

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, April 12, 2001**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 01/04/12

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

THE SPEAKER: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. O Lord, thank You for the life You have brought once again to the Earth. As Your light touches the world, nature blossoms forth. Let this vibrant energy renew our spirits and help us to use this strength for the good of all. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to present on behalf of a number of constituents of Edmonton-Whitemud, Edmonton-Rutherford, Edmonton-Meadow-lark, Edmonton-Norwood, Edmonton-Castle Downs, Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, and Edmonton-Centre petitioning the Legislative Assembly to urge the government of Alberta "to put in a system of rent control."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon I have a petition by 24 Albertans to present to the Assembly. These individuals are urging the government

to ensure that Mr. Stockwell Day is made personally liable for any funds required to settle his defamation [suit] and that no public funds are used for this purpose.

Thank you.

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

MR. BONNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly urging the government to determine "whether taxpayers must pay for Stockwell Day's legal bills." This petition was signed by 45 Albertans from Edmonton, Elk Point, and Fort Saskatchewan.

Thank you.

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of 485 Albertans urging the government "to fully-fund women's shelters and transition houses."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: **Reading and Receiving Petitions**

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

MR. BONNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request that the petition I presented yesterday be now read and received.

THE CLERK:

We the undersigned citizens of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to determine legally whether taxpayers must pay for Stockwell Day's legal bills.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

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

Bill 2 Cooperatives Act

MR. MAGNUS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce Bill 2, being the Cooperatives Act.

The purpose of this bill is to harmonize co-operative legislation across the country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 2 read a first time]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that Bill 2, the Cooperatives Act, be placed on the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development.

Bill 3 Fisheries (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2001

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 3, being the Fisheries (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2001.

The proposed act will amend the definitions, strengthen the manner in which we deal with individuals whose licences are suspended, adjust how fish in captivity are dealt with, and extend regulation-making authorities. The amendments contribute to the province's capability in protecting wild fish, thus sustaining the resource.

[Motion carried; Bill 3 read a first time]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development.

Bill 4 Surface Rights Amendment Act, 2001

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I request leave again to introduce Bill 4, being the Surface Rights Amendment Act, 2001.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed act will increase the compensation limit that can be claimed concerning damages from \$5,000 to \$25,000. This increase will reduce the time and money spent in court by an owner or occupant in recovering damages.

[Motion carried; Bill 4 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

MS EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege today to table two reports and the appropriate number of copies of each. They are the Children's Advocate reports. On September 8, 2000, I released the first report, for '98-99. The second report, made

available to me just last week, is the report for '99-2000. It deals with children's rights interests, and the advocate acts on behalf of those children that are in the child welfare system.

Thank you.

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, I have with me 24 tablings today. I'd like to table with the Assembly the requisite number of copies of the following documents: the 1999-2000 annual reports for all 17 regional health authorities as well as for the Alberta Cancer Board and the Alberta Mental Health Board; also the 1999-2000 annual report of the College of Physical Therapists, the 1999-2000 annual report of the Alberta Association of Registered Occupational Therapists, the 1999-2000 annual report of the Alberta Registered Dietitians Association, the 1998-99 annual report of the Alberta Association of Registered Nurses; and the 1999 annual report of the Alberta Dental Association.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With permission, I have three tablings. The first is a letter from Susan Horner of Manning concerned about the difficult time rural teachers in this province are having with class size.

The second is a letter from Kim Lambert of Manning to the Member for Peace River also concerned about class size and the effect on children.

My third tabling is some excerpts from the California statutes regarding class-size reductions.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first is five copies of a letter from Music Alberta outlining the effect of cuts to Music Alberta by the Alberta Foundation for the Arts.

The second is five copies of a utility bill which is a typical bill for a condominium in Edmonton-Centre, showing a \$15,000 utility bill for December and a \$34,000 utility bill for January.

Thank you.

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

MR. MASON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling five copies of a memorandum from the separate school board of Edmonton to the parents of St. Michael and Sacred Heart schools indicating very clearly that the utilization formula is driving the closure or proposed closure of those schools.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm honoured to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly several guests who are with us. Harvey Aarbo and his wife, Elaine, and his children Aaron and Loree have traveled from the Elk Point region to join us this afternoon. An interesting note is that in 1905 Harvey's grandfather, Thor, built a raft here in Edmonton and sailed the North Saskatchewan River starting here. He was on the search for a new home and made it as far as Elk Point, where the river froze, and he had to stop. So that's where the Aarbo family set up their homestead, and that's where it remains to this day. The

Aarbo family will celebrate its centennial here in Alberta at the same time the province celebrates its centennial in the year 2005.

1:40

Mr. Speaker, with the Aarbo family today are their good friends John and Jean Stewart, who on this very day are celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary. I'm told that both John and Harvey go back a long way with the Alberta Cow Calf Association and that up until his retirement John ran one of the best cattle operations in Alberta.

I am pleased to have all six of these wonderful Albertans with us today. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Legislature.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

MR. HORNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a large group of grade 6 students, 91 in all, with their teachers Mrs. Debbie McFarlane, Mr. Ray Shapka, Mrs. Evelyn Nixey, student teacher Miss Shauna Gerike, and parent helpers Mrs. Janet Boomer, Mrs. Maryann Arndt, Mrs. Joan Soehner, Mrs. Kelly Wilson, Mrs. Wilson, Mrs. Walsh, Mr. Van Bostelen, Mrs. Morrison, and Mrs. Yopek. They are seated in both the members' gallery and the public gallery, and I would ask that they all please stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for West-Yellowhead.

MR. STRANG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure today that I introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly 10 young, upstanding citizens from Edson, from the Yellowhead regional division, with teachers Mrs. Kneteman and Mrs. Darlene Dixon. I'd ask that they please rise now and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Government Services.

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly four members of the co-operative legislative working committee. This committee has been working since 1998 on developing replacement legislation for co-operatives. Today they were here to witness the introduction of Bill 2, the Cooperatives Act, 2001, just recently introduced by the hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill. Seated in the members' gallery – and I would ask them to rise as I repeat their names – are Ms Lynn Hannley, principal with Communitas Group; Mr. Rick Frederickson, supervisor for the feeder association with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development; Mr. Ray Zotzman, senior investigator with Alberta Government Services; and lastly, Mr. Mark Seville, legislative adviser with Alberta Government Services who actually chaired the working committee.

I would also at this time like to recognize the contributions of the three members who could not be with us today. They are Mr. Gerry Metz, corporate secretary of the United Farmers of Alberta co-operative; Ms Kay Robertson, legal affairs manager with Federated Co-ops; as well as Ken Ditzler, director of the Association of Seed Cleaning Plants.

I ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. HORNER: Mr. Speaker, if you may forgive the inexperience of a rookie, I'd like to clarify my remarks by adding that my students and teachers are from the Brookwood elementary school in Spruce Grove.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly Jannie Edwards. Jannie is a poet, a member of the League of Canadian Poets, and an English instructor at Grant MacEwan College. She is here to promote April as National Poetry Month and to reaffirm the importance of the arts in our daily lives. She brings gifts of poetry postcards for all MLAs to celebrate poetry, National Poetry Month, and the arts. With Jannie are students from Holy Family school, where Jannie conducted workshops. Three of the poems from one of her sessions were chosen to be on the Edmonton Transit system's poetry in motion project last fall. Rhiannon Edwards is one of the student poets with Jannie. Also present from Holy Family school is Eliza Soco. Jannie is also accompanied by students from Grant MacEwan College, and they are Jason Doucette, Pam Sitko, Jordan Millard, and Amanda Carter. With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I would ask them to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: Ministerial Statements

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Gaming.

Holocaust Memorial Day

MR. STEVENS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On April 19, 2001, Alberta will mark the first official Holocaust Memorial Day following the proclamation of the Holocaust Memorial Day and Genocide Remembrance Act. This legislation honours the memory of the 6 million European Jewish people who were annihilated between 1933 and 1945 and millions of others who were victims of systemic violence, genocide, famine, persecution, racism, and hatred.

Last November I was honoured to sponsor this special legislation. It enshrines the spirit of Albertans as tolerant and compassionate citizens who stand against violence and discrimination. I'm proud to say that because Albertans hold such strong convictions on these matters, hon. members of this Assembly ensured that the act passed unanimously. Consequently, Alberta became the eighth province to officially recognize Holocaust Memorial Day, known in Hebrew as Yom ha-Shoah or day of the whirlwind.

I recognize, as does the Holocaust Memorial Day and Genocide Remembrance Act, that many people in different parts of the world have perished as a result of some form of discriminatory violence. Today, however, I want to highlight the Holocaust on this special day of reflection. We all must do more than reflect, for Yom ha-Shoah is also a day for education about the horrors of the Holocaust and how the voices of history can teach our children the meaning of human suffering and how hatred and violence can scar the entire human race. Yom ha-Shoah brings people of the Jewish faith together around the world in remembrance of family members and friends who perished during the Holocaust. As Albertans we must all make an effort to take a moment today to pause and think about what this day means to each and every one of us.

My heartfelt compassion goes out to the Jewish community and indeed to all communities whose members have been victims of persecution and the tragedy of genocide. Victims whose voices fell silent still whisper to us the need to commit to a legacy of remembrance, education, and conscience. For Alberta to continue to be one

of the best provinces in which to raise our families, we must be diligent in protecting human rights and encouraging understanding. For the sake of our children we must be diligent in teaching them the cherished principles of respect, dignity, and equality for all. I urge all Alberta families of all races, religions, and political beliefs to make Holocaust Memorial Day an important day in their lives by sharing their thoughts and experiences with one another, particularly with their children.

Mr. Speaker and fellow members, as Albertans and as global citizens we have a responsibility to the past and future generations to maintain our vigil. We have an obligation to remember the unconscionable acts of violence and discrimination as the lowest points in human history and to prevent those horrific crimes from ever happening again. We must teach ourselves, teach one another, teach our children, for each generation must learn anew. We must look within ourselves. We're obliged as human beings to walk this path together. We can draw hope from one another.

We will remember, for we must never forget.

Thank you.

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

1:50

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you for the opportunity to respond on behalf of the Official Opposition to the minister's statement marking Alberta's first official Holocaust Memorial Day. The lessons learned from the Holocaust are deeply etched on our souls and should forevermore guide our actions.

As the Official Opposition we were honoured to work with the government to support the Holocaust Memorial Day and Genocide Remembrance Act. It underlines for us that as legislators we set the tone. We propose, develop, and pass the legislation which becomes law and by which we all live.

I'm glad that the hon. minister committed to a legacy of remembrance, education, and conscience, and I would add vigilance. History does repeat itself, and we must keep hearing the lesson because we do not always seem to learn it; Rwanda and Bosnia, to name a few examples. In this House we cannot rest. We must be vigilant to ensure that hatred does not flourish, that the seeds of xenophobia do not find fertile soil, that the flames of violence are not fanned.

When I was first elected, I pasted a short poem to my desk to remind me why I was here in this Assembly, and I share it with you today.

First they arrested the communists, but I was not a communist, so I did nothing. Then they came for the social democrats, but I was not a social democrat, so I did nothing. Then they arrested the trade unionists, and I did nothing because I was not one. Then they came for the Jews and then the Catholics, but I was neither a Jew nor a Catholic, and I did nothing. At last they came and arrested me, and there was no one left to do anything about it. That's from Reverend Martin Niemöller, a survivor of the Nazi prison camps.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge the enduring grief of Holocaust survivors and their families and extend our condolences and our commitment to stand on guard today and for the future.

Thank you for this opportunity.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, this is a very important day, and I would now ask that all of us and all of the visitors in the Assembly stand and join together in observing a moment of silence in recognition of this very important day.

Let us never forget.

Thank you. Please be seated.

head: Oral Question Period

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

Electricity Pricing

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Premier remarked that the increase in price for electricity is a continental phenomenon, but it isn't. A quick call and one will find that residential rates for electricity are much lower and stable in other jurisdictions except California, of course. In calls to B.C., Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Quebec we find that only Saskatchewan has increased their price in the last year and a half and by a whole 1 percent. My questions are to the Premier. Why is Alberta alone in seeing such incredible increases in the price of electricity?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, this is the question that was asked during the election campaign, and obviously Albertans accepted the answer. There are a number of factors leading to the high cost of electricity in this province. One is the phenomenal economic growth that has taken place here, which creates a tremendous demand for electricity. Another factor is the whole issue of the Kyoto accord.

As you know, in this province the cheapest form of fuel to generate electricity is coal, and there was a tremendous reluctance on the part of power producers to use coal in light of Kyoto, that would have required emission standards to be reduced by 6 percent of 1990 standards by the year 2010. Electrical power generated by coal is now back on the table because the generators, the producers, are confident now that the environmental standards can be achieved relative to emissions.

Mr. Speaker, another factor that has led to the high price of electricity is that a number of generators were down – and some are indeed down today – at a most inopportune time. Another reason is the extraordinary high price not just in Alberta but North-America-wide of natural gas, and that accounts for, I believe, 30 to 35 percent of all power generation in this province.

DR. NICOL: Mr. Speaker, the Premier's answer just kind of showed that if you're going to deal with marginal pricing, natural gas is our highest cost. Why do we not use an average pricing system to bring down the cost of that marginal price of natural gas by blending it with the coal and the hydro?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm certain that as the new power comes onstream, we'll see a stabilization in prices. When we're talking about average pricing, yes, we look at a high and a low. For instance, I'll give you an example of the latest, April 11, yesterday. The high was \$224.43 per megawatt-hour; the low was \$58.35. There's a tremendous difference. On Tuesday, April 10, the high was \$767.02; the low was \$84.35. The list goes on and on. When we talk about the average, the 30-day rolling average for power was \$95.07, or 9.5 cents per kilowatt-hour. So there is an average price, and we'll see that price come down as the weather gets warmer. As more power comes onstream, the price will go down even further.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: when you deal with average pricing in the context of a market system, is it not done at a spot time, not over a whole bunch of periods of time? It's done over the time period or the time frame of a contract; in other words, within our power pool on a one-hour basis, because that's what the bids go in with. If we were using average pricing for that,

we would look at the bids within that one hour, not over a number of days or a number of weeks.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, when you look at the bottom line, you look at what the consumer pays on the average. Our energy officials base that on a 30-day rolling average, and that 30-day rolling average is in the order of about 9.5 cents per kilowatt-hour, or \$95.07 per megawatt-hour.

THE SPEAKER: Second main question. The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Electric Power Generation

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Using a competitive pricing system, our generators and the power purchase agreement marketers can sell to any buyer in the western grid. Is it not true that our current power price is determined by what generators get by selling into the western grid?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, this is regulated still to some degree by the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board. Relative to the intricacies of how that power is sold into the grid, I'll have the hon. minister respond.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would add that the western grid and the markets of the south will have some influence. In fact, as the debate now starts to grow in North America, the debate will centre around an aging infrastructure, fully depreciated assets, a power energy deficiency. The returns of the information technology industry and other industries in the past 10 years were so great that money was not reinvested into both these regulated and unregulated areas of the energy industry. That leaves, Mr. Speaker, an aging infrastructure that's fully depreciated, that now is starting to respond by having a shortage of supply, an increase in demand, and we're going to see higher prices. There's no question. We're going to see higher prices throughout North America. But what will be happening – and of course I know now that the leader of the opposition party will be preparing a brief for submission to the EUB as they do their market review of the electrical industry, commencing sometime in May.

