

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, May 3, 2001**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 01/05/03

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

THE SPEAKER: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. O Lord, grant us a daily awareness of the precious gift of life which You have given us. As Members of this Legislative Assembly we dedicate our lives anew to the service of our province and of our country. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

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

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a rare honour for me to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly constituents of mine that are seated in your gallery, especially when they're the proud grandparents of a wonderful young lady that members will know as your head page, Ms Laura Gill. Laura has recently been selected for a position as a page in the House of Commons page program in Ottawa beginning in September of this year. She is one of four young Albertans to be chosen. She will attend either Carleton or Ottawa university on a scholarship given to those fortunate enough and, indeed, deserving enough to be chosen as House of Commons pages. I would ask that Ed and Emilie Zentner along with their son Gerard and his two children, Matthew and Emilie, please stand and receive not only the warmest welcome of the Assembly but our appreciation for their granddaughter's dedicated service to this Assembly.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by 20 residents of Morinville, 186 residents of Wetaskiwin-Camrose, and 52 residents of Calgary. The petitioners are asking the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to urge the government to introduce legislation "to allow Alberta health professionals to opt out of those medical procedures that offend a tenet of their religion, or their belief that human life is sacred."

head: **Reading and Receiving Petitions**

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that the petition I presented yesterday, Wednesday, May 2, regarding Stockwell Day's defamation litigation be now read and received.

THE CLERK:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to ensure that Mr. Stockwell Day is made personally liable for any funds required to settle his defamation litigation and that no public funds are used for this purpose.

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

DR. TAFT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would request that the petition that I submitted yesterday be read.

Thank you.

THE CLERK:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to ensure that Mr. Stockwell Day is made personally liable for any funds required to settle his defamation litigation and that no public funds are used for this purpose.

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

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

Thank you.

THE CLERK:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to ensure that Mr. Stockwell Day is made personally liable for any funds required to settle his defamation litigation and that no public funds are used for this purpose.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Solicitor General.

Bill 9

Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2001

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 9, being the Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2001.

This bill will streamline award processes of the financial benefit program and focus resources on innocent victims of violent crime in Alberta. Bill 9 extends the time limit from one to two years for victims applying for a financial award and grants increased authority to the program to dismiss frivolous claims.

[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a first time]

Bill 10

Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2001

MR. CENAIKO: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise and introduce Bill 10, the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2001.

The Traffic Safety Act itself was passed in 1999 but not yet proclaimed. The 2001 amendment will improve the existing act and make it ready for implementation in 2002. Highlights of the changes include the establishment of an administrative licence suspension process for new drivers under the graduated driver licensing program relating to zero alcohol tolerance; fine-tuning of the Alberta administrative licence suspension program by adding an immediate 24-hour suspension for persons providing a breath sample of over .08 or for failure to provide a breath sample. This is in addition to the current AALS program already in place. Other technical and administrative changes are also included to enhance the current legislation. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be able to introduce these amendments to the Traffic Safety Act.

[Motion carried; Bill 10 read a first time]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 10 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

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

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table with the Assembly this afternoon five copies of The Lobbyist Final Report, dealing with WCB reform, done by a Calgary injured worker, Allan Jobson. This man makes a big difference in the lives of many injured workers by assisting them with their WCB process gratis.

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got three tablings today. The first one is a letter that I received from Mr. Darrell Park, a retired geologist who lives in Bragg Creek, Alberta, expressing serious concerns about the proposed forest management agreement with Spray Lakes Sawmills giving "this company sweeping rights to the timber" covering the reserve areas and also about the future of Bighorn wildland park.

The second tabling, Mr. Speaker, is the appropriate number of copies of the government of Alberta news release dated May 29, 1997, regarding the Tupper report recommendations.

