sort of, Internet or e-mail, because it's difficult to verify and record the identity of the person making the request. What you don't want and what we have seen in some cases or where the concern was expressed was that there were a number of special ballots that were controlled by one individual or a group of individuals; right? So you want to be verifying and recording who requested them. I think you want to have a situation where you can ask for identification to be provided and recorded, like a driver's licence or a passport.

The provision that an application must be made between the notice of election day and the closing of polls on election day I think is probably not giving enough time for the ballots to be sent and received. Section 35 of the original act allowed that not much more than seven days' notice be given of an election, and this is clearly insufficient time for a special ballot to be sent and received internationally or even domestically, and one of the categories of electors that the member mentioned special ballots being particularly helpful for was electors who are temporarily out of the jurisdiction.

There's an added section that says that the elector must write "in legible printing in the space provided, the name of the candidates of the elector's choice." This I think is indicating that there will be no boxes to X and not necessarily any names on the form, and I think that there should be a provision that makes the special ballot conform to the same standards as a regular ballot and include the names of all of the candidates and the space beside each candidate's name to mark. So, in other words – I have to be careful that I'm not intimidating more than I mean to here – you wouldn't want to sort of mass produce these with the names already filled in of whoever your candidate is. I think you need to conform as closely as possible to what the actual ballot is looking like.

I've looked at a number of the other sectional analyses for this. In a lot of cases there's clarification being offered, which I think is good. You know, things about the oaths and the statements. That's all fine.

In sections 9 and 14 one of them is talking about the option of mailing or delivering notice of nomination day. Section 14 talks

about notice of election day to every residence at least one week before the day instead of at least two weeks. I think this could still be problematic, and I'm wondering if there are additional arguments to support the amendment of shortening the time line there because it's still mailing or delivering; it's not talking about e-mail. So I think there are problems there.

We've got clarifications in sections 11, 12, 13, 14, 16. I mean, I think most of these are fine.

A couple of good ones. Seventeen: allowing the returning officer to give a candidate a specifically prepared list of electors after the last day on which nominations may be withdrawn, and I think this is good. It's proactive in preventing people from submitting nomination papers to gain access to a list of electors and then withdrawing their nomination. Excellent. Well done.

Also, section 18: a person cannot obstruct access to an enumerator, candidate, or campaign manager who has produced identification provided by the elected authority indicating their role to each residence in a building containing more than one residence. Now, this is a huge issue for the candidate's access provincially and particularly in my riding and I think in other downtown ridings. So I think we need to be really careful about that one. The issue is not excluding people from buildings but making sure that they get access and that access is enforced by the electoral officer because with very short election periods and the chance that you can have a candidate that is barred or removed from a security building, you have to have very quick action by the electoral officer to enforce that the candidate has access to the building. Otherwise, we don't have democracy. There's unequal access to people.

Section 22. I think that if I might suggest to perhaps clarify that, the "deputy" to whom these new powers are devolved is designated as the presiding deputy because we're not talking about having two deputies in place there and new duties. Which one is supposed to get them? I think you might want to designate one as a presiding deputy, and then we know who's responsible for what.

There was a clarification around allowing minors into the ballot booth with the parents. That's fine. A clarification in section 24 allows interpreters to read the statements and any question necessary for a person who is illiterate. Fine. Allowing more leeway to individuals wishing to vote at advance polls: I think this is fine. I think it actually does encourage more people to vote, and I'm okay with that. I've already talked about the special balloting that's appearing in section 27 and on.

11:00

So those were just the sectional analyses that I wanted to do while I had the opportunity to do that sort of line-by-line discussion while we're in Committee of the Whole. I'm certainly for the most part in favour of what's being proposed here, and I'm happy to wait until third reading to get the answers back.

Thank you.

[The clauses of Bill 31 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:** Yes, Mr. Chairman. I move that we rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Lougheed:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following: Bill 29, Bill 34, Bill 31.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Would those who concur with this report please say aye?

**Some Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Those opposed, please say no.

**Some Hon. Members:** No.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Carried.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**

head: Third Reading

### Bill 21

#### Ombudsman Amendment Act, 2003

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

**Mr. Ducharme:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time I'd like to move third reading of Bill 21, the Ombudsman Amendment Act, 2003.

However, before I take my seat, sir, I'd like to answer a couple of questions that were posed in Committee of the Whole. One question was: why is the definition of agency expanded by regulation rather than by changing the act? Regulations, Mr. Speaker, can be updated more easily than statutes can. By allowing the term "agency" to be expanded in the regulations, the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman can be updated in a timely and responsive way. If the definition of agency was left entirely in the act rather than in regulation, then it could only be amended when the Ombudsman Act was opened up for review, which, as we know, doesn't happen very often.