2:00

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: is it not true that Alberta transmission companies have applied for an additional 1,000 megawatt export line to the south?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, again, I don't know if that statement is true or if it's not true. Perhaps the hon. minister can shed some light on it.

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, that information would be in the hands of the transmission administrator. I do know and can inform the House that there is construction on a line that will bring in an additional 400 megawatts from Saskatchewan so that there is an increased capacity there. Of course, with the competitive market there's also an announcement such as yesterday's with the 80 megawatts from TransCanada as well as numerous other applications being put in place to bring on additional generation.

I think, Mr. Speaker, as we refer to this North American energy

grid, one of the things that will make Alberta one of the most prosperous provinces in the country will be its ability to provide low-cost, reliable sources of electrical energy that will come from coal-fired generation, that will come from cogen, that will come from a number of sources that will be stimulated by competitive practices.

Mr. Speaker, if we look at the comments of the interim Leader of the Opposition, we can also note that the population of Saskatchewan today is the same as it was in 1935. The population of Alberta is substantially higher as demand grows here. In fact, I would say that Alberta, by taking this competitive market model, is moving ahead of the North American curve. In fact, we won't be exporting coal. We'll be importing jobs.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier. Before we have any foreseeable reduction in our prices, we must have supply that will exceed demand by at least 1,800 megawatts, this 1,000-megawatt new export plus the 800 that's available now, or we'll have California and the western grid stabilize our prices. Is that true?

MR. KLEIN: Is that true? I don't know if that's true. All I can say is that there will be sufficient supply to meet the demand and also after all the strict requirements are met to allow some of the power producers to export some of the excess power. You know, Mr. Speaker, as I explained yesterday, we have I think in excess of 1,200 megawatts of power in the hopper right now that is either under construction, about to come onstream, or has just recently come onstream, with another 4,000 megawatts announced. That is power sufficient, I believe, to light up another Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer, Medicine Hat, Grande Prairie, Fort McMurray, Lethbridge.

MR. SMITH: All the Conservative areas of Alberta.

MR. KLEIN: Right. As the hon. minister said, all the Conservative areas of Alberta anyway.

THE SPEAKER: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Electricity Rebates

MS BLAKEMAN: Mr. Speaker, this government's assorted energy rebates have from the start been discriminatory by treating Albertans differently based on what type of home they rent or own. Now, the government has partially addressed this discrimination with regards to natural gas rebates but not at all for electricity. Albertans who live in apartments or who own condominiums with shared meters receive different electricity rates and rebates than those in single-family residences. My questions are to the Premier. What criteria did the government use to categorize shared-meter high-rise apartments and condominiums as commercial?

MR. KLEIN: Again, relative to the criteria that was used and the calculations that were put in place and all the intricacies involved in dealing with this very difficult issue, Mr. Speaker, I'll have the hon. minister reply. Having said that, we appealed – we appealed – to the apartment owners and we appealed to those people who manage condominiums where individual condominium owners are not metered individually to pass on those savings to the customer. We would hope, for the most part, that they did precisely that.

Relative to the intricacies involved in arriving at the formula, I'll have the hon. minister respond.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Basically the issue revolved around one meter and the consumption of over 250,000 kilowatt-hours per annum or less. I will, though, take the detailed question under advisement and see if I can table more information.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier. Given that this member, condominium boards, and individuals notified the government of differential treatment for residential energy prices and rebates, why did the government not correct this situation?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, we tried to deal with the situation as best we possibly could, understanding that there are different situations relative to various apartment scenarios, various condominium scenarios. I can relate to my own situation here in the city of Edmonton. I own a condominium, and I'm individually metered. Therefore, I received all the benefits of the electricity rebate program as a residential customer. Down the block from me there is another condominium where the condominium is not individually metered, and I would hope that the condominium association would have passed on the savings to the people who own the condominiums. [interjection]

THE SPEAKER: Hon. member, you know the rule is that you ask the question. You don't answer the question.

Please proceed with your third question.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you for the advice.

My third question is also to the Premier. Given that the government has insisted that municipalities pass on property tax reduction savings, why is the government not monitoring and enforcing that rebates given to landlords be passed on to renters? Why the double standard?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I don't know if there is and I don't think there is a double standard.

Relative to our ability to force landlords and/or condominium associations to pass on those savings, I just don't know what authority prevails, Mr. Speaker, if any authority whatsoever prevails. I'll have the hon. minister respond. Maybe he can shed some more light on it.

MR. SMITH: Well, Mr. Speaker, with respect – and I'm sure that maybe the Minister of Municipal Affairs will want to be a part of this answer as well – I think that tax money is collected from the citizens of the province by governments and flows in that nature. Rents are collected by individuals and are charged in normal commercial matters.

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

DeVry Institute of Technology

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On January 31, 2001, the provincial government gave the DeVry Institute of Technology, a for-profit, U.S. based corporation, the right to grant academic degrees under the Universities Act. This unprecedented decision, which allows the for-profit private sector now to enter the postsecondary education system, is opposed by, among others, the

University of Calgary Faculty Association, the Canadian Federation of Students, and the Canadian Association of University Teachers. My questions are to the Premier. Why is the Conservative government getting back into the business of business by awarding academic degree granting status to the for-profit DeVry Institute?

2:10

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, the one thing that this government is not afraid to do is to think outside the box. We have the deepest and greatest respect for our universities and for colleges that grant applied degrees, whether they are public or private colleges. We have the greatest respect as well for colleges like Augustana, for colleges like Concordia or like The King's college, that grant degrees. We are not afraid to think outside the box to allow an established academic institution like DeVry, that has demonstrated that it can teach students effectively, efficiently, and competently, to grant degrees in a very specialized area. There is nothing wrong with that. I would think that the academic community would welcome the opportunity for institutions other than universities to open their arms to provide people with education. That's what counts.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Speaker, so much for the Premier's and this government's commitment to stay out of the business of business. It says a lot.

My second question to the Premier. Will the Premier confirm that now that the for-profit DeVry Institute has been awarded academic degree granting status, it will be eligible for direct government funding on the same basis as private, nonprofit university colleges like Concordia and Augustana?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I'll have the hon. Minister of Learning respond to that particular question, but I do take exception to the fact that we are back in the business of being in business. We are in no way involved with DeVry other than setting standards to make sure that this institution complies with the highest academic standards that are relevant to its degree-granting status.

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to make one point, and that first point is that the DeVry Institute receives absolutely no funding from us and will not receive any funding from us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: How much?

DR. OBERG: Zero. Zero.

Mr. Speaker, the Private Colleges Accreditation Board sits and determines the standards for any degree-granting institution that is a private college, and it sat and decided that the classes, that the courses that DeVry was giving our students did meet the standards, did meet the qualifications.

Mr. Speaker, this line of questioning is going in a very interesting way. I would ask the hon. member across the way to think of one thing and one word, and that is the Internet. There are numerous colleges from the United States, from all over the world that are coming into Alberta, and we have to – we have to – be in a position to accredit them. We have to be in the position to put the standards there, because they are coming, and your people are doing it on the Internet right now.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We'll certainly track the

minister's statement on DeVry not receiving any dollars from the government.

My last question to the minister. Will the minister put on hold the thoughtless decision to give the for-profit DeVry Institute academic degree granting status until there has been a full public debate on the floor of this Assembly on whether or not the government should proceed along those lines? [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Would the hon. minister please respond on behalf of the government. We'll ask some of your colleagues just to button it.

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The answer to the member's question is no. We have an independent board called the Private Colleges Accreditation Board, that does a tremendous job in determining the standards, determining the quality of courses that are provided to each and every Albertan in this province. Mr. Speaker, they do a wonderful job. The colleges, the universities are in favour of this. So I would ask the hon. member that if he has a problem with the Private Colleges Accreditation Board, then he should take it to them, that he should take it to the university boards, and they will come back to me, because they have no problem with them.

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

Electricity Rates

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the past couple of months many of the constituents in Little Bow have contacted me with serious concerns over their power bills, particularly a variety of additional service charges. Although the Leader of the Official Opposition, who just happens to be one of my constituents, wasn't one of those who contacted me, I do believe that we've heard similar concerns from the people in the area. My questions are to the Minister of Energy, and they relate to electrical rates in the EUB. Number 1, minister: are the various electricity rate classifications that are used within the industry subject to the approval of the EUB, or are these rates provided by the wire service provider as a mandate to charge as they see fit?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the utilities that the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board regulates – and these would be the major ones such as ATCO, Utilicorp, and TransAlta – rate classifications are indeed subject to the Energy and Utilities Board's approval. Now, rate classifications for municipal wire service providers such as Enmax and EPCOR are not subject to the Energy and Utilities Board's approval.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the increases were approved for gas and power utilities in order that they might recover previous losses, is the EUB mandated to set current rates based on current costs that reflect the ability of customers to pay, or are they there primarily to guarantee predictable returns to the utility shareholders?

THE SPEAKER: Hon. minister.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the mandate of the Energy and Utilities Board is to do both, not only indicate that those utility shareholders will have a reasonable rate of return but also that consumers are well-served, and the EUB is acting in the public interest and in the consumers' interests.

In fact, the mandate of the Energy and Utilities Board, Mr. Speaker, is twofold: one, to ensure that rates that consumers pay are fair and the service that is provided is safe and adequate; and secondly, to regulate gas and power utilities in ways that allow them to earn sufficient revenues to recover costs which include a fair return on investment. The energy supply side of this is the part that is determined by the marketplace. More and more as you see the models throughout North America start to move now, there is clear, clear evidence that the competitive marketplace is a far better judge of what a fair return is to shareholders, and in fact the competitive marketplace properly structured is also one that protects consumers in the most fair way possible.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. member.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you. The last commonly asked question, Mr. Minister, is: given that in a free enterprise model of business people appear to have the right to go broke, why does the EUB appear to guarantee financial success for the utilities?

MR. SMITH: Well, I would think, Mr. Speaker, that now the interim Leader of the Official Opposition is probably wishing he had contacted his MLA to ask questions.

In fact, utilities do provide necessary services in areas that would not benefit from duplication of infrastructure, such as electrical transportation and wires. But we have to look at the size of the investment that is required and how one was regulated in the olden days, and now today wire services are regulated, as is transmission. Those in fact, Mr. Speaker, are also coming up for renewal and examination. I think that we have used those good facilities, and we've received good and fair regulation from the Energy and Utilities Board, but we are getting to the end of our rope with those facilities, or the end of our wire, if you will, and that is going to require further investments in the North American power infrastructure. But it is important that the Energy and Utilities Board ensure that these utilities are not allowed to use monopoly positions to charge distribution rates unfair to consumers. So that's why these hearings are taking place.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, that's why we're also seeing the Energy and Utilities Board, that has not in prior times examined gas supply pricing because it was against policy for them to receive a profit, is now examining those in new hearings set in April. So, in fact, the Energy and Utilities Board in an open and transparent process with written and full disclosure decisions continues to work in the best interests of Albertans.

2:20

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Medically Required MRIs

DR. TAFT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier. Yesterday the Minister of Energy confirmed that interest probably amounting to millions or even tens of millions of dollars will be paid to electricity companies on deferred rates owed to them as a result of government policy on electricity deregulation. Yesterday also the minister of health flatly stated that no interest will be paid to ordinary Albertans who are owed money as a result of government

policy on MRI fees. My question to the Premier: will the Premier admit that this is a double standard that works against ordinary Albertans?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, no. There is no double standard whatsoever. You know, the hon. member is comparing apples and oranges and grapes and pears. Other than MRIs are powered by electricity, how you could relate MRIs and the situation that now prevails relative to the review that is being undertaken by the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness to electrical rates is absolutely beyond me.

We have a situation here as it relates to MRIs where people, individuals, allegedly went to their doctor, they weren't satisfied with their doctor's diagnosis of the particular situation, and sought a private . . . [interjections] Mr. Speaker, I hear the yip-yapping over there about a year's wait. How long did they have to wait before there were MRIs? I mean, there was a time in this country and in this world when there was no such thing as an MRI. The best thing we had was a CAT scan and before that X-rays and before that nothing.

But these people on their own went to privately operated clinics and paid for an MRI to find out that they had something probably more serious, maybe more serious than the doctor originally diagnosed.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to review this. We have no obligation to review this. We have absolutely no obligation to pay those people at all. There are other jurisdictions in this country that are woefully behind Alberta in terms of the provision of MRI services. We are doing this because we feel it is the right thing to do. There is no obligation to do it, and I think that we are being more than generous and more than compassionate as a government in offering this adjudication of MRI services.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

DR. TAFT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier, a simple and straightforward question: how does his government justify paying interest on money owed to huge corporations making record profits but not paying interest on money owed to ordinary Albertans often in poor health?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, he obviously does not hear the answer or he won't listen or he's taken too many lessons from some of the veterans over there. Again, there is no obligation. There is no obligation on the part of the government to do this at all. We are doing this because we think it is the right thing to do.

Mr. Speaker, after the adjudication has taken place – and I don't know how many cases will be examined by the expert panel but probably in the hundreds now – many of those people probably will not get the answer that they wanted and some of them will.

Mr. Speaker, there is no interest paid to anyone who experiences a delay or experiences any other difficulty that might have costs relative to access to the publicly funded system. It has never been done before; it won't be done in the future. We are going to the length of compensating those patients that will undergo an investigation or an examination by an independent panel of physicians. We will compensate those patients, if we can find that there is evidence to prove that they should have had an MRI in the first place. We don't have to go that distance. We are going that distance because we're a government that wants to do the right thing and we have compassion.

DR. TAFT: Mr. Speaker, why does the Premier feel an obligation to

pay interest to major corporations and no obligation whatsoever to pay interest to ordinary Albertans?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I answered the question.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-East, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta advantage is the envy of every other province in Canada. Our deficit was eliminated years ago, and our province will be soon debt free. That's, of course, due to the good management of this government. However, I understand that an Albertan who is not able to work and does not have other income and needs the support of government can apply and receive support from AISH, the assured income for the severely handicapped program, which has a maximum of \$855 a month. Constituents receiving AISH have told me that they are having a hard time living and making ends meet. Meanwhile, their rents and utilities are going up, the general cost of living increases, the bills keep coming. To the Minister of Human Resources and Employment: does the minister have any plans to increase the AISH benefits?

MR. DUNFORD: Mr. Speaker, currently we provide AISH payments – perhaps I should indicate that AISH stands for assured income for the severely handicapped – of \$855 a month, as the hon. member has suggested, to approximately 27,000 Albertans. So when we start to do the math, you can see then that it's a tremendous program.

I would want to indicate to the hon. member that there's more than just the income that is presented. If you are entitled to AISH, you're also entitled to medical benefits, and I'm told that an average client on AISH is receiving medical benefits of about \$240 a month. I need to remind all of the members and especially the hon. member who has raised the question that you can still qualify for an AISH payment provided you meet the medical criteria, but you could also have a hundred thousand in assets, you could have your own car, you could own your own home.

