

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, March 30, 2004**

**1:30 p.m.**

Date: 2004/03/30

[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.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment.

**Mr. Dunford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that protocol sometimes is to have another member introduce a member of our direct families, but in this case I'm going to do it myself. In the members' gallery this afternoon is my beautiful wife, Gwen Green. I would like her to rise, and I'd like the Assembly to show her a nice warm welcome, a northern greeting.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Seniors.

**Mr. Woloshyn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce a guest in the members' gallery, a gentleman who has been working in this province for many, many years in the health industry, somebody I got to know through our association with the health authority west of Edmonton. I'd like Larry Smook to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great privilege today to rise and introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly two very fine ladies from the Vermilion-Lloydminster constituency. Ms Barb Gulka is here today with her friend Ms Linda Beck. They're not only here to observe the proceedings, but they're here to thank the hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan for his excellent work on Bill 201. I would ask them to wave, and we'll give them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Oral Question Period**

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. First question.

### Rail Link to Fort McMurray

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A new company named the Athabasca Oil Sands Transportation Corp. could soon be overseeing a railroad project worth \$1.8 billion, but as far as we can tell, none of the leaders of this corporation have experience running railroads, so frankly the Liberal opposition is concerned that it's the Alberta taxpayer who could get railroaded here. My questions are to the Premier. What can the Premier tell us about this company, which was only registered last Tuesday and has already received 1 and a quarter million dollars in Alberta taxpayer funding?

**Mr. Klein:** Mr. Speaker, they haven't received one cent. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition should learn to tell the truth. That's the first thing he needs to do. He is not telling the truth when he says that we have given them \$1.25 million. That is not the truth. When someone does not tell the truth, he tells a lie, and I get frustrated.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I think that on the issue that you raise, if somebody is not telling the truth, that's one thing, but our rules definitely do move to the point where if you call it a lie, that is unparliamentary. The facts may be at variance with those stated.

**Mr. Klein:** My apologies, but I don't know any other word for an untruth.

Mr. Speaker, Athabasca Oil Sands Transportation Corp. is a newly formed Alberta company, as I understand it. The primary contacts are Jim Gray and Paul Giannelia, and Mr. Giannelia, of course, was the engineer responsible for Strait Crossing, the phenomenal bridge that links New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. The contributors would be – would be, if all things work out – the Alberta government and the oil sands, and the feasibility study would be conducted by this group.

There needs to be a group to facilitate and co-ordinate all of the activities associated with not only the rail line but transportation systems generally into the north. Those transportation systems include the existing rail line, which is the old NAR; highway 881, which comes down from Anzac to Lac La Biche; and highway 63, which is the main highway now serving Fort McMurray from Edmonton via a network of other highways. It involves east/west links as well and how those links could be upgraded. It involves perhaps the extension of the road to the Saskatchewan/Alberta border to 881, more commonly known as the La Loche road.

Mr. Speaker, I can understand that the Liberals don't know about any of these things because they have never been in that area, presumably. The simple fact is that there are very serious transportation problems related to almost a hundred billion dollars of development now or potential development in the oil sands, which has a huge impact on the economy of this province.

**The Deputy Speaker:** First supplemental. The hon. leader.

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Premier promise Albertans today, here and now, that if we commit to any funding in this project, Alberta taxpayers will never be on the hook for bailing out a financial flop relating to this railroad? Will he make that promise now?

**Mr. Klein:** Absolutely. I'll make that promise today because, Mr. Speaker, that's what the feasibility is all about. I don't mind making that promise at all. As I said to the media yesterday, this is not a decision that will be made on somebody's back porch. This is a decision that will be made based on sound engineering, sound financial facts, sound safety and human factors, and sound economic facts. So all of these things will have to be taken into consideration.

Mr. Speaker, I heard from across the way that this is the Muskeg Line. The existing line, the old NAR, is the Muskeg Line. But I would remind the hon. member that this government and the people of this province have spent literally hundreds of millions of dollars already to build roads over muskeg. Highway 881 is a road that travels through a tremendous amount of muskeg. Highway 63, the main highway, is another example of a road being built on muskeg. You can't build anything – but this hon. member doesn't know because he very, very seldom goes to Fort McMurray. Certainly,

he's not invited up there. Maybe he will be now that they have a Liberal candidate up there.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Final supplemental on this question. The hon. leader.

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that this company is already on record as backing this railroad, isn't it a conflict of interest for us to be paying for them to study their own project? Shouldn't we be going to a third party instead?

Thank you.

**Mr. Klein:** Mr. Speaker, this was their initiative, and quite frankly it's an initiative that I thought was long overdue by the private sector. But in that there are so many considerations that affect the province – that is, road upgradings and so on and how we treat those road upgradings – I thought it would be worth while to participate in the feasibility study, because there are numerous factors that impact the province and the public good relative to this.

Mr. Speaker, there are also some benefits on the economic side, without getting into whether we're going to support or not support the project, and I'll have the hon. minister speak to that.

1:40

**Mr. Norris:** Well, thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, you know, I noticed yesterday that in an attempt to drag what I think is a marvellous project down, the Leader of the Opposition made references to *The Simpsons*, and while he may look like Monty Burns, he seems to be thinking like Moe Szyslak, the bartender, on this one.

However, the reality of the fact, Mr. Speaker, is that the government of Alberta has a responsibility to be involved in this. We have made no commitment whatsoever. No money has changed hands whatsoever, and there is no long-term commitment other than the study, and the study speaks to the economics, which are remarkable.

So if you want to allow them to go and drag the project down . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Second main question. The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

### Infrastructure Funding

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again this government has let down the people of Edmonton. Today we learned that the Edmonton area would only receive one-fifth of the acute care hospital beds it needs and would not be receiving any new schools. Not one. In comparison, an Alberta Liberal government would give this city the schools and hospitals it needs. My questions are to the Minister of Infrastructure. Why is the Edmonton area only receiving funds to add an average of 56 acute care beds a year for the next three years when there is an immediate need for 800 new beds?

**Mr. Lund:** Mr. Speaker, this morning we announced that there would be some 170 beds added to five facilities in the city of Edmonton. We have asked all the regional health authorities to give us a 10-year capital plan. In that plan the Capital health region asked for 800 beds for acute care. That's over 10 years, and this morning we announced 170 that are going to start this year.

As far as the school situation is concerned, all of the schools go through a very, very long process to get assessed. All of the schools in the province. We are currently announcing the top list. The school boards will be coming back with their new capital plans. We expect to have those in June. We will then assess all of those plans,

and we'll prioritize them. Then we'll look at how much money we've got, and we will come down with the list on that prioritization. Mr. Speaker, it's a very pure system, and we will be sticking with it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. leader.

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is the minister then saying that Edmonton schools are a lower priority than Calgary schools?

**Mr. Lund:** Mr. Speaker, there's a long process that this goes through. It's all to do with the condition of the schools, the utilization of the schools, the location of the schools, and the list goes on and on. The fact is that the utilization in the city of Edmonton is slightly lower.

I know what he's trying to do. He's trying to make it look like Calgary has gotten much more than Edmonton. We have to look at the region of Edmonton. If you take and transplant the footprint of Calgary on the footprint of Edmonton, you're going to then include Leduc, Fort Saskatchewan, Sherwood Park, St. Albert, Stony Plain, and the list goes on. So what the member is doing is comparing apples to oranges, and we don't do that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Final supplemental, hon. leader.

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Finally, why is this government fundamentally refusing to provide the funds to address the infrastructure debt that has developed in the last 10 years? Why aren't we on top of that debt?

**Mr. Lund:** Mr. Speaker, the fact is that this government, since we implemented this 10-year plan, has allocated and committed to some \$6.5 billion. That's a lot of money. If we want to move it over to the schools, for example, since the year 2000-2001 we have committed and/or spent \$1.8 billion. If you move it over to the health side, over that same time frame we've spent \$1.9 billion. That is a lot of money in anybody's books.

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

### Corrections Review Report

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After two years the Solicitor General finally saw fit to release the corrections review. It is long on cost savings but, I would argue, short on enhancements for public safety. My questions are to the Solicitor General. Given that the jury is still out on whether electronic bracelets or GPS tracking systems work, why did the Solicitor General choose to make Alberta the guinea pig for this experiment?

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I first of all have to commend the committee that worked very, very hard on this particular issue, and that's the MLA for Red Deer-North, the MLA for Edmonton-Castle Downs, and the MLA for Lac La Biche-St. Paul. I think one thing that's important is the fact that this government, the Alberta government under the leadership of our Premier, has looked at the correctional landscape in this province and how it's changing. I would encourage her, if she could, to please write her federal counterparts and maybe ask them to look at their correctional facilities and how they're dealing with it.

But, Mr. Speaker, on the electronic monitoring question one of the things that we have had to face recently is a 40 per cent increase in conditional sentences that are being served in this province from a decision in 2000 called the Proulx decision that the federal govern-

ment has made, a decision in retrospect to determine why we should keep people in a facility versus not in serving in the community. We believe that to protect the people in this province – and public safety is our number one priority – electronic monitoring is a good idea to monitor the offenders who are serving conditional sentencing in this province.

**Ms Blakeman:** Totally unproven.

My next question, also to the Solicitor General: how is public safety enhanced by having a category of offenders, which includes people convicted of assault, be allowed to report less to probation officers?

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member is talking about one of the recommendations in the report about supervision standards. I have to say that the supervision standards pilot project that we launched two years ago has been highly, highly successful and is supported by the probation officers in this province, who believe that this should be expanded across this province.

Now, when you talk about supervision standards, it's very important to say that this does not include sexual offenders, it does not include young offenders, it does not include offenders who are serving conditional sentencing, and it does not include high-risk or high-profile offenders. What this does include is an offender who is charged with theft, for example. Under their supervision standards reporting could be done every two weeks instead of one, which allows the probation officers in this province to deal with the high-risk offenders.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Final supplemental, Edmonton-Centre.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. Again to the Solicitor General: given that youth will now serve their time in centres far from home, thereby weakening the support systems that will keep them from reoffending, why has the Solicitor General made it more difficult for these youths?

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Well, Mr. Speaker, let's be very clear. We have a province that extends from north to south. We have young offenders who are sentenced to our correctional facilities, whether it's Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, or Red Deer. We have offenders that could be from Peace River. They could be from all over. They go to the facility that's closest to them. So, you know, by looking at closing Medicine Hat, where the utilization rate is very low, and the Lethbridge and Red Deer units of the young offender centres, we're letting our young offenders go to the facilities. The way she speaks, she'd want a young offender centre in every area in the province.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. leader of the third party.

1:50

### Prescription Drugs

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Drugs have been the fastest-growing component of Canadian health care during the last 25 years . . . The public sector dominates most Canadian health care provision . . . In the area of pharmaceuticals, however, private sector funding has always dominated.

These are not my words but direct quotes from page 33 of the \$100,000 report that the Minister of Health and Wellness commissioned from the Conference Board of Canada and tabled in this Assembly two weeks ago. My question is to the Premier. Given that the area of health care with the most out-of-control costs is the one

dominated by the private sector, how can allowing more private involvement in our public health care system do anything other than drive up costs and make the health system less sustainable?

**Mr. Klein:** Mr. Speaker, again you're comparing apples and oranges and grapes and pears and turnips and potatoes and everything else. You can't equate and compare the involvement of private pharmaceutical companies with the whole issue of privately delivered health care.

I'll give you an example. The example would be ophthalmology services. Certainly, an ophthalmologist operating out of a private clinic and doing cataract surgeries, for instance, can reduce his overhead and do things, according to an ophthalmologist I talked to, in a much more efficient manner. One of the ways is that he doesn't have to hire union staff – I know that would be offensive to the NDs – so that people working in his office can do all sorts of duties outside of medical duties if they're required to do those duties, administrative duties and so on.

Another example of the public system, the sole public system, is in the area of purchasing. In hospitals there is not the freedom to purchase. Everything is done through a purchasing agent, as I understand it.

I'll give you a case that is anecdotal, but it happens to be true, a true anecdote. I had the opportunity recently of visiting CUPS, the Calgary Urban Project Society. CUPS ministers to those on the street with drug problems – I'm talking about illicit drug problems – and they were wondering about the possibility of purchasing methadone, which is used as a treatment for heroine addiction, through the Calgary regional health authority. I contacted the Calgary regional health authority, and they told me that because of their purchasing policies and the way that they have to purchase, it would probably be cheaper for CUPS to go to Shoppers Drug Mart to get the methadone.

The other instance I was going to allude to goes back to the ophthalmology . . .

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

**Dr. Pannu:** My first supplementary to the Premier: given that the Ministry of Health and Wellness's budget for pharmaceuticals has gone up a whopping 28 per cent from last year to this year, why has the government failed to implement innovations like reference-based pricing and increased use of generic drugs that provinces like B.C. have successfully used to constrain drug costs since 1996?