The other question was: how do the Ombudsman Act and the Health Information Act interplay with each other? Mr. Speaker, Bill 21 adds a provision to the act that clarifies that the Ombudsman, when conducting an investigation under the act, is not subject to the provisions of the Health Information Act. The Ombudsman will be able to access all of the information he needs to do his job without such a restriction. It should be noted, though, that in no way does this mean that the Ombudsman can interfere in the health commissioner's role and duties as legislated in the Health Information Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak in third reading on Bill 21, the Ombudsman Amendment Act, 2003. The goal of this legislation is to update the Ombudsman Act to include the provincial Crown agencies, committees, boards, and professional organizations and flows directly out of repeated recommendations coming from the Ombudsman Act. I can go back. In the 2001-02, 2000-01, '99-2000, and even back as far as the '98-99 Ombudsman annual report the officer has been advocating for the change in legislation.

It does include a few new jurisdictions for which the Ombudsman would have investigative powers, and this is partly what the

member referred to here, the patient concerns resolution process of the health authorities, cancer boards, and accounting agencies. We're in favour of this and think that it's a good idea overall. It's also allowing the Ombudsperson to receive special warrants for funds in fiscal years that lie ahead. Now, this was a recurring problem that was happening. If a special warrant was required and was granted to the government, it would not cover this particular office just because of the way the legislation was written. So this is correcting that. If a special warrant is sought and received, moneys would be able to be advanced to this particular office to carry on its business.

I've spoken in favour of this bill a number of times, and I'm happy to speak in favour of it in third reading. Thank you for the opportunity.

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

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise to speak in support of Bill 21 in third reading. I think it's a good bill. It does expand the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman and allows the Ombudsman to review or access third-party information. I think it's a bill that reflects the recommendations made by the outgoing Ombudsman. His experience indicated a need to expand his jurisdiction, and I'm glad that the bill, by and large, embodies those recommendations based on that experience.

So with the fact that the bill will now expand the Ombudsman's jurisdiction to include the patient concerns resolution processes of regional health authorities and the Alberta Cancer Board and the Alberta Mental Health Board and other delegated authorities which do provide services and work on behalf of the government of Alberta, the bill has built-in flexibility to include new delegated authorities, whatever have you, and certainly will serve, I guess, the interests of Albertans who may want to take complaints against their treatment at the hands of public agencies in this province.

So I support the bill, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake to close debate?

[Motion carried; Bill 21 read a third time]

### **Bill 16 Agricultural Dispositions Statutes Amendment Act, 2003**

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development.

**Mr. Cardinal:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move Bill 16, Agricultural Dispositions Statutes Amendment Act, 2003, for third reading.

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

**Ms Carlson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Happy to have another opportunity to wrap up on this bill. This is a bill that used to be very controversial when it was first introduced last year or two years ago, and subsequently the government did some consultations. They split the bill into two parts, and the part that was less controversial we see before us as Bill 16.

I would like to thank the minister for the briefing that I got from his department, which took us through the most significant issues that we had. Subsequently the additional questions we had were

answered in committee. So while I have still a few reservations about this bill, we are pleased to support it at this time.

**11:10**

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

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak to Bill 16 in its third reading. Our caucus continues to be unhappy with this bill as a replacement for Bill 31. Bill 31 was brought into the Legislature with a great deal of fanfare in 1999. It was passed by this Legislature. Unfortunately, it was never proclaimed. Bill 16 replaces that Bill 31, which we then supported. Unfortunately, Bill 16 really is a very severely gutted Bill 31. Much of what was treated by us as the strengths of Bill 31 are absent in Bill 16.

The most important part of Bill 31 that made it such a good piece of legislation had to do with the ability of the government of that time to claim, and rightly so I think, that Bill 31 strove to strike the right balance between the interests of leaseholders, industry, recreational users, and the people of Alberta, who own the land. It's precisely that balance that has been thrown out of kilter now by Bill 16.

So the ND caucus opposition is opposed to this bill primarily because it will mean that the whole question of the leaseholders' payments for leasing the land and the money that they receive as compensation from oil and gas developments on grazing lands – the difference between the two amounts is quite considerable, \$35 million, \$40 million a year. Bill 16 simply does not include any relief on that issue. It doesn't address that question at all, leaves it out. So Bill 31 dies. With that dies the attempt to bring into the public treasury, into the general revenue fund \$35 million to \$40 million extra, and that remains the primary reason why therefore we oppose Bill 16.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 16 read a third time]

### **Bill 15 Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2003**

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development.

**Mr. Cardinal:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Member for West Yellowhead I move Bill 15, Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2003, for third reading.