So I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, to all the members as a responsible MLA, a steward of taxpayers' money, that the AISH program that we have in this province, which is leading the nation, by the way, is a very credible and a very reliable and reasonable program.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is the \$855 a month that we're talking about. Does the minister really expect disabled Albertans to live on this amount?

MR. DUNFORD: There is no question, Mr. Speaker, that at \$855 a month it might be a difficulty. Let me again remind hon. members that the majority of AISH clients that we have on our rolls also have other income. We have been able, with the reform to the AISH program, to put a situation in place where, if they are able to find work, they're able to go out and work without deduction. If they're involved in a spousal relationship, then there is, I think, an exceedingly generous opportunity for the other partner, you know, to go out and earn money, something in the order, I think, of another \$775 month before there are any deductions made. So with the medical benefit and with the ability to turn other income, conceivably you could have a couple that could be earning over \$1,900 a month and

still gain a dollar of AISH but, more importantly, would still have access to that medical card.

2:30

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In light of the minister's comments, how can Albertans rest assured that our most fragile and vulnerable citizens are supported?

MR. DUNFORD: Mr. Speaker, we're very proud of the AISH program, and I want to again acknowledge all of the members of this Legislature that contributed to the reform of the AISH program, started back in 1998 and brought into place in October of 1999. As a matter of fact, across this country now ministers of social services and including the federal minister responsible have just published a recent report; it's called In Unison.

Actually our AISH program has received national recognition in terms of an effective service to people with disabilities. Part of what was highlighted within that recognition, of course, was not only the medical benefits that I've been talking about but basically a hassle-free process if people have to return to the program.

So AISH is just one of many, many things that we provide for Albertans that truly need our assistance. And I say again not only to the hon. member but to all taxpaying Albertans that we will strike the right balance between the opportunity for Albertans to receive the assistance that they truly, truly need and our responsibilities to the taxpayers.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Class Sizes

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Ministry of Learning through the Alberta initiative for school improvement has approved more than 15 class size reduction projects across the province. The focus of the majority of these projects are on K to 3 students. My questions are to the Minister of Learning. Given the results of the Edmonton study, why does the minister continue to selectively choose the students who will benefit from smaller classes through the sponsorship of these research projects?

DR. OBERG: Mr. Speaker, the Alberta initiative for school improvement was something that I talked about extensively during the last session. Under the AISI project there are presently 760 different projects around the province. The way these projects came into being was that parents, teachers, school board officials, and administrators sat down and felt that they would do whatever was the most important to help their kids achieve within their own schools, and they addressed numerous issues.

Mr. Speaker, it's much too numerous to talk to, and the reason I'm saying this is because of those 760 projects, 15 of them dealt with class size. Fifteen of them felt that class size was the number one issue. In saying that, on the class size study that we did in Edmonton, it showed that, yes, some kids did benefit from smaller class size, some kids did about the same, and other kids perhaps even did a little bit worse.

So, Mr. Speaker, the point that I have said, and I have been very consistent in what I have said, is that the school boards need the flexibility to determine through their teachers, through their parents, through their administrators – they need that flexibility to be able to find out what is most important for school achievement in their particular area.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the same minister. Why is the minister diverting money to research projects when the results are known and that money could better be contributed to a provincewide class size reduction program?

DR. OBERG: Mr. Speaker, I will very simply quote what the president of the Alberta Teachers' Association said on CBC radio. He said that no one wants to legislate class size.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister. Why does the minister refuse to set and fund provincewide targets for K to 3 classes? Why?

DR. OBERG: Mr. Speaker, again I will say the same answer. First of all, K to 3 is a very important age group. I don't think there's anyone in this Assembly that would argue with that. I don't think there's any research that shows that K to 3 is not a very important time. Where there is acrimony in the research is exactly what is the best way to effect change in the K to 3 age group. Is it our early literacy projects, where we saw a tremendous increase in results and achievement with these students? Is it by class size? Is it by one-on-one teaching? All of these are very successful alternatives.

Mr. Speaker, I believe in school boards. I believe that they have the best interests of their students at heart, and I believe that they will find the ways to do it. It is my job to give them the resources, and I believe in that as well.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Energy Rebates

MR. CAO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituency of Calgary-Fort covers a large area in Calgary, including the residential communities and a very busy industrial park. Energy consumers, both residents and corporate constituents of mine, have a concern, and the concern is the energy rebate. My question is to the Minister of Energy. Given that the current rebate of \$150 per month per residential gas bill will end by the end of this month, what is the government's plan beyond this time?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question is a good one. Of course, as we all know, the Natural Gas Price Protection Act was introduced by the Premier on Tuesday, so I won't go into specific detail as the bill is before the House, saying only that it will provide protection from spikes in gas prices in the future. So that is one arrow in the quiver.

Of course, a real opportunity here that we have is being fortunate Albertans and to be blessed by this resource to be able to use it for protecting Albertans. Any future rebates will go, as the bill will speak to, throughout the land. But right now I think that as well as Easter eggs that are on the horizon, so is another \$150 cheque being mailed out to Albertans, their second \$150 energy rebate cheque. Also, most Albertans receive a \$40 per month electricity rebate, that will continue until the end of calendar 2001.

For the important nonresidential or corporate constituents in Calgary-Fort, Mr. Speaker, there is the 3.6 cents a kilowatt-hour

rebate from auction proceeds that will proceed through to the end of calendar 2001.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. CAO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're talking about the residential consumer, but commercial and industrial business is also important to the Alberta economy, and companies in my area also want to know what the government's plan is for these energy consumers in the industrial sector.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. SMITH: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The 3.6 cents a kilowatt-hour that I did speak to in my first answer will continue, as of course the market transition credit will continue to the end of June. Program extensions could occur if needed. We are seeing a downward pressure on the Power Pool pricing from the initial spurt of a new competitive market model that came into being January 1. We are watching it. We're carefully monitoring the situation. Also, the Energy and Utilities Board has embarked upon a market performance review. We also look to advice from the Advisory Council on Electricity.

It's an important issue, Mr. Speaker. As I've said in earlier answers, we believe that we're ahead of a North American curve that's going to require absolutely phenomenal amounts of reinvestment in a whole energy infrastructure that will extend across North America, and Alberta again will be at the lead of this.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. CAO: Thank you. My last supplemental question is to the same minister. Could the minister update us on what is the total rebate up to now, and does the continuation of this violate the free trade agreement?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, it cost \$1.1 billion, paid for out of increased natural gas royalties. There is no North American free trade contravention.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands.

2:40

Access to Information

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Payday has recently taken on a whole new meaning for Alberta taxpayers. Since Alberta taxpayers have taken over a three-quarters of a million dollars hit on Stockwell Day's defamation suit, it only seems fair that they have access to all relevant documents relating to Mr. Day's claim to the risk management fund. However, FOIP officials have demanded fees of at least \$60,000 to process our Official Opposition access to information request. My first question today is to the minister responsible for the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the Minister of Government Services. Can the minister inform this House why FOIP officials have stonewalled our request by demanding fees of \$60,000?

THE SPEAKER: Hon. minister.

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The current provisions in legislation under the freedom of information act are identified under the freedom of information regulations. There are a few in number and are very specific and narrow in their approach. We find the need for paramountcy in this issue arises primarily because information concerns require increasing confidentiality, and for that purpose the information that is put in place for access to freedom of information is done particularly for confidentiality as well as the proper information that should be put forward for people to enjoy.

MR. MacDONALD: Given that the information in this Alberta government news release dated January 16, 2001, states, "We are releasing this information in keeping with this government's policy of openness and accountability," can the public interests be served by the hon. minister urging FOIP officials to please waive this fee of \$60,000?

MR. COUTTS: Mr. Speaker, there are many requests for information in this province through many departments, and each department is responsible for their own individuals and their own bureaucracy when looking after particular information that is being requested. It is important to remember that all of this bureaucracy being put in place to provide information costs a tremendous amount of money, and it's important also to make sure that frivolous requests for information be restricted because of all the demands for information. So with that, it's important that individuals come forward with proper information requests and make sure that those information requests are concise so that the costs can be kept down. If that would happen by members of the opposition, maybe those costs could be lowered.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. member.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given three-quarters of a million dollars in tax dollars, I do not consider it to be frivolous.

My next question is to the Minister of Justice. Will the hon. minister commit to tabling all the information in the Alberta Justice department on this issue? Will the minister table this in the Assembly?

THE SPEAKER: Hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

MR. HANCOCK: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I didn't think I'd ever say this, but I long for the days when we had in the opposition benches people who respected privacy. In fact, one of the reasons why – because I don't know the details of this specific request or the cost estimates for it, I would assume that the reason why \$60,000 is required is because it takes an awful lot of work to go through records which involve a lot of private information of private individuals, both plaintiff and defendant in this case as well as others that might have been involved in the case, to determine what type of information is appropriate to be released and what type of information is not appropriate to be released and to respect the individual privacy of those individuals involved.

So the fees that are being charged are not being charged to reduce access to appropriate information that should be before the public but to protect the privacy and to allow the bureaucracy to do what is necessary to go through the documents to determine what is appropriate to be released under the act and at law and what is inappropriate to be released under the act and at law and to protect the privacy of individual Albertans, which is why we have a Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, before calling on the first of four members today to participate in Members' Statements, let me just apologize to the half a dozen members who advised me that they wanted to participate in question period today. We had only 10 sets of questions. Yesterday we had 12. May I ask all members just to review the rules because when we return on Monday next, you will see further interventions from the chair in terms of speeding up the process so that we can have additional members participate in question period.

In 30 seconds from now I will call upon the first of four hon. members to participate, but in the interim I want to have approval from the Assembly to revert to the introduction of visitors, if we could.

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**

(reversion)

MR. SNELGROVE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you and to the members of this Assembly a couple seated in the members' gallery that have worked tirelessly raising their family and running their business in the Vermilion area for nearly 50 years. Their contributions to the community and to the area are too numerous to mention. I have the tremendous honour of being their son. Bob and Margaret Snelgrove are accompanied today by my uncle Maurice Snelgrove, and I would ask them to rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this afternoon a number of individuals from NorQuest College joined us in the public gallery. They were led by teachers Mrs. Andrea Massing and Mr. Cap Tiege. We had in all a total of 17 very eager students who seemed to have enjoyed question period quite a bit, and I'm very glad they were able to join us. I'm not able to introduce them to you and through you to members of the Assembly, but I would ask the Assembly to please give them the traditional welcome in absentia, and I will send it on in *Hansard*.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Economic Development.

MR. NORRIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an absolute delight for me to introduce some very special people today. There's an old saying: behind any successful man there's a very surprised woman. In this case, it's my entire family. I would like to introduce to you and through you my beautiful wife, Veronica, and my kids Claudia and Jack, who have come to join us here today at the House. Would you please welcome them.

head: **Members' Statements**

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

Edmonton Regional Science Fair

MR. VANDERMEER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with pleasure that I rise today to speak about the Edmonton Regional Science Fair, which includes communities from Jasper to Lloydminster, Athabasca to north of Red Deer. This past weekend I had the privilege to attend the award ceremonies where students from grades 4 to 12 showcased their hard work. I was extremely impressed by the

quality of their science projects shown at the fair. I saw an interesting range of projects from power of wind and hydropower to laser driven fusion and behaviour based robotics.

2:50

I can see why Alberta students are high achievers on a national and international level, and activities such as this science fair enhance Alberta's excellent learning system by giving students an opportunity to explore topics in an in-depth way, further their knowledge, and follow their scientific interests. These students are a credit to their parents and teachers, whom I thank for encouraging their scientific efforts. I would also like to acknowledge the Edmonton Regional Science Fair council for their work in organizing last weekend's scientific fair. I really enjoyed the experience.

Congratulations to all the award winners, and good luck to the seven students who are representing the Edmonton region at the Canada-wide science fair. I am confident that these students and their projects will amaze the judges. I encourage students from all over Alberta to participate in science fairs and experience the excitement of scientific exploration.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Class Size

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The release of the Edmonton class size study, confirming research elsewhere that smaller classes do make a difference, was accompanied by an unacceptable spin by the Minister of Learning. With this study was a covering press release that attempted to negate the findings and indicate that the same results could somehow or other be achieved through other means. In later comments the minister indicated class size would not become a matter of legislation.

Through private members' bills and motions in the Legislature the Official Opposition has asked the government to legislate class size in this province. Why? First and foremost, students will benefit, not just those students in school districts that can scrounge the needed resources but all students across the province. Second, such legislation would carry with it the obligation on the part of the province to provide resources so that those smaller classes could become a reality. Third, the province can't be trusted. This is the government that slashed kindergarten, claiming there is no research to support the benefits of such programs, and when parents objected, there was no protection for those five-year-olds to be found in the Alberta School Act. The objections that such legislation would be an unacceptable one-size-fits-all solution and too rigid to work seems not to be the case elsewhere.

The legislation I tabled earlier today is but a sample. Our calls for legislation differ from what has been done in the U.S. We will again ask for class size targets to be set. Our Bill 215 stated setting targets will allow lead time to ensure that there are adequate numbers of teachers in place and classroom spaces to accommodate additional classes. Targets would not be rigid. Classes of 28 students would not automatically be split into two classes of 10. Common sense would prevail. Class sizes will be reduced if not by this minister by his or her successor. Let's not delay one more generation. Let's not deny them the benefits of such class sizes. Let's do something about the situation now.

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

Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's seniors today are more than 300,000 and growing and are a very vital part of our

society. That is only one reason but a huge one why it is such good news that we now have an entire ministry dedicated to serving Alberta's seniors.

The steering committee for the aging population study, which I chaired, recommended that we have an associate minister of seniors within Community Development, and of course I was very thrilled, as most Alberta seniors must be, with the decision to create a separate Ministry of Seniors with the hon. Member for Stony Plain as its first minister.

As re-appointed chair of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta, I am very pleased to acknowledge in this Assembly the valuable role the council fills as a link to Alberta's seniors and the government. The council is unique in that it consults on an ongoing basis with all seniors potentially, and frequently provides advice and recommendations to the government through the Minister of Seniors on areas of concern that are important to seniors.

The council also holds public consultation sessions around the province, and they're planning to hold their next one in Grande Prairie and area in June. The council participates as members on committees that work to improve the quality of life of seniors: the long-term care review, the impact of the aging population study, shelter cost study, and presently on a seniors' centre study. The council has very recently studied and made recommendations in areas of home care, mental health, and older drivers.

The 13 appointed and very capable citizens, I might add, who form the council with myself as chair look forward to an exciting and challenging time as we continue our work with Alberta seniors and the government, all within the new ministry, in the coming months. We will assist the government to address the needs of today's seniors while planning for the future and the impact of the aging population.

