

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, May 16, 2000**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 00/05/16

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

head: Prayers

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, guide our thoughts, words, and deeds to be worthy of the trust our constituents have placed in us to better serve Thee through service to our province of Alberta and its people. Amen.

head: Introduction of Visitors

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Science.

DR. TAYLOR: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't quite used to your voice yet sitting in that chair, but I am pleased to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly His Excellency Colonel Kongpay. He is the high commissioner of Brunei Darussalam. Accompanying him is his wife, Mrs. Lungkau. This is the high commissioner's first official visit to Alberta since being posted to Canada in February 1998 and, in particular, his first visit to Edmonton. We are very pleased to welcome him here today.

Brunei is a 600-year-old kingdom located in south Asia. It has a population of 323,000 people who benefit from a wealth of oil and gas revenues, much like Alberta, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the people of Brunei pay no taxes whatsoever. Several students from Brunei are studying at university in Alberta. There are some at the University of Alberta, some at the University of Calgary, and we are very pleased that they have chosen Alberta for their studies.

I had the opportunity along with my hon. colleague the Minister of Environment to have lunch with the high commissioner and his wife, and it was very enjoyable. He described Brunei to us, and it sounds like it would be a wonderful place to visit. So I would encourage all my colleagues here: if you have the opportunity, by all means take the opportunity to visit Brunei. It's a wonderful country.

I'd ask that our guests arise in your gallery and please receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the great pleasure to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly two special guests from the Republic of Karelia in northwest Russia. Mr. Shurupov is the Minister of Economics for Karelia, while Mr. Mukhin is the Minister of State Property. The hon. ministers are visiting Alberta under the Yeltsin democracy fellowship program to examine our policies and programs pertaining to regional economic development and the privatization of government assets and services.

We had the opportunity, along with the Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose, of hosting our special guests at lunch today and found much in common dealing with forestry, agriculture, and of course things like fisheries and minerals.

I want to take this opportunity to once again welcome our guests to Alberta and hope that they have a very successful trip. They are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, and I would ask that they now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: Presenting Petitions

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

MR. GIBBONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got a petition to present today, and it's one that's been signed in the last couple of days in my office. There are 44 names from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, Edmonton-Norwood, and Edmonton-Manning.

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got two petitions today. The first one: another 43 Albertans signing the petition opposed to Bill 11, and the total number of signatures on that petition is 22,567 today.

The second petition, Mr. Speaker, is signed by 69 Albertans, and it reads:

We the undersigned residents of the province of Alberta hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to urge the Government of Alberta not to institute a flat tax because:

- it will unfairly shift the tax load from high-income earners onto middle-income Albertans;
- it will deepen the divisions between rich and poor in Alberta society; and
- it will do nothing to simplify the tax system.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: Reading and Receiving Petitions

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd request that the petition standing on the Order Paper under my name concerning the working hours after midnight now be read and received, please.

THE CLERK:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to introduce legislation requiring a minimum of two people on shifts from dark to daylight.

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

MR. GIBBONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd ask that the petition with respect to public health care that 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 stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care.

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to request that the petition I tabled yesterday be now read and received.

THE CLERK:

We the undersigned residents of the province of Alberta hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to pass a Bill banning private for-profit hospitals in Alberta so that the integrity of the public, universal health care system may be maintained.

head: Notices of Motions

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 34(2)(a) to give notice that tomorrow I will move that written questions appearing on the Order Paper do stand and retain their places with the exception of written questions 21, 23, 24, and 25.

I'm also giving notice that tomorrow I will move that motions for returns appearing on the Order Paper do stand and retain their places with the exception of motions for returns 39, 47, and 50.

Thank you.

head: Tabling Returns and Reports

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

MR. HAVELOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have two tablings. I am tabling five copies of a response to Written Question 8, as was agreed to by this Assembly on April 5, 2000, and I'm also tabling five copies of a response to Motion for a Return 24, as agreed to by this Assembly on, again, April 5, 2000.

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

DR. WEST: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies of a report titled *On the Classification and Interpretation of Global Progressivity Measures*. This is a report that was prepared for Alberta Treasury by a well-known individual to the members across the way, Mr. Kim Cassady, who is an adviser to the Member for Edmonton-Glenora. They developed this report, which demonstrated a measure of progressivity in the so-called single-rate tax, and it was used by the Alberta Tax Review Committee to determine the single rate of tax. I would hope that they would read this report, because it's made by one of their own advisers.

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got two tablings. The first one is a letter from Claire Goertzen of Lacombe, who like thousands of other Albertans, provides documentation and factual information showing why Bill 11 will not reduce waiting lists and save tax dollars.

MR. SAPERS: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

DR. PANNU: The second one, Mr. Speaker, is an e-mail from Harry Chase of Calgary opposing the flat tax proposal.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first is a document entitled *The Jasper Place Gateway Foundation Community Access Network*, and what it describes is the community access network which has been funded by Industry Canada, which will provide community access to computer terminals and Internet access to six locations in the

constituency of Edmonton-Glenora. I'm very proud of this project. Congratulations to all of those who had a hand in it.

1:40

Mr. Speaker, the second is a letter from Mr. Harry Chase of Calgary regarding Bill 18, and it describes the provincial government's flat tax proposal as: their latest exercise in greed.

Thank you.

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

MR. BONNER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the appropriate number of copies of a report compiled by two injured workers out of Calgary that was presented to the MLA review panel on the WCB. In this report they outline their concerns and problems with the WCB and also make a number of recommendations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was absolutely thrilled this morning to be part of McHappy Day, assisting Ronald McDonald in the promotion of children's treatment. The Alberta Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society, and the Aaron Moser foundation for spinal cord research, as well as the Alberta cord blood bank are recipients of this year's McHappy funds. I have copies of tablings to that effect.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings this afternoon. The first one is a summary of findings from the Protection for Persons in Care Act community consultation held March 15, 2000, by the Alberta Association for Community Living, Developmental Disabilities Resource Centre of Calgary, and FAIRE, Families Allied to Influence Responsible Eldercare.

The second tabling is the news release produced yesterday by physicians on behalf of 150 Calgary physicians who are speaking out on health care and the commercialization of health care in the province of Alberta.

Thank you.

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

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first one is a letter from Janice Waddell from the Social Housing Advisory Committee to the hon. Minister of Community Development requesting a meeting.

My second tabling is a response to her letter. It's action request 64788 to Ms Janice Waddell from the hon. Minister of Community Development stating that unfortunately he cannot meet with her to discuss her issues.

Thank you.

head: Introduction of Guests

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Associate Minister of Forestry.

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like

to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly 19 bright grade 5 and grade 6 students from the Grassland school. They are accompanied by their teachers, Julie Genoud and Jeff Semenchuk, parents Casey Bizon and Shirley Nahorney, and bus driver Richard Korb. They are seated in the members' gallery. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Learning.

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the Members of the Legislative Assembly 21 students from Alcoma school. These are junior high students from Rainier, Alberta. They have with them teachers Steve Mungall, Connie Waddle, and Sue Chomistek, as well as parent helpers Mike Graham, John Ovinge, Debbie Axelson, Janice Christensen, Debbie Takeda, Diedre Lindsay, Donna Bobinski, Janet Wagner, Laurie Graham, and Lorraine Payne. I would ask the Legislative Assembly to take special interest in three of these people: Mr. Mike Graham, Ms Sue Chomistek, and Ms Laurie Graham, who are son, daughter, and daughter-in-law of someone who is very close to a lot of members in this Assembly, the late Mr. Jim Graham. So I would ask you all to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to Members of this Legislative Assembly 36 visitors from Viking school, of course the home of the Sutter family of Viking, Alberta. We have 29 students and seven adults. The group is accompanied by teachers Mrs. Muriel Hill and Mrs. Sharon Whitehead; parents Mrs. Charlene Peterson, Mrs. Shawna Hafso, Mrs. Patricia Bredesen, Mr. Lee Laskosky, and Mr. Brian Albrecht. They are seated in the public gallery. I would ask them to all rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MR. LOUGHEED: Thank you. I've got two introductions, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce Scott Hennig, a student of economics and political science and a resident of Fort Saskatchewan, and also from the school in Fort Saskatchewan, Rudolph Hennig school, named after Scott's great-grandfather, a group of grade 5/6 students accompanied by their teacher, Lynn Marshall. I'd ask Scott and the class and helpers, assistants, and parents to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MR. MELCHIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me pleasure today to stand and introduce to you a constituent of Calgary-North West, Dr. Mark Genuis. He's the founder and executive director of the National Foundation for Family Research and Education. It's a privately funded national charitable foundation that works to strengthen families and their children. His research on child and adolescent development, sexual abuse of children, and juvenile delinquency has been published in a number of academic journals and books, and he is a frequent speaker at conferences, public meetings, and symposiums. He's presented his research to the

International Congress of Psychology and the Canadian Psychological Association as well as to parliamentarians, policymakers, school boards, parent groups, and service clubs across Canada. He certainly has been quite a leader in a lot of this research. I'd ask him at this stage to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: Oral Question Period

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

Proposed WCB Medical Facility

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans and Edmontonians are suspicious about prospective new private health facilities, especially in the wake of Bill 11. We are hoping that perhaps the government can shed some light on a couple of deals that are in the works where public assets are about to be leased or sold. My questions are to the Premier. Since apparently the government has conditionally sold off the Charles Camsell hospital, what are the financial and zoning conditions that have been met before the deal has been closed?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, relative to the preamble I don't believe that Albertans and Edmontonians are suspicious. The bill has been out there for some time, and all Albertans have had an opportunity to look at the legislation which simply puts rules and regulations around clinics that already exist, including the 30 that were approved under the leader of the Liberal opposition's watch when she was the minister of health.

Relative to the specific question, Mr. Speaker, I'll have the hon. Minister of Infrastructure respond.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We currently have a request for proposal out on the table for redeveloping the Charles Camsell site or any other ideas that might come forward with respect to further use of the particular site. As far as conditions, that would be up to the prospective individual that's making a proposal and also to the city, but currently it is zoned residential.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: First supplemental. The Leader of the opposition.

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's nice to get an answer.

This is back to the Premier. Given that the WCB is planning a new health facility at hangar 25 on city-owned property, the airport land, will the health facility be operated by a private health company, or will it be a facility owned and operated by the WCB?

1:50

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's news to me, and the question is a very good one. I'm afraid I don't have the answer, but perhaps the Minister of Health and Wellness does.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of these specific plans, but I think it is extremely important to point out – and I think the Leader of the Opposition should acknowledge this – that the WCB, according to the provisions of the Canada Health Act, which is now being, I understand, overseen more by the Minister of Health, has perfect latitude to establish its own health delivery system for its own specific needs.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Second supplemental to the first question. The Leader of the Opposition.

MRS. MacBETH: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps we can go to the minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board on the second supplemental. Given that the site is ideal for flying in patients, who else will the new WCB facility be able to contract with: Capital health authority, other health authorities, private business, foreign corporations? Can the minister shed some light on this?

MR. DUNFORD: Well, I think, as my colleague the Minister of Health and Wellness just described, the WCB is not under the Canada Health Act, so they have the ability, then, to provide the sort of opportunities and care that their people need. Whatever constraints the board of directors would put on the operation of that particular facility would be a consideration that would be entirely within the WCB. I, of course, would have some legislative responsibilities in terms of the act just to make sure that they were living within the legislative reasons that they're there. I think the board that has been put into place – the public, employer, and employee board – would be capable of looking after the interests of the WCB.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Second main question. The Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Bill 11 Enforcement

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Behind closed doors seems to be a way of doing business for this government. Not only have they failed to inform Albertans on the sale of public property; they've also hidden details on how to enforce Bill 11. Section 8 of the bill talks about cost-effectiveness and public benefit, but the bill is silent on how such concepts are going to be measured. My questions are to the Premier. Given that the Auditor General's report points out that over half of the regional health authorities have undisclosed expenses associated with payments to private operators, how does the government plan to determine whether there are any cost-effectiveness means in these private facilities?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, relative to the issue of the proponent and the RHA determining cost-effectiveness and efficiency, I will have the hon. minister respond.

MR. JONSON: First of all, Mr. Speaker, the basis of this question, I think, has to be challenged a bit, and that is that the Auditor General has certainly indicated and provided advice which Alberta Health and Wellness takes seriously with respect to improving accounting procedures. But it could be implied from the question that there is no accounting with respect to RHA budget money being spent in contracts and other arrangements with private providers. In effect, we have a contract with the Alberta Medical Association, which operates a whole host of facilities such as doctors' offices and associated services. So the situation is not quite the way the hon. member portrays it.

Now, with respect to the legislation there will need to be specifics established in regulations. In terms of the cost-effectiveness they know what their current costs are for particular procedures and services, Mr. Speaker. If the proposal or the bid, so to speak, that comes in or might be put before them is more costly than what they are currently doing and does not offer any advantage in terms of additional or better service, obviously it would not be considered cost-effective by them.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: First supplemental.

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would refer the minister to page 218 of the Auditor General's report, where he talks about noncompliance of facilities.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, can the minister give us any indication of how many government positions are going to be created in order to monitor and regulate these new private facilities? Is it 10 new positions? Is it a hundred? Is it 500 new positions? Is there any indication?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, generally speaking, the regional health authorities across this province have in place administrative staff which currently deal with the clinics that operate in the system. We go back many, many years. It's been well outlined in fact today by the Premier. Those teams, as far as administration and accounting are concerned, would deal with this area of contracting as they deal with contracting the area of food services and laboratory services and arrangements with the 52 surgical clinics that we have currently in the province.

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. members, we seem to have a lively debate going back and forth. The custom of the House is that only one person stands and speaks at a time, and those that are sitting are not invited to engage in debate or in calls across the way.

I believe the Minister of Infrastructure has tried a couple of times to supplement.

Bill 11 Enforcement (continued)

MR. STELMACH: During the second question the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition made a statement that the public is not aware of what public properties are up for sale. I'd like to advise the House and all members here and Albertans that they're posted on the worldwide web. We also have ads in various papers, and we also issued a government news release. So to make an insinuation that the public is not aware of what surplus properties are available is totally wrong.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Second supplemental. Hon. leader.