The third tabling, Mr. Speaker, is a letter dated March 9, 2001, from Mr. Brian Tobin, the federal Minister of Industry, addressed to Ms Susan Whelan, chair of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology. This letter deals with the matters pertaining to consultants/lobbyists and their conflicts of interest.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. MASON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have one tabling today. I would like to table five copies of a report entitled Losing Ground: The Slow Decline of Workers' Rights and Privileges in Alberta from 1975 to 2000. It was published by the Alberta Federation of Labour and released today.

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

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings today. The first is a letter dated February 2, 1999, from members of the Congress of the United States, and it's addressed to the President of Colombia, President Arango.

The second tabling is an address by President Arango at the 12th presidential summit, that occurred in Lima, Peru.

The third tabling I have today is an article from TIME.com, and it is entitled Defending His Strategy. It is written about President Arango, again.

Thank you.

1:40

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is another in the series I've been tabling to show positive examples of other uses for the Rosedale power plant. This particular tabling is selections from the web site of the Oregon museum of science, showing the conversion of their old power station L into a science centre.

Thanks very much.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Highwood.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a group of 51 senior high school students from across our province who are visiting the Legislature this week for the Forum for Young Albertans. The Forum for Young Albertans is a nonpartisan political learning experience which provides the opportunity for close study of provincial and local politics. Joining this group of enthusiastic young Albertans is Mr. Jason Blair Stolz, executive director of the Forum for Young Albertans. They are seated in the members' gallery this afternoon, and I would ask them to now rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Solicitor General.

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and introduce some individuals who've played an important and instrumental role in the development of Bill 9, the Victims of Crime Amendment Act, which I've just introduced. Cal Wrathall is the director of victims services and co-chair of the review committee. Dennis Willner is the operational manager of the financial benefit program and co-chair of the review committee. Linda Unger and Brenda Young are financial benefit officers with the Alberta Solicitor General. I ask them to rise today and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's truly an honour today to introduce to you and through you I would guess 95 percent of the public gallery, who are from Hazel Cameron elementary school in Vulcan, Alberta. They got on the bus at quarter to 6 this morning, and they're here for Education Week. They're going to tour the Bennett centre tomorrow and have a presentation on trees and forests, which they're studying in their course. With them today are 18 parent helpers; their bus driver, Gordon McLean; and their teachers Toni Garlock and Jenn Garbutt. In the interest of time I'd like to table the names of all the helpers that have come with the students. I've got five copies. I would ask all of them up there to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

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

MR. MAGNUS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure today for me to stand here and introduce to you and through you to Members of this Legislative Assembly two ladies in our members' gallery. One lady is here from California by way of Texas and is quite a student of U.S. politics. She is here for three days and wanted to see how our system operated. Her name is Pat Wirth. The second lady I've known for 50 years, and she is someone that is extremely close to me, my sister, Judy Mills. I would ask that they both stand and receive the warm applause of this House.

MR. CENAIKO: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you stakeholders who have provided valuable support and input to staff from the Department of Transportation. At this time I would like to introduce to the House the following people: Staff Sergeant Kees Kikkert, RCMP, Stony Plain; Constable Glenn Stark from the Edmonton Police Service; Eloise Leckie,

president of People Against Impaired Driving; and Doug Hollands, president of the Alberta Motor Association. I would like to ask these individuals to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. BOUTILIER: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly a very close friend of mine from the constituency of Fort McMurray. Blake Robert was born and raised in Fort McMurray, and he now calls Fort McMurray his home again. He was twice elected as PC Youth's vice-president of organization, north. He's traveled throughout all parts of this province in terms of working with young people. He's here with us today, and it's my pleasure to ask him to rise and receive the warm welcome of all members of the House.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly two fabulous women from the Edmonton-Centre constituency office. The first is a woman whom I pried away from the theatre community. She was a very well-known stage manager; now she's going to manage me. [interjections] She'll do well. That's Betty Hushlak, the new constituency manager for Edmonton-Centre. Also joining her in the public gallery is Sunita Chowdhury. She is our summer placement student, and we welcome her to Edmonton-Centre. I'd ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