On behalf of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta I encourage all members of this Assembly to utilize this valuable . . . [Ms Kryczka's speaking time expired]

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

Environmental Policy

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the government talks about having a plan that will give Alberta's children a future with limitless possibilities, it is acknowledging that the questions we ask and the decisions we make in this Assembly have effects that reach far beyond this session, this year, and even the next 10 years. When we talk about Albertans benefiting from a decision or a project, we have to ask: which Albertans, and what is the real benefit? Will it be a short-term economic benefit for a particular company and a forest of stumps for the rest of the province? Maybe the benefit will go to larger companies and their shareholders while the local community gets a decimated landscape, falling water levels, and polluted air.

When we look back on the decisions that lay before us, decisions about energy and natural resources, will economists say that we got every dollar we could and therefore it was a complete success? Maybe we'll find ourselves sitting on piles of money and trying to figure out what to do with air we can't breathe and water no one wants to drink. I'm not against economic development or making money from our natural resources. What I am concerned about is that we are not asking the right questions at the right time. The government doesn't seem to really want to look at conservation and alternative energy sources. They pay lip service to these ideas, but their commitment is questionable. They just want to build another coal-fired plant as quickly as they can and keep costs down, but are they really considering all the numbers in their costs? Can we measure clean air and water in cents per kilowatt hour?

The Alberta government cannot continue to use dollars, debit, and

deficit as the bottom line. It just isn't sustainable, Mr. Speaker. As members of this Assembly we need the courage and the conviction to ask the right questions at the right time. A future with limitless possibilities means we have some tough decisions ahead of us.

head: **Projected Government Business**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask the government to share the projected government business with us for the week that we come back, starting April 23.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday the 23rd under Government Bills and Orders for second reading, Bill 1, Natural Gas Price Protection Act; Bill 2, the Cooperatives Act; and address and reply to the Speech from the Throne.

On Monday evening at 8 under Government Bills and Orders, address and reply to the Speech from the Throne and as per the Order Paper.

On Tuesday, April 24, at 4:30 p.m. under Government Bills and Orders, as has been indicated, the Minister of Finance will provide a Budget Address to the House.

On Tuesday at 8 p.m. under Government Motions if the opposition so chooses, that would be their first opportunity for a response to the budget. Under Government Bills and Orders second reading under Bill 3, Fisheries (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2001; Bill 4, Surface Rights Amendment Act, 2001; address and reply to the Speech from the Throne, and as per the Order Paper.

On Wednesday, April 25, at 8 p.m. under Government Bills and Orders, under Government Motions: in the event that the opposition and the third party choose not to reply on Tuesday night, they would have the opportunity to reply on Wednesday evening. Thereafter Committee of Supply, day 1. We would ask for permission to revert to Introduction of Bills to introduce the supplementary supply bill and thereafter as per the Order Paper. Under Tabling Returns and Reports that day we would anticipate tabling the supply calendar of appearances as per agreement between the House leaders. For the information of the House we would anticipate introducing the interim supply bill that afternoon.

On Thursday, April 26, in the afternoon under Government Bills and Orders for Second Reading, supplementary and interim supply, address and reply to the Speech from the Throne, and as per the Order Paper.

3:00

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech**

Mrs. Tarchuk moved that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

To Her Honour the Honourable Lois E. Hole, CM, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank you, Your Honour, for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

[Adjourned debate April 11: Mr. McClelland]

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

MR. McCLELLAND: Mr. Speaker, I had concluded my comments. Thank you.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to once again have this opportunity to reply to the Speech from the Throne. I, too, would like, as other members have, Mr. Speaker, to begin by congratulating yourself and the Deputy Speaker and Chairman of Committees on filling the offices that you have been chosen to fulfill. It's not always easy. We aren't always the easiest group to lead and to stay in our places and do what's expected of us, but I appreciate the work you've done in the past and look forward to four more years of being treated similarly.

I, too, would like to thank the constituents of Edmonton-Mill Woods. This is the third time that they have been good enough to elect me, and their confidence is both gratifying and humbling, Mr. Speaker. Election campaigns are hard, and constituents in Edmonton-Mill Woods ask good questions. They have high expectations of the people they put in public office, and I hope that I can fulfill those expectations.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

I would also like to congratulate the new members that have been elected. The election campaign was hard fought, and it's a credit, I think, to your ability and to the hard work that all of you engaged in that you're here today.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I would, however, be remiss if I didn't mention a number of my colleagues who no longer share our work in the Assembly today. I'd like to mention if I could, Mr. Speaker, some of them by name.

I for one will miss the former Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark. I'll remember her particularly for the very powerful speech – I think the most powerful speech I've heard in eight years in this House – that she gave when we were considering the Holocaust memorial bill. It was a speech that I think had members on both sides of this House deeply moved.

I'll miss very much the former Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert. That member, Mr. Speaker, had a zest for life and a sense of good humour that made the tasks you worked on with her, in and outside of this House, very easy tasks, and I will miss her.

I'll miss the former Member for Edmonton-Manning. That member quietly traveled the province listening to Albertans and brought their voices back to this Assembly.

I'll miss the former Member for Edmonton-Calder. That member constantly reminded us that we had to write and we had to talk and we had to keep in the forefront of our consideration everyday Albertans. He often spoke of his barber, and his question was: would my barber understand that? Would my barber appreciate that? Lance's barber has a permanent place at our caucus table, Mr. Speaker.

I'll miss the former Member for Edmonton-Glenora as a bright and versatile and an articulate young man whose sense of justice, I think, didn't leave anyone who met him untouched.

I'll miss especially, of course, Mr. Speaker, our former leader, the former Member for Edmonton-McClung. This was an individual who had the option of doing a lot of things. The fact that she chose to become leader of our party and to sit in this House and to serve Albertans I think is a measure of the woman. She brought with her a sense of style that will be very difficult to replace, and I will miss her.

Those are regrets, Mr. Speaker, and we can't dwell, I know, too far in the past, so it was interesting to listen to and to read the Speech from the Throne. I was especially interested, when I was thinking about my former colleagues, in the very last page, where the government takes a pledge. I couldn't help but think that maybe the former Member for Edmonton-Glenora would have something witty to say about the government finally taking the pledge.

But going to the Speech from the Throne, immediately after the election I was questioned by a reporter who said: "What are you going to do now? Your numbers are so much fewer. What are you going to do?" I guess my answer is the answer I gave today, Mr. Speaker, that we as a party are going to go back to our basic principles. We are going to oppose legislation that is brought forward that we think violates those principles and hurts Albertans. We will be offering our own versions of legislation that we think supports those basic principles and makes the lives of Albertans better, and we're going to support such legislation if it's brought forward by the government.

I wanted to talk just a few minutes if I might, Mr. Speaker, about some of those principles. Alberta Liberals believe in Alberta. We believe in only the amount of government that we need, but we insist that we get all the government that we need. We believe in a government that's strong enough to use words like "love" and "compassion," and I was pleased to see the section in the Speech from the Throne that talked about the values that Albertans hold, the concern for community, the concern for family. I was also pleased to see the promise in the speech that those values will be a continuing guide to the government.

We Liberals have an abiding faith, Mr. Speaker, in education to lift the human condition. One thing you'll find that all Liberals, I think, agree on is the value of and the need for the very best education we can afford. We believe that the talented have to be encouraged. We should do everything to make sure that they develop the kinds of skills and interests and abilities that they have to the fullest.

But while survival of the fittest may aptly describe evolution, it should not be the philosophy of a government. Government should fill the gaps that have been left there by chance or by a wisdom that we don't understand. So government has a role, a strong role, in helping the vulnerable and in making sure that the talented and those blessed with talents do make the very best of their abilities.

Alberta Liberals believe that a province that's as blessed as ours, a province that can spend billions of dollars on private-enterprise schemes, ought to be able to help by lowering class sizes, by maintaining women's shelters, by providing homes for the homeless. Surely with all the resources that we have and that we can draw upon in this province, the vulnerable should be looked after.

There was a question earlier today in question period about the AISH payments. Most of us in the Assembly and the new ones will soon be visited, I'm sure, by those recipients of the AISH program. It's painful to find the kinds of life situations they find themselves in, the kinds of limited options that they have in terms of looking after themselves, and for them to feel somehow or other that their fellow citizens are attacking them or at least not stepping up to the plate and providing them with the kind of help that they need. The AISH program is a wonderful program, and it has great potential, but I believe, Mr. Speaker, that there has to be a systematic way built into the system that reflects increasing costs for that group of Albertans, that allows them to live with some dignity so that they don't have to take the very few precious assets that some of them have and dispose of them so that they are eligible for further increases.

3:10

The system has to be changed. I think the numbers that were

given earlier in the day are disgraceful. When you contrast the way those increases come about periodically with the way we have looked after our own affairs as MLAs, where we have attached increases to our own salary to an index, I think there's something wrong, Mr. Speaker. There's a basic fairness that's missing there in terms of treating the vulnerable.

The throne speech, Mr. Speaker, speaks of values that Albertans hold. As I said before, there are other values, and there are values that the opposition has to be particularly aware of and make sure aren't violated. Those values include loyalty, justice, and freedom. It's our charge as the opposition to make sure that government actions do not in any way lessen or make less relevant those values in the lives of Albertans.

I think, Mr. Speaker, with those comments I'd like to conclude. I look forward to seeing the kinds of legislation that will follow from the Speech from the Throne. I'm left, I guess, with a question, and it is just that I'm not quite sure. The opening pages of the speech speak about: "It was only two months ago that I laid out the government's vision for Alberta's future." It goes on to talk about what that vision for Alberta was: "It was a vision of a strong economy, new jobs." So the vision for Alberta is laid out on the first page, yet on the last page we're told that there is going to be another summit to find out what the future is going to be. It seems to me that there's a basic inconsistency there. Either you have the vision, on the first page, or you're looking for it, on the last page.

With those comments, I'd conclude. Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Economic Development.

MR. NORRIS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations on the election of Mr. Speaker and the Deputy Speaker.

It's an absolute delight and a great pleasure for me to have the privilege of responding to the Speech from the Throne, and I thank you for this opportunity today. As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, this is an especially moving occasion for me, given that it is not only my maiden speech as an MLA but as Minister of Economic Development with responsibilities for tourism in Alberta. A month ago I was standing on a freeway freezing in the dark and waving at people. Now I walk through the building and people call me honourable. Go figure. This is a very strange business.

I need to take a very special moment to offer my wife, Veronica, and my two children, Claudia and Jack, all the love and support and thanks that I can give them. It's been a very long year, as everybody knows who has done this process, and I would not have made it without them. I thank you sincerely for being with me. I also want to thank my wife for kicking me out of bed every morning. It really helped. It worked.

I need to thank more than 75 volunteers, Mr. Speaker, who believed in me and worked tirelessly day and night on my campaign. There are times when all of us know how it is to continue on with the process in the face of all the challenges we're met with on the campaign trail, and without those volunteers I would not be standing here today. I need to say to them: thank you. They are the very best.

I would also like to thank the voters of Edmonton-McClung. Those people have put their trust in me to be their MLA, and they have voted for me to help them represent their views inside this government as we work toward creating a positive and exciting future for all Alberta. I am very excited and humbled by their trust, and I am delighted to be here to work for them and the people of Alberta. As I said in my campaign, there is nothing more important than having somebody say, "You have my support," and I will always work very hard to continue earning that trust.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank our Premier, who led this campaign with class and dignity. We never got mired down in any kind of name-calling. We discussed issues. We told Albertans what we believed and where we were going. They believed in that vision, and they voted overwhelmingly for this government to return to this House to lead them for the 25th Legislature. It's been an outstanding campaign, and I am grateful to be part of this Progressive Conservative team.

Our purpose here this afternoon is to address the eloquent throne speech given by the Lieutenant Governor on Tuesday, April 10. Much of what Her Honour spoke of was the same vision I share, a vision of no debt, low taxes, reliable social programs, jobs for our young people, and a strong economy. All of these noble endeavours are why I became involved in politics. I hope it is my belief and commitment toward keeping Alberta the best place to live, work, and do business in Canada that the people of Edmonton-McClung recognized and entrusted me to bring to this government.

The Lieutenant Governor mentioned that this work we are doing toward achieving the vision begins with strong economic and fiscal planning. Nowhere is that more evident and more prevalent than in this province of Alberta. We are one of the strongest economies in Canada, if not the strongest. We continue to grow and prosper despite economic slowdowns faced by other jurisdictions, and we will continue to be the strongest growing economy in all of North America.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, my hometown, the great city of Edmonton, is poised for some of the strongest growth of any city in Canada. We anticipate growth in the neighbourhood of 5 percent, and I look forward to working toward that very, very enviable goal. As development in the north continues, everything from oil sands, gas, and tourism continues to boom, and Edmonton is poised to assist in that growth. It is our responsibility to serve as the gateway to the north and be an invaluable source of business resources and information to those communities. I will endeavour as the Minister of Economic Development to ensure that I do everything within my power to continue that growth pattern.

MR. SMITH: Hear, hear.

MR. NORRIS: Thank you, Murray. [interjection] What a Chamber.

Across the province we are planning for growth in tourism, and I know that if my colleague from Banff-Cochrane were here, we'd be hearing the same thing. We are planning for growth in tourism, large growth in tourism. Alberta's fourth largest industry is tourism. Our goal, with the help of the very wonderful resources that have been given to us by God, is to take this 4 and a half billion dollar industry to \$6 billion by the year 2005.

Aggressive marketing and strong partnerships with the tourism industry and Ivan Strang will help us toward that goal.

Speaker's Ruling
Referring to the Absence of Members
Referring to Members by Name

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I'd just like to take the opportunity to say a number of things to new members. One is that we do not refer to the presence or absence, particularly the absence, of hon. members. You can refer to them but not to the fact that they may or may not be here. They may be in their office or whatever.

We do refer to one another by our constituency names, not our given names.

MR. NORRIS: Thank you for that input, Mr. Speaker. If you've followed my career to date, I've made a habit of putting my foot in my mouth, and today is no different. I will attempt to move on.

3:20

Debate Continued

MR. NORRIS: Mr. Speaker, Alberta's success rate is a result of the hard work of Albertans, many of whom work in small businesses throughout the province, and the great leadership of this government. It is also a result of their trust in government to create an environment that fosters prosperity and investment. As someone who only a few short weeks ago was reliant on a small business to support my family, I can assure you that I have the intimate appreciation of the needs of small businesspeople throughout this province, and I will continue to work to meet their needs.

There is no doubt that growth causes its own pressures, and in Alberta we are faced with some of those pressures due to outstanding and phenomenal growth. I was pleased to see in the throne speech that some of these pressures, such as roads and infrastructure, were going to be addressed and noted that the government will continue to respond with programs such as twinning of the north/south corridor and the \$1 billion three-year commitment to build or modernize schools.

Clearly our focus is addressed where it should be, and I am proud to be part of this team. Addressing these types of pressures is important, not only in meeting the immediate needs of Albertans but in continuing to improve our quality of life. We also make the province a more attractive place for things such as trade, investment, and tourism, and that helps ensure our long-term prosperity and continues to make Alberta the very best place in the world to live, work, and do business.