**Mr. Klein:** Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, we do have a generic drug policy. That policy is the least-expensive alternative.

One of the problems that we encounter – and I don't know how the hon. leader of the third party would address this, and it doesn't matter whether you're a Liberal or a Conservative or a member of the New Democrats – is that if you have cancer and there is a drug on the market that might be better or slightly better than the least-cost generic drug, the patients are going to demand this drug if it alleviates pain, in their minds or if it actually does, or if it prolongs life, even if that prolonging of life might be only for three or four months. They are going to ask for that demonstrably more expensive drug. It's one of those moral problems that health regions under ND administrations, under Liberal administrations, under Conservative administrations have to deal with, and it's one of the things that we'll have to deal with as we work through reforms.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Final supplemental, Edmonton-Strathcona.

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is a solution to this moral dilemma the Premier is talking about.

Let me ask him this: if this government is serious about making the health system sustainable, as opposed to lining the pockets of private health insurance companies, why has it failed to adopt the best practices of countries like Sweden, which funds 100 per cent of drug costs from public sources at a lower overall cost than is the case in this province?

**Mr. Klein:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I find it very interesting – well, strange, perhaps – that one day we would be talking about looking at best practices in countries like Sweden and be criticized by the NDs and the next day the NDs are suggesting that we look at the best practices in countries like Sweden. That's precisely what we are going to do.

I want this hon. member to stand up now and promise today that if we implement the best practices adopted by Sweden, he will never in this Legislative Assembly or anywhere else criticize the government for it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

### SuperNet Delivery to Schools

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently I received notice from several of the school boards in my constituency about the pending connection to the SuperNet. These boards, indeed all the boards in my area, are very excited about the potential for the provision of some superb learning opportunities. Some of the boards, however, have been advised that in some cases there may be two types of connection: a wireless and a fibre optic. In fact, in one district out of the 15 schools all within a city 10 would be wireless and five would be fibre optic. My questions are all to the Minister of Innovation and Science. Could the minister assure this House and the education community that even with these two types of delivery services the level of service under SuperNet will not be compromised?

**Mr. Doerksen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the Alberta SuperNet is the infrastructure that is being put in place for high-speed broadband network services. That infrastructure will consist of both fibre optic and wireless components. Bell as the major contractor is obligated to provide service levels, in this case to schools. As part of our role Alberta Innovation and Science's job is to ensure that, whether they are a fibre optical network or a wireless solution, in fact those service levels are met and are reliable and deliver the kind of capacity that we have promised.

**The Deputy Speaker:** First supplemental, Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the demand for capacity will probably grow at each school site, who will pay for the upgrades and maintenance of these wireless and fibre optic deliveries?

**Mr. Doerksen:** Mr. Speaker, in the industry the term that's often referred to is scalability, and that means the ability to take services and actually scale them upward as the demand for broadband increases. We've seen over the last number of years the insatiable demand that users have had on broadband services. So as schools require additional bandwidth, these upgrades will be provided to them as part of Bell's obligation in the contract.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Final supplemental, Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That definitely is good news.

Given that there appears to be some confusion out there on servicing and costs, is the Department of Innovation and Science working closely with Alberta Learning to make sure that there is clarification on these issues?

**Mr. Doerksen:** Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear that Alberta Innovation and Science is communicating on a regular basis with Learning, with Health, with Community Development as we start to deliver and build the Alberta SuperNet. In addition, we are also prepared to meet with representatives of school boards and hospitals or libraries to make sure that we understand their concerns, and we can also let them know how we are delivering on the service that we have promised.

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

2:00

### SuperNet Service Costs

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The \$193 million that the government gave Bell to build the SuperNet will be a drop in the bucket compared to the fees over the next 10 years that taxpayers are going to pay Axia, the SuperNet service provider. My questions are to the Minister of Innovation and Science. Given that the yearly cost of each connection is \$3,000 and at least six ministries are paying for its services, what will the SuperNet cost taxpayers over the next 10 years?

**Mr. Doerksen:** Mr. Speaker, as I just referred to in my previous answer, the Alberta SuperNet is an infrastructure project that builds a network that provides high-speed broadband services. Over that service provision you can run applications such as the Internet, but the Internet is only one part of a service delivery. You could run an application like RACOL, which we demonstrated, from Rainbow Lake through La Crête to the University of Alberta to actually have teaching sessions using, again, Alberta's technology through the Smart board whereby you could instruct students in all of these centres at the same time. Schools and libraries and municipalities and everybody else have to pay a fee to access broadband capacity.

Let me use an illustration, if I could, Mr. Speaker. Currently you have a normal Internet high-speed service at your home, which I would compare to, say, a garden hose. The Alberta SuperNet, as it gets to schools and libraries, actually provides in a picture kind of way a fire hose so that you can send a lot more data and digital services and expanded applications over that kind of network that are not currently available.

**The Deputy Speaker:** First supplemental, Edmonton-Centre.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. Completely evasive.

Given the constant obsolescence in this technology, why did the government lock us into a 10-year service provision contract with Axia?

**Mr. Doerksen:** Mr. Speaker, going back to the first question that was received about the \$3,000, I must admit that I'm confused about where the \$3,000 comes from, because there are different levels of service depending on the connection that you choose. So there's an option to have a 256K service. You could have a two megabit service. You could have a five megabit service. You could have a

20 megabit service. You could potentially even at some point have a 100 megabit service. There are different costs that you pay to subscribe to that kind of broadband.

At some point soon we're going to be looking at the Minister of Learning's budget – and he may wish to supplement; I don't know – which talks about the connection speed that he is guaranteeing and providing so that every school, a thousand more schools, that currently do not have high-speed broadband in our province will be able to have access to it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, this is getting to be a long question, and we're still only on the second part of a three-part question. Can you do it in 30 seconds? The hon. Minister of Learning.

**Dr. Oberg:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My department has budgeted \$10 million a year for SuperNet costs. We anticipate that this is what it will be. I will add that we're looking at the cities of Edmonton and Calgary probably decreasing their Internet costs by close to 50 per cent with SuperNet.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you.  
Final supplemental, Edmonton-Centre.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: given that the government has already provided \$1.2 million to municipalities for hookup, how much more is the government going to have to give municipalities to help pay Axia's service fees?

**Mr. Boutilier:** Mr. Speaker, the question, first of all, is about infrastructure, but more importantly, the cost is not a cost. You know what it is? It's an investment in rural Alberta and urban development, that you don't support. [interjections]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hopefully, all of these extra people who are helping ask the question and, worse yet, are trying to answer the question will go to one minister and one member.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

### Alberta Works Program

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2001 the Minister of Human Resources and Employment put in place a committee consisting of the members for Calgary-Bow, Calgary-East, Cardston-Taber-Warner, Edmonton-Norwood, and myself to investigate our provision of low-income benefits to needy Albertans. Following this review and subsequent report the minister has announced a new program known as Alberta Works. Can the minister explain to members of this Assembly and all Albertans what this new program means for low-income Albertans whom we are trying to help?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment.

**Mr. Dunford:** Well, thank you very much, and perhaps it's a great opportunity to once again thank the committee that looked into Alberta Works. Alberta Works, that we announced yesterday, has some main goals. We want to move people from assistance to independence through the workforce. For those people that are currently already working, we want to do whatever we can to have them maintain positions within the workforce, and of course for those who are unable to work, we want to be able to supply their basic needs for them. So this is what we've been doing.

The main focus now of the Human Resources and Employment budget will be on skills training. I want to assure all members here in the House that we will be very aggressive in moving people from a sense of reliance on the government to one of self-reliance.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental to the same minister: will Alberta Works clients see an increase to their benefits as compared to the old program?

**Mr. Dunford:** Probably not if they're just looking for cash in their pockets or, of course, into their bank accounts. What we are doing is in terms of some benefits in kind. Basically, what we are able to do, then, is increase the financial support of our client base, and we've added some new features. Certainly, some of our folks find themselves in situations of abuse, and we need to get them out of those situations. So we're able to provide some additional funding in those particular areas.

I think that every member in this House is concerned about single moms and their situation with how it relates to them moving into the workforce and how it relates then to child care. So we're kind of opening up some new avenues in that area, rewarding families, particularly grandparents now, to be involved with those children to make it easier on the whole family.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Final supplemental.

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: from a qualitative perspective will our clients receive a different or better type of service?

**Mr. Dunford:** Well, it's certainly going to be different. We've been working on this for the last three or four months at quite a pace with our front-line workers. Again, we want to increase their skills at assessment as people come forward seeking support.

Basically, what we're doing, Mr. Speaker, is moving from a system of labelling people and then providing entitlements to a more individualized case management approach. Then through the assessment, of course, we can look at a menu based on what their individual needs actually are. So I think that we'll see more attention given to the individual person, the individual Albertan, seeking assistance. Our main goal is to move them from assistance to being taxpaying Albertans.

### 2:10 Private/Public Partnerships

**Mr. Bonner:** Mr. Speaker, we continue to receive many letters and inquiries from Albertans on P3s. They are concerned that this government can't estimate the cost of a P3 project, even though they have committed hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars to these projects. Albertans are outraged that this government would rather hide the infrastructure debt than be accountable for the public money they spend. To the Premier: why should Alberta taxpayers believe that P3s save them money when the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Infrastructure refuse to give an estimate of how much a P3 project should cost?

**Mr. Klein:** Mr. Speaker, that is not true. There is one P3 project that has gone through the process, and the costs are public. P3s are not new at all. Maybe the name is new, the application of P3s. Is this hon. members suggesting that we should abandon the P3s that have existed for years and years and years in this province? Those

are nursing homes. You know, for years nursing homes have been contracted by government to government or now to regional health authorities. They're all run by private operators but are subsidized by the government. There are examples of P3 proposals or projects that have existed and worked in this province for years.

Now, relative to new P3 projects there is a process in place, and it involves a detailed adjudication as to the worthiness of the project. If it fails to meet the many tests involved, then it simply will not proceed, and we will proceed with the project on a conventional basis if indeed we have the money. If we don't have the money, then the project won't proceed. But if it meets all the tests and if it is a good project, then we will proceed with a P3.

**The Deputy Speaker:** First supplemental, Edmonton-Glengarry.

**Mr. Bonner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: when will Alberta taxpayers see the proof that the southeast ring road extension or the Calgary court centre are more cost-effective?

**Mr. Klein:** I don't know about the south ring road, Mr. Speaker, but it will have to meet the test, and the process is a very transparent process, at least the outcome. If people, including members of the opposition, have a problem with the outcome and can provide demonstrable evidence that the project will not save taxpayers' dollars or the project will be inefficient or the project will not be properly managed, if they can present evidence relative to these issues or other issues, then we'll take that evidence into consideration.

**Mr. Bonner:** Again to the Premier, Mr. Speaker: given that many of the taxpayers that contact us believe that P3s are nothing more than private profiteering at public expense, what mechanisms are being put into place now so that P3s will not force taxpayers into costly agreements for generations to come?

**Mr. Klein:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to see copies, if the hon. member would be so kind as to submit copies since we don't have the privilege of FOIPing them like they do of us.

**Mrs. McClellan:** What? We can't do that?

**Mr. Klein:** Can we do that? If we can, fine. I'll FOIP them then. I mean, they FOIP us and then complain about the price they have to pay. So I would like to see this huge outpouring, this huge basketful, wheelbarrow full of letters that he talks about and this sense of outrage by Albertans. I would like to see that. I doubt it very much. So will the hon. member give me a commitment either after this question period or now that he will send me the letters?

Now, to answer his question, there are numerous steps that proponents have to go through to be approved for a P3 project, and I'll have the hon. Minister of Infrastructure explain.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Very briefly, hon. minister. We're already into this for six, seven minutes.

**Mr. Lund:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. The fact is that this does take a bit of time, and we've done it many times in the House, so I'm not sure what is the best way to educate the hon. member.

The fact is, as the Premier has said, there are a number of steps including an outside panel that will look at these that are put forward, and they have to approve the project as being one that's good for Albertans, that it's efficient, that it's timely, and a number of other components. So in due course they will see.

The member continually brings this issue up. Just as an example, with one regional health authority that I'm aware of, we had allocated them so many dollars to get 150 long-term care beds. The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that they came in in excess of 170 and had \$7 million left over that they could put into some other facility.