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Getting back to the minister of health and the issue of increased administration, how much will this whole new level of bureaucracy cost the taxpayers of Alberta, dollars that would be far better spent on health care than on administration of the Bill 11 provisions?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Official Opposition is entitled to her conclusions, however erroneous she wants them to be, and I guess there's no limit to that. I do not see any major so-called layer of bureaucracy being established to let contracts. The vehicle for letting contracts in those regional health authorities – all of them have one type of contract or another – is there. Administrative costs in the regional health authorities across the province run at about 5, 5 and a half percent, which I think compares rather well with other large service organizations, and that is the situation as we see it continuing.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Third main question. The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

School Classroom Sizes

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Optimal class sizes for kindergarten to grade 3 is 17 students, as the minister of education has admitted, yet an Official Opposition survey completed by 5,100 teachers in 750 schools in 245 Alberta towns and cities revealed that 81 percent of kindergarten classes were above the recommended size, 95 percent of grade 1 classes were over the limit, 94 percent of grade 2 and 98 percent of grade 3 classes were over the recommended size. The government's Speech from the Throne promises that the Minister of Learning will work with education partners on classroom size. My questions are to the minister. Why has this government reneged and left Alberta students in such overcrowded classrooms?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Learning.

2:00

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much for that very important question, Mr. Speaker. First of all, there needs to be a little bit of explanation about the whole class size of 17. As I am sure the hon. member is aware, that study came out, I believe, in Cleveland or Cincinnati. The interesting part about that study was that at about 17 . . . [interjections]

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Perhaps you would have a question later on Edmonton-Norwood, but right now the question is from the leader.

MS OLSEN: I'll ask my question later on, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I was speaking to you, hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood, suggesting that if you have a question later on, we'll entertain that, but right now we wanted to hear from the Minister of Learning and the Leader of the Opposition.

The hon. Minister of Learning.

School Classroom Sizes

(continued)

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, the study that was done – and again, I believe it was in Cleveland or Cincinnati – stated that with a class size of 17 in the K to 3 age group there were significant improvements. The interesting part about that study was that at a class size of 18, those improvements were not seen. So it seems to me that there is a difficulty when you go from 17 to 18. What is the actual variable that is there?

The other thing that I will say about the hon. Leader of the Opposition's comment that we had put it in the throne speech that we are doing something, Mr. Speaker, is that in January of this year I allocated \$500,000 to the Edmonton public school board to take a look exactly at class size. They are in the midst of their program, and there have been some absolutely fascinating results. They decreased the class size in 10 high-risk schools. They decreased it to 13, 14, and 15, and in some cases 12 students.

What they are seeing is quite literally nothing short of exceptional. They're seeing something that I would never have seen. One of these issues is attendance. They are actually seeing an improved attendance, which leads to the question that someone in grade 1 is actually learning how not to go to school. Instead, because they want to go to school, because there is a decreased class size . . .

[interjections] Mr. Speaker, obviously the hon. members are not concerned about the question. The question about class size is very legitimate. It's a very legitimate question.

The other thing that I will say is that there has been \$170 million over three years allocated to a thing called the Alberta initiative for school improvement. The school boards are quite capable of using those dollars to address class size in the K to 3 age group or in any class size. So, Mr. Speaker, \$170 million starting on September 1; \$500,000 as a pilot project starting on January 1.

MRS. MacBETH: Well, Mr. Speaker, Albertans have heard a lot of talk from this minister, and given the government's piecemeal and experimental approach to reducing class sizes, when will parents and teachers provincewide be able to expect smaller classes?

DR. OBERG: Mr. Speaker, unlike the Liberal opposition we actually look at data. We actually look at studies and base our funding on actual studies that are out there. If they think that Cleveland is the same as Rainier, Alberta, they are sadly mistaken. There are a lot of differences there. The onus is on me as Minister of Learning to ensure that my taxpayers' dollars, that the constituency of Strathmore-Brooks taxpayers' dollars are spent in the best possible fashion. Starting September 1 the school boards have the ability to take a look at class size, so the answer to the question is September 1.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, what response does this minister have for the C.W. Sears school council in Tofield in the Vegreville-Viking riding, wherein they say that

reducing class sizes to a maximum of 17 students . . . would minimize these difficulties and would lay a strong foundation for students to reach their potential and see success in the future,

as does the study which the Alberta Official Opposition worked hard to do. Where's your study?

DR. OBERG: Mr. Speaker, I'll say exactly the same thing to them as I'll say to the Alcoma school, that is up there today. We are looking at it. We are actually doing scientific studies. A survey of what is happening out there based on a study in Cleveland, Ohio, is not exactly what I would call scientific evidence.

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

Income Tax

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The threat to shut down debate on a major policy initiative for the second time this session is exactly the kind of thing that is enraging voters in Edmonton-Highlands and throughout the province. This government is increasingly arrogant, antidemocratic, and out of touch with the concerns of ordinary Albertans. The government's regressive flat tax scheme fails the test of fundamental fairness. It represents a massive shift of the tax burden onto the shrinking middle class. My questions are to the hon. Premier. Why has the government decided to undermine fairness by giving huge tax breaks to the already very wealthy leaving only pennies for middle-income Albertans?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I would hardly say that it's arrogant to introduce tax reform policy and legislation that will take 190,000 low-income Albertans completely off the provincial income tax roll. Sir, that is hardly arrogant. That is respecting and understanding the need for those Albertans to have more disposable income in their pockets rather than in the coffers of the government.

A single-parent family making \$30,000 a year will get a 276

percent tax cut. A 276 percent tax cut. Mr. Speaker, alluding to the wide range of Albertans who are in the middle-income range, a single-income family making \$55,000 a year will get a 41 percent provincial tax cut. That is very significant. A senior couple earning \$40,000 a year will get a 57 percent provincial tax cut. That is hardly being arrogant. That is being fair to Albertans and understanding their needs.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Premier please tell my constituents where the \$100,000 per year plus jobs are so they can go and apply for them and thereby receive some benefit from the government's flat tax scheme?

MR. KLEIN: I would be very, very happy to. I would suspect that in the riding of Edmonton-Strathcona, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of dual-income wage earners. I would suspect that some of them are university professors, and I would suspect that their combined income would be somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$100,000 to \$120,000, maybe \$130,000. I am sure there are many of them in the hon. member's constituency. Generally speaking, in that tax bracket under the single-rate regime, under the delinking proposal to which Bill 18 alludes, that family would receive a 12 percent cut in provincial income tax.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many of my constituents are in fact university-age students. They can't even afford to go to university to become professors.

My last question to the Premier: is the Premier advising middle-class Albertans to start buying Lotto . . . [interjections]

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: We couldn't hear the question because there seemed to be a lot of noise over on my right. I wonder if we could have the final supplemental asked again without the preamble, hon. member.

2:10 **Income Tax**
(continued)

DR. PANNU: Thank you. Thank you kindly, Mr. Speaker. Is the Premier advising middle-class Albertans to start buying Lotto 6/49 tickets in the hope of striking it rich and thereby being able to take advantage of the government's tax breaks to the wealthy scheme?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, no, I'm not advising. That's a personal choice as to whether people wish to buy 6/49 or 7/47 tickets. All I can say is what I said previously, that a single-income family – and this is just one of the examples – making \$55,000 a year will get a 41 percent provincial tax cut. That is very significant indeed.

Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member wants to vote against taking 190,000 low-income families off the tax rolls, if he wants to vote against giving an average wage earner of \$55,000 a year a 41 percent tax break, if he wants to deny a senior couple earning \$40,000 a year a 57 percent provincial tax cut, then I would advise him to vote against Bill 18. His record of vote will be well noted.

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

Kananaskis Development

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, on an ongoing basis my constituency office actually receives more mail and phone calls or e-mail regarding environmental concerns than even health or

education. My first question is to the Minister of Environment. Can you please explain the terms of reference that your department has issued to Genesis Land Development for its proposed development in the Spray Valley of Kananaskis Country?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, last year I ordered Genesis to conduct an environmental impact assessment for their proposed project in Kananaskis Country. Perhaps the best way to look at an environmental impact assessment in terms of reference is that it should be thought of as a comprehensive review of environmental and social and economic and cultural consequences that must be addressed prior to a project going ahead. There has been a very strong degree of interest expressed by the public. Over a thousand Albertans expressed their views about Genesis' proposals and made submissions for the terms of reference and their views on what should be reviewed by Genesis.

Mr. Speaker, environmental concerns that had been expressed by the public that must be addressed in the terms of reference include the potential impact of this project on wildlife, transportation routes into the Spray Valley, water quality in the Spray Lakes, and also the appropriateness of large-scale development in Kananaskis Country.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: First supplemental, Calgary-West.

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, my second question is also to the same minister. If Genesis decides to proceed with this assessment, what role will it play in the approval process?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, the environmental impact assessment, or EIA, must describe the impacts of the proposed project. In the case of the Genesis project they are proposing three things: a heli-skiing operation on Mount Sparrowhawk, a four-season resort on Tent Ridge, and a tour boat operation to operate on Spray Lake. If the EIA report identifies any adverse impacts arising from the Genesis proposal, Genesis must demonstrate how it will either eliminate or mitigate those effects.

When Genesis finishes the EIA report, it will be submitted to the Natural Resources Conservation Board for review. The EIA also requires Genesis to consult the public as part of the assessment process and to include the findings of their public input in their NRCB submission. At that point the NRCB would decide if the proposals put forward by Genesis are in the public interest.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Final supplemental, Calgary-West.

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is also to the Minister of Environment. Since the Spray Valley proposals are near the Banff national park boundary, is the federal government involved in the Genesis environmental assessment?

MR. MAR: The short answer, Mr. Speaker, is yes. The federal government has had representatives who have participated in the review of Genesis to this point and have assisted directly in helping develop the final terms of reference for the environmental impact assessment report that my department issued today. I think this has been a very co-operative model that should be used in all cases of federal and provincial joint jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, we have an agreement between the province and the federal government to co-operate in this environmental review, and we certainly intend on living up to that commitment.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Physicians' Concerns over Bill 11

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the recent debate on health care thousands of Albertans from all walks of life and many, many organizations have expressed their opposition to this government's plans for further privatization of our health care system. Yesterday over 150 Calgary physicians added their voices in the fight to defend public health care. My question this afternoon is to the Premier. Given that these doctors view with, quote, grave concern the expanding, for-profit elements in the health care system, close quote, will this government hold off on proclaiming Bill 11 until the concerns of these doctors have been identified and dealt with?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, no. The Minister of Health and Wellness plans to proceed with the College of Physicians and Surgeons and other stakeholders to go ahead and draft the regulations and have the bill proclaimed. I'm sure that he would be happy to talk to representatives of the group of doctors involved.

As I understand it, about six of these doctors attended a news conference in Calgary yesterday, and yes, one of their concerns was this so-called commercialization of health care. Another concern, of course, was that expressed by the Alberta Medical Association, and that is funding for more frontline staff and so on. That has nothing to do with Bill 11. That is a budget item, and it will be addressed in another forum. I can assure you of that.

Mr. Speaker, I have been informed that one of the doctors protesting the so-called commercialization of health care was Dr. Ron Jadusingh. Well, he might want to look in the mirror, because he's a partner with Medical Laboratory Consultants, and that's one of several private providers to the Calgary regional health authority. As a matter of fact, they do about 1 percent of the CRHA lab work. I simply point that out.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: First supplemental, Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the concerns expressed yesterday in fact reflect the same concerns raised by Dr. Brock Dundas, who is the elected president of the Calgary Regional Medical Staff Association, and given that one of the biggest concerns of these physicians is conflicts of interest that will inevitably arise due to privatization, what specific mechanisms does this government plan to install to regulate and monitor these private facilities for fraud?

MR. KLEIN: One would have to assume that these doctors have not realized that surgical clinics outside of conventional, full-scale hospitals have been operating in this province for many, many years, 30 of which were operating under the watch of the former minister of health who is now the leader of the Liberal Party.

Mr. Speaker, relative to the conflict of interest provisions it is very obvious now that this hon. member has not read the bill. The bill and the amendments to the bill allude specifically to conflict of interest guidelines, and as the regulations are developed, I think you will see very strict conflict of interest guidelines develop relative to contracting out. I will say that those guidelines did not exist before, but they – that is the Liberals – voted against even the notion of putting in conflict of interest guidelines.

2:20

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, this opposition and this caucus recognize a toothless provision when we read it.

The point I'd make is this. Given that these same Calgary physicians have said that "it is vitally important that you, the

taxpaying public, who may also be patients or health care providers, become involved in changes that may seriously affect you or your loved ones," will this Premier commit right now to holding free and open public consultation on the development of all of the 20-odd regulations provided for in Bill 11?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the meat and really the essence of the law is in the legislation. It's in Bill 11. If these doctors have some concerns with the guidelines as they pertain to conflict of interest, I would suggest that they immediately get in touch with the College of Physicians and Surgeons, their representative body, to discuss their concerns with the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, because this is their opportunity to provide meaningful input to the college so that indeed the guidelines that will be put in place relative to conflict of interest will have lots of teeth.

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

Income Tax (continued)

MR. HLADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It will come as no surprise to members on this side of the House that thanks to the good policies of this government Albertans enjoy the highest after-tax incomes in Canada. However, being the best in Canada is not enough. As a recent study by Standard and Poor's concluded, the after-tax income enjoyed by Albertans is lower than the after-tax income enjoyed by people living in Alabama. That matters because Alabama is the poorest state in the United States. The richest Canadian province, Alberta, is behind the poorest state, Alabama. Unlike the United States, after-tax incomes in Canada are sliding, not rising. This means that families are finding it harder to make ends meet, harder to buy the things their children and their families need. My first question is to the Acting Provincial Treasurer. Can the Acting Treasurer explain what Alberta has done, is doing, and will be doing for hard-working families in Alberta, families who form the bedrock of our great province, to address this matter?

DR. WEST: Well, Mr. Speaker, those are sad statistics, indeed to compare Canadians and Albertans to . . .

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Both sides, I think, are anxious to make their points of view known. We'll keep, though, with the tradition of the House that one member gets to speak at a time, and the only member right now that's been recognized to speak is the hon. Acting Provincial Treasurer.

Income Tax (continued)

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, this government has for a long time recognized the unfairness as it relates to taxation of people trying to raise families, whether they be a single-income earning family or a double-income earning family or a family of any combination thereof. Therefore, over the last couple of years and including now we have taken measures to level the playing field for working families as well as to lower their tax burden.

You know, for me to say that would be one thing, but to have the National Foundation for Family Research and Education executive director, Dr. Mark Genuis, say it is another thing. Today at noon he

released a news release which says that there are three specific initiatives in this new tax era in Alberta that "have particular benefit for Alberta families and are cumulative in their positive effect." First, the Alberta family employment tax credit that we brought in a while back is "Canada's first refundable credit to parents of lower income." Secondly, he says that

the increase in the Basic Personal Exemption and the Spousal Exemption provides significant tax relief for younger and lower-income families.