It is that future as a result of our prosperity that Her Honour referred to in her reference to the Future Summit. The Future Summit will give Albertans a voice in charting a course for a future as a debt-free province. I am very pleased to have been asked to be part of the organizing committee for the Future Summit. I look forward to working with the other ministries – Revenue, Finance, and Community Development – and the Alberta Economic Development Authority to make this summit one of growth and vision for all Albertans. [some applause] Thank you, hon. member.

The general theme of the summit is to develop a plan for what a debt-free Alberta will look like. The summit starts from that fiscal perspective, but as noted in the throne speech, a good fiscal plan and solid economy allow the province to address quality of life issues. Therefore, economic development issues will be a vital component of the summit discussions. That will be my primary focus as Economic Development minister. The Future Summit will give our government and all Albertans a chance to hear what people's priorities are for the future direction of this province and its wonderful growth.

Mr. Speaker, those who know me know that I am a family man. Family is no doubt the most important thing in my life, as I'm sure it is in all members' lives. I believe its one's love of family that fosters the love of our communities, and that in turn makes our communities a better place to live and grow. I think this philosophy is something that was taught to me very directly by my father, who also served the residents of Edmonton through public service as an alderman from 1977 to 1986. I believe the citizens of Edmonton were better served for that service. I would also like to acknowledge him and thank him for giving me the gift of public service.

Being an Edmontonian, I can't help but recall the sentiments of Grant MacEwan, who always espoused the very, very simple philosophy that you should try to leave the world a better place than when you got here. Those very simple words I believe, Mr. Speaker, are why we are all here. It is something that guides my actions and activities every day.

As I begin my public service, I want to assure you that I will work

to serve all members of this Assembly, the constituents of Edmonton-McClung, and the people throughout the province of Alberta to the best of my abilities. It has been an outstanding month since the general election, and I must tell the members of this House that if you asked me to write a job description for how I'd like to spend the next 10 years of my life, I could not write a better job description. The people I work with are outstanding. The goals and admiration that I have for people in this House are second to none, and I believe sincerely that this 25th Legislative Assembly will accomplish great, great things for the province of Alberta.

I wish to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this privilege of speaking today, and God bless all Alberta.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The chair would like to apologize to the hon. member for interrupting him in his maiden speech. I hope you will forgive me for that.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to start my response to the throne speech by congratulating those who were elected. It's not easy to run for public office. It's very hard work. It's a great commitment from families. I appreciate and I honour all of those who were successful. I also grieve for those who were not successful. We've lost some good people in this House. I miss them dearly, and I would like to thank them for the service they gave while they were in this House. They weren't re-elected, but that doesn't diminish the service they provided while they were here with us.

I join others in congratulating the Speaker on his election and the other officers that we've elected to guide this Assembly. I would also like to make mention of the table officers who join us and who are of such assistance to us at all times: unfailingly gentle, although at times we probably deserve a firmer hand.

Now, here we are at the beginning of the 25th Legislature, and it's interesting listening to the debate that has gone on here over the past couple of days. Certainly I acknowledge that the Progressive Conservative Party has formed the government with 74 seats. That's overwhelming. But I caution my hon. colleagues on the other side that that is not all of Alberta that was speaking there. I think it comes out to about 30 percent of all Albertans, and that needs to be kept in mind. As legislators we have not captured all of those who were eligible to vote, and that's something we all need to work on. What is it that we're not doing that we have such low voter turnout? If only 50 percent of the people that are eligible to vote are voting, we're not doing something right, and we need to look to that.

So we do have a significant portion of eligible voting Albertans who did not support the current government. It's my job as a member of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition to hold this government accountable, to raise the issues that the government may not want raised or perhaps doesn't think important, but some Albertans do, and I will raise those issues for them.

I'm not sure what the mandate this government was running on was about because I really didn't hear any policy articulated during the election. I heard a lot of announcements of money, and that's fine. If that's the indicator of what their policy is, fine. I didn't hear that policy articulated specifically, but I did see billions and billions of dollars that were allocated that had not been scrutinized by this Legislative Assembly. I think that is something we need to look to: not approving money much after the fact but approving it before it's spent and scrutinizing it on behalf of all Albertans.

I did hear the platform being put forward about "proven," but I think there are a couple of different takes on that record. Certainly when I talk to the people in my constituency, they talked about it

being proof of being back in the business of being in business when they looked at various loans and losses in business support that this government had provided to large corporations here in Alberta like Al-Pac or the Prince Rupert grain terminal, West Edmonton Mall, Bovar, Millar Western. People still remember that, and I think it's a caution that we all need to keep in mind.

A number of people were very, very distressed that they had spoken clearly and loudly to the government with their concerns over the Health Care Protection Act, which at the time was known as Bill 11, and were deeply offended when the government not only insulted them by calling them left-wing nuts but didn't listen and didn't react to what was being said. We need to keep in mind that those people were coming forward with deeply held beliefs. Certainly in Alberta to have people motivated to come out to the Assembly and hold a demonstration speaks very loudly indeed.

3:30

I think "proven" also has meant in many cases that it's government behind closed doors, and I've often spoken in this Assembly about that. We have more legislation being passed that has huge referrals back to the regulations, and regulations, as we know, are not passed through the Law and Regulations Committee in this Assembly. I don't think the Law and Regulations Committee has been called probably in my lifetime, which I think is a real drawback. There's a lot to be said for all-party committees working in the Legislative Assembly. It would probably get rid of some of the confusion and high temper that we see in the Assembly at times if that was able to be discussed more openly.

"Proven" has also meant to me less time in this Legislative Assembly. I'm sure almost everyone in here has heard remarks about: "Well, you know, you get holidays for eight months of the year. You're only in this Assembly for barely four months." Again, I question that. I think there's more that needs to be discussed and debated here. This is the citizens' avenue to having their points of view heard and their issues raised. We should be spending more time in this House, not less.

"Proven" also meant more user fees and licences and tariffs, and I've spoken about that in this House previously as well. Yes, taxes have been reduced, but if you had your taxes at a thousand dollars and they've been reduced to \$800 out of one pocket but you have 900 bucks worth of user fees, tariffs, and licences that are coming out of your other pocket, you know, you're not really further ahead here, folks. I think we have to be honest. When we look at taxes, we also have to look at all of those other fees that people are now paying that have been put into play by this government.

So I read the throne speech with great interest: what was now being put forward as a policy or as a program to be followed. Certainly the economy takes up the largest single section in the throne speech, and that may well be appropriate. It's certainly a very high priority for this government, as demonstrated in the past. I think the discussion about a diversified economy is excellent. We've been trying to achieve that for some time, I think through the last three different Premiers, and it's been some struggle to achieve it. Obviously, in Alberta, with such a strong resource base in the oil sector, we need to continue to work on that.

It also talks about jobs, and I think we have to be careful here. Government doesn't create jobs. The only jobs that government creates are those in their own bureaucracy. Beyond that, I'm assuming you're trying to give an economic platform that attracts small business to grow and thrive. Certainly we know that small business is the biggest generator of new jobs in the sector, but I think the government has to be very careful about not promising that they

are creating jobs. They're not. We have to rely on the economy for that.

I read about fiscal plans. Excellent. I would like to see much more planning on behalf of this government and certainly much more of putting that plan out well in advance so it can be seen by Albertans and debated by Albertans. Certainly we could use an improvement on the past record of those increasing costs with user fees and licences, et cetera.

I would ask the government to please work harder on strong, solid performance measurements, particularly ones that stay in place from year to year. As Albertans and as members of the opposition look at that budget and scrutinize it – and we've all moved to a system where we are looking at performance measurements – there's not much to measure when you're changing your performance measurements every year. You can't go back and compare on how you did the year before. I think we're all missing out on a very good and productive tool here.

Better management overall. I've heard now that we've put more money back into health care than where the system was in 1995, but the waiting lists are still longer than they were before. So there's a disconnect here and still a serious problem. I think my colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods would also argue that there's lots of money going back into the school system, but we're still having trouble with results, with literacy, with numeracy, and with the ability for children to move ahead and have a full and productive life. Certainly it's been a concern of mine, and I've already raised questions in the Assembly about the use of the utilization rate in school closures. I really don't think that it moves us further forward to be closing schools in the inner city or putting the school boards in the position of having to do that in order to justify expenditures of new schools in other parts of the city. It shouldn't be playing one off against another.

Also, in the throne speech I see modern transportation, safety of roads and highways. Definitely. I think anyone could support that, and we all know that even the Auditor General was on the government's case for deferring maintenance on highways. Maintenance has to be a regularly scheduled expense. We can't not do it for five years and think you can put the same amount in and end up with the same quality and safety of your roads and highways.

I continue to have a concern about the north/south trade corridor in that it does seem to be set up in a way that it bypasses Edmonton. As Edmonton is still the gateway to the north, I do express concerns on that, and I would be happy to have any member from the other side prove me wrong on that one, but so far that has not happened.

I notice that the government is putting a lot of weight on the 2001 World Championships in Athletics. Actually, they seem to be expecting everything from it. The actual section reads:

The government will continue to provide business and investment programs, especially in conjunction with the 2001 World Championships in Athletics. These programs will focus on the strategic benefits of investing in Alberta and demonstrate the province's diverse and world-class energy, petrochemical, forest and building products, agriculture and food, tourism, and information and communications technology sectors.

Yowza. All of that in 10 days. Wow. They're expecting an awful lot to come from that 10 days.

I think it's a great opportunity for Edmonton. My ongoing concern about that – and I've raised it a number of times with the previous Minister of Community Development – is an expectation that the local professional arts community will be promoted through this. Certainly we would like to see community arts groups involved, but we have an astounding professional arts community here in Edmonton and throughout Alberta, and that should be showcased as well. I note that no money that came from the

province was tied specifically to the funding of that, which I think was a serious mistake, but they may well have risen above that, and I look forward to the games this summer.

The energy market and the energy free market. Well, I think the two sides are just going to agree to disagree on this one, although I will point out that even the Premier has now admitted that we're not going to see prices go back to where they were before, so I still question why we got into electrical deregulation. That was supposed to be the point, but I guess we're not going back there.

I have a concern around the promotion of new generation and, particularly, streamlining the approval process, in that in my riding we have right now an application before the Energy and Utilities Board on the Rosedale power plant and potentially having three turbines added to that plant, which was to be decommissioned in the year 2000. Certainly it was not anticipated in any city planning or in the area redevelopment plan that we would now have a new and three times as large power plant in the centre of our city. My concern around this streamlining of the approval process is that there be no interference with the application and the intervenors who have raised points to the EUB around the Rosedale plant. Essentially, how does the EUB, which is a regulatory body, operate in a deregulated marketplace? I think that's something that needs to be clearly outlined. Also, how does the EUB operate with the Government Advisory Council on Electricity? Will the EUB be able to make unimpeded decisions on the Rosedale plant and others?

There have been a number of issues that have arisen around electricity deregulation in Edmonton-Centre. I've already raised the issue of discrimination against those living in single-metered high-rise apartments and condominiums. This has been significant for those people. They both had a much higher rate to pay under a regulated rate option and received lower rebates. They also received lower rebates for the gas rebates. That has been adjusted at this point, and time will tell whether it's been successful.

3:40

The second thing that happened around that was there was no competition. These buildings were each told: "Well, that's okay. There are 18 different suppliers out there. You can go and get a competitive bid from all of that, and you'll end up with a lower price to pay for your electricity." Wrong. They were too small a user to be able to attract bids from those 18 different power plants. In fact, they were down to just the two, Enmax and EPCOR, and in Edmonton that meant EPCOR, so now we had a monopoly happening. There was no competition involved in that.

The government has also talked about stable agricultural communities. I'm certainly pleased to see some movement on the intensive livestock proposals. I think that's really important not only for the rural areas but for all of Alberta. I am concerned about a long-term strategy for the agricultural sector, and I look forward to more debate and ideas being shared. If there's anywhere that needs to be thinking outside of the box, I think that would be it.

A clean environment is obviously of great importance to many Albertans. It consistently comes up fourth in a priority for constituents that live in Edmonton-Centre.

Responsive health care. Obviously, I'm glad to see the government keeping to its promise, finally, to elect board members for regional health authorities, and it appears that we are indeed keeping 17 regional health authorities, but I am still concerned about how we address diagnostic queue-jumping other than saying don't do it. We need other things in place. I'm looking for more by way of prevention and more to address the waiting lists, and that doesn't mean more money. That means smarter. That means better management.

That means better planning. Health care is consistently the second key issue for constituents of Edmonton-Centre.

The third key issue is education and lifelong learning. In particular, I'm going to single out postsecondary education. There are a lot of students who live in Edmonton-Centre. They go to NAIT, they go to Grant MacEwan Community College, they go to Alberta College, NorQuest, the university, and these people are really struggling. While I appreciate that there are additional scholarship programs being put in place, those scholarships really only apply to a very small number of people. We are not addressing the overall problem of that intergenerational transfer of debt that has happened onto students' shoulders in this province, and that indeed is what happened. Supposedly we were getting rid of our debt here so that we didn't transfer that debt, but we did it instantly. When we've got students coming out of university programs with a \$50,000 debt, that is instant intergenerational debt transference.

As well, I think there needs to be a look at student finance. Certainly the way it's set up now, there's an expectation in the budgeting for student finance that a student would only pay \$359 for rent and utilities. I challenge you to find some place that you can stay in any centre in Alberta that has a postsecondary educational institution for \$359 including utilities. A lot of students don't qualify for student finance. They have to get it through a regular bank loan, which is, again, the same problem. They end up with a huge debt load.

Under Safe, Strong Communities there's talk about a Future Summit. You know, I really see this as another move to separate people's representation from people. It is separating the Legislature from policymaking, the spending of tax dollars. That disconnect that I talked about when I began this, between people and politicians, widens with this sort of endeavour. We all noticed in the campaign, I think, the number of single-issue campaigns that were running as a corollary to us, and there's a reason for that. It's because people are beginning to question whether they're getting their voices heard in here, and I think that with the reduced hours, with more decision-making behind closed doors, it's increasing that disconnect between people and their representatives. When they have budgeting and financial planning that's done by a sort of mail-in multiple choice and they don't see what they've said represented in that, we are contributing to that feeling that they're not being represented by people.

I'd like to talk now about what's not in this Speech from the Throne. I don't see anything in there about employment standards and labour relations, which are sadly lacking in this province. We need a lot of work on that, including a look at the WCB.

Again, I talk about real support for the arts, not just sort of as a nice thing for the tourists to see when they come to the world games or photo opportunities for tourism brochures but real support for it. That sector is still operating on 1988 dollars and has not even had a cost of living increase. In particular, what I'm hearing now is that the PASOs, the provincial art service organizations, are in trouble. Those are the organizations that took over many of the programs the government used to offer.

So I'm looking forward to an opportunity to bring up the rest of the issues I have.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Next is the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

MR. LORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to be able to participate in this discussion today with regards to the Speech from the Throne, and I rise in this esteemed Chamber with pride and,

I must admit, a little trepidation since this is my maiden speech.