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

### Court System

**Mr. Vandermeer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know of a constituent that had to defend himself in a frivolous civil lawsuit and was literally bankrupted by the legal costs he had to incur. This isn't the first time I have heard such stories. I realize it would be inappropriate to discuss a specific case in this House, so I have a general question for the Minister of Justice and Attorney General. Can the minister tell me what his department is doing to control the high cost of civil lawsuits so that the justice system is not one that financially punishes innocent people?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back in 1999, prior to my taking over the portfolio, there was a summit on justice, and that actually was one of the critical concerns that was identified by the summit on justice and therefore has been at the base of our business plan and operations since that time. It's a critical problem for Albertans. We have a great system in terms of a strong adversarial process with a strong tradition, but one of the problems is that it's becoming too expensive for the ordinary person to deal with.

So there have been a number of things that we've been trying to do to provide Albertans with alternatives both inside and outside the courtroom. We've expanded the use of mediation, other programs. The courts have also weighed in on this topic, knowing that they have to be responsive to Albertans' needs and to accessibility, so they've started judicial dispute resolution processes to try and encourage Albertans to solve disputes more actively and without the need for a trial. The long and short of it is that we have to find new and better ways to help Albertans solve their own problems: provide them with the tools, help them develop the tools to deal with their own problems without going to court, and to only use going to court as a last resort.

The court system is expensive. It is a difficult adversarial process. It needs to be there when points of law have to be resolved, but it should be a last resort. So we should be trying to ensure that Albertans have access to the tools to solve their disputes without going to court.

Now, having said that, Mr. Speaker, about 97 per cent of civil cases that are launched are resolved without going to court, so there's a lot of success in that area, but the big problem is where there's an economic imbalance between the parties. So we have to put in and we are working on putting in mechanisms which allow a party to a dispute to force an issue to go to mediation to see if that's a possible way of resolving it, and there are other methods that we're bringing forward to try and make the system more affordable.

2:20

**Mr. Vandermeer:** My second and only supplemental is to the same minister. Given that the status quo is simply not acceptable for people like my constituents, can the minister tell us if there are ways the system can be changed to take into account the needs of Albertans who feel unfairly punished by a complex and costly justice system?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of things that we've done already. For example, as the member will know, the small claims limit, or the Provincial Court civil claims limit, has been moved from \$7,500 to \$25,000, and discussion is happening as we speak with the Provincial Court about potentially moving that to \$50,000.

As members will know, people can appear in Provincial Court without representation by lawyers. They can put their cases, and as long as the cases are not complex cases requiring advocacy with respect to law, there's no good reason why parties should not be able to do that. So we're working on that process.

As the member may know already, as well, the civil mediation project in Provincial Court has been successful in helping people to resolve about 60 per cent of the cases that go before Provincial Court. On the family side, for example, there's a collaborative law process that's been engaged in by members of the bar themselves in which the lawyers contract with their clients not to go to court but to resolve matters through mediation, interest-based mediation. There are pilot projects in Edmonton and Calgary with dispute resolution officers who are members of the family bar who volunteer their time to assist mediating claims between parties so that they don't have to go to court. On the criminal side we have an early dispute resolution protocol that's come in so that we can have things resolved early if there's going to be a guilty plea in any event.

So there are a number of things we've done, and we're continuing to talk about reorganizing the courts on a single trial court basis so that we can be more effective in terms of using the expensive court resources in the most effective way. But again, Mr. Speaker, the key issue here is encouraging Albertans to solve their own disputes by arming them with the tools they need to do effective mediation.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

#### Automobile Insurance

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first question is to the Minister of Finance. Has the superintendent of insurance alerted the minister of any auto insurance companies that provide auto insurance to the public that have withdrawn from the Alberta market?

**Mrs. Nelson:** Mr. Speaker, I'd have to take that question under notice.

**The Deputy Speaker:** First supplemental, hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: what extra costs would consumers have to pay if an auto insurance company that provides auto insurance withdrew from the Alberta market? How much would that cost consumers?

**Mrs. Nelson:** I don't believe, Mr. Speaker, that it would have an effect on consumers.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Final supplemental.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: how many auto insurance companies have temporarily discontinued writing new business in Alberta since January 1, 2004, if any?

**Mrs. Nelson:** Mr. Speaker, under our new structure we've had tremendous co-operation from this industry to come on board to put this new structure in place. I believe they have carried on with their existing clientele very well, and they've honoured the freeze. They're looking forward to the new structure that the Member for Medicine Hat is going to be bringing forward this summer through the implementation team. They have worked very well with us on this structure. So I'm pleased to say that their response is good, and I am not aware of anything otherwise.

head:

#### Members' Statements

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon members, in 30 seconds I'll be asking the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, the hon. Member for Calgary-West, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, and the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs for their statements.

#### Tartan Day

**Ms Graham:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Tartan Day is a special day for Scots and all those who would like to be Scots to celebrate all things Scottish by wearing the tartan and honouring the numerous and significant contributions to society made by Scots. In particular, Tartan Day commemorates the anniversary of the declaration of Arbroath, or the Scottish declaration of independence, which is considered the Scottish equivalent of the Magna Carta and is one of the earliest expressions of the rights of people to a peaceful and productive life free of oppression.

It was on April 6, 1320, at Arbroath, Scotland, when Scottish nobles declared their defiance of the English king and their commitment to the independence of Scotland. I have circulated a copy of the declaration to each member along with a swatch of the clan Douglas tartan ribbon, a tartan similar to my own clan Graham tartan. Officially, Tartan Day is April 6, but we are recognizing it today because of the Legislature's spring break next week.

Mr. Speaker, that Scots have had a major impact on the development of society is captured in the recent *New York Times* bestseller entitled *How the Scots Invented the Modern World* by Arthur Herman. He describes how the Scots have made crucial contributions to science, philosophy, literature, education, medicine, commerce, and politics which have shaped the modern western world. This is no less so in our own country and province, where the Scots have played a major role in the founding and development of our society. Of note, those of Scottish descent represent the largest immigrant group in Alberta, numbering some 650,000 people, or 1 out of every 5 Albertans.

Back now to tartans, which are synonymous with Scotland and Scottish clans. They are very popular symbols throughout the world, and new tartans are being continually created by families, organizations, and regions to identify themselves. Today many members are wearing tartan, including my Calgary colleagues and I, who are wearing the new Calgary tartan, unveiled last year as an official symbol of the city of Calgary, provided to us courtesy of the St. Andrew-Caledonian Society of Calgary.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, may I say: let everyone wear their tartan with pride.

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

#### Wilbur Griffith

**Ms Kryczka:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Wilbur Griffith, one of Calgary's shrewdest, most generous, and most humorous entrepreneurs, passed away March 20, 2004, at the age of 101. Wilbur is

best known for his donation in 2000 of 92 hectares of Elbow river parkland to the city of Calgary. Griffith Woods, as it is named, is about four times the area of P.E.I. To his friends Griff will always be remembered as the guy who played four holes of golf on his 100th birthday, and at age 97 Griff was tickled to be named the CFCN athlete of the week.

During my 1996 nomination campaign I came to know the graciousness of Wilbur and Betty in their beautiful home and was honoured by his support over the years. In 2003 he joined other Calgary-West constituents to receive a Queen's jubilee award. Even last month, during a brief visit in the Rockyview hospital, I was reminded of his great intelligence and dignified manner.

Wilbur Griffith, beloved father, grandfather, and friend, was born in 1902 in Enid, Oklahoma. After earning a business administration degree at Drake University, Wilbur joined the Gulf Oil company, where over 20 years he gained necessary experience to become a very successful independent oil lease broker. Wilbur moved to Calgary in 1955, where he and his late wife, Betty, built their home and raised their family in Springbank. He founded Canadian Export Gas & Oil Ltd. and was contracted to supply the gas for Trans-Canada PipeLines. After 1965 Wilbur continued his entrepreneurial endeavours, including wheat farming, cattle ranching, and land development.

2:30

In 1977 Wilbur constructed the Pinebrook Golf and Country Club, which ignited his passion for the game. Wilbur also enjoyed hunting, giving golf lessons, and travelling. His quick sense of humour, charm, and optimistic zest for life will be sadly missed and lovingly remembered.

Wilbur is survived by his children, Sally Rondio, Julie Warthe and her husband, Rick, and Bill Griffith, and by his grandchildren, Justin, Tessa, Kai, and Nico. Wilbur has surely been reunited with his Betty in that better place.

Thank you.

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

### Health Care System

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier and members of the government caucus frequently misrepresent and distort the vision of medicare's founder, the late Tommy Douglas. The Premier has proclaimed that Tommy Douglas's vision of health care was a very minimalist one, a health care that would only protect people from losing their homes and livelihood because of grave illness. In other cases the Premier has invoked Douglas's name to justify the unjustifiable; i.e., the introduction of user fees, deductibles, and out-of-pocket expenditures for Albertans.

Let me say categorically that Tommy Douglas would never have supported this government's cold-hearted plans to burden hard-working and middle-class families and abandon the sick and the injured. Such distortions do a tremendous disservice to a truly great Canadian.

The Premier refuses to take seriously the counsel of men such as Tommy Douglas and Roy Romanow, both of whom served as Premiers of a province without the resources enjoyed by Alberta and who, therefore, know something about the difficulty of balancing provincial budgets. Romanow, like Douglas before him, understands that preserving health care in Canada demands that we strengthen the public system, not starve it, not dismantle it.

This government is so ideologically bent on padding the pockets of private health providers and insurers that they refuse to even consider the true vision of Tommy Douglas for a health care system,

which is "a comprehensive health insurance program which will cover all health services – not just hospital and medical care – but eventually dental care, optometric care, drugs and all the other health services which people require."

Mr. Speaker, Tommy Douglas never envisioned a health system characterized by health premiums and profiteering. His vision was one of compassion, equality, and comprehensiveness, and that is a vision shared by a vast majority of Albertans.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

### Private Members' Business

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One Monday ago, the 22nd of this month, the Speaker made several comments on procedure. As you know – and I'm quoting – "Monday afternoon in our Routine is private members' business, very, very important in terms of the history of this Assembly and everything else that we deal with."

The Speaker further commented that what the "opposition might do is to make sure that there's never ever any time on the agenda for those bills to come to the agenda," not suggesting for a moment that that may be the case. The Speaker further elaborated.

The way it's going right now is that I sit back and I look here, and my subjective view is that the only private . . . bills that will ever reach the floor this session would be government private members' bills, but with all the written questions and motions for returns, if we spend as much time as we did today on five of them, none of those [bills ever will].

Mr. Speaker, the Liberal opposition, however, contrary to what the Speaker has observed, notes on their web page that "government MLAs are holding up their own bills that would enhance workplace safety for firefighters and other emergency workers by dodging questions on government expenses," further saying, "The government doesn't seem as interested in debating these issues as we do."

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to all members of this Assembly that many of the private members' bills before this Assembly at this time are of imperative importance. Some of the bills will preserve and enhance the safety of our front-line workers like firefighters, police officers, paramedics, prison guards, and others. Not passing these bills is detrimental not only to their health but to their lives. Hence, I would suggest that all members of this Assembly, particularly the members of the opposition, bring back the order of private members' bills on the agenda of this Assembly so that we can in a democratic manner debate these bills on their merits and either pass them or fail them on their merits alone.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The only comment I would make is that written questions and motions for returns are also private members' business.

### Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

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

**Ms Graham:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. The Standing Committee on Private Bills has had certain bills under consideration and wishes to report as follows. The committee recommends that the following private bill proceed: Bill Pr. 2, Sisters of Charity of St. Louis of Medicine Hat Statutes Repeal Act.

The committee also recommends that the following private bills



proceed with amendments: Bill Pr. 1, St. Mary's College Amendment Act, 2004, and Bill Pr. 3, Living Faith Bible College Act. As part of this report, Mr. Speaker, I will be tabling five copies of the amendments proposed for these bills.

Mr. Speaker, I do request the concurrence of the Assembly in this recommendation.

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

head: **Presenting Petitions**

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Norris:** Stand up, Brian.

**Mr. Mason:** Save it for question period, hon. minister.

I'm presenting a petition signed by 47 individuals petitioning the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to "implement a public, not-for-profit automobile insurance system."

**Some Hon. Members:** Forty-seven?

**Mr. Mason:** Forty-seven today, just today.

head: **Notices of Motions**

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands has a notice of motion.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much. I'd like to advise the Assembly that at the appropriate time the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and leader of the New Democrat opposition will move:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly deplores the federal government's failure to deliver the new funding commitments necessary to adequately support health care in Alberta and the other provinces in its 2004-2005 budget and, further, that the Legislative Assembly urge the federal government to immediately correct this deficiency.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

**Mrs. McClellan:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to table a letter on behalf of the Premier. Much has been said in the last days about the horse racing industry, and of course much of that information was incorrect, incomplete, and some of it totally erroneous. The Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne, in order to assist some of the members of this House to understand the importance of this industry, where 70,000 people work, to understand the split of the funds that they earn from slot machines, has written to the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition and invited him to tour Northlands Park – it's the one that's closest to us – and perhaps talk to some of the people who work in that industry and certainly better understand it. The type of information that's being given out here is a total disservice to the industry. On behalf of the Premier I would table this letter.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a tabling, as well, with a considerably shorter preamble. It is a pleasure for me to table a letter from a constituent of mine who feels

very strongly about certain recommendations contained in the final report of the Learning Commission.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development.