Third, the flat tax will provide real savings for all Alberta families. Now, Mr. Speaker, he says that there at least four specific . . .

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Could you wait for the next question?
The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HLADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Those tax reductions don't come cheap. I understand that Alberta is planning to spend \$1.3 billion improving the after-tax incomes of Albertans. My first supplemental is to the Acting Provincial Treasurer. Can you really afford to remove \$1.3 billion from our provincial revenues?

DR. WEST: I want to assure Dr. Mark Genuis of the National Foundation for Family Research and Education that we can. He said that there are four benefits that will come from that \$1.3 billion in savings. He said:

First, low-income families will be provided with a tax refund per child.

Second, lower income families will not pay provincial taxes until their annual family income reaches nearly \$30,000.

Third, the lifestyle options for families are increased as tax discrimination between single and dual income families are reduced.

With that \$1.3 billion we can also say that "Alberta parents will be able to provide better for their children as they will have substantially more of their own money left to them."

I'd like to table this so that everybody gets accurately what was said by the national foundation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Final supplemental, Calgary-Mountain View, without a preamble.

MR. HLADY: Well, Mr. Speaker, can the Acting Provincial Treasurer explain the policy logic the Liberals and NDs are using to block these tax reductions?

Speaker's Ruling Seeking Opinions

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, as all hon. members well know, you're really asking for an opinion, and what the Acting Provincial Treasurer might think about why someone else – it might then be imputing false motives. I don't know what you could answer, since you've just been asked for an opinion.

Income Tax (continued)

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, I definitely wouldn't give a hypothetical answer on their reasoning, but I can say this. The Canadian Taxpayers' Federation has put out a news release that says: Klein's Tax Cuts a Boon to Middle Class; Bill 18 Critics Out to Lunch. They said that "middle class earners are in line for substantial tax savings." I couldn't understand why anybody would be against this.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Acting Provincial Treasurer I think has made his point.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood.

Justice and the Poor

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the National Council of Welfare, a citizens advisory group, released a report entitled Justice and the Poor. One of the most striking findings of this report is that the highest rate of imprisonment for failure to pay fines is right here in Alberta at 60.7 percent per 10,000 adult residents, or over 18,000 Albertans per year. Now, these are fines. By and large, a good number of these people are the poor, the illiterate, and the mentally ill. Other provinces have social programs; in Alberta they go to debtors' prison. My questions are to the Minister of Justice. Given that we have a fine-options program, can the Minister of Justice explain why Alberta's rates for imprisonment for failure to pay fines is so outrageously high?

MR. HANCOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's a good question indeed. We do have fine-option programs. We do have alternatives for those people who are not able to pay fines, and one would think that they would take more opportunity of those particular programs. But we have to go on to indicate that we need more opportunities to provide for diversion from the court system for minor offences which result in fines so that people can deal with those issues by way of community service and by way of community conferencing issues and other ways of dealing with it.

It is an issue that needs to be dealt with. It's an issue that we need to be cognizant of. I think it also points to the fact that right across this country, particularly in Alberta, we have to do more to deal with the root causes of crime: alcohol addiction, drug addiction, and mental health issues.

2:30

MS OLSEN: My second question is to the same minister. Given that it costs the taxpayers about \$100 a day to keep a person in jail, how long will this government think this incarceration rate is acceptable? When are you going to stop it?

MR. HANCOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, it should be clear that this government doesn't send people to jail. People are prosecuted and they go to court and the courts provide for a penalty. Usually in the case of a fine, a fine option is available. So it's not the government that is sending people to jail.

I did indicate to the hon. member that we do have to do more to find appropriate alternatives, because sending people to jail is not the way to deal with these issues. We have to find ways to get people back into the community better equipped to handle the stresses and the root causes of crime in the first place.

MS OLSEN: Given that actions speak louder than words, when will the minister ensure that the fine-options program works for everyone, including the poor, including the illiterate, and including the mentally ill? When will that happen, Mr. Minister?

MR. HANCOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, we're always trying to find better ways to make sure that the public of Alberta understands how the system works and understands how it should work for them. Obviously in circumstances such as are being pointed out, some people are not taking advantage of the programs that are available for them, and we'll have to do more to make sure that they're aware of those options.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Tourism Industry

MR. CAO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With our Canadian climate becoming more conducive to more outdoor activities and Alberta's natural heritage revealing its splendors, once again tourism will be at its peak in the cycle. My question is to the Minister of Economic Development. What are the government policies in terms of economic development with regard to tourism in our province?

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

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We regard tourism as a critical industry within this province. It is our fourth largest sector. That recognition is evidenced by the fact that in Get Ready Alberta, the province's new economic strategy, we would like to see that sector grow from its present level of about 4.2 billion to over 6 billion by the year 2005.

Now, it's easy to say that, Mr. Speaker, but how do we achieve that? One of the ways we are approaching this is to increase the budget with respect to marketing visitor information centres, call centres, et cetera. In fact, the budget from 1998 at \$8 million increased to \$16 million in 1999.

That budget, as I mentioned, includes some marketing dollars. We are aggressively leveraging with the private sector. In fact, at this point in time in leveraging with Alberta-based companies, we're achieving a 2 to 1 ratio, and for companies that are located outside the province, we're actually at a 5 to 1 ratio.

We are also partnering with the private sector with respect to product development. Of course, within this province in order to increase our level of tourism, we need to provide tourists with new levels of product.

Finally, we're trying to develop a stronger relationship with the Canadian Tourism Commission, Mr. Speaker.

The bottom line is that we want Alberta to be a top-of-mind vacation destination, not only for Albertans but for Canadians and international visitors.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplemental, Calgary-Fort.

MR. CAO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what are the specific programs that promote tourism among Albertans spending time and money inside Alberta?

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have an in-resident marketing program which has a budget of approximately \$2 million. In fact, the question is very timely. Just this past weekend we sent to hundreds of thousands of households a little brochure – and I have one here – called Travel Alberta. It is an excellent brochure, and I'd encourage all members of the House to look at this brochure.

What we're trying to do is use this to increase interest in Albertans in other parts of the province aside from those they traditionally visit. We are also running significant TV and print promotional programs in conjunction with the release of this document. We have a new accommodation guide, a new campground guide. We have a 60-page travel planner out there.

So what we're trying to do, Mr. Speaker, is, again, encourage Albertans to see those parts of the province which they have not previously visited. In that way, we will grow the tourism industry not on a regional basis but throughout the whole province.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Final supplemental, Calgary-Fort.

MR. CAO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what are the specific government programs to promote tourism to attract visitors from outside our province?

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, Alberta's performance in attracting overseas visitors was considerably better than the national average for the first two-quarters of 1999, and these are the most up-to-date figures that I have. Unfortunately, our performance was significantly lower than the national average in attracting U.S. visitors for the same period.

That's one of the reasons why we recently launched a new Americas campaign. It's an approximately \$4 million TV and print promotional campaign, and we are running that in selected states. We've tried to pick those states where we feel we'll have the greatest impact; for example, Texas, California, the Pacific Northwest. It is the largest campaign in the United States since, I think, 1988. We're trying to ensure that Americans are well aware of all we have to offer.

We are also working with the Canadian Tourism Commission in the United Kingdom and German markets. Our initial figures are very encouraging with respect to leads being generated through our advertising. We have some new initiatives in Japan with two leading travel agencies.

Mr. Speaker, it's not often I get to answer questions in the House. I don't take a lot of time, but I would like to take this opportunity to explain to members what we're doing, because it is important.

Briefly, Mr. Speaker, we have some challenges to overcome, and those challenges relate to the national parks and what the federal government is doing with respect to restricting access. We also have the challenges regarding air service and how that is impacting the availability of direct flights. We are working aggressively with other economic development and tourism ministers from across the country to address those particular issues.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Homelessness

MRS. SLOAN: Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Community Development: when is the government's policy framework on homelessness going to be publicly released?

MR. WOLOSHYN: Mr. Speaker, that policy is available to anybody upon asking for it.

MRS. SLOAN: That answer doesn't explain why the agencies providing services to the homeless haven't seen it, Mr. Speaker.

My second question is: how much will the provincial government contribute to fund the \$37 million in capital projects being initiated by the Calgary Drop In Centre and Salvation Army to address the needs of the homeless?

MR. WOLOSHYN: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to let the House know that Alberta is the only province that in fact does have a policy with respect to homelessness. I was very pleased that the member did refer to Calgary, simply because Calgary and Edmonton, for that matter, are being touted in Ottawa by Minister Bradshaw, whom I had the pleasure of meeting with, the minister responsible for the homeless on a national scale, as examples of what should be done across this country. What we are doing is working with the local authorities, with the federal government in a very proactive fashion, and with the smaller agencies within these cities.

We have for the first time allocated a budget line directly at the homeless in my ministry, the idea being that this money will be accessed by the serving agencies via the bigger umbrella agencies, and in the case of Calgary, it's through the Calgary Homeless Foundation.

MRS. SLOAN: My third question, then, is to the Minister of Infrastructure. When will the government be making funding available to the Salvation Army and the Calgary Drop In Centre to fund the capital projects they've initiated for the homeless?

MR. STELMACH: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Community Development just answered the question. He's got the budget line in his particular budget allocation to deal and work co-operatively with all of the social housing organizations.

Of course, our Member for Calgary-Bow has done extensive work in this area, and I would encourage the hon. member to have a good look at the report and get some further information and ideas out of it.

head: Members' Statements

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: We have three members' statements this afternoon. In 30 seconds we'll start with the hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan, followed by Edmonton-Glengarry, and finally Peace River.

2:40

Crime Prevention Week

MR. LOUGHEED: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed my pleasure to rise today and recognize Alberta Crime Prevention Week 2000, which runs May 13 to 19. This is the ninth annual crime prevention awareness campaign that is co-ordinated by Alberta Justice with the Alberta Community Crime Prevention Association.

This past Saturday I had the opportunity to attend the Alberta Justice crime prevention awards, which were presented by the hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General. These awards recognize the outstanding contribution of Alberta's volunteer crime fighters in communities across the province. The 13 recipients – seven individuals, three businesses, two police officers, and one community organization – showed that there is a part for all Albertans to play in the province's crime prevention team. By working in their communities, these recipients have created a sense of pride and ownership that has helped to reduce crime. With their community spirit and tireless efforts they have made a difference. Their achievements are proof that crime prevention programs work best when developed and implemented at the local level. In fact, community involvement is one of the best ways to eliminate crime and the social, financial, and emotional costs that go along with it.

Throughout Crime Prevention Week 2000, communities will be holding numerous events and special activities to increase awareness about how Albertans can prevent crime and make our province safer and stronger. From open houses at local police detachments and robbery awareness seminars to demonstrations on children's, seniors', and home safety, Albertans across the province will be out in force to support the week and its theme: Crime prevention – it's in your neighbourhood.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to encourage the members of the Assembly and all Albertans to participate in this special week and to help spread the word about crime prevention in Alberta.

Thank you.

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

Rendez-vous Canada 2000

MR. BONNER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last week tourism industry operators from across Canada gathered in Calgary for the industry's annual showcasing of its latest products and plans. Some 1,400 delegates came together for Rendez-vous Canada 2000 at the Round-Up centre in Stampede Park from May 6 to 10. Organizers from the Tourism Industry Association of Canada reported it to be its largest annual gathering ever.

Recognition for this outstanding event must go to dedicated individuals from the Tourism Industry Association of Canada board and the Rendez-vous Canada advisory committee. Their ideas, hard work, and dedication culminated in the creation of an event which proved to be an excellent tool for the tourism business community.

Tourism is Alberta's fourth largest industry. It produces \$4.2 billion annually and employs around 100,000 Albertans. It is also an industry with a tremendous potential for growth. By 2005 tourism is expected to bring in \$6 billion a year in revenue. Yet the tourism industry has been treated as a forgotten child by the Alberta government. Years of inadequate government spending, ineffective marketing by the province, and the disruptive failure of the government's Alberta Tourism Partnership Corporation experiment all took a toll on the tourism industry in this province. To quote a representative of the Calgary Convention & Visitors Bureau, there was a time when provinces around the country considered Alberta to be a leader. That's certainly not evident anymore. Tourism funding is still only a drop in the bucket compared to what competing destination provinces such as British Columbia and Ontario spend on the industry.

Today the industry is battling back from the government's mishandling of tourism and marketing. Through a great deal of hard work on the part of industry and stakeholders Alberta's tourism providers and marketers are now poised to make real inroads into making this beautiful province of ours a tourist destination of choice.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Mary Percy Jackson

MR. FRIEDEL: Mr. Speaker, on May 6, 2000, Dr. Mary Percy Jackson passed away in Manning, Alberta, at the age of 95. This was a sad loss for her family and the community, but I cannot imagine a life more fulfilled, more accomplished, and more rewarding than hers.

She came to the Peace country in 1929 from England, expecting to stay for about a year. Instead, she stayed and practised medicine for almost 50 years and raised a family that now includes great-grandchildren. Dr. Mary was a pioneer in every sense of the word as she was the only doctor in the vast north Peace for a number of years. She covered an area of more than 100 miles when the only mode of transportation was on horseback because there were no roads. Her patients included homesteaders and natives alike.

I can't possibly do justice to a proper recognition in the short time that I have available, but maybe a partial list of her many awards might help. They include the Centennial Medal of Canada, the Alberta achievement award, an honorary doctorate of laws degree from the University of Alberta, the Alberta Order of Excellence, and in 1990 an officer of the Order of Canada. That's only the short list.

Dr. Mary continued to live in Keg River after her husband died in 1979 and only moved to Manning after she was 90 years old.

I had the privilege of getting good advice from her on a number of occasions. Ironically, our last conversation was about two months ago when she called me in support of Bill 11. She said that she had seen more than 70 years of advances in medicine and health care, and it was important to always look ahead to new and innovative ideas.

In her book, *The Homemade Brass Plate*, she wrote: when I die, I hope I shall be able to quote Robert Louis Stevenson's *Requiem*.

Under the wide and starry sky,
Dig the grave and let me lie.
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will.