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

**Ms Carlson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a bill that is mostly good. It clarifies portions of the act that were too vague with regard to forest and prairie protections and primarily fires. It gave more power to forest officers and fire guardians, which is a good thing. But the part about this bill that we still haven't had the answers to is the part that deals with increasing the amount the government can recover from people who are responsible for fires. Yes, we believe that people who start fires should be held accountable for their actions. There's no doubt about that. But then where does the liability begin, and where does it end? If your teenagers are out at a bush party for the weekend and a fire starts, are you responsible for paying for the cost of that fire? Let's remember that fires in this province cost hundreds of millions of dollars. So how much do they recover, and who do they recover from if it's a minor who starts the

fire? Those questions were never adequately answered for me. I can see in all cases that there would be some sort of a token amount like a fine – a \$5,000 fine, a \$500 fine, a \$1,000 fine – but if we're looking at total cost recovery and we're looking at who proves what, then I think there are some questions that need to be answered.

There also wasn't a full debate about what causes liability when a fire starts. There are cases of very dry times when just using a vehicle in a dry area can set off a spark and start a fire. So those were questions that weren't answered either. Generally we're in agreement with this bill. Hopefully, we'll get these other issues cleared up over time, but at this point we will support the bill.

[Motion carried; Bill 15 read a third time]

### **Bill 14 Securities Amendment Act, 2003**

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Stevens:** On behalf of the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, I wish to move third reading of Bill 14, Securities Amendment Act, 2003.

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

**Mr. Lord:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise this evening. I would like to speak a little bit, if I may, on Bill 14, the Securities Amendment Act, 2003, make a few comments on behalf of my colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, as well, and answer a few questions that were raised previously.

As previously mentioned during earlier stages of this bill, the amendments in Bill 14 will provide greater protection for investors, allow Alberta business improved access to capital markets, and make the current regulatory environment more efficient. It will also lay the foundation for improved security laws as further reforms are made down the road.

Also, I'd like to comment briefly on some of the questions raised by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar during Committee of the Whole. His first question was whether this bill provides the greatest amount of protection possible to investors. I'm assuming that he means the greatest reasonable amount of protection possible, because the only way to reduce risk to zero, of course, would be to prevent people from investing in the first place or investing at all, and I'm not sure they would appreciate that much protection. Certainly, the answer to the question is, yes, Bill 14 will provide greater protection for investors.

Mr. Speaker, recent events in U.S. markets highlight the need to examine similar regulatory reforms in the adoption of new protection for investors across Canada. Without these reforms investors and issuers may bypass the Alberta markets in favour of safer and more responsive markets. Our task is to tailor regulations to the needs of Alberta while maintaining an appropriate level of investor protection. A number of the amendments in Bill 14 are measures to streamline and simplify the current regulatory framework in Alberta.

At the same time, Bill 14 will provide for improved investor protection in four significant ways. First, new improved disclosure rules will ensure that investors have more timely, reliable, and useful information when making an investment decision. Second, there will be a renewed emphasis on timely and relevant education programs to deliver investor awareness education messages to many Albertans. Funding will come from moneys received from administration penalties. Third, the addition of a new prohibition against unfair practices will address inappropriate sales techniques fre-

quently employed by unregistered salespersons in the exempt market. Finally, extending investors' right of action for damages for a misrepresentation in an offering memorandum will include directors, promoters, and any other person who signs the offering memorandum. Mr. Speaker, this government wholeheartedly agrees with the importance the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar attaches to enhancing investor protection in Alberta. Bill 14 is deserving of the support of all members of this Assembly in this regard.

**11:20**

I would also note that the bill provides for the adoption of corporate governance rules similar to those considered in other jurisdictions.

The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar also asked if Bill 14 allows improved access to capital markets for Albertans, and he requested further explanation on how this bill would accomplish that. As the member is aware, the erosion of investor confidence in the wake of highly publicized corporate scandals in the United States has left security regulators grappling with how best to respond to the loss of investor confidence. These events have made it even more difficult for issuers to access the capital markets for financing, particularly the small cap issuers, who make up the majority of Alberta and Canadian issuers.

Mr. Speaker, these issues have been relying in large part on a new harmonized capital-raising exemption rule developed by the Alberta and B.C. securities commissions to make it easier for issuers to access the exempt market in both provinces. The four new harmonized exemptions in the rule adopted last spring have proven to be so popular with issuers that seven other jurisdictions are in the process of adopting them. Bill 14 contains a number of amendments designed to complement these new capital-raising exemptions. The passage of Bill 14 will ensure that Alberta issuers have another tool to maximize their access to capital markets across the country during this period of market uncertainty.

The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar also talked about the ongoing work among securities commissions across the country in an effort to harmonize Canada's regulatory system. He wondered if this bill represented the initial phase of these changes, and if so, why are we heading in that direction? He also wanted to know whether there was an interest in working more with the federal government in this regard. Mr. Speaker, I would refer the member to comments made by the Minister of Revenue in this Assembly on March 27. Those comments were in response to questions put to the minister regarding the federal and provincial committees reviewing Canadian securities regulation. As the minister stated in his response, the provinces, not the federal government, have jurisdiction over securities regulation, and therefore the provinces and territories must lead initiatives dealing with securities regulation reform. Under the leadership of the Minister of Revenue all the provinces and territories have unanimously agreed to develop a work plan by September 30 for improving the securities regulatory framework in Canada.