**Mr. Norris:** I clearly thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me. I'd like to table the required number of copies of the annual report of the Alberta Economic Development Authority. As you know, this is a requirement of our House. I would like to offer a very significant thank you to Mr. Art Smith, the cofounder of this with our Premier, and Mr. Ron Triffo for another fantastic year of work. I have the appropriate number of copies and I'm tabling them now.

head: **2:40 Motions under Standing Order 40**

### **Federal Health Care Funding**

Dr. Pannu:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly deplores the federal government's failure to deliver the new funding commitments necessary to adequately support health care in Alberta and the other provinces in its 2004-2005 budget and, further, that the Legislative Assembly urge the federal government to immediately correct this deficiency.

**Dr. Pannu:** Mr. Speaker, I'll speak to the matter of the urgency of this motion. The motion relates to health funding, which, of course, is an ongoing discussion that needs to be undertaken by all Albertans and Canadians, but this specific motion raises a matter of particular urgency and must be dealt with in a timely and pressing manner.

Mr. Speaker, the government introduced its budget for 2004-2005 last week, and this afternoon we will continue to give close examination to that budget. Last week the federal government also released its budget. In the days since, there have been hints about further federal funding for health care, yet no solid commitments have been made.

Mr. Speaker, our health care system remains in a precarious position. On the one hand, the Premier continues to threaten further privatization and delisting of services. On the other hand, the federal government presented its budget last week, and this budget was extremely disappointing because the federal government failed to indicate any commitment or timeline on the part of the federal government to meet the objective of providing funding for 25 per cent of the expenditures on insured services. Although it appears that the \$2 billion guaranteed by the Prime Minister will likely be paid to the provinces sometime this year, these dollars will only represent a one-time injection rather than an ongoing base payment.

Mr. Speaker, it's urgent that the federal government be brought under immediate pressure to provide the stable, predictable, and long-term funding recommended by the Romanow commission. This motion is intended to bring such pressure to bear on the federal government, and I hope that all members of this House will give their unanimous consent to debate this motion this afternoon.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Unanimous consent denied]

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, we'll call the committee to order.

head: **Main Estimates 2004-05**

### Sustainable Resource Development

**The Deputy Chair:** As per Standing Order 58(3) the first hour will be dedicated to the minister and the opposition members, and thereafter any other member is able to participate.

The hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development.

**Mr. Cardinal:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and good afternoon. I'm pleased to be here today to talk to you about Sustainable Resource Development's 2004-2005 budget.

But first of all I'd like to take the opportunity to introduce the staff from our ministry who are sitting in the members' gallery. They will be taking notes, and some of the questions that I don't answer here today will be answered in writing shortly after. I have Stew Churlish, the assistant deputy minister for strategic corporate services; Ray Duffy, director of the finance branch; Donna Babchishin, director of communications; and Daphne Cheel, executive director of policy and planning. Of course, also we have Dave England, who is my acting executive assistant at this time.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the dedication and professionalism that the ministry staff exhibits daily as they carry out their tasks. Our field staff are well known, respected, and appreciated in communities throughout Alberta. They do an outstanding job of managing our public lands and renewable resources and protecting our forests from wildfire and forest pests.

Our job in this department is to ensure that Alberta's natural resources are sustainable and available for future generations, to ensure that Albertans both now and in the future benefit from the development of their renewable resources and the public lands. To achieve that goal, the ministry has to maintain a balance between activity and conservation, and that's challenging. It has to consider economic, social, and environment values that all Albertans cherish. These three values are the very core of Sustainable Resource Development in this province.

The ministry has four core businesses: wildfire management, natural resource and public land management, Natural Resources Conservation Board, and surface rights and land compensation management. The ministry continues to be challenged by increased public awareness and expectations about the decisions that are made, competing demands on our landscape, and the need to reduce the footprint on this land base. The population and economic growth in Alberta are also significant factors affecting the services and the resources that the ministry oversees and manages. The ministry fully understands that the province's natural resources contribute to the high quality of life that Albertans enjoy.

A key business of the ministry is the sustainable management of our fish and wildlife resources. Grizzly bear conservation is a high priority area for the ministry, and a management plan is being developed for this species. Grizzly bear populations are very difficult to estimate. They spend the winter months hidden from view hibernating, and during the rest of the year they freely roam within a large area. It can be hundreds of square kilometres in size.

2:50

Alberta is internationally recognized for being a leader in grizzly bear research. SRD will continue the support of grizzly bear research so that we have the knowledge and planning tools to ensure long-term conservation of the grizzly bear in Alberta. This year we are conducting a DNA population census that will provide more accurate information on grizzly bear numbers. We will also continue with our support of grizzly bear research throughout the foothills model forest.

Alberta continues to make significant progress to support Alberta's endangered species legislation. This year SRD will support 14 recovery teams and over 16 stewardship research monitoring and sampling projects. A recovery plan is also being developed for caribou.

In order to improve our ability to manage all of our fishing resources, we continue towards reducing the number of commercial fishing licences in Alberta. Close to 275 fishing operators, accounting for more than 13,000 100-yard nets, have applied to participate in the buyback program which we call fisheries compensation. We will begin the process this year as dollars become available.

The interest in recreational fishing and hunting continues to grow. Last year over 221,000 sport-fishing licences were sold, an increase of about 4,000 over 2002. There were over 620,000 active wildlife identification number cardholders, an increase of over 50,000. Close to 97,000 hunters purchased more than 251,000 different hunting licences.

While the increased interest in recreational fishing and hunting is very positive, it does put increasing pressure on our natural resources. It is more important than ever to ensure that we have the proper system in place to deal with these increases. That means that our staff and ministry need to have the financial and manpower resources to carry out their responsibilities. We have set aside funds to develop partnership programs.

To generate revenue, the Alberta Professional Outfitters Society is collecting a levy that can go into the direct revenue fund for wildlife management. Alberta's 365 big-game outfitters are paying the fees for their wildlife allocation over five years. The \$1 million that will be collected will assist wildlife programs such as wildlife inventories and aerial surveys to manage species like moose, deer, elk, and antelope.

Our fish and wildlife officers continue to do an outstanding job. Over the past year they have worked with other staff on new priority areas, such as the West Nile virus monitoring program, walleye monitoring, and obtaining samples of elk and deer for chronic wasting disease surveys. The \$16.8 million budget for enforcement field services is a slight increase that will be used over 150 wildlife officers. About 130 of these are working in the field. Patrolling will continue to be required although they will be focused during angling and hunting seasons.

We have a challenge when our animals become urbanized also and become too familiar with human populations. We have deer, elk, moose, and coyotes coming into populated areas. This is not healthy for wild animals. Last year there were more than 16,000 accidents between vehicles and wildlife such as elk, moose, and deer and also resulting, unfortunately, in five fatalities. We are looking at a number of options, particularly continued education as well as additional changes to our fall hunt to address these issues.

There continues to be an increasing demand on our public lands and resources. We have seen an increase in the number of land dispositions provided through the public land and forest division. This department manages more than 187,000 land dispositions that are issued for agricultural, commercial, and industrial purposes. Last year dispositions increased about 6 per cent. This reflects the volume of work that the ministry staff are carrying out on a daily basis.

Over the next year SRD will continue to develop and implement policy guidelines and practices that will minimize the footprint on Crown land. We are working with the public stakeholders on a number of access management plans, such as the Ghost-Waiparous, which is over 1,500 square kilometres, and the Bighorn backcountry, which is over 5,000 square kilometres. These plans are being developed in consultation with stakeholder groups.

We are achieving a balance to protect the environment and provide recreation opportunities for the public. We are in the first full year of new rules for recreation and exploration access on agricultural leases on public land. The Agricultural Disposition Statutes Amendment Act has been very successful in resolving access issues between leaseholders and the recreation users. By December of last year nearly 90 per cent of the leaseholders had submitted contact information.

Supporting the agricultural community is also a big part of this department by ensuring that we have well-managed public rangelands.

Forestry continues to be an important part of our Alberta economy. It is an industry that generates an annual revenue of around \$8 billion, provides jobs for over 54,000 Albertans, and is a key industry in the overall economic diversification plan of our province. In fact, about 45 communities in Alberta depend on forestry as their major source of income and also job creation.

I am especially proud of the working relationship that we have developed with industry. Despite the challenges, industry continues to show their commitment to innovation and the future of our forests. They continue to introduce new technology and leading-edge practices while placing a high value on concerns for the environment and wildlife.

Just last week the Alberta Forest Products Association announced that the value of forest products produced by their member companies increased productivity by 16 per cent. Alberta industries have increased their exports to the U.S. by 30 per cent from approximately 1.1 billion board feet to about 1.5 billion board feet. This is because Alberta has some of the most modern and efficient mills in North America. Our forest practices are also amongst the best, and we have done a good job of creating the environment for industry to create jobs and create wealth in Alberta.

3:00

It is important to remember that a healthy forest industry is crucial to the well-being of our economy and our environment. It is no secret that the Alberta forest sector continues to face some very real challenges such as the impact of the softwood lumber trade dispute. A priority for SRD is to continue to work closely with the industry and, of course, the people that are involved in the softwood lumber trade negotiations. Together we are looking at options to resolve this dispute on a long-term basis.

As you know, last year we had another very busy fire season. Over 1,100 wildfires burned nearly 55,000 hectares of forested land. Many factors affect the cost associated with protecting Alberta forests, such as weather conditions, fire hazard levels, and moisture levels. To be as effective and prudent as possible, we start with a base budget to ensure that we have adequate resources throughout the year. Our priority goals are to protect human lives and communities.

Being prepared will save taxpayers money in the long run by reducing the number of costly escaped fires. When large wildfires occur and when numbers get high, the cost of additional staff and resources is covered through supplementary estimates. Last fall it was determined that disaster assistance was required, and additional funds were made available through a sustainability fund. In 2002-2003 the department was able to collect on a wildfire insurance policy that was in place. After carefully reviewing the increased premiums for this year, it was not in our best interest to renew the policy for this fire season. Despite the severe fire season in parts of the province I am proud to inform you that we did not lose one single building to wildfires, and we were able to reduce large fires from 4 per cent to 2 per cent.

This past summer was also significant with the devastating impact that wildfires had on families and communities in B.C. A recent independent report on the B.C. wildfires urged government to reduce the risk of large wildfires. Their recommendations are consistent with those contained in past reviews of Alberta's protection practices. We have been doing much of this work already. Alberta is continuing to strengthen the FireSmart community prevention program and will take more resources in that area this coming year.

I would also like to address the fine work that is being done by the Natural Resources Conservation Board. The Natural Resources Conservation Board has two roles: the traditional role, to review projects that could affect the province's natural resources, and their new role as a regulator of confined feeding operations in Alberta. Ever since the NRCB assumed responsibility for regulating confined feeding operations, their workload has increased dramatically. The additional \$1.1 million increase in their budget will ensure that they have the necessary resources to manage the confined feeding operations.

Last year the NRCB received 1,083 complaints, and so far they have resolved 876 of these. Inspectors from NRCB issued 19 enforcement orders. They received 148 applications for confined feeding operations or manure storage facilities. In the case of confined feeding operations the NRCB is involved in these stages and, of course, still takes directions from Environment on whether large projects require environmental impact assessment studies.

In its traditional role outside of confined feeding operations the NRCB kicks in once Alberta Environment determines the need for an environmental impact assessment study. The environmental impact assessment contains information on the anticipated social, economic, environmental effects of the project and what steps are being taken to reduce any adverse effects. As you can see, they continue to be extremely busy.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. minister, the 20 minutes allocated to you have now lapsed.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Ms Carlson:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Happy to have an opportunity to talk about the estimates of Sustainable Resource Development this afternoon, and I look forward to the minister having a chance to finish his comments in a few minutes. I'd also like to thank all of the staff that are here. You guys do a great job, and I know that you try and keep him on track. It doesn't always work, but I know that you try your best.

That's one of the first things that I want to talk about this afternoon, Mr. Chairman, an issue that his department tried to keep him on track for and he didn't follow suit, and that's about grizzly bears. In spite of evidence that there are dangerously low populations in Alberta and in spite of the recommendations from the government's Endangered Species Conservation Committee that grizzly bears be classified as threatened and in spite of thousands upon thousands of protests from concerned citizens, the government decided to go ahead with this spring's grizzly bear hunt, which meant that they also ignored the recommendation of their own grizzly bear recovery team that the hunt be suspended this year.