Dr. Mary, that epitaph and this thank you is for you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: We have one point of order that I'm aware of. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Point of Order
Allegations against a Member
Reflections on Nonmembers

MR. SAPERS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am going to be referring to some words spoken by the Acting Provincial Treasurer during Routine, during tablings. I will be referring to Standing Order 23 and also recent Speaker's rulings regarding referencing people outside the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, during tablings, just minutes after Prayers, the Acting Provincial Treasurer was obviously so eager to exercise what he thought would be a got-you that in a fairly smug and arrogant way, misrepresenting a paper that was co-authored by a gentleman by the name of Kim Cassidy and then tabling it in this Assembly, as though it gave some credibility to this government's tax policy, he then sat down and from his seat, carefully avoiding his microphone, pointed directly across the aisle at this hon. member and said: tell the truth. Though he said that off microphone, clearly his voice was loud enough, I think, for all hon. members in this Assembly to hear.

There's only one reason why he would utter that phrase, tell the truth, and that would be to insinuate that this hon. member, myself, had not told the truth about that particular tax policy paper.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to ask you to call the Acting Provincial Treasurer to order for two reasons. I'm going to ask you to do two things. One, I would ask you to ask the Acting Provincial Treasurer to withdraw the allegation that I was not telling the truth. I take this very seriously. If the hon. Acting Provincial Treasurer can put on the record one example of one untrue utterance that I have made in relation to that tax policy paper, I will stand in the Assembly, I will apologize for it, and I will retract it. If he cannot do that, I would ask him to do the honourable thing and withdraw that allegation.

2:50

The second thing that I would ask you to call him to order for, Mr. Speaker, is in relation to the Speaker's rulings of late where the Speaker has gone to great lengths to talk about how we must not take advantage of individuals who are not inside the Assembly by drawing them into this debate and then misrepresenting or abusing their work and their reputation.

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman in question, Mr. Cassidy, once upon a time was employed by Alberta Treasury. During that period of time he did a series of very good works for Alberta Treasury. He subsequently left Alberta Treasury. One of the papers that he co-authored found its way into publication in a very esteemed and prestigious academic journal. This happened some 10 years, I understand, give or take a couple of years, several years after it was originally authored. It is a measure of progressivity. It has been misrepresented in this House by the Acting Provincial Treasurer.

The paper in question talks about how tax plans must be revenue neutral if they are to be compared. Bill 18 is not. It talks about comparing tax plans side by side, which Bill 18 does not. And, finally, the third way in which his work has been misrepresented for partisan purposes by the Acting Provincial Treasurer was that it does

not support any particular tax scheme. It certainly does not support Bill 18.

So, Mr. Speaker, those are my arguments. I do take this seriously. I will not tolerate being accused of telling an untruth in this Assembly, and I certainly will not stand by while one of my constituents is maligned in this House by the Acting Provincial Treasurer.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader on the point of order.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed unfortunate when comments are tossed across the way from one member to another, usually provoked by some form of attempt at informal discussion. However, in this particular case I'm hoping that the chair will not find that there's a point of order, because I have not been able to track down in *Hansard* any specific comments that were recorded in this respect. I'm not taking away from the fact that there may or may not have been an exchange between the two members being discussed here. However, I certainly didn't hear any of that exchange, and I doubt that the chair would have heard it either.

As we all know, there is an amount of heckling that goes on between members in lead-ups to what would otherwise be a very productive question period that follows. I think that may well be what has happened here. As I understand it, just listening to Edmonton-Glenora, the discussion centred around Bill 18, which is on the Order Paper, as you know, and does provide a number of benefits through a lot of tax cuts that will be forthcoming, which Albertans, we believe, really do want. I would congratulate the member who is not in the House, Mr. Cassidy, for the fine work that he did in this regard, that helped lead up to this.

I happen to know Mr. Cassidy, and I do judge him to be a very nice gentleman, and I'm sure that he did his best work. However, I don't think that anyone in this House, including the Acting Provincial Treasurer, would have taken any liberties by suggesting any ill work by that gentleman. Simply perhaps a congratulatory thing and perhaps asking the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora to reflect on that. However, I did not hear the exact conversation.

What I would tell you, though, Mr. Speaker, is that expressions like "tell the truth" – I have looked through *Beauchesne*, and I haven't found that particular phrase, unless I missed it, to be ruled unparliamentary in previous usages. In fact, under *Beauchesne* 485, titled Unparliamentary Language, it states:

Unparliamentary words may be brought to the attention of the House either by the Speaker or by any Member. When the question is raised by a Member it must be as a point of order and not as a question of privilege.

I'm sure that if the Speaker himself had heard something unparliamentary, he would have acted on the first part of that statement and brought the member to order himself. Not having heard that, I can understand that the chair did not stop the member's discussion at that time, if in fact that's what did occur.

The other point I would raise very quickly is *Beauchesne* 486(4), which reinforces what I said earlier:

Remarks which do not appear on the public record and are therefore private conversations not heard by the Chair do not invite the intervention of the Speaker, although Members have apologized for hurtful remarks uttered in such circumstances.

That having been said, I think we may well have a disagreement here over an interpretation of an allegation about certain words that may or may not have been said. In that instance, if that was the case, I'm sure the two members can sort it out.

However, it's my position that while we may have a disagreement over an allegation, that in itself does not constitute a point of order, and I would ask for your ruling in that respect.

Thank you.

MS CARLSON: Mr. Speaker, first of all, we see the member alleging that there was no comment made on the record, and then he defends it. If we go to either *Beauchesne* or *Erskine May*, we find that it is the interpretation of what is said. "Tell the truth," the tone that that was volleyed across the floor of this Legislative Assembly did have an interpretation that would fall within both of those books in terms of being unparliamentary.

There have been many cases in this Assembly when tapes have been listened to when *Hansard* hasn't picked up miscellaneous statements made within the Assembly, so I would ask the Speaker to review that in that context in terms of making a ruling there.

In terms of the allegations made against a person who is not a member of this Assembly and is not here to defend himself, that person being Kim Cassidy, we have had several recent experiences in this Assembly where people have had to retract remarks, apologize for them. Certainly the interpretation that the Treasurer put on those comments he made about Kim Cassidy and his work done previously in this province does need to be retracted and taken in that kind of context.

So I'm hoping, Mr. Speaker, that you will find a point of order on both counts, the "tell the truth" statement and the comments made about a person who is not in a position to defend himself in this Assembly.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Well, the chair would agree with the hon. member who did bring up the item in *Beauchesne* 486(4), which indicates that "private conversations not heard by the Chair do not invite the intervention of the Speaker." So I can't get into the detail of what wasn't heard, as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora clearly alleged that the hon. Acting Provincial Treasurer covered up his microphone when he said whatever he said to the hon. member.

Certainly the chair did hear hon. members back and forth saying a number of things. If there was some question of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora being untruthful, that certainly would be a hurtful comment and would be worthy of retraction, but the chair can hardly intervene in that if the chair didn't hear. Certainly the chair heard noises and will have to look at the Blues, if there was a clear catch of that.

With regard to references to Mr. Cassidy, the chair will have to look at the Blues to see if there was an adverse – that seemed to come after the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora made the point of order. I would have to read the Blues to make a comment about that, if there was something untoward.

I think that probably this is much more a point of clarification than a point of order. The hon. member has clarified his point, and the chair will look at those references to Mr. Cassidy.

head: Orders of the Day

head: Public Bills and Orders Other than
Government Bills and Orders

head: Second Reading

Bill 209
Employment Standards (Parental Leave)
Amendment Act, 2000

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

MR. CAO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to stand before this Assembly and present my private member's Bill 209. This bill is a result of consultation that I have conducted since the spring of 1998 relating to an issue that's close to me.

As the representative for my riding I have witnessed that working parents do not have enough time to nurture their infants, especially when the infants are not well and the parents are demanded to be at work. I also received strong support from many individuals and organizations such as the Developmental Disabilities Resource Centre of Calgary, the Calgary family day home agencies, parents as teachers programs, Adoption by Choice, the International Adoption Association, the first steps parent council of Edmonton, early prevention programs, and so on. I want to take this opportunity to table letters of support from those individuals and organizations.

3:00

This bill involves people that are very important to this Assembly and to this government. It involves Alberta's young children. What we have an opportunity to do here is ensure that many of them are better off. Bill 209 is not about benefits to parents. It is about the care for our Alberta infants.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The purpose of Bill 209 is to amend the Employment Standards Code as it relates to maternity and adoptive leave. The bill amends the code to allow for a maximum of 27 weeks of parental leave, which could be taken by either birth parents or adoptive parents. This leave could be taken by one parent or divided between both parents as they see fit. The leave must be taken consecutively and cannot be taken by more than one parent at a time. The amendment would amalgamate current provisions for maternity leave and adoption leave and bring Alberta's parental leave standards in line with other provinces.

In fact, Alberta currently has the lowest maternity and parental leave time sanctioned in the whole country. Mr. Speaker, I believe it is time to revisit the current maternity leave provisions that this province has. In fact, our current maternity leave provisions were established in the old Employment Standards Code in 1976. This is more than 25 years ago. Though many of us have utilized these provisions and they have served a purpose, a lot of time has passed. Many things have changed and so has our knowledge regarding child care and nurturing. These old provisions I speak of granted employees who had been with the same employer for a period of at least one year 18 weeks of maternity leave with at least six of those weeks following the date of delivery.

In 1988 adoptive parents were granted adoption leave as long as the adoptive parents had been with the same employers for a period of at least one year and adopted a child aged three or under, but these parents were only allocated a period of no more than eight weeks of leave from the date of custody, and only one adoptive parent was eligible for the leave.

Mr. Speaker, in fact, in 1991 our current minister of health examined this legislation. Our MLA for Ponoka-Rimbey introduced Bill 291, An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Code. The bill proposed to change the code so that employees could avail themselves of all maternity leave and parental leave available under the federal unemployment insurance program. At that time those benefits were for 27 weeks. My Bill 209 proposes the same amount of time. Another suggestion that is included is that the fathers also be allowed the opportunity to take parental leave following the birth.

Though Bill 291 died on the Order Paper, some very valuable suggestions were made. They included reducing the 18 weeks allowed for the birth mother to 17 weeks, creating an 18 consecutive weeks' parental leave period available to both parents, birth or adoptive, a requirement of four weeks' notice to an employer if an employee wished to return to work following their leave time before

that leave expired, reducing the qualifying period of employment from 12 months to 13 weeks, and removing the age restriction on adoptive children so that all adoptive parents would qualify.

Mr. Speaker, in 1991 the minister of labour petitioned the chair of the social planning cabinet committee to change the code as it applied to parental leave. Changes would have followed the suggestions outlined in Bill 291. However, these recommendations were never carried out, and the issue has not been made since.

Presently, maternity and adoption benefits fall under division 7 of the Employment Standards Code of Alberta. As I have stated, while some other amendments to the code have been made, maternity leave provisions have not changed since 1976. Alberta still limits the parental leave provision to the birth mother and one adoptive parent. Inequities still exist between entitlements for birth mothers and adoptive parents even though the circumstances encountered can be similar. Concerns have been expressed by groups representing adoptive parents that they should receive the same entitlements as birth parents. These groups do not recognize any difference in need between natural and adoptive parents. We should not either, Mr. Speaker. Furthermore, when comparing other provinces to Alberta, while entitlements to maternity leave are similar, Alberta lags behind on those parental leave provisions by failing to grant leave for birth fathers. This should not be the case.

The Employment Insurance Act currently grants payment of employment insurance benefits for maternity and parental leave. The EI provides for 15 weeks of maternity leave benefits and 10 weeks of parental leave benefits, to be split between both parents and taken within the first year of the new child. In addition, it requires a waiting period of two weeks. The total leave covered for the biological mother would be 25 weeks. However, our Alberta Employment Standards Code would not provide protection for the job longer than 18 weeks, whereas a full 27 weeks would be needed to take full advantage of the EI benefit.

Mr. Speaker, that is money made available to Albertans, money that Albertans pay into EI every time they get a paycheque. Not that Albertans are into handouts, but that is money that this old piece of legislation prevents Albertans from receiving. It almost seems as of late that if there is a program that the federal government can fund that excludes Albertans, they will most certainly increase funding in that program. Knowing full well that Alberta doesn't take advantage of maternity leave at a level above 18 weeks, the federal Liberals just recently announced a plan to extend employment insurance parental benefit leave. These benefits will be extended to one year by extending parental leave provisions by 35 days and will take effect on January 1, 2001. That is another program that Albertans pay into but many can't take advantage of.

3:10

On February 28, 2000, the federal government outlined more details on how it intends to increase parental benefits to a maximum of 50 weeks of combined maternity leave, parental leave, and sickness benefits. The federal government intends to amend the Canada Labour Code so that the period for job protection under the parental leave provision will correspond to the extended employment insurance benefit. The program will also be made more accessible by decreasing insured hours required for such leave to 600 hours from 700 hours.

Changes to the federal legislation will have a great impact on what occurs in Alberta, though it certainly widens the gap between current provincial legislation and federal legislation. Mr. Speaker, Bill 209 serves to shorten that gap. I believe that one year of parental leave is excessive, but half a year, as proposed under my bill, is more reasonable, closer to that available in other provinces of Canada.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to get back to the true beneficiaries of this bill. I want to emphasize that the true beneficiaries of this legislation are the young children of Alberta. When we debate this bill, I want all members to be clear about what is meant by parental leave. When we use the term "parental leave," I hope many of you are not thinking to yourselves: parental holiday. We would be mistaken to interpret parental leave that way, and that is not why we allow parental or maternity leave in this province, to begin with.

Parents who take maternity or parental leave are performing a valuable contribution to Alberta by helping to raise happy, well-adjusted Albertans. Many of us here in the Assembly had the benefit of being raised at least in the early years by one parent who stayed at home. That's the way it was for many of us back then. Many of us in this Assembly may believe that it is the best way to bring a child into the world. Now, we may not be authorities in the field of child care, but many of us are parents, and we know that it is a valid observation, an observation that child care experts do agree with. There are many studies and statistics that demonstrate that there is truth in this hypothesis.

Parent advocacy groups across North America have been very active in promoting early childhood involvement by both parents, particularly since dual-income households have increased in prominence. In fact, Mr. Speaker, seven out of 10 families in this country are dual-income families. Their position is supported by this commonly accepted belief that children whose parents take an active role in their early development are more socially adjusted.

Even further arguments have been made regarding the need for fathers to be as active in early parenting as mothers. Among others, Dr. Paul Amatos of the University of Nebraska demonstrated a direct relationship between children's behaviour and the amount of time and support provided not just by mothers but by fathers as well. In fact, Mr. Speaker, there are volumes of social science research that address the issues of early childhood development and the effect of a young child's environment on how the child will function in society as he or she grows up. The findings of the studies are consistent, indicating that the quality of care vis-a-vis a child's development psychologically, emotionally, and intellectually is consistently better when that care is from a parent as opposed to a paid caregiver. No matter what the facility, there is no equal to parental care in a child's formative years.