While this review process is under way, we must continue to respond to the needs of Alberta markets. The amendments in Bill 14 will complement a number of harmonization initiatives either recently adopted or currently under development by updating or repealing Alberta requirements that differ from the new uniform rules. For example, the adoption of harmonized capital-raising exemptions and resale rules concurrently with other jurisdictions means that two different and sometimes conflicting sets of requirements have to coexist until the amendments in Bill 14 are passed. It is too confusing for investors, issuers, and the market to allow this situation to continue until the review process has been completed.

The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar was also curious about how many new investment vehicles might be affected by Bill 14. He

wanted to know how much, if any, enhanced protection there might be for Albertans investing in income trusts and whether Bill 14 is going to encourage American investment in these trusts. Mr. Speaker, the member asked a series of questions relating to how this legislation would affect income trusts. Income trusts are an increasingly popular investment vehicle. The short answer to these questions is that Bill 14 does not affect them directly. As the member may know, there has been an ongoing discussion in corporate Canada about income trusts, whether there should be limited liability for investors as there is for investors in corporations, and corporate tax policy generally.

Several provincial governments including Alberta have been approached about this issue by trade associations and groups representing income trusts such as real estate or royalty trusts. At this point there is little I can relate to the member about this issue other than to say that these groups have been heard, and the government is assessing their presentations. I understand that the government of Ontario announced in its budget that it is introducing legislation to limit the liability for investors in these trusts, and it will review government standards for publicly traded trusts.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, that that answers the questions that have been raised by the member, and with that, since it has been moved, I'll take my chair. Thank you.

**Dr. Taft:** Well, I appreciate the brief comments from Calgary-Currie. There were a number of questions, as the member has mentioned, raised in committee, and between his efforts and the efforts of the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, they've been reasonably well addressed. We do have some concerns remaining, but we will in fact be supporting this bill.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 14 read a third time]

#### Bill 12

##### Financial Sector Statutes Amendment Act, 2003

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Stevens:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure on behalf of the hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill to move third reading of Bill 12, Financial Sector Statutes Amendment Act, 2003.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks for the opportunity to speak in third reading to Bill 12, the financial sector amendment act, 2003. Now, we did note a number of concerns at committee, but overall we're supportive of this act in that it's trying to update the legislation and keep it current. It's been a complaint of mine, anyway, that we're not reviewing enough of the legislation. It becomes very archaic and less useful, so it does need some sort of constant updating program, and that's what's being contemplated here. Not all of the concerns that we raised were addressed, but at this point I'm certainly willing to support this attempt to update the legislation.

Thank you.

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

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to briefly comment on Bill 12.

**An Hon. Member:** Support it.

**Dr. Pannu:** And support it. Yes, that's true.

The bill is essentially of a housekeeping nature. It does amend several existing pieces of legislation and does allow credit unions and ATB to be able to engage in providing services and engage in business activities that were previously available only to federally chartered banks. I think that's fine. We're supportive of those changes. Some of these changes were requested by credit unions themselves and by ATB. Thus there's no serious objection that we see coming from any of the interested parties to this bill, so we are happy to support it.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 12 read a third time]

#### Bill 10

##### Health Information Amendment Act, 2003

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Mar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move third reading of Bill 10.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This piece of legislation provides a genuine dilemma for me as the critic. Unquestionably there are good components to this bill, one that we actually advocated in the fall be included in miscellaneous statutes. It instead is in this bill.

A completely different component of the bill addresses the issue of consent for having patient information recorded and shared electronically. I'm torn – I'm truly torn – on the issue, but ultimately I am going to stand in favour of an active safeguard for people's privacy, and that's a safeguard that this bill will be removing. So I'm going to oppose the bill, recognizing that there are undoubtedly some very good components to it. It's truly a dilemma for me.

Thank you.

11:30

[Motion carried; Bill 10 read a third time]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Zwodzesky:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that it's late, past 11:30 p.m., and I just want to briefly applaud the dedication of all members for being here so late.

I also want to salute the dedication of my staff who were here earlier tonight and in particular Darlene Andruchuk, my director of financial services, who has worked for the government of Alberta for over 30 years. In spite of the fact that it is her 36th wedding anniversary – and I know that she would much rather have been elsewhere – she did come here tonight. I think all members by their cheering, which I hear, salute her in that regard, so thank you.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would move that we adjourn until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow afternoon.

[Motion carried; at 11:32 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.]