In response to that, I sent out a letter to a number of Albertans criticizing the government for that decision, and I got back some very interesting comments, Mr. Chairman, some for and some against. Cliff Wallis of the Alberta Wilderness Association and Sonja Mihelcic of the Sierra Club of Canada, prairie chapter, and Peter Duck certainly supported what I was saying, but some people certainly didn't.

Tom Foss, who is the regulations chairman of the Alberta

Bowhunters Association, had some interesting things to say, including that he spends some 20 days in K Country every year and sees between six and eight bears there a year. He says:

There is a huntable population of bears there. Whether a hunter harvests the bear, a car runs them over or they are removed by Fish and Wildlife, or killed by another bear, killed as they are held in a trap or snare, there will always be bear mortality. Unfortunately we are never going to have the numbers of bears that lived here over 100 years ago but we do enjoy a [healthy] population [now]. In our opinion there are many areas in the province that can support a hunt.

I guess that's the minister's opinion too.

T.J. Schwanky of Cochrane was also concerned with what I said. He said that while he's typically been a big supporter of mine and my position on environmental issues, he thinks that I'm "way off base on the grizzly hunt." He says that "hunters pose no threat to these great bears and, in fact, are quite likely their best ally. The real threat to grizzlies is habitat loss and human use in the backcountry."

Also, Ryk Visscher, who is the past president of APOS, stated that as one of my constituents and one of my biggest past supporters and as a biologist and an outdoorsman himself he's extremely disappointed in my position. He talks about in the past my being reasonable and objective and that he shares a passion for the great outdoors and wildlife populations, which I do, and he believes that I'm ignoring the science that already exist on the population.

In response to that, we have Jeff Gailus from Canmore talking about the need for "the persistence of a stable population of grizzly bears in Alberta" so that everyone – photographers, hunters, the general population – and other bears can enjoy the bears forever.

But the latest (and very substantial) research on grizzly bears, both inside and outside Alberta, indicates that the population in Alberta is too small, the reproductive rate too low, the habitat too degraded and, most importantly, the human-caused mortality rate way too high (2 or 3 times sustainable levels) to ensure a future for Alberta's grizzly bears.

He then goes on to support that argument.

So my questions for the minister are with regard to this issue and his position in terms of the budget estimates for next year and how they're going to spend the money. One, what does he have to substantiate or does he believe he's going to have to substantiate that the grizzly bear population in Alberta is in serious danger and he still refuses to elevate the status of the grizzly to a threatened status? Do you expect that you're going to be revisiting this issue and potentially suspending the grizzly bear hunt? There is an estimate, Mr. Chairman, that there are only 250 to 350 mature breeding individuals on provincial land, whereas the recommended minimum number to maintain stable, healthy populations is a thousand bears. So if you could answer that question, I'd appreciate it.

3:10

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

**Mr. Cardinal:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Those are definitely good questions. It is definitely a priority of our government to ensure that we do our job in maintaining the balance between, you know, the development of our resources out there and environmental protection and, of course, the protection of our wildlife resources also.

As you can see, my budget did not increase, but it did not decrease in any area. We will continue with our budget and the programs that we have in place, and the member I know is quite familiar with some of the programs that are in place. We will continue monitoring very closely.

The challenge we have out there is in relation to when you're monitoring, being able to count the number of animals that are out there. Most grizzly bears will hibernate. The easiest time to see them because of their colour would be in the snow, and of course they hibernate in the winter, so they're not out there. The other time that you could try to find grizzly bears to count would be maybe in early fall or in the summer. Their hearing is really good. You know, if a helicopter were to fly in any area within 10 miles of the animals, they would probably move and hide under the trees and shrubs and stuff. So it's a tough area. We estimate that there are over 500 grizzly bears, and some have indicated that there are more than that. So it's a real challenge.

What we've done this year is actually reduce the hunt by about 30 per cent. We still allowed about 130 licences a couple of years back, and with the 130 licences the average take of animals was about 12. We've reduced that by 30 per cent. There are now 73 licences, and I would estimate, based on historic information, that the maximum that would be taken out would be somewhere around eight or nine. So it is a challenge.

I mentioned in my opening speech that we have a challenge in relation to animals becoming urbanized, and that includes grizzly bears but a lot more black bears. In order to keep animals wild and away from growth centres like Edmonton and towns and hamlets and communities throughout the province – I believe it is healthy not only for humans but also for the animals to remain wild, and I believe that the way you do that is to continue some form of a managed hunt. Now, at what level do you maintain it to try and keep animals away from growth centres and towns so that they don't endanger lives? If you do run into a grizzly bear, either the grizzly bear is dead or you are. It doesn't walk away. In fact, it'll hunt you down. So it is a challenge, and we'll continue monitoring that closely.

In B.C., next door to us, they allow 200 licences, although their grizzly bear population is around 1,400, 1,500, 1,600 – I'm not sure – in that area. They allow a bigger hunt. You know, animals will move between borders, so again it creates additional challenges.

So whatever I don't answer here, we'll do in writing on that specific item, you can be assured. I commend you for continuing to put pressure on our government and the people that are involved in the hunt of grizzly bear. That will need better monitoring, no doubt, and better management. That's our goal: to achieve that balance.

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

**Ms Carlson:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My next set of questions is around declining woodland caribou populations. In March we asked the question about them, and basically the minister responded that things are fine and that the government's doing a good job at maintaining healthy wildlife populations. Meanwhile, in the Edmonton *Boreal Market News*, volume 2, issue 4, there was an article that talked about harvesting being postponed for the sake of caribou, where Weyerhaeuser will postpone harvesting on 82,000 hectares in Alberta in order to aid protection efforts for the mountain woodland caribou. So my question is: why is it that a large forestry company like Weyerhaeuser can recognize that no further harvesting should take place until a caribou recovery plan is put in place, but we're not seeing any leadership from your department on that?

**Mr. Cardinal:** Thank you very much. That's another very important question. Actually, the press release came out today.

This is a normal process for the corporate sector. We have in the past always worked with the industry out there, not only forestry but also the oil and gas industry. Al-Pac, for example, in my constitu-

ency has, you know, a study that has been going on within their FMA for a long period of time now on woodland caribou, monitoring and tagging and following the paths where the animals move. In fact, they've also developed, similar to Weyerhaeuser, a recovery plan and plan all their forest harvesting activities based on the free movement of these particular animals.

Now, when it comes to woodland caribou, one of the challenges we have, of course, is again the management of the population growth. Woodland caribou in Alberta is not a food source for First Nations. It is a food source for wolves, mainly. Therefore, the wolf population is growing. They have more impact on the caribou population than the economic activity that takes place out there.

There's no one else hunting the animals. Maybe one a year is taken out, I understand, by the First Nations. In the extreme northwest of Alberta I believe a few more are taken out, but in the north-central, northeast, all the way to Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories border there are very, very few animals ever taken out for a food source.

Therefore, the main predator is the wolf population. Wolves are very, very tough animals to count to start with, to manage the population. They're very, very smart animals. In fact, my dad trapped all his life. He's turning 92 years old soon. He's trapped since he was 12 years old, and he only saw wolves twice in his lifetime. Now, he's a guy that spends all his time in the bush. So we are dealing with smart animals that are after these other animals. When you go to some of the oil and gas plants that operate in the areas where the caribou are, sometimes you will find that the caribou will hang around the developed areas for protection from the wolves because wolves don't come near the developed areas.

So it's a real challenge, then, to try and keep that balance going. You know, we'll keep monitoring. We'll encourage industries to keep doing what they're doing, like Weyerhaeuser – I commend them for that – Al-Pac, and no doubt other companies that are doing caribou management are to be commended.

3:20

In 2005, I believe, two forest management agreements out of 20 or 21 will be renewed. Some of the things we'll look at as we move forward are what this company is doing in relation to minimizing the footprint we leave out there as we harvest the resources, working in co-operation with the oil and gas industry in relation to use of the land base, the road network developed, and, of course, you know, the amount of dollars they spend on management of the caribou. So there are options. Eventually, all the FMAs will be renewed. As we move forward, we can incorporate some of the changes that are necessary to put in long-range plans for those companies that may not be planning our plans.

Thanks.

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

**Ms Carlson:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My next set of questions is on Dutch elm disease. We've seen this disease kill millions of elm trees throughout North America, Europe, and Asia in the last few years. Alberta is one of the few areas in the world where elm trees are widely grown and the disease has not yet been widespread.

In the past a province-wide monitor ensured that we would be able to identify and monitor early signs of Dutch elm disease in order to prevent its spread here. Last year, however, that position was cut, and I believe that it hasn't been reinstated this year. So my questions are: given that the elms in Alberta's rural areas alone are valued by this government at \$634 million, does the ministry not see a value in keeping that position to monitor the disease, and will you be

contributing any funding towards the monitoring of this disease in rural areas?

**Mr. Cardinal:** Mr. Chairman, on this particular issue I'll get my department to answer in writing to you.

**Ms Carlson:** Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to add to that question then: if you could give us some detail on what plan you have to stop the spread of the disease or to eliminate it once it is seen to be spreading in Alberta.

My next question, then, is going to be on forest management, including FSC certification. A study on the boreal forest entitled State of Denial, funded by an Alberta timber company, is demonstrating how the combined impacts of human activity are devastating Alberta boreal forests. FSC certification would help to protect these important areas while allowing our forestry companies to become more competitive. So the question is: when is the government going to establish more protected areas so that it can implement the forest certification standards? Can you tell us what you're planning on forest management for the 2004 plan? Do we see a review of the Forests Act any time soon?

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

**Mr. Cardinal:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'll start off with the certification process. That is another challenge. I'm sure the member is talking about the international certification.

It is a challenge, and it's something that we have to monitor very closely. Some of the larger companies already have those processes in place. It is an area where it makes it quite complicated for some of the smaller companies in particular because the international certification has nothing to do with the quality of wood that is manufactured or the amount of wood that is taken out of a tree. The certification is based on how you harvest your resources, and that's not bad. That's not bad. Some of the large companies, I believe, won't have too much of a problem in getting international certification. The companies that will be faced with a challenge are the smaller operators.

We have over 125 small sawmill operators and loggers in Alberta, companies that produce less than 5 million board feet per year. So far we've managed to exempt those in our softwood lumber negotiations. That is why there are about 50 communities that depend on forestry as their major source of income and also job creation. In those particular cases most of those companies will not be able to get international certification. We may have to look at it as a province in developing a certification plan to certify those smaller companies that can't afford to do the certification, because it would close the industry down.

In relation to the actual planning of how we harvest our resources in the forest management agreements, number one, when a company takes a forest management agreement, they buy it for 20 years, normally, 20-year agreements. Of course, when you do that, you have a 20-year plan to start with as to how you're going to harvest your resources and how you're going to expand your company and diversify and value-add and continue your plan to make, you know, the revenue that's required as a private company.

Then there is another plan, a five-year plan of how you're going to develop the resources. Then there's an annual operating plan. Again, most FMA holders and quota holders have to have a public meeting and invite the public to participate in how your harvest plan is going to be done for that year. Once that process is completed, it has to be approved by the minister, so the minister ends up seeing most of the plans in Alberta.

I believe there are one or two FMAs out there that don't have that condition in them and that may not be following the rules that closely. As we review these FMAs, we will make sure that the consultation part is included in them, so that will deal with that specific issue you mentioned.

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

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to join the debate on examining the 2004-2005 estimates for the Sustainable Resource Development department.

Mr. Chairman, I want to make some general observations first about the widespread concern across this province that this department's ability to enforce its own laws and to enforce compliance with respect to its obligations to protect renewable resources has been on the decline since the get-go.

In 2001 this department was established, of course, to provide protection for and to enhance the sustainability of Alberta's renewable resources. On the watch of this minister Albertans are saying that the capacity of the department starting in 2001 has simply gone down. So I really want to get a clear message across the way to the minister that people in Alberta are very concerned about the growing incapacity of his department to do what it is there to do. The fact that it is there is that it has certain responsibilities. The message that I'm getting from the press, from the media, from various organizations, concerned Albertans is that the department is simply not doing its job, and I think the buck stops at the minister's desk on this, and he has to, I think, explain this.

3:30

I just want to read, Mr. Chairman, from a letter that the minister received from Steve Carlson, president of the Alberta Game Warden Association. This letter is dated October 22, 2003, and I just want to read here and there from this letter. I'm sure the minister has the letter available to him, and I hope that he'll pay attention to it. Mr. Carlson draws the minister's attention to the growing difficulties that his staff responsible for the sustainability of resources and for protection of wildlife and fish populations is having because of the budgetary cutbacks that they have had to live with.