The president of the Canadian Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Dr. Elliott Barker, has argued that nothing is more important in the world today than the nurturing that children receive in the first three years of life. For it is in these earliest years that the capacity for trust, empathy, and affection originates, and if the emotional needs of the child aren't met during these years, permanent emotional damage can occur.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans are hardworking and industrious people. Some argue that this bill will somehow slow down small business in this province. I disagree. The net long-term benefit will be a positive one not just for society but for the economy.

In the year 2010 one in three Albertans are predicted to be senior citizens. This is not a bad thing, but with such a dramatically changing demographic in Alberta, it is time for us to focus on the future. Alberta's children are our future, those who are currently the most underrepresented people in our society. Mr. Speaker, I urge all the members of this Assembly to do something for them and support this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, there is a question that asks, for example: how will this bill affect the workforce availability in Alberta? In 1997-1998 statistics show that there were 36,500 Alberta infants born, along with 217 adoptions. Also, I've seen from statistics that there are over 1.5 million Albertans working. So with the calculation that I

attempted, I can say that in the short term it's very negligible. If all the birth mothers or birth parents take leaves of absence and all the adoptive parents take leaves of absence from work, then the implication of labour availability is less than .4 percent of the labour force in Alberta.

But looking at the long term, there's a multiplying benefit. It's often quoted from the research that \$1 spent in early childhood reduces \$7 in youth correction. Also, looking at the workforce, I would say that because of parental leave, we will have happier and less stressed-out working parents. That means more productivity and less social problems.

Another view of it is that if you look at 27 weeks in a human life, then I can say that relative to the number of months for human conception, which is nine months, or even looking at human life in terms of the formation age, which is 20 years, which is again looking at 1,040 weeks, and if you look at the production stage of human life, which is 45 years of working life, with all of this 27 weeks is relatively very small.

Thank you. I hope I have support from our Legislature.

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

3:20

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand this afternoon to make a few observations in support of Bill 209, the Employment Standards (Parental Leave) Amendment Act, 2000. While supporting the bill, I think we might keep in mind how modest the proposal really is. When you think of this legislation which would increase unpaid adoption leave for an adoptive parent, which would increase unpaid maternity leave to the birth mother to 21 weeks and to an aggregate of 27 weeks of parental leave to the birth parents and contrast that to some European countries who provide a full year of pay for parents who choose to spend the first year at home with their children, then I think it starts to put this proposal in some perspective.

I think the importance of the first years of a child's life has been recognized universally, and again this is a very, very modest proposal. For those of us who have children and who have recently been associated with children . . .

MRS. SOETAERT: Like you? Are you a new grandpa?

DR. MASSEY: Yes. [interjections] Mr. Speaker, I need some relief from the heckling. I think I'll start again.

The importance of those first years, I think, is abundantly clear. The issue is not just care during the first year or first two years of life. Custodial care we can provide, but it's the formation. It's what happens to those youngsters in those first two years and especially that first year and what happens in terms of, in particular, values formation.

A number of authors and researchers have tried to identify what are the things that happen to children during those early formative years. At least one of them has tried to point out how important those first two years are in terms of a youngster gaining self-control and developing empathy. The literature has been fairly supportive that our values are rooted in those early experiences.

The notion of self-control, being able to use one's faculties and one's energies and to have those faculties and energies under control of the will, is extremely important in later life. I think there is strong support from the academic community that self-control begins right at birth and that learning self-control continues very rapidly thereafter. The notion of empathy, the ability to intellectually or

imaginatively put ourselves in someone else's position, is again one of the two very basic values that are instilled in children starting at birth.

Writers have identified those two characteristics as being so important in later life. We look at the kinds of problems that we deal with in our society and how much easier it would be if we could be assured that all citizens were empathetic, could feel what other citizens feel. We're able to exercise self-control because it's in that loss of self-control that we find rooted so many of the ills that we face today. It's not just parental care, but it's parenting that we want to foster, and Bill 209 moves us a small way in that direction.

One of the other issues, of course, is the issue of child care centres. I think there's good evidence supporting the work in child care centres, but there are some qualifications. Those child care centres have to have personnel that are the very best that we can hire, the very best qualified that we can have in place, and they have to be excellent facilities that provide a physical and an emotional environment in which the kinds of values that we want instilled can be fostered. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, that's not always the case today. Many centres are forced for one reason or another to hire less than qualified caregivers, and many centres are driven by motives other than the care of children. In some centres financial motives are paramount, and that's unfortunate for the children that are enrolled in those centres.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I think there's almost a universal longing for parents to spend more time with their children when they're first born. The growth is so remarkable that you don't have to be around those youngsters long before you see how important that early learning is and how rapidly that early learning takes place.

I wondered about this bill appearing as part of the employment standards. I assume that's the place where it has to be for legal means, but it seems to me that it points to the need of a family policy in the province or a policy to address the needs of children. In terms of early childhood I think many of us are still quite astounded that the kindergarten programs were cut back as they were. It seems to me that if children were dealt with from birth to early childhood in one department or under one jurisdiction, that kind of sacrificing of children wouldn't occur and the kinds of provisions we find in Bill 209 might be more extensive and might sit in context.

The former member indicated that there was a concern on the part of small businesses that this bill might somehow or other penalize them by having to provide these provisions for new parents, but I don't believe that's true. I think everyone in this society recognizes the importance of those first two years of life and certainly those very first early weeks of a child's life, the importance of having parents or adoptive parents or the individuals that are going to be raising them there full-time.

So with those comments, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to, along with my colleagues, support Bill 209.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I know you were concluding, hon. member, but I'm required to interrupt you. The time limit for consideration of this item of business has expired today.

3:30

head: Motions Other than Government Motions

Urban Renewal

510. Ms Olsen moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to establish a special task force in conjunction with

federal and municipal authorities to examine ways to preserve neighbourhoods affected by school closures and business relocations.

[Debate adjourned May 9: Mr. Amery speaking]

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the short two minutes remaining I would like to encourage everyone to support this motion. Edmonton-Norwood, in fact, has a strong background in the reality of communities and what it means when schools close and businesses relocate. Certainly those of us from rural Alberta are well aware of what happens if a school closes in a community.

In fact, in the community I am from, Villeneuve, many years ago I remember when that school closed and how tough it was for that community to stay alive and revitalize once that centre of focus was gone. Certainly, I know many churches are having difficulties staying open in small rural communities as well. So this motion, I think, is a very solid motion, urging the government to look at it and see what can be done.

I think this is not only an issue in parts of larger cities where communities struggle but most certainly in rural Alberta. The places that are farther away from the main centres, I know, struggle often because of lack of population and because of distance to get programs.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those few words of, I hope, convincing encouragement I am hoping that every member here will support this motion. Thank you.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 510 lost]

Senior Abuse

511. Ms Kryczka moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to broaden the mandate of the Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence to include elder abuse so that its functions are to educate and further raise the awareness of Albertans about this serious problem for seniors, support current government and community initiatives and support improvements on them if needed, and identify gaps in legislation and services to seniors in areas where they might be at risk and to ensure the committee has adequate resources to handle its expanded role as advocate for seniors in Alberta.

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

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today and begin debate on Motion 511. Through many different facets of my life I have become aware that elder abuse is a serious problem facing seniors. I have heard from many concerned Albertans as MLA for Calgary-West, as chair of the Seniors' Advisory Council for Alberta, and as chair of the steering committee for the governmentwide study on the impact of the aging population on government programs and services. I am also an Albertan who is deeply concerned with the plight of our seniors. What I have come to realize is the severity of this problem and the fact that a lot of Albertans aren't fully aware of the extent of its existence nor of the programs and initiatives in place to deal with it. So it is difficult to find support to improve present programs if government and the public are not fully aware of the problem that exists.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to start by sharing a few facts with everyone in this House, facts that necessitate action on our behalf

now and not later. In November 1999 the long-term care review committee released a report titled *Healthy Aging: New Directions for Care*. In that report the committee made reference to the fact that although today people over 65 years comprise 9.8 percent of the population, by 2016 that number will rise to 14.5 percent and by 2031 to about 25 percent. So in 30 years one in four Albertans will be a senior citizen. For most of us these seniors will be our children. This is a significant number, and we as a government must ensure that we are readying ourselves now for what will be a greater number and proportion of seniors tomorrow.

If certain seniors' programs or initiatives are not working optimally now, what will happen when one in four Albertans is using them? We need to have workable policies and links to the seniors' community today so that when baby boomers, such as almost everyone in this room, become seniors, we are ready.

I think we have been doing our job for Alberta's seniors. We have among the best seniors' benefit program in the country. We have almost every department in our government liaising with seniors to create the best possible programs for them. We have a health care system that is working for our seniors, and we have countless community groups working and supporting seniors at the grassroots level. But, Mr. Speaker, I think that if there's an area where we can do more, it is responding to and fighting elder abuse.

I look at Motion 511 as one step in a much broader path of progress that needs to occur. As I realize that a motion is a good forum to get debate started, get people talking about an important issue, that is why I want to focus more right now on an overview of elder abuse.

Mr. Speaker, a frustrating characteristic about elder abuse is that it is not limited to one place or one group both from a government perspective in trying to formulate good policy and from a professional perspective in trying to educate to prevent it. What I mean is that abuse of seniors can occur in almost any setting, whether in their own home, another person's home, a seniors' lodge, or a nursing home. Abuse can happen to any senior, whether they are rich, poor, healthy, ill, male, or female. Therefore, it is very important in my comments to define as best I can what elder abuse is and to illustrate that it occurs in many forms and in many places, from private homes to public institutions.

Mr. Speaker, a good definition of elder abuse can be found with the U.S. Center for Elder Abuse. They have defined three basic categories: domestic, institutional, and self-neglect. Domestic elder abuse refers to maltreatment of an older person residing in his or her own home or the home of a caregiver. Institutional abuse refers to the maltreatment of an older person residing in a residential facility; for example, a nursing home, board and care home, foster home, or group home. Self-neglect refers to the conduct of an older person living alone which threatens his or her own health or safety.

From those categories elder abuse is also manifested in four general classes: financial, emotional, physical, and neglect. Elder abuse can occur to anyone, although elders who have mental or physical disabilities are at the greatest risk. Unfortunately, we know victims of elder abuse are most often reluctant to report offenders and are not willing to pursue a criminal investigation. That is why it is difficult to obtain reliable statistics on the occurrence of abuse in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I want to spend some time further defining these different forms of abuse because from this you'll see just how varied the abuse can be. Physical abuse is described as any action done intentionally that causes physical discomfort, pain, or injury, such as hitting or slapping or physical confinement. This is the abuse that most people think about. It is almost the classic idea of abuse, but the reality is that abuse occurs in many different forms.

Emotional abuse can range from denying access to grandchildren to not respecting a senior's privacy to words that are hurtful. Often seniors are threatened in this manner and are coerced into doing things they don't want to do.

Neglect is one of the types of abuse hardest to define. It can be on purpose or a case of not caring about a senior's well-being. Neglect can range from not giving a senior proper food or clothing to failing to provide adequate housing or health care to denial of social contacts and outings to failing to prevent physical harm in the case of disabled or physically weakened seniors.

Financial abuse is also difficult to define because it can occur in many different forms. One of the most prevalent forms is fraud. Financial abuse by means of telemarketing fraud and other scams is a very serious, extensive problem for seniors today. In Canada 40 percent of fraud victims are seniors. Losses to each victim can run from hundreds to thousands of dollars and in some cases much more. This is a serious problem that doesn't get the attention it deserves.

It is estimated that in Canada at least 4 percent of persons over the age of 65 have suffered from one or more serious forms of abuse at the hands of family members or other close contacts, such as financial, physical, mental, or even sexual abuse. The general consensus among experts is that elder abuse is largely underreported, so the figure of 4 percent is considered to be too low. Some experts report the percentage of abuse as high as 8 percent. If you take the 290,000 seniors living in Alberta in 1998 and say that 4 to 8 percent are abused, that means that 11,560 seniors to as high as 23,135 seniors are facing one form of abuse or another. Those numbers are very scary. So, Mr. Speaker, this is the situation we face in Alberta.

3:40

In illustrating some basic facts about elder abuse, I have painted a fairly bleak picture, but fortunately that is only one side of this issue. There are many very good programs and initiatives going on in this province with respect to elder abuse that we should be very proud of, with many people at the grassroots level helping countless older Albertans protect and improve their quality of life. There are volunteers and professional staff at Kerby Rotary House, a shelter for abused seniors in Calgary, or the men and women on the elder abuse early intervention team in Edmonton or numerous ministers and employees across government who have a hand in our highly regarded seniors' programs.

A groundbreaking piece of provincial legislation to protect seniors is the Protection for Persons in Care Act. The act, proclaimed January 5, 1998, addresses the abuse of vulnerable persons in government-funded facilities such as nursing homes and senior citizens' lodges. Mr. Speaker, the act makes it mandatory for anyone who has reason to believe that abuse against a client has occurred to report it. Most reports come through the protection for persons in care reporting line operated by Alberta Community Development and are investigated by the department, within whose jurisdiction the act falls.

Mr. Speaker, linked to this act is the long-standing Health Facilities Review Committee, chaired by my colleague from St. Albert, whose main purpose is to routinely review and inspect facilities and observe the manner in which they are operated. The committee also investigates complaints reported through the Protection for Persons in Care Act.

These initiatives are much needed, Mr. Speaker, and it helps ensure that Albertans living in government-funded facilities, many of whom are seniors, receive the protection they need against abuse.

But, Mr. Speaker, in regards to the Protection for Persons in Care Act, this is just a start, as many of those who were involved in the drafting, implementation, and now operation of the act realize. A

multidepartmental working group has been reviewing the act, with the work split into two parts. The first part has resulted in many administrative improvements and has led to the creation of the central investigation unit. The second part, currently being reviewed, will further improve the act and may lead to the recommendation that further education and training of facility staff are necessary.

Mr. Speaker, another concern that has been expressed is that the Protection for Persons in Care Act does not address the abuse of vulnerable persons living in their own homes, in private care or family homes, or in any other facility not funded by the government and listed in the act. There is currently little specific legal protection for vulnerable persons living in private care homes, and there are currently very few specific standards or regulations relating to the care of persons in such homes.