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

DR. TAFT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly the summer constituency assistant for Edmonton-Riverview. Her name is Jayne McPhee, and she's seated in the public gallery. Jayne has recently completed her fourth year of political science at the U of A. Her focus has been Canadian government policy and politics. She now has the theory and is looking forward to getting some practical experience. I'd ask Jayne to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's not often I get to rise and introduce guests from Lethbridge-East. I'd like to introduce Stan Klassen this afternoon. He's part of the board of the Chinook health region, but he's also the executive director for the Alberta Irrigation Projects Association and in that role has had a lot of input into the issues that are important to agriculture and southern Alberta. I'd ask Stan to rise and be recognized by the House. He's in the members' gallery.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, before proceeding to Ministerial Statements, might we revert to Reading and Receiving Petitions?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Reading and Receiving Petitions**
(*reversion*)

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

MS GRAHAM: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Further to the report of the Standing Committee on Private Bills, which was concurred in by the Assembly yesterday, I move now that the petitions for private bills presented in the Assembly on Monday, April 30, 2001, now be deemed to be read and received.

head: **Ministerial Statements**

Education Week

DR. OBERG: Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise before you in the middle of Education Week to speak about Alberta's learning system. Each year the province designates a week dedicated to celebrate learning. This year Education Week is April 29 to May 5, and the chosen theme is A World of Opportunity.

I had the privilege this week of attending the opening of the Strathmore storefront school. This school began operation in 1996 with an enrollment of eight students, and as of April 2001 there were 140 students enrolled. Between 60 to 65 percent of the students end up returning to the regular school system. Fifty percent of the graduates have gone on to postsecondary education. These students have overcome their unique personal issues and tragedies that caused them to drop out of the traditional school system.

This did not happen by accident. The Golden Hills school division had the foresight to establish and continue funding this school. The community embraced the concept by providing space and furniture and generally assisting whenever help was needed. But the unsung heroes of the Strathmore storefront school are the principal, Denise Peterson, and her staff. Denise has the compassion and ability to make the school a success, but more importantly, she cares for and about her students 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. She and her staff are providing a world of opportunity for their students on a daily basis.

Mr. Speaker, the many school boards we have like Golden Hills, the many communities we have like Strathmore, the many unsung heroes like Denise Peterson are what makes the world of opportunity for the students of Alberta. As parents and politicians this government and Legislative Assembly thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

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

1:50

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Roman orator and master teacher Quintilian, the source of many of our public education ideas, would be pleased with the theme of Education Week this year. Quintilian firmly believed that schools should open a world of opportunity for students.

Education Week provides an annual opportunity for citizens to celebrate and rededicate themselves to the ideal of public schools, schools that offer excellent programs, schools that are open to all students regardless of their ability or their parents' capacity to pay, schools that are fully funded from the public purse, and schools that play a vital role in the intellectual life of a community.

We are fortunate in Alberta to have widespread support for the work of our schools. In that context our public schools are confidently able to respond to changing conditions and public interests. We have seen their mandate broaden to be much more inclusive, and they are inclusive, Mr. Speaker. Our public system itself includes fully funded Catholic schools. Within our two school systems alternative programs serve a wide range of community, parent, and student interests: the international baccalaureate program, advanced placement programs, a host of languages from French and Ukrainian to Mandarin and Cree, the performing arts, the fine arts, religion-based programs, and even an exclusive girls' school.

Historically, an important extension of our public K to 12 schools has been the development of our public colleges, institutes, and universities. We must ensure that they, too, meet our ideal of offering excellent programs accessible to all qualified Albertans and sustained by adequate, long-term public funds. The Official Opposition will continue to make proposals and to measure the government's performance with these ideals in mind.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: **Oral Question Period**

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

Lobbyist Registry

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Premier. Is it the policy of this government that free and open access to government is an important matter of public interest and that lobbying public officeholders is a legitimate activity?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, relative to the first component of the question, yes, this government is open and accessible. As a matter of fact, it's a fundamental policy of this government to have an open-door policy so we can hear the legitimate concerns of our constituents.