Mr. Carlson says that

the Officers in the province have a very difficult job. As the primary front line contact for the department they are left with the challenge of being everything to every one. They are expected to provide detailed biological information on complex ecosystems, they facilitate volatile public meetings, they provide talks to school groups, respond to incidents involving dangerous wildlife, they apprehend serious resource violators, and they provide logistical support to other government departments such as those dealing with health crisis. The nature of their responsibilities dictates that they are a very mobile and responsive agency actually present on the landscape, with representation in communities throughout Alberta. This fact carries with it the reality that equipment needs and operating costs are greater than other functional positions within the Department. It appears this fact has not been recognized with the present allocation of operating funds within the Department.

The next paragraph is particularly disturbing in what it has to say.

It has been widely reported in the media that the Fish and Wildlife Division is suffering a severe shortfall on the money it requires to effectively deliver its programs.

Then the writer observes:

At this same time, operating budgets for the Fish and Wildlife enforcement districts across the province have been slashed anywhere from 20 - 50% compared with last years allotments.

So it compares with, I think, 2002's allotments.

What this equates to is that some districts were allocated a total

budget of \$8,300.00 to cover the costs of telephones (office and cellular), equipment purchase/repair/maintenance, fuel purchases, office supplies, travel and subsistence, [information technology] repairs or upgrades, office equipment rentals, etc. This then begs the question . . .

And I'm going to ask the minister to address this.

. . . where have the dollars (the \$700,000.00 budget increase, the \$800,000.00 reduction experienced by wildlife and fisheries management, and the money from the 20-50% district budget cuts) been allocated?

Where has it been transferred to? Why is it not available to the fish and wildlife branch of the department? What has the minister done in this year's budget to address this clear concern that his own staff has with respect to the inability of the department to provide those services?

Another quote.

It is reported that the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Development was created in March 2001 to provide greater direction and focus on the sustainability of Alberta's renewable resources. The Deputy Minister for the department has indicated that nothing has changed in terms of the department's expectations that compliance with legislative requirements is a necessity.

I'm asking the minister: is he satisfied that this legal requirement on his department to have sort of compliance with legislative requirements as a necessity – does he have the resources to meet that obligation?

Published documents have acknowledged the importance of having a credible and effective enforcement program, which can be called into action when education and prevention are not sufficient.

I just heard the minister in his introductory remarks say that he focuses on education and prevention, but his own staff is saying that education and prevention are not sufficient to achieve compliance with the legislation.

In response to the limited budget dollars allocated, managers within Fish and Wildlife were forced to provide direction to Officers that preventative patrols would be discontinued, and officers were not to work evening and weekend shifts to avoid the additional expense of \$1.75/hr for shift differential and weekend premium. Of course it is during these evening and weekend periods when officers notice increased unlawful harvest of our resources. This also has meant that repairs and maintenance to equipment vital to their ability to monitor resource harvest and status (such as our highly sought after fishery resources) just do not happen.

Now, I don't think anyone can communicate to the minister in clearer language the sense of crisis that is experienced by the people on the front line in his own department.

A snapshot of the results this direction has had indicates that enforcement actions for the month of July has decreased by over 50% when compared to the same time period during the previous two years.

Grizzly management plans . . .

To which the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has spoken already.

. . . call for increased enforcement; meanwhile proactive deterrent patrols are at an all time low. Efforts of protecting the bull trout (one of the province's official symbols, sporting a zero catch limit), has all but been eliminated leaving these protected fish populations vulnerable to unregulated and uncontrolled harvest.

I hope the minister is listening. These are not my words. It's coming from his own staff.

Monitoring of commercial fisheries has in some cases been limited only to examining records blindly trusting that they have been completed truthfully and accurately, and that nets have not been set in locations closed as sanctuaries for the fish or where recreational fish such as walleye accumulate thereby being susceptible to over-harvest.

The question is asked by Mr. Carlson himself.

Do you view the delivery of compliance assurance activities with its present restrictions as being credible and effective?

Minister, I'm asking the same question: is your new budget addressing this question, and if so, in what way? Are the resources there for you to be able to live up to that compliance assurance that your department is supposed to certainly respect and implement?

Mr. Chairman, talking about fish in particular – and I have had on this matter some discussions both in public and in this House with this minister. You know, there are members in this House and the Premier who can go to these rather fancy lodges outside of this province to do their fishing. Most Albertans rely on the sustainability of the fish stocks in the province for them to be able to enjoy the natural wealth that's available to us by way of these renewable resources.

If the minister fails in his obligations to protect those resources simply because he can't win more dollars, more resources when he's sitting around the cabinet table, then people have the right to ask the question: why is this happening? So I hope the minister will answer that question.

I'm asking the minister to address this question concretely and nonrhetorically if possible. I'm trying to be as factual as one possibly can be on this. These are very serious questions, Mr. Minister, on your watch, and the capacity of the department to do these things has gone down, not up. Why? Why are you putting in danger the future of these resources for our present generation and for the coming generations? If you don't do the job that your department is supposed to be doing – and that's why the department was established in the first place – we won't have these resources either for our enjoyment or for increasing the attractiveness of the province to tourists.

3:40

The tourist industry is an important industry in this province. This government is committed to expanding that industry, but if we deplete our fish resources, if we allow our very unique species to be put in danger and disappear, then what happens? Your failure here is working at cross-purposes to the very goals that the department in terms of economic development, social development sets up for itself.

Here are some questions for you, Minister, to address.

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

**Mr. Cardinal:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank the member for all the questions because they are good questions. I know that he's as sincere as any other Albertan in ensuring that we protect the limited, valuable resources that we have in Alberta.

The member used the words crisis in wildlife management in Alberta. There is no crisis. To start with – and the member may disagree with me – I feel that 99.9 per cent of Albertans are very honest. They would not purposely break any laws. Therefore, the plan we have in place is to deal with those few people that possibly break the law and to try to target our activities based on that. Why hit the 99.9 per cent of Albertans who never break the law, have a whole pile of staff out there checking everybody inside and out, when you know for a fact – and the officers themselves know – that Albertans are generally honest? They do not break the law on purpose.

You know, we have a \$40 million budget. We have over 1,900 staff total because staff do work together in a number of areas, even sometimes in different departments to support other departments. We have over a hundred fish and wildlife officers out there, and we need to make sure that we have efficiencies wherever possible when we operate the department.

I spent 19 years in government myself, right from a wage position

to a management position, in fact working as a consultant to an assistant deputy minister. I tend to think that I know how the departments operate inside and out. I know that from my involvement previously there are some deficiencies. Staff are generally good, but there are some efficiencies that we need to improve.

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

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me reiterate here in Mr. Carlson's own words his very serious concern. The minister may not want to call it a crisis. Let me just read to the minister. I think he may have forgotten the contents of the letter and the tone of the letter. In the second last paragraph there, the important paragraph there, this is what Mr. Carlson says, Minister.

Although compliance enforcement is only a portion of what we do, it is no less important than the other facets of our job. We recognize that we always have to strive for ways to improve efficiency and focus our efforts on mission critical activities. However we do feel an obligation to do all that we can to ensure the sustainability of Alberta's natural resources, and the viability of those industries that are geared to capitalize on Alberta's natural wealth. It is for this reason that I respectfully submit that the Fish and Wildlife Division desperately requires . . .

Desperately requires. Is that a tone of crisis or not, Minister?

. . . additional funds to be allocated to their operating budgets.

Without measured controls on development and compliance with management goals and objectives, these finite resources may be over exploited and doomed to long periods of recovery and inaccessibility to Albertans and industry alike.

I'd like the minister to respond to it and specifically address the question: by how much has he increased the budget for the fish and wildlife division, which is desperately short of resources to do the job that it is required and expected to do?

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, the one hour allocated between the minister and the members of the opposition has now elapsed. The chair will recognize any other member that may wish to participate in the debate.

Hon. minister, you may proceed with your remarks, but I'll recognize if there are any other government members.

**Mr. Cardinal:** Okay. Thank you very much. The other area that the member mentioned earlier, of course, is in relation to the commercial fisheries issue. Starting April 1, which is coming very shortly, we will commence the compensation program as part of our overall fishing management strategy in Alberta. We will commence the buyout program.

Right now we have over 800 commercial fishermen in Alberta. They fish approximately 34,000 100-yard nets. Our plan is to reduce that down to 200 and about 18,000 100-yard nets. We will have viable commercial fishing operations and the ability for us to be able to manage better and monitor better and ensure that the program works well.

The other thing we do, of course, is run some pilot projects. Calling Lake was one example. I think most people are familiar with that. It is working well, where part of the lake is closed completely from all activity. One part is open, where you can keep one walleye of any size. That's being monitored. The report is supposed to come out very shortly.

The other thing we're doing is that starting April 1, we will initiate the barbless hooks, where people will have to use a barbless hook now to fish in any lake or river or stream. I believe, again, that that will help in restoring some of the fisheries we have in Alberta because if you do catch, say, a larger walleye or pike with a barbed

hook, right now in a lot of cases when you take the hook off, you destroy the fish pretty well. If it's a catch-and-release program, you have no choice but to release the fish into the water to prevent you from getting a fine. So we are doing a lot of new, innovative ways of managing the fewer resources we have.

Our budget is consistent from previous years, so all we're doing is trying to operate efficiently within that budget, and we will. Like I say, I'm quite familiar with how departments operate and where there are maybe some weaknesses. We will continue to do that.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. McClelland:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a question of the minister which the minister may or may not be able to respond to at the moment. It's really to satisfy a curiosity that I've had for some time. The curiosity has to do with confined feeding operations or livestock operations in general near a watershed, in particular confined feeding operations. As I understand it at the moment, if I were to build a house for a single family and it were to be outside of the normal sewage area and it was next to a watershed, I would have to have the effluent hauled away. In some areas it's not even permissible to have a septic field, depending upon where it is on the watershed. Why is it not permissible to have a single-family residence with human waste going into the watershed but it is permissible to have a large confined feeding operation that would have effluent going into a watershed?

3:50

**Mr. Cardinal:** Mr. Chairman, again, because it's a pretty detailed question and it's very, very sensitive, I'll get the department to answer that particular one in writing.

In relation to the whole process of confined feeding operations, of course in the past, you know, as a former municipal councillor I was involved in some of this where applications would come into the municipality development officer for review and possible approval for any type of development, including residential, including larger commercial and industrial operations.

Of course, then in addition to that, there were the regional planning commissions, which in some cases, not in all cases, were involved in approving some of these developments. Because the municipal planning commissions were eliminated a number of years ago to reduce expenditures in Alberta, it was critical that some form of an organization be developed to deal with the intensive growth of the animal industry, and of course the NRCB two years ago was given that added role and works very closely with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

But specific to the question I will get the staff to write.

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

**Ms Carlson:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have two sets of questions left, and then I'm done for this afternoon.

The first is on staffing within the department. I've asked this question many times over the years in the House, and it's still, I believe, an issue, that fish and wildlife officers can't really be expected to protect our resources if they aren't adequately funded.

We see that other people are picking up on this issue. Back in the fall there was a letter printed in the *Alberta Game Warden* magazine from a retired fish and wildlife officer asking for more support for fish and wildlife resources. He talked specifically about:

There must be political will and some priority placed on Fish and Wildlife resource research and protection. A good start would be to take back the fish and wildlife licence money (\$7 million) that is

given to the Alberta Conservation Association, which in many cases duplicates the work and fragments management programs.

He really believes that the money has better use within the government department because the devoted staff there will bring forward good management plans and work within budget constraints.

That concern was picked up in the *Edmonton Journal* with regard to Fish and Wildlife losing to poachers. Officers feel demoralized and worthless because of budget cuts.

I for many years have advocated that there be more positions in this department rather than fewer. It's one of the few places where I think we just don't spend enough money. So I would like the minister's comments on that.

I'll just wrap up my last set of questions too, and that is in terms of the Alberta Conservation Association. We're getting increased concern from member groups in that association and groups that have decided that they will not or will no longer be member groups that the ACA, which has DAO status, is not spending the money wisely. The issues that they would particularly want addressed are five, and I will talk about them.

The first one is that the "priority or focused spending of hunter and angler monies . . . has not been achieved." They believe that necessary fish and wildlife surveys are not being conducted "that will better manage our resources and provide increased opportunities." They believe that they

are unable to direct the monies for on-ground fish and wildlife habitat protection, development and enhancement. Current spending includes a large manpower base, administration, spending on lower priority species, indirect benefits to hunters and anglers and generally lower priorities to hunters and anglers.

The second point. "The government is unable to deliver many of these necessary programs and although the Minister has tried to obtain increased budgets, it does not appear likely" that it's going to happen in the near future. "The concern for funding fish and wildlife management and enforcement has been expressed by government biologists and enforcement officers, and fish and game members, and the media."