I would like to start by first and foremost taking this singular opportunity as a new member of the 25th Legislature, the first Legislature after the first election of the new millennium, to thank the people of Calgary-Currie for their vote of confidence in our party and in me and, further, to thank my wife, Patty, my family, and my invaluable campaign volunteers, who did so much to help me gain that vote, without whom I certainly would not have this position today. It is an important position, that of MLA, and is a privilege and honour and a heavy responsibility indeed all rolled up into one but certainly a privilege and an honour and a responsibility that I intend to take very, very seriously and hope to prove worthy of.

Secondly, let me say, Mr. Speaker, that I would like to add my voice to those of so many others in congratulating you on your recent re-elections: first, in your re-election to this Chamber and now, once again, on your re-election to the prestigious office of, in your case, Deputy Speaker. As well, through you, let me extend my congratulations to all of my colleagues here today and to all the hon. members of this Legislature on their recent election success as well. I look forward to working with you and each and every other member of this Legislature. As well, I would like to say that I look forward to working with all the very helpful, exceptionally friendly, and very important support staff of this Legislature: the people who toil so hard in the background on our behalf with so little recognition.

Let me just say that I'm looking forward to working with all of you in the months and years ahead in the service of the people of Alberta, as we look to continuing on behalf of the citizens of Alberta our own local brand of triple E government here in Alberta. I use a slightly different definition than the one that was presented yesterday by my hon. colleague from Calgary-Fort, so I guess I am now presenting the third definition of triple E – the triple triple E definition – effective, efficient, and ethical government, government that currently is and will be even more so setting the gold standard benchmark for so many others and governance that is making us all so very proud to be living here in this great province of Alberta.

I like what I have heard in the throne speech, Mr. Speaker. I like the vision, the aspirations, and the ideals that have been so eloquently expressed therein. I like the challenges that such a grand statement places before us all, commitments that are very worth while indeed, and for those I thank Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor for her directions and thoughts so eloquently expressed.

I also thank especially our hon. Premier for his guidance and leadership in helping us to develop these aspirations and more importantly for his able direction in putting these thoughts into action as he steers and stays the course towards continuing success and an even more positive future than Albertans have already been able to enjoy to this point.

I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that the messages contained in the Speech from the Throne will be well received in Calgary-Currie, because Calgary-Currie is a riding whose people are familiar with change, since they have seen so much of it, and who understand and appreciate innovation, leadership, straight talk, and more importantly action on the issues. I can say this because I have been working in the riding now for 18 years and can even say that I was actually born in the riding. So I certainly have had the opportunity to get to know and to appreciate and to call my friends a great number of the people living in the area over the years. They are without doubt some of the finest people that you would ever meet anywhere.

3:50

I'd like to tell you and all our hon. colleagues a little more about

Calgary-Currie, Mr. Speaker, if I could ask for your indulgence to allow me to brag a little bit. In terms of population Calgary-Currie today is a riding that has one of the highest percentages of young adults living in rented premises in the city of Calgary, young people who are filled with the energy, aspirations, ideals, and high-tech knowledge of so many of our young people today but who also tend to have very little money and are very concerned about things like rent prices.

Calgary-Currie today also has a much larger than average percentage of more senior individuals with their irreplaceable wisdom and the experience and the patience that can only come with the seasoning of many years. But a lot of them, sad to say, Mr. Speaker, also have very little money and are vulnerable in many other ways as well.

We also have just about everything in between, Mr. Speaker, with young and old living side by side, with rich and poor, lots of solid family people and lots of singles, young children and empty nesters, professionals, and salt-of-the-earth folk, all working with each other to build a safer, stronger, and more caring community. It is clear that Calgary-Currie today is an area that is succeeding in the face of all this contrast, succeeding in not just meeting change but capitalizing on it as we move ahead.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

Speaking of change and of building, it is truly amazing how fast new building is taking place in Calgary-Currie, Mr. Speaker, particularly on the lands which used to belong to the Canadian forces base, the lands surrounding Currie barracks, from which Calgary-Currie got its name. This area in Calgary-Currie is home to what I understand is the largest urban renewal development project of its type in North America, as these former CFB lands are starting to fill up with all these new families in new houses. It makes for a curious and eclectic blend in the district. As these new constituents look out from their luxurious new homes, some of the most expensive new homes in Calgary, across the streets and across the district are some of the oldest, most famous, and most significant heritage homes in all of Calgary, because Calgary-Currie is also one of the most significant historic districts in all of Calgary, with about 2,700 of our buildings having been built before 1946 and 6,735 of them having been built before 1960.

Now that we are in the new century, Mr. Speaker, looking back at our past heritage and forward to a positive future, it seems that Calgary-Currie has all the necessary ingredients and essentials to fit in perfectly with this theme of old meeting new as a model community in Alberta, a melting pot of bubbling vibrancy and diversity and energy, which it certainly is, filled with thinking people who are passionate about the issues and who come from all walks of life, people such as Paul Jefferies, two-time world champion tattoo artist, Austin Hook, owner of the oldest retail computer store in the world, Peter Papisideris, certainly one of the world's greatest living marksmen, and many, many other interesting, successful, and eclectic people as well. This is Calgary-Currie today.

Now, besides interesting people, we also have some very important institutions in Calgary-Currie. Calgary-Currie is proud to be the location for Mount Royal College, already one of the most important postsecondary educational institutions in our province and certainly an ambitious institution focused on lifelong learning concepts with major expansion plans assuring them of an even more positive future as well and an even better reputation than they already have.

We also have an exciting, fairly new addition to Calgary-Currie with the headquarters of the film industry in Alberta located in the riding, an industry that I have a solid background in myself person-

ally and thus will be taking a great interest in as well. We have a thriving arts and culture environment, a thriving small business backbone in areas such as the Marda Loop, which boasts an attendance upwards of 30,000 people at their increasingly popular Mardi Gras/Summerfest each year, as well as many other attractions throughout the district. In all, we have a lot to build and a lot to build on in Calgary-Currie.

But it isn't all positive news in Calgary-Currie, Mr. Speaker. Crime is a very big concern, as it is a big concern to all Albertans, so I am glad to hear the initiatives mentioned in the Speech from the Throne on this subject. Aging infrastructure, social issues, affordable housing: these are all particularly acute concerns in Calgary-Currie. The greatest recent concern is the announcement in the media that five of the seven elementary schools in the district may be closed this year, including King Edward school, where William Aberhart was the first principal. It is an announcement that has stunned and shocked many people in the riding, myself included, and it is an announcement that has many people wondering what possible reasoning could be behind such a decision, again, myself included.

In the face of all this major revitalization, in the face of this urban renewal, in the face of an estimated 10,000 people moving into the area in the next few years, people are wondering why they're suddenly having to see their schools considered for closure. This is coming on the heels of a lot of other bad news in the riding – it's not bad news, but it is for Calgary-Currie – over the past few years, most recently the relocation of the Children's hospital, currently located in Calgary-Currie, which has been such a pride and badge of honour to the community for the past many years.

I would not want, Mr. Speaker, to give the impression that Calgary-Currie doesn't have a few issues to which my constituents are demanding answers. I know from experience that my constituents can be very loud in their demands, having represented many of them for the past two terms on Calgary city council as their alderman. I am well aware of their expectations of me in this regard, and as their representative I am certainly going to be fighting hard on their behalf to address these concerns. I'm also very mindful of the strong leadership and representation that these communities have had over almost the past century and of the sort of expectations that Calgary-Currie constituents will therefore have for me and for their future as a result.

Mr. Speaker, when I talk about the proud history of this riding, may I just say that Calgary-Currie has had in the past and still has to this day some of the most important political names in Alberta history counted among the citizens who have lived or are still living within the districts bounded by the borders of Calgary-Currie, including many names that are well known in this Chamber to all of you. Beyond politics in Calgary-Currie we're also very proud to have some of Alberta's most important and well-known citizens from virtually every walk of life calling our district home.

I have very big shoes to fill, Mr. Speaker, and a high road to follow, which, I must say, makes the challenge before me all the more exciting and daunting all at the same time, one in which I truly hope and trust that I can rely a great deal on everyone here for advice, for consideration, and for your experienced guidance in helping me to address these and many other issues as well on behalf of my constituents.

Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, this is an opportune moment to speak a little about what I have worked on in the past and what issues I hope to focus on for my constituents now that I have been given this opportunity to serve at this level of government. During my tenure on city council I worked very hard on a great number of issues, and I like to think that I enjoyed some success at it, as perhaps evidenced by my presence here today. These issues remain of concern and of

interest to my constituents and therefore are especially of concern and interest to me. Since there are so many of them, I won't list them all here, but let me just talk a moment about some of them.

Having been a small business entrepreneur my entire working life, signing the front of a paycheck since I was 18, I was often referred to as the voice of small business on Calgary city council, and small business, believe me, needs all the voices it can get. I emphasize the words "small business" too, although since approximately 75 percent of all businesses have five employees or less and in fact 95 percent have 50 employees or less, the reality is that numerically almost all business is small business. The quality of the environment that we create for microbusiness entrepreneurs in this province to start up new companies, to translate their dreams into reality, and to succeed against the daunting odds any new business faces is of paramount consideration in my mind and vital to continually review, if we are to create a better quality of life for all Albertans. There is a lot of work that needs to be done in this area at every level of government.

I also had opportunity, while on council, to work on a lot of high-technology and environmental issues, particularly in introducing high-technology solutions and creative approaches to problem solving, and problem solving is what I like to do most in life. I hope that this government, as excellent as it is, has still left me one or two problems that I can get involved with so that I won't be disappointed there.

4:00

Speaking of problem solving, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to let all of you know that I'm also very pleased to be part of a new team here of exceptionally capable, brand-new MLAs. I'm speaking in particular about exceptionally capable six brand-new MLAs who are located on the third floor of the Annex Building. I am very confident that we are soon going to be dazzling all of you with our brilliance and innovative new ideas. You might say a new Department of Solutions, so to speak. We haven't quite decided on the name yet. I am calling us the bright lights on 3, but I am sure that all of you will very soon be impressed; no doubt about it.

And speaking of a better idea from the bright lights on 3, let me just start with one little one here, Mr. Speaker. When I first came into this esteemed Chamber on orientation day, the first thing I noticed, believe it or not, was the 600 light bulbs on the ceiling here, and I remember discussing how difficult it was to change them: clearing the Chamber, putting up scaffolding, and so on. I also noticed that they are incandescent bulbs, not the compact fluorescent bulbs, which look almost the same, give off the same light, but use 70 percent less electricity and last 10 times longer. So I wondered: why aren't they? Better yet, if we were to use the latest light-emitting diode technology, which uses almost no electricity at all in comparison to incandescents and which is expected to last for decades without replacement, it seems to me we could save the taxpayers a lot of money and have the opportunity to show leadership in energy conservation concepts right here in this Chamber.

Now, I may not be the first to suggest this idea, but maybe I could further suggest another idea. We could calculate the savings we could get, including the scaffolding avoidance savings, and leverage these funds even further by awarding the savings in an annual bursary or prize to the student or other individual in Alberta who comes up with the best energy conservation project each year.

So there is an opportunity or an idea for consideration, Mr. Speaker, in an important area for Albertans and this government, energy conservation. In fact, the whole area of energy conservation, ideas, expertise, and technology strikes me as one of the areas that Alberta is perfectly positioned in to develop as a major export. Instead of the past, olden-day ways of just being hewers of wood and

drawers of water and drillers of oil and gas, why not really get behind fostering an even bigger transformation from what we are already seeing in this province, a transformation from energy production to full energy management across the spectrum, becoming a hub of the world's leading energy conservationist experts, products, technologies, and ideas?

We already have some outstanding examples here in Alberta; for example, the Alberta sustainable home in Calgary built by Jorg Ostrowski, a home so energy efficient it is almost off the municipal grid, virtually no external energy requirements at all. So we already have a few Albertans setting the pace worldwide. Let's promote this.

I find it an exciting industry to contemplate, Mr. Speaker. I'm one of those who has always looked for the silver lining in the dark cloud, which is why I have always looked at the Kyoto agreement as probably one of the world's biggest business opportunities, if we can just figure out how, and I think I have a few of those ideas. Energy conservation principles are an area in which I was pleased to have played a leading role in introducing to the city of Calgary during my tenure there. The initiatives under way there now are resulting in projects that are going to save an estimated \$100 million for city of Calgary taxpayers over the next 10 years and are also expected to allow the city of Calgary to meet almost 50 percent of its entire Kyoto commitments on greenhouse gas reduction, and this is just within city buildings.

When I say that \$100 million is a drop in the bucket of what I believe could be done right across the province, I think I can now say that with some credibility, Mr. Speaker. This is why I'm very pleased to have been appointed to serve on the energy and sustainable development committee, where I hope to make a good contribution.

In conclusion, let me just say that I am very proud to be here today. I am very proud of the constituency that has given me this opportunity. I look forward to representing Calgary-Currie and achieving the goals in the Speech from the Throne in a manner which befits the very nature and substance of the great people in my community, a blend of the conservative wisdom of a district with an exceptionally proud historic past balanced against a new, enthusiastic energy that pervades the community as it looks forward to a very positive and progressive future. In short, Mr. Speaker, a Progressive Conservative constituency.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak, and God bless Alberta.

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

MR. SNELGROVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope you will forgive my nervousness today, for I should not be. I have been made to feel truly welcome in this Assembly, and it is with tremendous pride I stand before you today representing my constituency and the people of Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the encouragement and support from my family: my wife, Bev, and all my children. Particularly I would like to mention some of my key campaign organizers. Mrs. Brenda Lee, Mrs. Silvia Solay, Mrs. Sherry Stalwick, along with over 240 other volunteers and 170 different financial contributors made our campaign fun and very successful.

I, too, Mr. Speaker, would like to offer my congratulations to you on your re-election as Speaker of the House. The pride and tradition you bring is evident by your actions as you work so hard to try and integrate us new members into this wonderfully complex Assembly. I know I speak for all the new members when I ask you to convey to your staff, and indeed all the staff of the Legislative Assembly

including our assistants, our thanks for all they have done to prepare us for today and the future.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate all my fellow members, including the opposition, for we are all Albertans. Although our philosophies may differ, I know their concern for the people they serve in this great province is genuine. I look forward to working with them over the next four years.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow for the tremendous vote of confidence Albertans bestowed upon him.

The speech offered by our Lieutenant Governor has provided a clear path for the government of Alberta to take. Maintaining and building our strong economic base, coupled with providing responsive, effective, affordable health care and education systems, relevant economic, environmental, and social programs, all combined within a framework of fiscal responsibility: this combination, Mr. Speaker, will make Alberta truly the best place to live.

Mr. Speaker, I have four children, from kindergarten to grade 11. My parents are seniors, and my mother-in-law lives in a senior's manor in Vermilion. I guess you could say that I have more than a passing interest in our province's education and social programs.

Mr. Speaker, I've spent the last 25 years working with my family in several different businesses including farming, the construction industry, and a tourism and hospitality business. I know these sectors are all very important to the Alberta economy. I hope to bring to government my business philosophy. Simply stated: we must be adaptable and efficient, we must be able to foresee change, and we must be able to build strength from diversity. I share the vision this government has put forward in its throne speech, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to attain it.