So, Mr. Speaker, if we as a government are to encourage private homes as a viable housing option for seniors, which seems to make sense, especially in rural areas where there may not be the demand or developer interest to build a larger facility, we must ensure that there are the proper regulations and the ability to monitor private homes. Otherwise, we are creating a situation in which abuse can occur with no way to monitor the standards and to sanction those who violate them. I have heard this concern for much-needed regulations by almost all professionals working with seniors, from police officers to social agency workers.

Mr. Speaker, another example of a government initiative that is working well is this Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence, which is housed in Children's Services. When I started my research on this topic, I was not aware of the existence nor of the excellent work this committee has done advocating for all Albertans, seniors included. I am strongly recommending that this committee be given the added responsibility to be full advocates for seniors and to expand their mandate to include elder abuse. The committee has the network of skilled professionals, well-established links to other provinces, and could be a much more effective and strong voice for seniors in Alberta.

As well, this committee works with the Protection against Family Violence Act. The act, proclaimed June 1, 1999, contains provisions permitting the police to obtain a warrant to enter a home in certain emergency situations. In other cases the most appropriate approach is one involving awareness raising, support, and counseling. Such provisions are regarded as instruments of particular use in the intervention against seniors' abuse. We as a government need to ensure that the Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence has our full support both in spirit and in dollars.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to spend a moment discussing some of the recommendations that came out of the long-term care review, or Broda report, which I had the honour to vice-chair. Several items mentioned in this report have a direct impact on fighting elder abuse. Recommendation 31 includes introducing a new continuing care act. The new act would, among other things, "establish a mechanism for monitoring the quality of care provided in the home living stream, the supportive living stream, and the facility stream."

Recommendations 44 and 45 include "support informal caregivers" and "expand respite care," two strategies to assist in alleviating problems that can arise. Training and support groups that teach coping skills to informal caregivers and provide flexible amounts of respite care are needed. This makes sense. If caregivers are inadequately trained or lacking in support, it is easy to see how they can get stressed out or burned out and then do something they might otherwise not do, such as commit abuse.

Another very important consideration that pertains to elder abuse is taking steps to explore ethical issues. A crucial ethical imperative

is truly preserving and promoting personal dignity and autonomy for the elderly. This imperative is of vital consideration. We do promote the best interests of our seniors, and we do work to improve their quality of life. Respect for seniors' dignity has to be a sincere part of our governmentwide policies.

It is very easy to sometimes forget that seniors are still vital adults capable of making their own decisions. Many, even family members, see seniors as vulnerable and therefore easy prey, and their actions are done out of disrespect. Others may be frustrated by lack of support or may not have the appropriate training and skills. Seniors themselves need to be reassured that they have the right to stand up for themselves when they are abused.

What we must do as a government, Mr. Speaker, is continue to work to ensure that the many excellent recommendations from the long-term care report are acted upon. I'm happy to say that we have already begun, for example, by adding \$265.8 million to long-term care facilities and dollars for more frontline staff. The 1999-2000 health budget provided our RHAs with new funding to hire at least another additional 1,000 full-time, permanent frontline staff and a total of 2,400 over the next three years.

The Fair Trading Act, housed in Government Services, protects consumers through increased remedies and enforcement tools and tougher penalties that will discourage marketplace fraud. A key program in battling fraud is the Hang Up on Fraud campaign, that has helped consumers identify phone fraud and protect themselves from being taken advantage of by fraudulent telemarketers.

Turning to community-based initiatives, the Kerby Rotary House, which is operated by the Kerby Centre in Calgary, and the Calgary Seniors Resource Society are excellent examples. Kerby Rotary House is a multipurpose facility for abused seniors providing a wide range of counseling and information services and is dedicated to the enhancement of quality of life for older persons and the promotion of independence and dignity.

Kerby Rotary House was opened in May 1999 and is a last-resort haven for seniors in abusive situations, providing them the counseling and support they need to break out of the cycle of abuse. It is seen as a unique shelter model for all of North America. Calgaryans and Albertans should be proud of this initiative. However, Kerby Rotary House is presently not funded as a shelter, as are other shelters in the province that provide for women and children. This need must be seriously reviewed by government.

There is a similar community initiative in Edmonton, but it involves a special working relationship between the Edmonton Police Service and the community. Their mission is to prevent and respond to elder abuse by working in partnership with the community, therefore enhancing the safety and well-being of older adults. As I mentioned before, the elder abuse early intervention team is making a definite impact on fighting elder abuse. The team provides outreach, emergency response, short-term counseling, referral, and community education. I can say from personal experience and meeting the team members that they truly care about our seniors and are a valuable resource to the Edmonton seniors' community. They are battling the unwillingness of today's seniors to report abuse through laying a groundwork of trust and security.

Mr. Speaker, we must ensure as a government that these community groups have our fullest support. We pride ourselves on community-based initiatives, and these are examples of some of the best.

So I have presented an outline of elder abuse in Alberta. I won't deny that we have a problem in elder abuse, a problem that has the potential to get proportionately bigger as our population ages. As I have illustrated, many positive initiatives and programs exist that are dealing with this serious problem and must continue in the future.

3:50

Mr. Speaker, I want to wrap up my comments today with a few suggestions on where we can go from here. First and foremost, we must raise public awareness to educate Albertans, including seniors, that this problem exists, creating a climate where seniors will actually seek help for themselves when they need it. Seniors may even have to report a member of their own family. We must also educate and reinforce to people that the most vulnerable people in our society deserve to be treated with the same respect as others. Second, we must promote and support current initiatives at community and government levels. Third, we must better co-ordinate existing government and community initiatives through greater communication. Many good initiatives could be even better. Fourth, we must ensure that input from seniors is included and taken seriously in all of our proposed initiatives. They often know what works best for them, so their input is vital. Finally, we must continue to work to change the attitudes of Albertans in general towards seniors. Seniors are a valued resource to our province.

Mr. Speaker, I look at Motion 511 as one step in a process that needs to be undertaken in order to improve the situation of seniors in Alberta. I can't overemphasize the seriousness of this problem for our seniors today and tomorrow and how important it is that we have a coherent, comprehensive policy platform to address the abuse of seniors.

I thank all of my colleagues for listening to my comments, and I urge everyone to support Motion 511. Thank you.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My colleague beside me is giving me a hard time about elder abuse. It's because he's older than I am.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to speak to this motion. It's difficult to talk about elder abuse because in many cases it's denied. I think back to about 25 years ago when we actually admitted that there was abuse in homes and that women needed shelters. It was hard for a society to admit and to say, "We need this kind of support in the community," but we did that, and we've made I think great strides in awareness about abuse in families and abuse towards women. Hopefully, someday we won't need shelters because it will be so unacceptable in society to abuse people and to abuse women. We're not at that stage, but we have that reality, and we're working towards it when it comes to abuse against women.

I think we're at the stage in society where we're actually admitting that there is elder abuse. That's a very hard thing for people to talk about. Number one, sometimes it's children who are abusing their parents, and it's hard because a parent doesn't want to say: my child is abusing me. So often it's hidden, I think far more than we realize. I've seen financial abuse in some families, in fact. It makes me angry. Yet I see parents handing over money for all kinds of things, and then they end up unable to stay in their homes, unable to have finer things in their life because they've once again given money to a child who treats that person as if they're an unending supply of money. I see that.

I know that the member mentioned sales campaigns. Actually, one couple that I can think of bought a \$900 vacuum when they had a vacuum system within their house and then, embarrassed to tell about it, just said: no, no; that's what we wanted. That's really sad. To protect elderly people like that is a big, big undertaking. Some seniors, God bless them, are very outspoken and can speak up for themselves and make the world know what's going on in the facility that they're living in. If the food isn't good enough or if they're cold

or if they aren't getting good care, they're very vocal. But there are very many who are not and who feel that if they didn't have this place to stay, they wouldn't be anywhere, so they don't dare to complain. They don't have a lot of family support and are feeling that they're a bit alone in the world and aren't vocal about concerns that they have. I have seen that happen too.

Now, I am glad the member said that this is just a small step, because it is. I mean, I support the motion. Of course I support the motion, but urging the government is a small step. I would like to see so much more done, as the member mentioned, and I'm glad she did.

Maybe the member has seen and maybe other members in this Assembly have seen the letter from the Alberta Association for Community Living, the Developmental Disabilities Resource Centre of Calgary, and FAIRE, which stands for Families Allied to Influence Responsible Eldercare. In that letter there are many concerns expressed that we should be addressing when it comes to eldercare, and certainly one of the things they talk about is the act that we have in this province, the Protection for Persons in Care Act. I know this is a motion that will go towards supporting that. Some of the real issues, though, that need to be addressed weren't addressed in the act and can't possibly be addressed in a motion. I think we certainly have to look at some of the things that have to be addressed, at more than just the motion.

Some of the things that could be addressed are the deficiencies regarding client applicability, protection, and rights. There's an issue of clients who need advocates. Nowadays I guess we call it global communication, but families are global as well, and often people do not live near their parents or grandparents. I feel very fortunate in that I live near my parents, near my husband's family, and in fact near my husband's grandparents, who are 91 and 89 and still live in their own home and do very well. But a lot of people don't have that kind of family support, so we are talking about a need for the role of advocates for seniors in different facilities. I think we have to look at the client's right to be represented by his or her family, guardian, or spokesperson.

We also have to address the issue of clients who may not want the alleged incident to be reported and maybe look at the background of why that isn't being reported, why they want it hidden. You know, there are all kinds of issues there. I think we have to address the potential jeopardy facing abused clients following disclosure, because once they do disclose what's happened, I'm sure there are issues surrounding that and feelings of guilt about what they're talking about, who they're talking about. So we have to address those things.

I think we have to require the victim and/or the victim's spokesperson to be informed of the reporting of abuse and of the recommendations made in the investigator's report. We also have to provide the abused person with legal representation, counsel, and other benefits of the law. Often in these cases we're talking about people who do not have money and cannot follow up with legal help.

I think we have to honour the abused client's constitutional right to an appeal process, and we have to articulate the interests of the abused person, which will take precedence over all other interests, and provide an abused person the opportunity to choose an informal means of resolving complaints. I think we've often seen that maybe we can resolve things without going through the court system, and I think we have to look at that.

4:00

I think sometimes we have problems in communication, as indicated by these three groups that I referred to earlier, the AACL, the Developmental Disabilities Resource Centre in Calgary, and the

FAIRE organization. One of the things that is not being addressed right now in current legislation and that we should be looking at is to allow for collaborative discussion regarding the allegation or the dismissal of a complaint, the investigative procedure, or its outcome. I've seen this in some institutions, where an elderly person complains about something, feels intimidated by the person they go to with the complaint, and then as a result other people back right off. If it's an issue to all and they want to take it to the director of the institution and one person speaks up and then gets put down, everyone else backs away. We've got to realize that that's a reality, too, that we all have to address.

I think within the act that we do have to work with there's no definition of a criminal act. We also have to differentiate between an abusive act and a criminal act; clarify what is meant by "a reasonable level of safety"; clarify what is meant by "reasonable and probable grounds"; clarify what constitutes an unfounded complaint; clarify what constitutes an investigation; require that the alleged perpetrator, the victim, or the victim's family or spokesperson be informed of the reporting of the alleged abuse, the recommendations made in the investigator's report, or the minister's decision; communicate who may assume the role of investigator and the qualifications that are required; and clarify what constitutes a criminal records check.

We also need to clarify why abusive acts by persons with mental disabilities and abusive acts by persons with demential illness are treated differently under the act and to track the nature of calls received other than those that are reporting an abusive situation. And you know what? We have to monitor private caregivers. I realize that the hon. member mentioned that as well. We need to be looking at that. This motion does not address that, but we should be looking at changes in the act to continue what this small step does. It should identify who is qualified to make the decision whether or not an alleged situation is abusive and therefore will be investigated.

When we're talking about agencies, there are things that are not required yet of agencies, and we have to act upon that. I don't mean to belittle the motion. The motion is good, and it urges the government, but truly action is needed. Certainly I think that people should be aware of what the act does, and some of the suggestions by these three groups are that the act be posted in a conspicuous place in the facility and that abuse protocols, proceedings, and guiding principles be developed. I would venture to say that most agencies would willingly do that and would actually make their residents and their clients well aware of their rights and what tools they have to address issues of concern. I would say that very good agencies would do that and would gladly be an example to others, but we should enact it. We should put it in an act.

We should require agencies to be accountable for the alleged occurrence or cause of the abuse. We have to routinely assess and address risk factors that contribute to the occurrence of abuse and initiate and publicly disclose safeguard mechanisms for preventing or reducing the likelihood of abuse from occurring. Agencies should be subject to repercussions for failing to develop and implement safeguards that address the client's needs and vulnerability, should inform the abused person's family or spokesperson of the alleged incident, and should log incidents of abuse for routine assessment and documentation by the Health Facilities Review Committee. They should protect, counsel, or provide crisis care to an abused client following disclosure, accept responsibility for providing legal counsel to abused residents, and routinely educate clients, families, and staff about the act and the characteristics of an effective safeguard.

We should have policies and procedures regarding disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment of employees

alleged as abusers and follow through on recommendations from the minister and address systemic issues that potentially lead to abuse such as staff ratio – we've talked about that often in here – lack of staff training around abuse, and lack of agency policies. Now, I know that many agencies and organizations are getting much better at training staff, but they often find themselves short of staff, so that reality is out there and needs to be addressed as well. We have to maintain a standard level of quality of care that might minimize abusive situations occurring.

I would like to continue on with some deficiencies regarding investigations. When we ask for investigations to occur, these people have to be trained in investigative procedures. I mean, they have to be qualified. What does it take to be a qualified investigator? The investigator should be knowledgeable in the areas of cognitive disability or demential illnesses. We should require the investigator to determine and report the underlying cause of the abuse; require the investigator to engage all involved parties in collaborative discussion; require the investigator to discuss the incident with the victim and the victim's family; stipulate a deadline for closure of investigations and ministerial decision-making; ensure a fair, thorough, and impartial investigation; and stipulate that all reports of alleged abuse be investigated.