Number three: "Without redirected funding and existing limited government budgets, the precautionary approach to fish management . . . will prevail." Then there may be "few changes to very restrictive catch and size limits. Such restrictions may in part be a cause for reduced angler interest in Alberta."

Point four.

The current organization of fish and wildlife management in Alberta appears to be confusing and attempting to determine who (the government or the ACA or the hunters/anglers) is responsible and accountable for information, for management priorities, and for spending priorities is a challenge.

Lastly,

efforts to change the direction of the Alberta Conservation Association [have] included considerable correspondence, the submission of resolutions to the ACA Annual General Meeting . . . , input into various government reviews of the ACA, and the 2002 Memorandum of Understanding between government and the ACA.

Yet little of the input has been accepted. In fact, former members have as a result withdrawn from participation in ACA.

So if the minister could address those concerns for me in terms of staffing, their relationship with the ACA, and why you don't just take back this organization, which doesn't seem to be meeting its mandate, and have those dollars available within your department.

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

**Mr. Cardinal:** Thank you very much. Of course, in the past year we have restructured the Alberta Conservation Association some, and



we are monitoring it very closely and work with them very closely to see if there should be changes. At this time we are not anticipating any major changes immediately, but you know that if any program does not work in an organization like Sustainable Resource Development, of course the program won't be around. But we will monitor it.

Those are good questions. I'll have my staff answer most of them. But for the benefit of Albertans I think people need to know that the department does spend more than \$200 million already. We have around 1,900 staff. A lot of the questions today were related to the fish and wildlife issue or cuts in the budget, but there are no cuts in the budget. We still expend \$40 million. We have over a hundred fish and wildlife officers, and we do share movement of support staff and administrative staff in particular.

We can do some efficiencies yet within the department. You know, I think it's the right direction to go. I'll give you one example. At one time, as a member of the government working in the civil service, if a meeting was held in Edmonton and you're situated, say, at Lac La Biche, Slave Lake, or a place like that, which is about a 2 and a half hour drive, if the meeting started at 8:30 or 8:15 in the morning, you had to come in the night before, leave mid-afternoon, leave your work, come to Edmonton, stay overnight so you can attend a meeting at 8:15.

I often wondered why the meetings were not held, say, an hour and a half later. So you do not stay overnight. You can continue working on your job out there during that day, come the next morning, do your meeting, and go back the same day. It would save dollars for the taxpayer, and it saves time for the officers or government employees that travel, not only fish and wildlife officers but other government employees.

How we operate sometimes we need to review very closely. For an example, last Father's Day there was a checkpoint just south of Calling Lake. I got stopped in that. I don't mind. I'm like any other Albertans. I didn't break any laws, so I didn't get fined. But there were a number of vehicles. I thought it excessive the number of people involved in the checkpoint because you're in there, you set up your checkpoint, and because of the communication system we have these days with the cellphones, within an hour or so everybody in the country knows that you're sitting there. I said: well, why don't we have fewer people in there, less time in that one particular setting, and go move to another location to be more efficient? We have some efficiencies that we need to work on.

4:00

The other one is in relation to some of the charges we lay at times. What process do you do when those charges hit the courts? Do you go sit in there day after day after day till the case is heard? Well, I'm reviewing that right now to see if we can make some improvements in that particular area.

So we are monitoring very closely to try and do the job yet be cost-effective and save money wherever we can but, at the same time, do the job that needs to be done. Again I stress the fact that we don't have Albertans running around out there breaking the law; 99.9 per cent of Albertans that are out there using our wildlife resources are honest, hard-working Albertans. We need to design our enforcement programs based on that, and we need to ensure that we treat those hard-working Albertans with respect when we do a checkpoint, because they won't put up with anything other than that.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Dr. Nicol:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to ask just a couple

of questions that come up significantly in the rural part of southern Alberta, and this deals with the NRCB and its application to the intensive livestock operations. The public is looking for some direction as to: when are the officers who are out there doing the evaluations, doing the checkups going to be more open to the community in terms of their investigations: what they're doing, what they're looking at, how they're finding out things?

Then I guess the second question to the minister is in terms of enforcement and compliance. There have been a number, a small number, Mr. Minister, of cases brought where the public sees what appears to be a violation not being acted on. What do you have in the works to increase transparency so that the confidence can be brought to bear for individuals who see those violations that I was talking about and then will see some action in terms of compliance or cleanup action, whatever, resulting after a complaint is made? People don't see a real relationship between their complaint and some action.

The third question on that same area would be: at what time in the future do you see the NRCB looking at the issue of cumulative effect, you know, one big operation versus a whole bunch of small ones in the same community area? The issue of cumulative effect doesn't seem to be resonating in the community. They don't see any action. They see it as a heavy concentration of intensive livestock. If it's one big operation, the NRCB seems to act, but if it's a bunch of smaller ones with the same total number, the NRCB doesn't seem to act. There's a concern out there in the community.

So I just raise, basically, those three questions that the community would like to have some feedback on. Thank you.

**Mr. Cardinal:** The NRCB, of course, has done a good job. We had to get additional dollars throughout the year for staff, and then this year's budget has increased by \$1.4 million to try and deal with some of the complaints that we have. Like I said in my opening speech, last year we had over 1,083 complaints, and we resolved close to 900 of those. So I think the staff are doing quite well. No doubt, we can always do a better job, and of course we'll strive for the best.

It is a challenging area, but again it is a necessary process to have in place because we don't have the regional planning commissions any more. We have Environment with their environmental impact assessment studies, et cetera, to work with. Because we don't have the regional planning commissions, we have individual municipalities, of course, that approve some of the smaller projects. Therefore, I think that the NRCB will have to be monitored very closely to ensure that we are doing the job that people want out there. That is why we're out there. It's for the people that we're dealing with. Also, any individual that is in disagreement with the NRCB always has the opportunity to call the minister to ensure that we are dealing with the issues effectively.

**Dr. Nicol:** Just a friendly suggestion to the minister then. In your business plan where you talk about the mandate of the NRCB, change the order of your priorities. Where you talk about the "economic, social and environmental" interests of the community, turn them around so that people get the sense that the environment and social issues play more than the economics. Economic Development, Agriculture, or Energy can deal with that part of it. They want you acting on behalf of the community. So just a friendly suggestion.

**Mr. Cardinal:** Mr. Chairman, that is a very good comment. I know that my staff is here taking notes, and we will definitely have a look at that. It's good.

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

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a fairly simple question for the minister. Minister, I understand that the department had last year around a hundred fish and wildlife officers. What's the projected number of fish and wildlife officers for the year that we're discussing the budget for? What provisions are made in the budget to enhance their capacity for enforcement, which is what they've been asking for? Enforcement is a problem, they say, and they're unable to secure compliance with the laws of the province because of the lack of resources. So the number of officers and the resource enhancement for them so they can do their job.

**Mr. Cardinal:** Mr. Chairman, like I mentioned earlier, we do have, you know, around a \$40 million budget. That budget has not decreased. In fact, there have been some minor increases in the budget. In relation to hiring new staff or more staff, if any vacancies occur, we will be filling those positions, but at this time I don't see us going out to hire a whole pile of officers. Again, I want to make sure that we do our job, that the staff have the capacity to do the job they need to do.

Keep in mind that 99.9 per cent of Albertans out there are honest. They're not lawbreakers. So you don't design a program like you're dealing with a bunch of people that are out there breaking the law. You design a program to work with the people to ensure that they respect the resources that are there. You can be assured that most Albertans do respect our wildlife resources and, again, would not break the law. Therefore, we need to ensure that when we're dealing with Albertans, we deal with them with respect. They expect that, and they deserve that. We can't be treating them like they all break the law. They don't. Very few do.

So we've got some work to do within our own department to make sure that, you know, the attitudes towards the people that we're dealing with are right. The best way to have abundant resources in the province is to work co-operatively with the public. That's the way to do it, not by enforcement. Only for the few that break the law, and there are very few that do.

**Dr. Pannu:** During the session last fall the minister brought before this House the Wildlife Amendment Act. The purpose of it was to greatly enhance the fines that lawbreakers would have to face, that would be imposed on those who break the law. Now, the very fact that the minister brought forward that piece of legislation to increase deterrents would suggest that there's a problem with compliance with the law. Otherwise, why would he have wasted the time of the House bringing a piece of legislation that for no good reason at all increases enormously the fines for violation of the laws that he's supposed to implement and seek compliance with?

4:10

Secondly, the Alberta Game Warden Association letter would suggest that the problem with enforcement – and I repeat this; I'm not somehow dreaming these things up. I'm basing my questions on what's been expressly stated by people at the front lines, people who are doing the enforcement for the minister and for us Albertans who want to be assured that compliance with those rules is happening. Whether it's 10 people or 50 people or 70 people, the damage is being done is what the Alberta Game Warden Association is saying. They want to prevent this damage from happening. The only way they can do it is not by hearing the minister repeat again and again that 99.9 per cent of Albertans are not lawbreakers. No one is accusing Albertans of lawbreaking.

The people who do in fact look after the question of whether the

law is broken are the people who are speaking through this letter, and they are saying that there's a problem. They cannot enforce the law, and compliance is not being achieved. So what is the minister to say about that? The minister does not address the question that has been asked by either of these letters that I've tried to put before the minister this afternoon.

**Mr. Cardinal:** Mr. Chairman, no doubt, I get the same letters. If I don't, he should pass them on to me now. If they don't come to me but come to you, maybe you could pass them on, and I'll answer them in writing.

The overall issue of wildlife management and the amendment to the Wildlife Act in relation to fines for poachers again is another measure, another tool to discourage voluntarily Albertans or any other people from breaking the law. There are not too many of them, but if you discourage one by implementing a law like that, I think that's a lot. We're not saying that there are going to be a whole pile of people all of a sudden caught that are poachers because I don't think there are that many people out there purposely breaking the law by poaching.

In relation to the other questions I'll get my department to answer in writing.

**The Deputy Chair:** Anybody else wish to participate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

**Dr. Pannu:** We do have time. I was looking, Minister, at page 401 of the business plan of your department. There are some interesting strategies outlined there, the bullets, that I want to draw your attention to. It's "the values Albertans receive from wild species are sustained and enhanced for future generations." What it means, your department says, is that

Alberta's wild species are managed and used in a manner that maximizes the environmental, social, and economic benefits that Albertans receive from these resources while ensuring they are sustained for future generations.

Now, there's a strategy there: "Mitigate and reduce negative interactions between wildlife and humans." The two examples are related to fishing and poaching.

You know, I was reading something this afternoon which says: open season with no patrols. The next headline reads: it's a poacher's paradise out there. It's not something that the New Democrat opposition has invented. I'm simply drawing your attention to the stories in the media, people speaking out, people with concerns. You have committed the department to mitigation and reduction of negative interaction between wildlife and humans. What specific measures in this year's budget are included to address that particular strategy? That's one.

I may as well, while I have the floor, draw your attention to a few of the other strategies that are indicated here.

Ensure high levels of compliance with fish and wildlife legislation by delivering appropriate education, prevention and enforcement programs; monitoring the use of fish and wildlife resources and ensuring timely and effective responses to non-compliance.

Now, again, this is your department's own strategy and committing the department to ensuring high levels of compliance, say, with enforcement programs, to use enforcement programs for that. Specifically, what new funds, as compared with last year, are allocated in this budget to enhance enforcement, Mr. Minister?

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

**Mr. Cardinal:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. In relation to the articles, poacher's paradise, et cetera, you know, I've seen those

articles also. I don't get a whole lot of phone calls from Albertans in relation to poachers on highways, but I do get a lot of phone calls from people running into deer and moose and other animals, road kill, on the highway. It's a challenge because animals are getting urbanized.

We have a major challenge out there. We have deer moving into towns and cities, moose moving into towns and cities, elk moving into towns and cities, black bear moving into towns and cities; also, coyotes and foxes and cougars, in some cases. It's a challenge because they're all of a sudden in town. Thirty years ago or 40 years ago you didn't see that. Thirty or 40 years ago you would have never seen a deer in northern Alberta. Today it's common to drive between Athabasca and Calling Lake, for an example, and see 30 or 40 deer along the highway.

So we've got that challenge that faces us. In fact, you know, I don't have too many people phoning saying that there are a lot of poachers out there. I still believe that most Albertans are very, very honest, and I'm sure you'll agree with that too. But we have to deal with the issue of the urbanization of animals.

We have to have some form of a balanced hunt to ensure that they remain wild. For the health of animals it is better for them to remain wild than move into towns because it creates a major problem for everybody. What we will be doing this coming fall is extending a lot of our hunting season: different forms to increase some of the hunting, the length of hunting, type of animal, et cetera, to try and reduce areas where there is a problem, to target the populations.

So with that, Mr. Chairman, I'll sit down again, and I'll get my staff to do it in writing.