Mr. Speaker, nowhere is the Alberta advantage more obvious than in Lloydminster, where the incredible oil and gas prices and a booming retail market have the city bursting at its seams. This tremendous growth has the existing infrastructure, in both human services and utilities, stretched to the limit. It is a problem that many cities and towns would love to have, but it still comes with a tremendous cost.

Yet, Mr. Speaker, less than a half hour from the city, many small communities scratch and claw to try and preserve their way of life. The loss of many of our country elevators, the consolidation of our service centres and our machinery dealers, and a grain industry devastated by years of rising input costs and low commodity prices have left many of these communities with no longer the financial capability or the population growth to support even the most basic services many of us take for granted. As stated in the throne speech, economic prosperity depends on a solid foundation. I believe that these rural communities and the populations that surround them are the bedrock of our prosperity. As a province and as a country we do a tremendous disservice to future generations if we let this way of life disappear.

4:10

Mr. Speaker, the government recognizes the value of agriculture and of the related value-added industries. However, the ongoing debate surrounding intensive livestock operations must be addressed. There are huge differences in philosophical arguments, emotional reactions, and scientific fact. I look forward to working with the government to develop a set of sound, comprehensive regulations putting both the producer and his neighbours at ease. Also, I believe the Premier showed foresight and understanding when he realigned his cabinet to better reflect the needs of this diverse province.

The Speech from the Throne spoke of the government's commitment to make strategic investments to improve the safety and

efficiency of our highways and roads. This is great news for the farmers who must haul their grain many miles now to market or to the people of Lloydminster and area who have truly found that any time and every time is train time in downtown Lloydminster.

The Speech from the Throne also made notice of the forthcoming addition to the north/south trade corridor. We must be careful to remember the importance of the east/west trade corridor that runs from Lloydminster through Edmonton and beyond to Jasper. This corridor provides more efficient access to Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia not only for the people who live in my constituency but for all the people who live along the Yellowhead highway.

I would like to commend this government's commitment to maintaining and furthering the excellence of our education system. This government has provided our learning institutions with the education delivery methods and systems to prepare Alberta's youth for the world of tomorrow. This government's commitment to increase funding to school boards to allow them to address specific issues in their jurisdictions will enhance student learning in all our schools. Mr. Speaker, success in education should not be measured by how much money we spend but by the results we get from carefully targeted spending.

The administrative offices of Lakeland College are located in Vermilion, and at this time I would like to congratulate the chairman of the board, Mr. Bill Kondro, and its president, Dr. Mark Lee, for they have been instrumental in guiding Lakeland College to its current place as a leader in the fields of agriculture and environmental sciences, business and computer studies, the trades and technologies, and many others.

Located near Lakeland College in Vermilion is the Alberta Fire Training School. Under the management of Mr. Don Gnatiuk this renowned institution has earned the reputation of being a world-class facility and has been responsible for the graduation of many well-educated and well-trained firefighters and EMTs. As well, the Alberta Fire Training School has been designated network manager for the delivery of municipal, industrial, and disaster services training for the province of Alberta.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, Alberta Community Development is currently working with a group in Vermilion to develop an Alberta fire museum and interpretive centre, which will complement both the school and the community. By the year 2005 Vermilion will be able to boast not only one of the world's most advanced and successful firefighting schools but a state-of-the-art, interactive educational fire museum and interpretive centre.

Mr. Speaker, this government's support for agricultural societies and other programs has facilitated the building and operation of many community halls and seniors' and recreation centres, and they are truly the glue that holds these small communities together. Islay and Clandonald are both small communities in my constituency that have recently revamped or rebuilt their community halls, and they are a great example of the partnership that is important in these communities. Last Friday we turned the sod for the new Vic Juba community theatre in the city of Lloydminster.

Mr. Speaker, as the new Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster I have heard many times that I'll be working in the shadow of my honourable predecessor, Dr. Steve West. On the contrary, I feel we are working under the brightest shining lights of the most prosperous province of Canada. Thanks to all the members of the 24th Legislative Assembly and Dr. West. During his long and successful term Dr. West played a key role in making Alberta a stronger province. His term as Provincial Treasurer saw the government of Alberta become more efficient and prepared to tackle the challenges that lie ahead.

Never retract, never explain, never apologize, get things done, and let them howl: the battle cry of the incomparable Dr. West? No. Nellie McClung. I trust that future generations of Albertans will honour the legacy and cherish these accomplishments of a truly decent man, the Hon. Dr. Steven West.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the throne speech has given all Albertans a clear idea of what this government envisions for the future in attempts to provide Albertans with a strong economic base that can provide stable, effective, and affordable government in the future. I for one can hardly wait to be a part of it.

Thank you.

REV. ABBOTT: Mr. Speaker, it is with the greatest of respect and awe that I rise to address this 25th Legislative Assembly, and I begin with my heartfelt congratulations to the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, and the Deputy Chairman of Committees on your elections as Speakers. Already, in the few short weeks I've had to get to know you three gentlemen, I can honestly say that the members have chosen wisely. I was glad to see that Mr. Speaker did not put up too much resistance when the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition walked him up to that big chair.

Now, I'd also like to thank Her Honour Lieutenant Governor Lois Hole for the excellent presentation of the Speech from the Throne on February 12 and again on April 10, 2001. My mother attended the swearing-in ceremony held on April 3, and she commented on Her Honour's kind mannerism and the genuine sincerity that she felt from our Lieutenant Governor at that great occasion as well.

AN HON. MEMBER: That's true.

REV. ABBOTT: Yes, it is.

Now, as I stand before this House on behalf of the almost 30,000 residents of the Drayton Valley-Calmar constituency, I know that they would want me to invite all Albertans to come and visit our beautiful riding. Within our approximately 200 kilometres by 80 kilometres borders you will find a flurry of activity, including agriculture, oil and gas, mining and forestry, retail trade, professional and other services, and golf courses.

We are like a small Alberta within Alberta. We boast a diversified economy that is currently booming beyond our wildest expectations. In fact, the average family income back at the 1995 census was just over \$50,000 per year, and it has grown steadily since then under this current government's programs and principles.

Now, because our diverse constituency is so reflective of our entire province, every initiative that this government undertakes will be of great interest and of great importance to us. We are used to enjoying a high standard of living in a province that is determined and built by its citizens, not by its government. We believe in more personal freedoms, in individual initiative, and in financial responsibility.

[The Speaker in the chair]

As was outlined in the Speech from the Throne, we too envision a province with low taxes and no debt, a province that lives within its means and that presents balanced budgets with affordable spending on priority programs and services.

Now, in Drayton Valley-Calmar we, like the rest of Alberta, have a very good population balance of young and elderly, so a good education system and a good health care system will be high priorities for us in this mandate. Like our neighbouring constituencies around us we want to ensure a positive future for our children in a modern and safe school building that is well staffed. We want

state-of-the-art technology in our hospitals and long-term care facilities to help our seniors. We want good roads to move our oil and gas and forestry products. We want commonsense government with no waste and no frills.

Now, the farmers of Drayton Valley-Calmar want to be valued and respected for the important work they do. It seems sometimes that farmers in other countries are appreciated more than farmers in our country. We must never forget that farmers are the lifeline to everything else we do as a province, for without food hospitals and schools and even roads are not much good. High input costs and low commodity prices are currently squeezing the farmers of Drayton Valley-Calmar, and we need this government to not only lobby the federal government but also to share the Alberta advantage with those who created it in the first place. Now, I'm pleased to see that the throne speech has addressed this issue by pledging to implement insights from Ag Summit 2000.

4:20

Another real issue that we face in Drayton Valley-Calmar along with the rest of the province, I believe, is that of single-parent or no-parent families. We are so blessed to have a good Children's Services ministry and many excellent professionals and employees that serve therein, but now it seems that the rest of the professional sectors are running ahead of any wage or staffing increases to this important government department. During this mandate we envision the government increasing Children's Services' funding as well as continuing to promote and support pro-family and pro-life issues.

As a former minister of a rural church I have seen firsthand the great needs that are facing Alberta families. Some of these needs cannot be fixed by money at all. Some require Albertans and this Legislative Assembly to reaffirm and strengthen our commitment to the family. Like the new Minister of Economic Development, I too am a strong family man. Good families produce good citizens. We need to protect the family and to tenaciously defend Alberta's legal definition of marriage as that of being the union between a man and a woman. We need to value and encourage two-parent families, such as we have recently done with Alberta's new personal income tax exemptions that recognize the true value of having one stay-at-home parent.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I recently read – you guys will be interested in this – that Edelman Financial Services of Fairfax, Virginia, completed a national study on the worth of the stay-at-home mother, based on the average North American salary. They compiled a list of the typical functions of a mother, such as financial manager, cook, psychologist, bus driver – 17 different occupations that a mother has. Now, the study reports that since mothers wear many hats and since a mother is on duty 24 hours a day, the typical mother deserves a full-time salary for 17 key occupational positions. Now, based on this conclusion and on the average national salaries for the 17 respective jobs, mothers should be paid just over \$508,000 per year. Actually, the editor of *Working Mother* magazine called the half million figure a little low, saying that many mothers often take on far more jobs than were covered in the Edelman study.

We need to promote strong families in Alberta, but I am not suggesting that it is only stay-at-home moms; in some cases stay-at-home dads are what is best for kids and for families. You see, it is the women of Alberta that have been starting up new small businesses as of late. It is the women who have been creating new jobs for Albertans, and we don't want to stop that. We simply want kids to be valued and cared for by a loving parent so that our province has the positive future that we have been promising.

New jobs, health, education, farms, and families – oh, yes, there are many needs, Mr. Speaker, but since 1971 the residents of my

constituency or its predecessors have repeatedly voted Progressive Conservative in election after election because they believe and have been shown that this is a good government that cares and that listens and that exercises a healthy balance between tax reduction and reinvestment into worthwhile programs and services. They have seen this current government keep their promises to Albertans, so we support these new initiatives outlined in Her Honour's Speech from the Throne. As a new MLA I relish the opportunity to help this government continue to build on the best province in Canada, and I will be doing so as I work hard for the best constituency in Alberta.

On March 12 I was both honoured and humbled that the constituents of Drayton Valley-Calmar chose me, an Evangelical Covenant Church pastor, to represent them for this current mandate. I believe they chose me, though, not just because I have lived in the riding for almost 20 years, not just because I have a background in small business and farming as well as in oil and gas and in the professional field. Rather, I believe they chose me because of my love for and understanding of ordinary people and because of my strong stands on pro-life and pro-family issues. I believe they chose me because of my promise to uphold high morals and values and because I am a fiscal conservative with a social heart.

It is difficult, Mr. Speaker, to be all things to all people, but I have promised to be visible, accountable, and accessible to the people of Drayton Valley-Calmar. I have promised to work hard to bring forward every idea and concern of our constituents. I believe that this is the time to be bold and, as our Premier said today, to think outside the box so that we can continue to make the best province in Canada even better. This is the time to embrace modern technology without forsaking proven practices in principles of the past.

In my 12 years as pastor I learned that success requires two things: a clear vision and a willingness to change anything but that vision. Our hon. Premier has a clear vision, a grand vision, and he now has 73 other team members to help shape and carry out that vision. We also have nine hon. members in total on the other side of the house to help keep us on our toes and to offer healthy debate and constructive criticism to government initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, let me say in closing that I am not so naive to think that I was chosen to represent the fine people of Drayton Valley-Calmar merely on my own merits. I believe they chose me because of the great work of my predecessor, MLA Tom Thurber, and my wonderful campaign team, my wonderful family, and because I am part of a larger team of PC MLAs with proven leadership.

Ralph Klein is truly a great leader with proven leadership, and the Tory caucus is truly a great family. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the six of us on the third floor of the Annex are fast becoming a family within a family. The bright lights on the third floor: I like it. I look forward to building many more relationships and families throughout this mandate. Alberta is a province that believes in family. Without family none of us would be here. We know that strong families give us a strong province.

Let me close with a quote from our former Alberta Treasurer and the current Leader of the Official Opposition in Ottawa, Mr. Stockwell Day. In his maiden speech to this House back on June 24, 1986, Mr. Day stated:

I am firmly committed to three essentials for a truly great society. These are faith, family, and freedom. I will support and promote all ideas and initiatives from either side of this House which embody any or all of those principles. It is my prayer that the members of this Legislature would be gripped with a desire to do what is right, not necessarily what is expedient; that we would show ourselves to be not civil masters but truly civil servants, for only out of a genuine willingness to serve do we earn the right to govern.

Now I echo those words today, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. Mr. Day ended his speech as I will also end mine. He

said, "May it be said of us in this House, 'They came here to serve.'" God bless Alberta. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. RATHGEBER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed an honour to rise as the newly elected Member for Edmonton-Calder, and I regard it as a privilege to speak to the Speech from the Throne. Before I comment on the speech, I'd like to join with the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods and pay homage to the former Member for Edmonton-Calder, a member who served in this Assembly for eight years. Prior to that he served the city of Edmonton for nine years. That is 17 years of public service. I got to know Mr. White throughout the campaign. I regard him as a gentleman, and I'd like this House to acknowledge the 17 years of public service that he committed to this city and to this province.

4:30

I'm pleased to succeed Mr. White as the Member for Edmonton-Calder. For those of you who are not familiar with my constituency, it is in the city of Edmonton. It extends from 111th Avenue on the south border to 137th Avenue on the north border, from 109 Street on the east border all the way to the western city limits. Geographically it is a large urban area by size. It is the home of 31,290 constituents and a large industrial base. It is comprised largely of working-class families but has a large percentage of senior citizens.

The history of Calder goes back to the turn of the century. Interestingly, Mr. Speaker, Calder was once a rural community and was called the village of West Edmonton. It was not until 1917 that the village of West Edmonton officially joined the city of Edmonton and became known as the Calder community.

Transportation is the history of the Calder constituency with the evolution of the CN rail yards, and transportation remains a viable part of the Calder constituency. The CN rail yards are in the very geographic centre of the Calder constituency. Moreover, Calder is home to the Via Rail terminal, the Edmonton municipal airport, and highway 2 and the Yellowhead Trail both transgress and transcend the boundaries of the Calder constituency.

I have lived and practised law in the Calder constituency since 1994.

The constituency is proud to host many active community leagues and neighbourhood associations. I'm pleased and proud to be a member of the Inglewood Community League. I must admit, Mr. Speaker, that I was not entirely familiar with all of the community neighbourhoods within the geographic boundaries of Calder until the recent electoral campaign, during which I had the privilege of visiting all of the constituents and learning more about the residents of the constituency that I now represent.

I must acknowledge that a majority of the constituents seem to be particularly happy with the way the current government has been performing. Employment opportunities remain very high within this portion of Edmonton. Taxes are comparatively low. Many of the constituents that I met knocking on the doors throughout the 28-day campaign had recently immigrated to Alberta from other parts of Canada, and they seemed to be particularly happy to find the employment opportunities that exist within our province and were especially pleased to find out that this is the only province that has no provincial sales tax. The residents of the neighbourhoods within the Calder constituency are generally satisfied with the record of this government, as is evidenced by their endorsement of my candidacy.