Now, there were other deficiencies that haven't been addressed regarding consumers. The act is subject to a review process where consumer representation is absent. It fails to ensure ongoing opportunities to educate consumers about what they have at their disposal through the act and to safeguard mechanisms for preventing or reducing the likelihood of abuse occurring. It fails to ensure ongoing community consultations regarding the act's effectiveness. It fails to provide an opportunity for the presence of consumer advocacy in the life of persons in care and fails to provide consumers a mechanism to access the names of agencies involved in abuse allegations and the number of allegations reported under any given agency.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have indicated just a few of the many areas that need to be addressed when talking about persons in care, when talking about elder abuse. I know that this motion was made with the best intentions. It is a very small step. There's an opportunity to put words into action, I think, by addressing the Protection of Persons in Care Act, which to me would do far more in addressing elder abuse.

I will support the motion, but it doesn't nearly address the issues that are out there. I have suggested several things that could be changed to address that. I would encourage all members of the Assembly that when they are looking at legislation over the next however many days we sit or the next time we meet, certainly this is one act that could be addressed, that could be brought in with really strong amendments and with the ability to implement it. That would be real action put to words.

I support the motion, but I encourage action. Rather than just speaking to an issue, I think it's incumbent upon us to act. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

4:10

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

MR. HANCOCK: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise and speak to Motion 511, addressing the issue of elder abuse. Elder abuse is, in my view, a very serious issue, a very serious concern in our province and one that we do need to bring out from behind closed doors and talk about in public and start to deal with. In my past life as a solicitor – that's practising law, I should

add – I had occasion to deal with situations where elder abuse was a significant concern. I don't often find myself agreeing with Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, but it's a concern that we do need to discuss, that we do need to bring out in the open, that we do need to have people understand happens to our neighbours, happens in our communities, happens to people that we know, and that they are scared to talk about it. They are reluctant to talk about it because in many cases it happens at the hands of family members.

We have to be careful though. Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert suggests that we should be bringing in legislation. I'm not averse to the concept that we need to strengthen some of the legislation that we have, but more important and the gist of the motion that is before the House today is the concept that we should have a working committee looking at the issue, that we should be using that mechanism to raise the profile of the issue, and that we should be using that mechanism to make it an important and a discussed issue in our communities. Legislation by itself is not the answer to everything. We may need the force of legislation at some point. We may need to improve the legislation we already have at some point.

The most important thing we could do to deal with the problem of elder abuse today, as I think we are trying to do with the issue of domestic violence today, is to bring it out into the open, to shine a light on it, to show people that it's there, that it exists, that it's not something we can pretend happens in other parts of the world or to other people. It happens now. It happens in our community. It happens to our friends and our neighbours. It's something that's insidious. It's something that doesn't get discussed and doesn't get brought out into the light of day. So I would like to congratulate the Member for Calgary-West for bringing forward this motion and for suggesting that it's an area that needs more attention. I think she's raised it in the appropriate manner, that we should "broaden the mandate of the Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence," because elder abuse is family violence, whether it's emotional abuse or financial abuse or physical abuse, and all three of those happen in our communities today.

As an MLA and as chair of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta, the Member for Calgary-West has worked hard on behalf of Alberta seniors and has helped to bring their concerns and issues to the attention of this Legislature and to the government. Again, in this manner, by bringing forward this motion, I think she is showing real leadership in bringing out an issue, Mr. Speaker, that most people don't want to talk about. They don't want to talk about it because it's something we should be ashamed of when it happens in our communities and to our friends and to our relatives.

I'm interested in this motion and in exploring increased collaboration with other departments to address elder abuse. As our Premier mentioned in his annual televised address to Albertans earlier this year, seniors are a very important part of this province. Through their wisdom and dedication and community spirit they make valuable contributions to the province, and it's indisputable that today's seniors helped to build the province and establish the wonderful quality of life that Albertans enjoy today. That's why it's such a crime when we have seniors who are scared in their own homes, seniors who are unable to let people know that they're being abused, who in some cases perhaps are even unaware of the fact that they're being abused. So we do need to find ways to deal with that issue, and the first step is really one of discussion, one of communication, one of education, one of bringing it out into the open and making sure that we talk about it and find ways to deal with it as a community.

Elder abuse, Mr. Speaker, whether it's physical, emotional, or financial, is simply unacceptable. Alberta Justice has and will continue to work with other departments to prevent elder abuse, to

provide support and information to victims of elder abuse, and to prosecute where possible those who commit this terrible crime.

The whole issue of awareness and of victims' needs. We have many programs now available to help victims of violence or victims of crime, but in many cases we don't have. A question came up in question period today on an unrelated matter but in a similar context, where the programs are in place, where the programs that we need are there, but the people who need them don't take advantage of those programs. So to a great extent, again it's a question of education but also a question of providing the forum and the mechanism so that the people who need the program can take advantage of the program, because in many cases people are living in personal residences or even in institutions and are afraid to step out and let somebody know that they need that kind of help.

The current business plan for Alberta Justice and Attorney General reflects the commitment of this government to protecting, supporting, and providing information to victims of crime, and I think we have to look at that in the context of elder abuse to see how we can do a better job in that area. So again I think that the concept of making it part of the mandate of the interdepartmental committee is a very, very important one.

It's important to make Alberta seniors aware that help is available to them when they need it. As I say, we have programs right across this province for victims of crime to help victims and their families, but unfortunately in many cases we don't provide the access that's necessary to enable those who need it to be able to access the programs easily and in a manner which perhaps would calm or assuage their fear that they might have retribution if they were to take advantage of those programs.

We have a couple of very important pieces of legislation already, Mr. Speaker, and again I respond to Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, who said that we need more legislation. The Victims of Crime Act is guided by key principles that focus on the needs of the victim, principles that describe the importance of treating victims with courtesy, compassion, and respect for their privacy concerns. For victims of elder abuse or any other crime, the legislation protects them from further abuse and considers their best interests during the criminal justice process. But, again, although that legislation is there with good intention, with the tools that are necessary at that end of the program, we don't have the process which would encourage a victim of elder abuse to step forward, to come out and say: I'm being abused, and I want to use this process. We don't yet have processes in place which make many of those elders who are being abused comfortable that they can come out and access that and get that protection, so there's still work to be done.

The Protection against Family Violence Act, which came into force on June 1, 1999, is a law that gives police the power to move quickly when seniors are at risk of violence in their own home from a family member. It gives Albertans immediate protection with respect to an emergency protection order, which allows police to temporarily remove an abuser from the home. For seniors the law helps eliminate the fear that they'll have to leave their home because a family member is abusing them, and it also gives the authorities certain rights to investigate and go into a home where there's a real apprehension that there is a problem.

Again, we need to do more work to make sure that seniors and other family members are aware of these laws and are aware of the ability to use these laws when either they are being abused or when they know of someone who's being abused and who is not able to come forward and identify that they are being abused and take steps to remedy that. So we do need to make better use of that law, and we need to make better use of that law by making sure that Albertans are aware of the fact that that law is there for protection not just in

domestic family violence situations but certainly in the area of elder abuse as well.

4:20

I'm quite proud of the support that the department gives to community agencies that provide crime prevention programs. The provincial crime prevention strategy announced December 1, 1999, introduced a new grant fund to further support development of community-based crime prevention initiatives. This is an area where we could get Albertans involved to find ways to do more work in the area of crime prevention, and certainly preventing elder abuse is, in my view, a very important crime prevention program. So I'm pleased that these crime prevention programs are available. I think that we have some very excellent legislation available to assist, particularly the Protection against Family Violence Act, but I am concerned that we don't go far enough in making certain that our seniors are protected from abuse, whether that abuse happens to them in an institution or whether it happens to them in their own home.

We've tried very hard to make sure that there are mechanisms in place to allow the reporting of abuse, crime prevention programs in place to encourage the reporting of abuse, and programs which would steer away from abuse. We have victims of violence programs and victims of crime programs which could be utilized. We have the Protection against Family Violence Act which could be utilized. We have many pieces of legislation in place. What we really need, Mr. Speaker, is a greater awareness, a greater understanding in our community that elder abuse is real, that it's insidious, that it's a horrendous thing to be happening. It need no longer be hidden under a bushel basket. It should be brought out into the light. It should be exposed for what it is, and we should be educating our community as to the availability of resources to deal with it. Yes, if we need to have better legislation or if we need to have better programming, if the programming that we have doesn't deal with the issues directly, then we need to examine that and come up with better ways of dealing with it.

That's not the first order of business, Mr. Speaker. It's the order of business that we need to take on after we have addressed the issue of community awareness and raised the level of intolerance in the community in the area where intolerance is appropriate, and that is in the area of elder abuse. We cannot, we should not tolerate abuse of anyone in the community, but particularly some of the types of abuse that some elders have to put up with are not acceptable.

I think that the hon. Member for Calgary-West, by bringing forward this motion at this time to encourage specifically the interdepartmental committee dealing with this issue and by leading the way to bring this out into the open and encourage that discussion, is making exactly the right move, and I would urge members to support the motion.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to vote in support of Motion 511, and that's because I think this is an area that needs to be pursued by this government. The difficulty I have with the motion is not with the subject matter, that being one of elder abuse. The only hesitation I would have in terms of voting in support of it is this. The Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence really started out from an initiative of the office for the prevention of family violence. Before that, within the once department of the solicitor general there was a working committee looking at domestic violence issues, particularly focusing on violence against

women and children, particularly violence against women and children at the hands of men.

While I acknowledge that there are several forms of violence and abuse that take place within families and that there is no form that is more or less acceptable than any other form, I must say that from my own experience working within the criminal justice system, the predominant form of violence is violence against women and children, primarily where men are the perpetrators. So I was a little disappointed when I saw the focus moving away from dealing seriously in a cross-government fashion, in a pan-government fashion, with that particular form of violence.

By now making the mandate of the Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence include all forms of elder abuse, I'm afraid it may just serve as a means for the government to say, "Oh, yeah, we're dealing with the issue; look; we've now expanded the mandate of this particular committee," instead of being able to say: "Well, we are serious about the issue because we have committed new funding, because we have created new programs, because we have made it a core part of the business of the ministry responsible for seniors' programs. You can tell we're serious about this issue because it does in fact have a legislative framework around it."

I am very mindful of the legislation that the Minister of Justice just reiterated for the House, and I think the government is moving in the right direction in some of its crime prevention initiatives. But the problem still remains that by simply expanding the mandate of an existing interdepartmental committee, you will not be demonstrating any real, serious commitment to eradicating elder abuse. The interdepartmental committee is already well challenged and well burdened with its existing mandate.

Government programs have already been criticized for dealing inadequately with other forms of domestic violence situations. We are only slowly beginning to see government action in terms of resolving long-standing family law matters. We have not seen any real commitment in terms of expanding the role of children's service authorities or the Children's Advocate in terms of dealing with children who are at risk. We still wake up to headlines, Mr. Speaker, which in very tragic large type tell us of new tragedies dealing with women who have been abused. So I think we need to do more than simply refer this to a committee.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The time given to debate this motion has now concluded, and I must put the question on Motion 511.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 511 as amended carried unanimously]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: May we have unanimous consent to go to the next order of business rather than try and do it in one minute?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: Private Bills
head: Second Reading

Bill Pr. 3

Westcastle Development Authority Repeal Act

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to move second reading of Bill Pr. 3, the Westcastle Development Authority Repeal Act. The original act was put in place in about 1985 for the MD of

Pincher Creek and the town of Pincher Creek to develop and go out and promote a skiing experience in the Westcastle Valley known as Westcastle ski hill. With operating the ski hill for a number of years by themselves, they have since developed an arrangement with a private corporation. The private corporation has purchased the assets of the ski hill from the Westcastle Development Authority, and they are expanding the facilities and operating the facilities as a private venture. Thus the Westcastle Development Authority no longer needs to be in place, and therefore their desire is to have it dissolved. Bill Pr. 3 gives that authority.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

4:30

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know we don't often speak to the private bills in the Assembly, but if I may for a few short moments just bring to light some of the things that have come up during the discussion of this bill. Some questions were asked during the committee meeting which were answered. Research was done, and in fact we had statutory declarations from two people, Mr. Norris Graham and Mr. Douglas Evans. They requested the petitioner's counsel to provide a statutory declaration from the appropriate official representing Westcastle Development Authority to confirm the status of the authority's outstanding liabilities. To their knowledge, there were none, and they signed statutory declarations to indicate that.

One thing that was not mentioned in the committee that I raise for people to consider is the now issue with the Siksika Nation, who are expressing concern about the Westcastle development and concerns around the issue of the transfer of land and their involvement in that. So I just bring that to your attention. Actually, it was an article in the *Calgary Herald* that brought to our attention that – in fact, the headline is "Natives threaten to seize Castle Mountain" and "Band wants traditional lands returned."

It could be a whole different area? Is that what you're indicating? Then that would give me cause for relief. I just wanted that brought up. I'm sorry; I didn't know that that wasn't a part of it. I'm glad it's not, because that would certainly be cause for concern.

With that, I appreciate the clarification from the nod by the chair. Then the concerns that were addressed had been met, so I thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 3 read a second time]

head: Private Bills
head: Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

Bill Pr. 1

Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the Province of Alberta Repeal Act

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

MR. COUTTS: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I move that the question on Bill Pr. 1, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the Province of Alberta Repeal Act, be put.

[The clauses of Bill Pr. 1 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.

Bill Pr. 2
William Roper Hull Child and Family
Services Amendment Act, 2000

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

MR. MELCHIN: Thank you. I know that this is going to occupy the minds of everyone here for a long time to come, and we should study each paragraph and clause in detail and each word, the spelling and the like. On behalf of the Member for Calgary-Glenmore I would move that the question be put on Bill Pr. 2, the William Roper Hull Child and Family Services Amendment Act, 2000.

[The clauses of Bill Pr. 2 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.

Bill Pr. 3
Westcastle Development Authority Repeal Act

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd just like to offer a quick comment before calling the question on this, and it deals with an item that was brought up in second reading on Bill Pr. 3 by the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert. The Westcastle Development Authority Act was originally set up, as I said, to look for developers in the Westcastle ski hill. The Westcastle ski hill is not at this point in time under their authority any longer. It's in private hands, and that particular transaction went through all of the government discussions of the day here a couple of years ago.

The situation around land claims from First Nations people does not apply to this particular piece of property, but it does apply to the Special Places 2000 program. In the special places special management area that is surrounding the ski hill, there were some areas where there were some native concerns and some significant areas they were involved in, but I just want to reassure the hon. member that this particular area, where the development is and the ski hill itself is, does not include any of those concerns that were involved in the special places component.

So with that, I'd like to just say that I'd like to move that the question now be put on Bill Pr. 3, the Westcastle Development Authority Repeal Act.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

4:40

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a few questions with regard to this bill that I'm hoping can be answered before we take the final vote on it here in committee, and I think this is the appropriate time to ask them. I've followed the development of the Westcastle ski hill and the impact it's had on the surrounding area for some time. Certainly since I have been elected, it's been an ongoing issue in the region, as the member knows, and I have some questions that perhaps you could answer for me today.