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

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank the minister for being patient and dealing with my questions with the seriousness I hope that they deserve.

The minister just made a reference to extending the hunting season to deal with what he called the urbanization of wild animals. I have a slightly different question. It's related to hunting. Grizzlies in this province, the Alberta wildlife association is saying, are an endangered species. There are far fewer now than there were some years ago and, certainly, far fewer than there were several hundred years ago. They're on the endangered species list. Will the minister in fact ban grizzly hunting in the province rather than extending the season for hunting grizzlies as well as some other species that he thinks are getting into urban areas?

4:20

**Mr. Cardinal:** Mr. Chairman, at this time we have no plans to completely shut the hunting down, but we have plans to put in better monitoring programs, better management programs to ensure that the population remains reasonably healthy.

As I indicated earlier, it's a hard animal to manage; it's a hard animal to monitor. In fact, because grizzly bears hibernate – and the wintertime would be the time you'd be able to see them better. So they're not out. They come out in the summertime, the spring, when the leaves are out. They can hear so well that if you get a helicopter 10 miles away that wants to count the animals, you'd never find them. Therefore, it's a tough one. We estimate anywhere around 500 population now in Alberta and maybe more in some areas.

We've reduced the hunt by over 30 per cent. In fact, two years ago we issued 130 licences. This year we are only issuing 73. When we released 130 licences, the number taken out was around 12 a year. We not only reduced the numbers; we also moved the hunting from southern Alberta, where there's a lot more pressure along the

eastern slopes, to north of Grande Prairie and that region, where farmers are having some difficulties with grizzly bear and black bear. We are, you know, continuing to manage the hunt.

That's one animal you want to keep wild because, like I say, if you do run into a grizzly bear – it doesn't matter where, downtown or in the bush – either the grizzly bear is dead or you're dead. There are no ifs or buts. That's the nature of the animal, unfortunately. It is hard to manage.

So at this time I can't commit to closing down that season completely for those reasons also.

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

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is to the minister again, from his strategies for the section on wildlife protection on page 401. What caught my eye is an interesting statement: "Promote healthy fish and wildlife populations by working with stakeholders to mitigate, detect and manage threats from disease and invasive alien species." What's that reference to, Mr. Minister? Invasive alien species. Which members of the wildlife are threatened by the invasive presence of what alien species?

**Mr. Cardinal:** I'm not sure exactly where that question fits in, Mr. Chairman, but, again, I will get my department to put it in writing.

There are – and I gave an example earlier – wildlife challenges. Just for an example, the one I used was the caribou population, which is threatened. Now, the threat is not from development. It's not from First Nations because it's not our food source, except in northwestern Alberta, I believe, Meander River, that area. There some of the First Nations may use caribou as a food source.

But the biggest threat for the caribou is the wolf population. Therefore, you know, that is the big threat. So how do you manage the caribou then? Do you reduce the population of the wolves? Those are some of the challenges we're faced with. Trappers do not normally hunt the wolf, so the wolf population has grown. They threaten the deer population. They threaten the moose population. So it's a tough balancing act. Some of those species like the wolves you hardly ever see in your lifetime. There are probably thousands out there. They're dangerous to other animals, even calves when they're born. They're dangerous to calves.

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

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My next question to the minister is about the commercial fisheries buyout program that's mentioned as one of the strategies here. We're on page 401. Since we're dealing with the budget, what kind of budget commitments or allocations are included in your budget, Minister, with respect to these commercial fishing buyouts?

**Mr. Cardinal:** The commercial fisheries buyout is part of our strategy to manage the fisheries resources we have in Alberta both for sport fishing and for domestic and commercial and First Nations use. The plan that's in place and which will be implemented this April – and I'll get it out of the budgets later – was developed back in 1991. In fact, I chaired the committee when I was an MLA for Athabasca-Lac La Biche to work along with the Alberta Commercial Fishermen's Association and government to develop and design the fisheries buyout policy. The policy that's in place now only had minor amendments, so it's still a similar policy involving the commercial fisheries.

A number of years ago there were over 800 commercial fishermen in Alberta with access to 34,000 100-yard nets, and a lot of the

fishermen were not doing it as a full-time business. Some were. Because there are so many active commercial fishermen, even for some of the small ones in a lot of cases, it was not economically viable for the people that wanted to concentrate on it because there were so many people after the same resource. The plan is to reduce it to about 200 licences and about 18,000 100-yard nets. That is our target, and that plan would take place over probably three to four years. We've started this year with around \$2 million. There are over 230-some applications already, and I believe it's around 13,000 or 14,000 100-yard nets.

So that is the first phase of probably a three-year program, and it's going to be challenging. We need all your help to do that. We do have a hardship committee in place which will involve the commercial fishermen and some departmental people and some public to sit on this committee. If a person feels that they are not being fairly treated in the buyout process, then we will deal with that. We probably will spend close to \$2 million this fiscal year on that particular program.

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

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The minister is committed to striking a balance, I guess, between environmental, social, economic values that Albertans derive from his department's activities. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East has asked him to perhaps rearrange the priorities there, focus on conservation, environmental sustainability and leave the other two to other ministries. I have this question: given that just recently legislation was passed in this House that loosens requirements for watershed management in forestry reserves – and here I'm referring to Bill 13, the Forest Reserves Amendment Act, related to which numerous environmentalists have expressed deep concern and alarm pointing out that this change would also impact water supplies fed by rivers passing through these reserves, and it's your legislation, I guess – does it make your job easier to seek to strike this balance that you're committing yourself to on a piece of paper, or does it make it harder, as a matter of fact? Which is what I think most Albertans who expressed their concerns on this particular bill would conclude.

4:30

**Mr. Cardinal:** I'll get the department to answer some of that in writing.

You know, you do have a good point. It continues to be a real challenge out there to maintain the balance between resource development, the environment, and protecting the wildlife resources at the same time.

Because of our economic growth there is a lot of pressure out there on wildlife resources. There is a lot of pressure. We manage over a hundred million acres of public land. There is a lot of pressure out there from all-terrain vehicle users. So we'll continue with these challenges, and I don't think they're about to change as long as our economy continues to grow as strong as it has. People have the dollars to spend, and we should encourage that, not discourage it, but in a planned way, so that is why the Ghost-Waiparous, the 1,500 square kilometres of area for which we are trying to develop an access management plan.

At one time people would drive up and down these streams and lake beds and stuff with all-terrain vehicles, and they still do in some cases. I've flown over; I've seen people drive up and down the streams. That should not be allowed, and the management plan will definitely deal with that.

The other one is the Bighorn backcountry, which is larger yet, 5,000 square kilometres, for which we've developed an access management plan in a similar way. But once you finish those plans, that's not the end of the process. The actual work starts after that.

There's going to be a monitoring committee that will continue overseeing these plans, ensuring that they're developed and a trail system put in properly and enforcement put in properly.

So it is a challenge overall to manage our resources that we have out there, but in relation specifically to the question you have, the department will answer you in writing.

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

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Along the same lines as my previous question to the minister, another bill that I think would undermine the ability of the minister to strike this balance is Bill 2, the Black Creek Heritage Rangeland Trails Act. You referred to, you know, proper trails and their monitoring and enforcement.

The Alberta Wilderness Association certainly expressed a great deal of concern about how, in fact, this bill will undermine rather than enhance their capacity to meet the mandate of your department. This is again a legislative initiative that came from your department. While you certainly are quite, I think, credible in terms of outlining the goals, the actual instruments that the department is developing concomitantly with the development of these goals would seem to contradict and suggest that the capacity to accomplish those goals is reduced rather than enhanced by the legislation.

I wonder if you have any comments on that.

**Mr. Cardinal:** Mr. Chairman, I'll get the staff to answer that in writing.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any further questions?

Hon. members, after considering the business plan and proposed estimates for the Department of Sustainable Resource Development for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005, are you ready for the vote?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

Agreed to:

Operating Expense and	
Equipment/Inventory Purchases	\$198,541,000
Capital Investment	\$3,200,000

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

**Mr. Stevens:** Mr. Chairman, I move that we rise and report the estimates of this ministry.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

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

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005, for the following department.

Sustainable Resource Development: operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases	\$198,541,000
capital investment	\$3,200,000

**The Acting Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

head:

**Private Bills  
Second Reading**

**Bill Pr. 1**

**St. Mary's College Amendment Act, 2004**

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mrs. Ady:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move second reading of Bill Pr. 1, St. Mary's College Amendment Act, 2004.

The purpose of this bill is to make the necessary amendments to the incorporating act to enable St. Mary's College to grant three-year and four-year bachelor of arts degrees and to use the descriptive word "university" in the name as recommended by the Private Colleges Accreditation Board and as supported by the Minister of Learning.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Anybody else? The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw to close debate.

**Mrs. Ady:** Close debate.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 1 read a second time]

**Bill Pr. 2**

**Sisters of Charity of St. Louis of  
Medicine Hat Statutes Repeal Act**

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

**Dr. Nicol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry I move second reading of Bill Pr. 2, the Sisters of Charity of St. Louis of Medicine Hat Statutes Repeal Act.

Mr. Speaker, the Sisters of Charity of St. Louis of Calgary and Medicine Hat wish to centralize their administrative units in the Calgary office and thus eliminate the need for a separate act to deal with their operations and their tax exemption in Medicine Hat.

4:40

**The Acting Speaker:** Anybody else wish to participate in the debate? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East to close debate.

**Dr. Nicol:** Question.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 2 read a second time]

**Bill Pr. 3**

**Living Faith Bible College Act**

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Marz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move second reading of Bill Pr. 3, Living Faith Bible College Act.

This bill will incorporate a private Bible college that will be located near Caroline, Alberta. There's currently a Living Faith Bible College operating there, which has been operated since 1971

by the Living Faith Evangelistic Association. Bill Pr. 3 will create an entity that's distinct from the Living Faith Evangelistic Association, and it will provide for the possibility of moving towards accreditation as well as allowing students to be eligible for access to Canada student loans.

I urge everyone in the Assembly to support this bill. It has been recommended by the Standing Committee on Private Bills.

**The Acting Speaker:** Anybody wish to participate in the debate? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills to close debate.

**Mr. Marz:** Question.

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

head:

**Private Bills  
Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, we'll call the committee to order.

**Bill Pr. 1**

**St. Mary's College Amendment Act, 2004**

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

**Mrs. Ady:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that Bill Pr. 1 be amended as follows. I believe the amendment has been circulated. Section 4(b) is amended in the proposed section 5 by striking out clause (h) and substituting the following:

- (h) to change the name of the College incorporated by this Act, without further amendment to this Act, provided that
  - (i) if required by the Post-Secondary Learning Act, the College obtains the approval of the Minister of Learning, and
  - (ii) no later than 15 days before the name change is to take effect, the College publishes a notice of the intended name change in The Alberta Gazette.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, just hold for a minute, please.

**Mrs. Ady:** Can I call the question?

**The Deputy Chair:** Anybody else wish to participate in the debate?

[The clauses of Bill Pr. 1 as amended agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

**Bill Pr. 2**

**Sisters of Charity of St. Louis of  
Medicine Hat Statutes Repeal Act**

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

**Dr. Nicol:** Just to tell the House on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry that this bill has been approved by the Private Bills Committee and that there will be no amendments. We should pass it through.

[The clauses of Bill Pr. 2 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

**Bill Pr. 3  
Living Faith Bible College Act**

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Marz:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that Bill Pr. 3 be amended as follows: section 3(a) is amended by striking out “in such fields as the Board may from time to time determine” and substituting “in the fields outlined in section 5(1)(a).” This accurately determines the types of degree programs that can be offered by this institution. I would encourage everyone to approve this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Perhaps, with the assistance of the Clerk, I’m just noticing that the amendment refers to 5(1)(a), and in fact in the bill, if I’m looking at it correctly, there is no 5(1), and so it would be just 5(a). Maybe the mover would accept that change to the amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Okay. I guess that I would be willing to accept that as a clarification. The chair makes note of the correction that the hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General is suggesting.

Hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, did you want to add anything to this particular point?

**Mr. Marz:** Just, Mr. Chairman, that the hon. member is correct in pointing that out, and I would accept that as a friendly amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** The Assembly will disregard the reference to that (1). So it will read as 5(a).

Anybody else wish to participate in the debate?

4:50

[The clauses of Bill Pr. 3 as amended agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.  
The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I’d move that the committee rise and report bills Pr. 1, Pr. 2, and Pr. 3.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

**Mr. Johnson:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports Bill Pr. 2. The committee reports the following with some amendments: bills Pr. 1 and Pr. 3. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.  
The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’d move that we adjourn until 8 p.m., at which time we reconvene in Committee of Supply.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:53 p.m.]