Now, relative to the issue of lobbyists, I guess everyone who approaches government is a lobbyist in one way, shape, or form. Very seldom do people approach government without wanting something. Mind you, there was an exception yesterday when the Capital regional health authority held a luncheon to, believe it or not, thank the government for all it has done to bolster health care in this province.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: is it also not the policy of this government that it is desirable that public officeholders and the public be able to know who is attempting to influence government and that free and open access to government should not be impeded?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, it is not impeded. You know, I have probably on average three, four meetings a day in my office with constituents, representatives of various institutions, some for-profits and some not-for-profits, all wanting to discuss an issue and in many cases wanting something from the government. It's the policy of this government to maintain an open door to hear from all of our constituents on matters that concern them.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Premier agrees with these four basic principles of open and transparent government, then I would ask him: why is it that he's opposed to a lobbyist registry for Alberta where Albertans will know individuals who are being paid to get influence to the government?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member now alludes to paid lobbyists, people who are paid specifically to lobby the government on behalf of organizations or individuals. It's not fair of the hon. member to say that I am opposed. What I have said to the media is that there has been no call for a lobbyist registry in this province. I don't get any cards and letters and phone calls on this particular issue.

But I will tell the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition that we will have the hon. Minister of Government Services revisit this particular issue, find out what's being done in other provinces, the expense involved, how much of a bureaucracy has to be created to undertake a lobbyist registry, and in light of the openness and the accountability of this government, if one in fact is needed.

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

DR. NICOL: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate the Premier on that suggestion. Given that that was my next question, I'd like to just basically pass my question. He did a very good job of committing to that kind of public scrutiny.

THE SPEAKER: Well, then, we'll move to the third Official Opposition main question. But before doing that, we'll recognize that today is the anniversary of the birth of the Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Premier. Given that it is a requirement that donors to political parties are listed in public documents, why not have those companies or individuals paid to lobby MLAs directly also made public through a lobbyist registry?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think I've already answered those questions. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition asked ostensibly the same question.

I reiterate and repeat that this has not been an issue. I don't get a lot of cards and letters and phone calls on this particular matter, the reason being that we are an open and accessible government and the whole issue of paid lobbyists simply has not been an issue. It has not been before this caucus, this government. It has never been raised, at least not in the past five years. The last time this issue was raised was the result of the Tupper report in 1997.

Relative to the Conflicts of Interest Act and recommendations in that act with respect to lobbyists, I will have the hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General respond, because there is a requirement in that act, I believe, for a review of the situation within five years.

MR. HANCOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's essentially right. The Conflicts of Interest Act was brought in in this province and provided for an automatic review every five years. The first review, I believe, resulted in what's called the Tupper report, and that was dealt with by this House in 1997. I presume that the next five-year review would be coming up fairly shortly, 1997 being about four years ago. So it is up for review. Also, as the hon. Premier has indicated, he's asked the Minister of Government Services to review the efficacy of registries across the country.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you very much. Also to the Premier. I appreciate that he's undertaken to review or research, but given that the Tupper report recommendations were in fact not fully implemented by this government, I'm asking now if the Premier is willing to establish a lobbyist registry.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I will repeat what I said earlier. We will

look into the situation. Again, this has not been an issue. Now, there has been in recent days some lobbying going on to have us bring about a lobbyist registry. The Liberals are lobbying; the media are lobbying. No one else is lobbying, but because we have some people lobbying, we will look at the whole issue of lobbyists.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

2:00

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask now if the Premier is willing to fully implement the recommendations of the Tupper report.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, again, we said that we would review this particular situation. There is nothing to compel government to accept all or any recommendations contained in any report. As I understand it, many of the recommendations in the Tupper report were accepted. Some were rejected. That is a matter for government to decide: what recommendations we're going to accept and what recommendations we're going to reject.