What's being done in terms of the transition between the authority and the new operators in terms of environmental impact studies or cumulative impact studies with regard to environmental issues, particularly land use and migration of species?

Before the question is called, I'm hoping that at least some preliminary answers can be put to those two questions, and upon receiving those answers, I might I have some follow-up questions, Mr. Chairman.

MR. COUTTS: I just want to make it really, really clear here that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie is asking questions about the private-sector corporation development when they purchased the property and set up their development plans and expanded on the ski hill. She's asking questions about that particular property as it applies today. I think the question that she's put forward is better served as maybe a question to the Minister of Environment at another time, because her question does not involve the transaction between the Westcastle Development Authority and the MD of Pincher Creek as they set up for the private sector to take over.

This act does not monitor anything that is going on presently. That is presently being monitored by the Department of Environment and the MD of Pincher Creek. What this act does is basically just gets rid of the development authority because the property is in the hands of the private sector at this point in time.

I think her questions are better served in another venue at another time in the Assembly. Thank you.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I certainly respect the comments that the member has made with regard to my questions, but I think it is always appropriate in this Assembly for us to question any change in direction in terms of lands that provide critical habitat for species in this province. Particularly when we see an authority which is at least a quasi-public body handing over any kind of control or authority to the private sector, then these are issues that do need to be flagged and identified.

Certainly I will pursue these questions with the Minister of Environment, but I think it's important for them to be on the record at this time in terms of the significance of this area. It's in a very environmentally fragile region, and it does provide critical habitat for species at risk in this province. It is a major stumbling block to providing wildlife corridors from Yellowstone to Yukon, which is an initiative that I know the Minister of Environment is looking at supporting.

You know, we're not just talking about a ski hill here. We're talking about a massively expanded ski hill. We're talking about at least one 18-hole golf course, if not two of them, and the corresponding widening of roads and improving of roads. We're talking about significant requests being made for hotels and other kinds of accommodation in the area, including camping. We're talking about concerns that have been raised in the past about off-road vehicles in the vicinity.

This is a hugely potentially contentious environmental issue in the region. I don't think I would be doing my duty as the Environment critic in this Assembly if I didn't flag this as an issue. We're seeing this move completely into private hands. We saw a lot of the decision-making and development in that particular region happen behind closed doors in this province. It is going to be an ongoing issue. There is no doubt that it has been flagged as a contentious problem for the future in terms of environmental regions. I know that the member who introduced this bill lives in the region and has worked hard with the people who live in the area to find satisfactory resolution to some of the issues that have occurred there. However, having said that, it has addressed primarily the issues concerning development, not the issues concerning environment, in terms of what I've seen.

So I think it's very important to put these concerns on the record. We will undertake to follow them up with the Minister of Environment, but I will say on the record that every time this development touches something that happens in this Assembly, we will be speaking to it.

[The clauses of Bill Pr. 3 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.

Bill Pr. 4
Calgary Municipal Heritage Properties
Authority Amendment Act, 2000

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

MRS. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that the question be put now on Bill Pr. 4, Calgary Municipal Heritage Properties Authority Amendment Act, 2000.

[The clauses of Bill Pr. 4 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.

Bill Pr. 5
Calgary Foundation Act

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

MS GRAHAM: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On behalf of the Member for Calgary-Currie I now move that the question be put on Bill Pr. 5.

[The clauses of Bill Pr. 5 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.
The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would move that the committee now rise and report bills Pr. 1, Pr. 2, Pr. 3, Pr. 4, and Pr. 5.

[Motion carried]

4:50

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

MR. SHARIFF: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following: bills Pr. 1, Pr. 2, Pr. 3, Pr. 4, and Pr. 5.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Does the Assembly concur in this report?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed? So ordered.

head: Private Bills

head: Third Reading

[The members indicated below moved that the following Bills be read a third time, and the motions were carried]

Pr. 1	Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the Province of Alberta Repeal Act	Coutts
Pr. 2	William Roper Hull Child and Family Services Amendment Act, 2000	Melchin (for Stevens)

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

MS GRAHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time I am seeking the unanimous consent of the Assembly for the following motion in my capacity as chairman of the Private Bills Committee. The motion is as follows: Be it resolved that the Assembly waive Standing Order 73(1) in order to now give consideration to third reading of Bill Pr. 3.

[Unanimous consent granted]

[The members indicated below moved that the following Bills be read a third time, and the motions were carried]

Pr. 3	Westcastle Development Authority Repeal Act	Coutts
Pr. 4	Calgary Municipal Heritage Properties Authority Amendment Act, 2000	Laing
Pr. 5	Calgary Foundation Act	Graham (for Burgener)

head: Government Motions

Reappointment of Auditor General

18. Mr. Hancock moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly concur in the recommendation of the Select Standing Committee on Legislative Offices agreed to on April 19, 2000, to recommend to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor that Mr. Peter Valentine be reappointed as Auditor General for the province of Alberta.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did want to make a couple of comments on the reappointment of the Auditor General, partly because I was a member of the Legislative Offices Committee when the current Auditor General was first appointed and partly because I think the Auditor General has served the province well. I think there can be general agreement that the reports we have received have been fair and that the Auditor General has gone out of his way to make sure that any criticisms his reports contain are clear and that some direction is given in terms of solving the kinds of problems he has identified.

I think it's a difficult task that the Auditor General has, and in particular I think it's going to be even more difficult with the reorganization of the government; for instance, the incorporation of education and advanced education now into one department. As that has proceeded, trying to keep a paper trail that is easily followed is, I think, going to be a challenge for the Auditor General, and it's important of course that the Auditor General do that job well.

If there are any reservations, Mr. Speaker, I suspect they would be surrounding two incidents. One was the purchase of some new furniture when this province was undergoing the first very severe budget cuts in the early '90s, and I wondered at the wisdom of that action by the Auditor General in terms of providing leadership within government. But that aside, I guess the only other incident that comes to mind is the more recent one with the use of promotional items. I realize that that's part and parcel of some government activity, but again the wisdom of being engaged in that kind of activity, given the Auditor General's job to ride as watchdog on government spending, I think is something that could be questioned. I'm sure the Auditor General is wiser now in hindsight in terms of being involved in that kind of activity.

There's one task that the Auditor General has not undertaken, and I guess I remain curious as to why not. That is any sort of critical analysis of the management schemes adopted by the government and government departments, and I'm thinking in particular of the management scheme employed in Learning that depends on the use of key performance indicators.

It's a scheme that I don't believe the Auditor General has commented upon other than to question whether or not departments and institutions are fulfilling the mandate of such a management scheme. Given his perspective and the kind of controversy that surrounds management by objectives, which is what the key performance indicator scheme is really predicated on, I find it rather puzzling that he hasn't found it necessary to at least evaluate the usefulness of that scheme as a way of the government managing its financial affairs and having made them such an important part of the business plan. So it's a curiosity.

I suspect I should put pen to paper and ask the Auditor General directly why he hasn't found cause to comment and to analyze and

maybe to point out some alternative management schemes that if the government were to adopt they might find useful.

So with those few comments I'm delighted to support the reappointment, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

5:00

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've had an opportunity to serve on the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices as well as participate in the Public Accounts Committee, so I've had many involvements with the Auditor General. Of course, I've also made it my business to read carefully his reports every year and particularly some of his special duty reports. One that I'm intimately familiar with, of course, is the review of the circumstances surrounding the refinancing with tax backstopped dollars for West Edmonton Mall. So when I learned that the current Auditor General, Mr. Peter Valentine, was being recommended for reappointment, I thought about whether that would be a good or a bad thing.

Mr. Speaker, I have utmost respect for the office of the Auditor General and the men and women that staff it. I do share some of the quibbles of my colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods, who spoke of perhaps some questionable decisions made about expenditures, but on the other hand to the best of my knowledge the Auditor General has run his office within budget in or under the line each and every year and makes spending decisions I suppose like any of us would in running an office such as that with an eye on the bottom line and trying to tease the best value out of every dollar spent.

Certainly I may not have joined him in some of the individual decisions that he made, but at the end of the day he's accountable for those, and I guess the proof is in the pudding. The committee to which he is accountable has recommended him for reappointment, and I'm sure that decision was not taken lightly. The Auditor General appointment is usually for a relatively long period of time. I understand that it could be for as long as eight years and typically five years in terms of appointment. This report, which recommends Mr. Valentine's reappointment, I believe calls for the term to be two years, and I question the wisdom of that.

The Auditor General needs to be focused on the task, not on maintaining his job, and I'm not suggesting for a minute that Mr. Valentine is not focused on his task, but this two-year appointment just makes me wonder why the change. I would like to see an Auditor General there for a long enough period of time to become intimately familiar with the breadth and the scope of government service and would like to see that any reappointment be consistent in terms of making sure that the auditor of record for the people's business is somebody who isn't going to be at some point quickly looking to move on to something else. It could be that Mr. Valentine has other plans maybe that he shared with the committee, that aren't in the report, that would explain his relatively short period of reappointment. I'm not familiar with any reasons why. I just wonder why it is that his reappointment is for such a limited period of time.

Now, on the one hand I could argue that it's a bad thing to reappoint the Auditor General for just a couple of years, but on the other hand I could argue that within two years there will no doubt be a general election, and of course I'm hoping there will be a change of government, Mr. Speaker. The new government would then have an opportunity to meet with the Auditor General. It would be at that point in time when a new government with that Auditor General would be able to make the decision whether or not Mr. Valentine

was to continue, and it would be in the normal cycle of things, given that it's only a two-year reappointment. So maybe it'll be fortuitous that it's a limited reappointment.

In any case, I would hope that the Auditor General is able to pursue his work, particularly when it comes to convincing the government in regard to the need to move to consolidated budgeting. It is an ongoing and a long-standing dispute between the office of the Auditor General and government departments. I agree with the Auditor General's position. I think the government books should reflect the totality of public money expenditures, particularly since the areas that are excluded from the consolidated budgets at this point are areas that have to do with health care, K to 12 education, postsecondary education.

I don't buy the government's arguments that they would somehow be accused of micromanaging or meddling in the affairs of health authorities or school boards or postsecondary institution boards. I mean, the Minister of Learning just recently micromanaged the decision to do with French immersion in Spruce Grove and Stony Plain. So if they can reach inside those other organizations and provide the kind of direction that was apparently provided in that case, it really sounds hollow when the government says that they can't move to consolidated budgeting because they're afraid of being accused of micromanaging.

So in summary, Mr. Speaker, I support the office of the Auditor General being an independent legislative office. I have been pleased with the work that Mr. Valentine has done and the work done in his office under his direction. I would encourage the Legislative Offices Committee to carefully think about the terms of appointment, and I would encourage Mr. Valentine to continue his work in regard to consolidated budgeting and helping the government accept what I think is very sound judgment and a very sound recommendation in that regard. So I will be supporting Government Motion 18.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker's Ruling Clarification

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The chair hesitates to correct the hon. member. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora did refer that the government will have to review the Auditor General's appointment or something to that effect yet later on went back and made mention of the fact that the Auditor General is in fact an officer of the Legislative Assembly and not an officer of the government. Just so that no hon. members would be confused by that.

[Government Motion 18 carried]

head: Government Bills and Orders

head: Third Reading

Bill 5 Land Titles Amendment Act, 2000

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to move for third reading Bill 5, Land Titles Amendment Act, 2000.

It's had some discussion over the course of its passage through second reading and in committee, but again, for the benefit of members, it's an act which brings up to date certain items relative to the land titles system. In particular, now that we have the benefit of electronics and computers, there's no longer a need for both a north Alberta land registration district and a south Alberta land registration district. It also has the benefit, then, of changing that to a land titles

office and changes the seal of office and does some other relatively administrative things.

It's a bill which will bring things up to date. It's a useful bill, and I would urge the Assembly to pass it.

5:10

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to speak to the Land Titles Amendment Act, 2000, at third reading. In fact, this bill has had very little debate in this Assembly in part because we support it. Just because we support a bill doesn't mean that we shouldn't have had our questions answered throughout the course of debate. When I was reviewing what was said here in second reading and in committee, in fact we had a number of questions that never got answered. So I would like to put those questions back on the record, and I hope that someone on the government side would undertake to answer them, because they are legitimate questions and issues that we have concerns about.

One of those questions was: where's the office going to be? In what city? Now that there's only going to be one office, will it be in Edmonton or Calgary? If we could get that answered.

The question that we'd like to have some clarity on is on section 122(9).

Is this by a civil action, when a person being filed against can't borrow money or is registered from buying property because of the lien? Is there any compensation for wrongs [done] against [people]?

Another question not answered is with regard to:

Issue might be taken with the continued extension of decision-making power and further development of the bureaucracy. This person is equivalent to administration in this province. Where is the pressure coming from to extend this position? Is it from the federal level? Why is this position introduced? Is it that the deputy of administration can't handle it himself? Who has the decision-making [power]? Is this just further diluting the present position?

So those were questions that should have been answered in this particular bill. I would refer government members to page 687 in *Hansard* on April 3, 2000, where there is a whole series of questions that never got answered.

Now, April 3 was a long time ago, Mr. Speaker, and certainly the government had ample time to undertake finding at least some of these answers. When I talked to my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Manning, who put these comments and questions and concerns on the record, and asked him if he'd had a response outside of the Legislature, he said no.

So, you know, while we're happy to support legislation that at first blush looks like good legislation, when in fact our questions are never answered during the course of debate, we find that interesting, certainly annoying, and not what we would expect in a good faith kind of ability that we would work towards in this House.

We could stall on every single bill, Mr. Speaker, until we got the questions answered. That would certainly be a tactic that could be employed as opposition. We undertake not to do that. I hear laughter at that comment, but in fact if you take a look at the number of minutes spent on debate on this bill, in spite of the number of questions we had, they were very few in number. We are not trying to stall what looks like good legislation. We are trying to get questions answered. We are trying to pass legislation through this Assembly in a speedy fashion whenever possible and save our concerns for that legislation which we find to be quite appalling and detrimental to the people of this province.

So I am hoping that in the very near future, Mr. Speaker, we will have the answers to all of those questions previously asked by my colleague. If we don't, certainly we will be undertaking to pursue the answers to those questions in all fashions and formats available to us in this Assembly.

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a third time]

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:16 p.m.]