The Speech from the Throne delivered by the Lieutenant Governor a couple of days ago is a statement of the government's commitment to carry on with good government. It is a record of continuing

to build on the Alberta advantage. It is a vision of low taxes, no provincial debt, a strong economy, new jobs for our young people, sound infrastructure, a good and sustainable health care system, a viable education system, stable agricultural programs, safe streets and communities, and reliable social programs.

Having grown up in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, I can say that Alberta is genuinely the envy of all of Canada. Our majestic scenery, our fertile farmland, our educated and skilled labour force, our forest reserves, and of course our generous abundance of oil and gas reserves give Albertans advantages that are the envy of all Canadians. Thankfully, managing all of this, we have a government with solid fiscal goals which allow all Albertans to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams and enjoy the economic prosperity that living in this province allows.

But there are challenges, Mr. Speaker. Albertans want protection from rising energy prices. I'm pleased that both the throne speech and Bill 1, introduced by the hon. Premier, indicate the government's commitment to provide such protection. This bill will ensure that all Alberta consumers have competitive natural gas prices so that they can continue to enjoy the Alberta advantage.

There are also local issues within the Calder constituency that will need to be addressed by this Legislature. The Calder constituency is home to the now vacant Camsell hospital site. The Calder constituency, as I indicated, has a high percentage of senior citizens. Thankfully, I hope to continue to work with the Ministry of Infrastructure to develop a plan that the private sector is developing to convert the vacant site into affordable housing for senior citizens.

The Edmonton-Calder constituency is also the home of the Inland Cement factory, and the Inland Cement factory, as some hon. members, including the hon. Member for St. Albert, are aware, has recently applied to convert from natural gas to coal in its foundry operation. This, of course, causes some concern for the residents in the surrounding neighbourhoods.

I came to this position with a very simple message to the constituents who entrusted me with their support: put Edmonton-Calder back in government. I'm beginning to form good and solid relationships with the various ministries, the ministers, and their staff, and I'm confident that through hard work, co-operation, consultation all of these issues will be resolved to the satisfaction of both the government and the constituents and most importantly to the neighbourhoods which are so viable within the Calder constituency.

I'm confident and optimistic that as a government member I will be able to bring the concerns of my constituents directly to the government and that the government will be sensitive and responsive. That is the pledge that I made to the residents of Edmonton-Calder, those who entrusted me with their support on March 12. I am proud to be their representative in this House, and I'm proud to occupy this seat in this hallowed Chamber.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It wasn't my intention to speak this afternoon in reply to the Speech from the Throne, but having been afforded the opportunity, I couldn't pass it up.

First of all, let me add my congratulations and best wishes to you on your acclamation as Speaker. It's well-deserved recognition of the work that you've put in over the past four years in the previous session of this Legislature and the reputation that you have achieved for fairness and for dealing with all members of this House with equity and equanimity and the enthusiasm you bring to the whole concept of the parliamentary tradition and parliamentary structure. I for one appreciate the reputation that you're building among

parliamentarians across this country for the Alberta Legislature and for the work that you do. So I just wanted to add my congratulations and my appreciation for your election as Speaker and for your agreeing to carry on that tradition for the next four years.

I, too, am very pleased to return to this House after the election of March 12. Having experienced my first term after the 1997 election, I can say that there has been no experience in my life which brings greater satisfaction, which brings greater challenges, which I can say is such an honour and a privilege than to serve the residents of Edmonton-Whitemud and the citizens of Alberta in this Chamber and to be considered a parliamentarian, to be considered a member of the Legislature and particularly to be a member of this government under the leadership of Ralph Klein, the Member for Calgary-Elbow.

I believe that it is appropriate to address the two speeches from the throne that we've had this year as Her Honour included a reference to the earlier Speech from the Throne in the speech which she delivered on Tuesday. They addressed many of the issues that are very, very important to Edmonton-Whitemud and to all of Edmonton. This session of the Legislature, I think, is going to be a particularly important one when we address the issues of importance of Edmonton.

I am very, very pleased as well to welcome and congratulate my 10 colleagues from Edmonton who have joined us on the government side of the House for this session and who I know will not only represent their constituencies well but will represent Edmonton well in both government caucus, in cabinet, at the very many policy discussion tables and standing policy committee tables, and the very many places at which we have to bring the personality, the issues, and the perspective of Edmonton to the table as we discuss the future directions of this province. It's particularly a pleasure to have so many additional members from Edmonton on the government side of the House so that we can be so much more effective at representing Edmonton in the context of Alberta's future, not, of course, to pay any disrespect to the concept of the capital region.

4:40

The capital region has been a very important part of this process, and the Member for St. Albert, as the chairman of the capital region caucus, has served ably in bringing together the MLAs in the past session from Edmonton and from the capital region to be a cohesive group of individual legislators, bringing forward that whole combination from the capital region, and bringing the enthusiasm and the personality of the capital region to caucus and government.

I particularly wanted to mention that because the capital region of this province has been a dynamic and growing force over the last four years. One of the reasons I believe we were so successful in electing members in Edmonton and the capital region and particularly in Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert and other constituencies in the area was because of that dynamic force, because of the optimism that we have in this region, because of the growth that's happening in this region, because of the economic activity that's happening in this region, and because of the quality of life that's happening in this region. Much of that is due to the policies of this government putting in place an infrastructure and a tax regime and a business concept which allow business to grow and prosper, provide jobs to the people of the region, provide economic opportunity to people of the region, and allow us to operate within this district to provide a very, very positive future for our children.

It is sometimes ironic, I think, that much of our time as MLAs is spent dealing with constituent concerns, which are very, very important, providing access for our constituents to government, trying to solve individual problems, and dealing with the issues of

the day. That is a very, very important part of our role as members of the Legislature. But the irony is that I think most people really want us to be elected to think about the big picture and the long term, provide a sense of vision and direction to the province. So as we spend a lot of our time dealing with day-to-day issues which are exceedingly important, we must always struggle to make sure that we have the time to stop and think, the time to look at the big picture, the time to think about visionary ideas. As I look at the Speech from the Throne, I'm really pleased that we have in that speech a framework which outlines exactly those concepts.

A clean environment, Mr. Speaker, is very, very important to the people of Edmonton and to the people of this province. As we look at this province, one of the things we are probably the most proud of is our geographics – our mountains, our clean air, our clean water, our national parks and provincial parks – and our ability to enjoy our province and enjoy that clean air and clean water in a climate of sustainable, long-term development, the ability to enjoy the resources that this province provides without polluting, without destroying the province, in fact, as one of my colleagues said earlier today, with the goal of leaving this province a better place than we found it. I think that means from an environmental perspective as well as all other perspectives. So I'm pleased that in the Speech from the Throne Her Honour addressed the issue of a clean environment, made it a priority for this government in terms of where we're going in the future.

But as we talk about the future, as we talk about where we want to go in the future of this province, there can be nothing more important, Mr. Speaker, in my humble opinion than education, than talking about how we educate our children and ourselves so that we can embrace the opportunities that have been provided in a global context and we can have the ability to go out and compete in the world. We often hear that in the modern context we will have four or five different jobs during our lifetime. My dad in particular, for example, worked for 45 years for one company. He was the last fur trader to retire with the Hudson's Bay Company, 45 years with one company. That won't happen much anymore.

So when we're talking about education, we have to, I think, make sure that we talk about education in the big context, not as job training but as teaching our children or teaching ourselves how to find information, how to access information – we're in an era where there's more information available to each of us than ever before – how to discern what information is important, what information is reliable, how to analyze it. In short, education really is about teaching ourselves how to think and how to communicate, and that has to be a basis of everything we do in the education system. I think we must be very careful to separate that concept of education from job training. We often think about needing to put more money into specific programs so that we can have more technologists for information technology, or more radiology technicians to run MRIs. Those are important, but we have to think of those two in separate contexts: education and job training.

I think if we want to have the type of province where our children can grow up to have the best opportunities they can have and to go out and compete in the world, we have to value education as a concept. We have to fund education appropriately. We have to provide the resources. I'm not talking about throwing more money at it. I'm talking about looking at what the cost, the actual cost, is of providing an appropriate education, knowing what we mean by providing appropriate education, targeting those resources, and making sure that all of our children have the opportunity to get a good liberal arts education, to learn to think and distill information and communicate so that they can go on to train themselves for whatever jobs they might want to undertake.

That's extremely important, Mr. Speaker, because innovation and technology are going to be the future in this province. We've been hewers of wood and drawers of water, as we've heard earlier this afternoon. We have agriculture as a base industry, and it will be a base industry in this province for a long time. Tourism is a good industry for this province. Forestry is a good industry for this province. Our natural resources have provided a very strong base for this province, but as we move forward, we're going to have to gravitate to an information and technology-based economy. World commodity prices have shown that they're not going to hold up over the long term, and we're faced with the reality that unless we go into value added, unless we can upgrade our resources here, unless we can bring in the industry and the technology which will allow us to employ people here, we will not be able to compete in the long-term economy. So education is the basis to allow our children to be innovative, to be thinkers, and to engage in research and technology and innovation and science.

Biosciences and life sciences I think are going to be for the next 20 years what IT was for the last 10 years. It's a wonderful opportunity for our province and for our people. We have a young, well-educated population now. We can compete with any area in the world in that area. We have to continue to build on that base and provide the education so that we can build on that base.

As we're looking to the future – and that's what we campaigned on, proven leadership for a positive future – we have that positive future. That positive future is going to be there for our children if we invest in education, if we invest in technology and the sciences and provide those opportunities for our children to take advantage of.

While we're doing that, of course, we also have to ensure that the gap between those that have and those that don't have doesn't get any wider. There's a real danger, Mr. Speaker, in our society today, where education and technology are going to be where the jobs are and where the opportunities are, that those who don't have access or can't make it in that kind of an economy will get left behind. As a society and as a government I know we have the values which lead us to make sure that we are always there to protect and to support those who are most vulnerable in our society and who cannot provide for themselves, not in a manner which takes away their ability to have faith in themselves or their ability to strive to be the best that they can be, whatever that might be, but in a manner which ensures that they can live in dignity and that they can participate to the best of their ability and have a decent life in a province where everyone should be able to have a decent life and a decent opportunity.

So, Mr. Speaker, those are the main issues that I wanted to speak to today, issues that are important, I think, to citizens of Edmonton-Whitemud, issues that I heard about on the doorsteps. It does come back to basic issues when people talk to you: issues of how many children are in their classes, what type of computer technology is available in the classroom, how many resources we have. I think those are important issues to be addressed, but, as I say, we need to also think in the bigger picture and the longer term so that we're not narrowed down into those day-to-day issues to the extent where we lose the concept of the bigger picture.

4:50

I would be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I didn't in my capacity as Minister of Justice and Attorney General talk about safe communities. We talk about the Alberta advantage and we talk about it normally in economic terms, and I don't apologize for that. I think having a strong fiscal agenda, being fiscally conservative, keeping within our means, and making sure that we have a strong economy is the basis for everything else that we do. If we don't have a strong

economy and we don't have jobs, then we won't be able to afford the other issues that we want to have.

One of the keys to a strong economy, one of the things that I learned through the course of the last four years in great detail when I had the opportunity to go to an IRDC conference in San Antonio – IRDC being an organization of professionals with corporations whose job it is to look for the next place for their corporation to locate – is that they're looking for a well-educated population. They're looking for a safe place for their people to live. They're looking, in essence, for quality-of-life opportunities, because if families, if spouses don't want to live in a place, then their chief executives aren't going to want to move there, and so it's necessary that we have safe communities, that we have quality of life.

I've spoken about the education side, the safe community side. The family value side is also very important. Safe communities aren't something that we get by hiring more police and putting them on every corner. Safe communities are something that we get when we all take an interest in our community. To use the title of a book that was written on the subject and that has been followed with great interest by the city of New York and other jurisdictions, *Fixing Broken Windows*, we have to fix our broken windows. We have to look at our community and say that this is the type of community we want to live in, and as citizens we have to take responsibility for the type of community that we want to have and ensure that we fix our broken windows, that we clean the place up, and that we take responsibility for it.

I'm not suggesting, Mr. Speaker, that people should go up and tap the local drug dealer on the shoulder and tell him that he shouldn't be doing that, but I am saying that if we know there's something going on in our schools or in our communities or in our shopping malls that is not helping us to have safe communities, then it's our responsibility to let the authorities know.

I am a very strong proponent, Mr. Speaker, of the concept of having school resource officers in the schools. These are police officers who are part of the school team, not to catch criminals but to build that relationship with students so they can work together to take ownership of their community, and I think that's a very important concept. We need to do that ourselves in our communities. So safe communities are a very important concept for us.

Mr. Speaker, I'll close on that note. There are lots of individual issues in particular constituencies, and Edmonton-Whitemud has its own individual issues, even though people think of Edmonton-Whitemud as being a relatively affluent constituency, and it is, a well-educated constituency, and it is.

MR. DUNFORD: Do you have pine shakes there?

MR. HANCOCK: We have pine shakes. Thank you for that.

So there are issues in every constituency of this province that we need to address, and I certainly have assured my constituents that I will be bringing their local concerns to our table for discussion, that I will be pushing for effective resolution of those concerns, that the

pine shake issue, which is still so prevalent in Edmonton-Whitemud, will be on my agenda for topics of discussion, and that we will try and find appropriate resolutions to that problem and to those types of problems.

Mr. Speaker, I don't want to go into all the details with respect to all the issues that are prevalent in Edmonton-Whitemud, because I want to stop where I started, by talking about the need for us to focus on the big picture and the long term, to provide a vision for this province as to where we're going.

One of the members across the way indicated earlier that they thought there was a contradiction in the throne speech where we talked at the beginning about setting out a vision for our province and at the end about having a Future Summit to talk about the future of the province. Well, there's absolutely no contradiction in that. Our job is to set out a vision and a direction, but it's not our job to ignore what the people of Alberta want. It's our job to constantly – constantly – be asking the people of Alberta what direction they want this province to go, what they want this province to look like, to bring that feedback in, to involve them in the discussion.

One of the most important jobs, in my view, that we can have as members of this Legislature is to go out and foment discussion, to get people in this province talking about the important issues and bring that discussion back in here to provide an update to our vision, an ongoing revision of that vision so that we can go in the direction that Albertans want to go, provide that direction for this province, provide that wonderful future for our children, which our children deserve. As my colleague from Edmonton-McClung said earlier, to leave this province a better place than we found it.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I think we've had a very productive and a very interesting first week, and I think all members should be congratulated for their participation and a special congratulations to the new members on all sides of the House who have participated in the response to the Speech from the Throne. I think we've all been greatly enlightened.

But, Mr. Speaker, we are coming to a very important weekend. There will be a lot of people, our members, traveling. We want to wish them a safe journey, and I would respectfully move that we call it 5:30 and adjourn the House until Monday, April 23 at 1:30 p.m.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, before I call the question for the motion, best wishes to all hon. members for a safe journey home and a very happy weekend. Due to the thoughtfulness of the Government House Leader and the unanimous consent of all members, we can now deal with the question of the motion to adjourn the House until Monday, April 23 at 1:30 p.m.

[Pursuant to Government Motion 5 the Assembly adjourned at 4:57 p.m.]