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

Conflict of Interest Guidelines

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Tupper report on integrity in government in Alberta strongly recommended that legislated conflicts of interest rules govern the conduct not only of elected members but also appointed officials such as the chairs of provincial agencies. Four years ago in its response to the Tupper report the government rejected this important recommendation. My questions are to the Premier. Given the enormous power wielded by senior appointed officials, how can the government justify not having a legislated code of ethics in place to govern their conduct, as recommended by the Tupper report?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out earlier, there is a provision in the Conflicts of Interest Act that requires a five-year review of the act, and since the leader of the third party is also now on the lobbying bandwagon, we will look into that as well.

DR. PANNU: Well, Mr. Speaker, if the Premier is promising that he is going to undertake a serious review of it, I will forgo asking the next two questions. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Heritage Savings Trust Fund

MR. VANDERBURG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is not about lobbyists. It's to the Minister of Revenue. During our recent campaign door-knocking in my constituency I found that there was a real sense that the Alberta heritage savings trust fund has been loaned out and that there's virtually no money left in it for a rainy day and that it, in fact, has been squandered. I know that between 1977 and '82 six provinces borrowed money from the Alberta heritage savings trust fund: Manitoba, Quebec, Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island. How many loans from these provinces and their corporations are outstanding on the Alberta heritage savings trust fund books today?

MR. MELCHIN: Given the goodwill nature of our Legislative Assembly this afternoon, this is a tremendous time to tell the great story of the heritage fund.

THE SPEAKER: Actually, hon. minister, it isn't. This is the question period.

MR. MELCHIN: I'd be honoured to answer the question.

In fact, you know, the Alberta heritage savings trust fund is not squandered at all. It actually has over \$12.2 billion of real money. This month of May is actually the 25th anniversary since the creation of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund, and I would like to assure all Albertans that this fund has been there and will be there for all Albertans and their benefit in the future.

With respect to his particular question on the loans, there were a number of loans that were given out starting back in the 1970s. The last loan was in 1982. We have had over \$1.9 billion loaned to various provinces over that period of time. We have received on an average over 12.5 percent interest rate return on all of those loans, no missed payments, and the last one was repaid just this past December from the province of Nova Scotia. So all of those loans as of December of 2000 have now been repaid.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. VANDERBURG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a newly appointed member to the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Committee, can the minister tell me in his wisdom: is there a mechanism in that fund to ensure that fair returns are returned to Albertans?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. MELCHIN: Thank you. To the hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne. This fund has actually performed exceptionally well over the past few years. It's actually averaged over 7.9 percent return over the last three years. It has quite a diversified portfolio: short- and long-term investments, equities, bonds, Canadian and international investment. It has a very diversified portfolio and is benchmarked against a number of well-known indices in Canada and the United States and throughout the world. This portfolio in its benchmark, be it in the bonds, be it in the equities, on average has outperformed all of the benchmarking over the past number of years.

MR. VANDERBURG: Mr. Speaker, my final question to the same minister. This government presently has \$6.9 billion in debt. Is there a way that we can use our heritage savings trust fund to pay this debt down?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. MELCHIN: Thank you. That as well as many other ideas have been suggested for use of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund. In 1995, actually, that was put in a survey to all Albertans: "What would you have us do with that fund? Should it be liquidated? Should it be used to pay down the debt? Or should we retain it?" Overwhelmingly Albertans have said that they would wish that we retain that fund and that its emphasis be turned from not just investment in capital projects but to maximize its return over the long term. That's precisely what this government has done over the last number of years. It has followed the advice of all Albertans to maximize its return and ensure that it is there for the future.

Thank you.

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

Calgary Regional Health Authority

DR. TAFT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The chief medical officer of the Calgary regional health authority is paid over \$240,000 annually by the authority to act as senior manager of medical services in Calgary. As a result, he has extensive access to information that is not generally available and has substantial influence over the delivery of medical services including contracting out. Yet a search of corporate documents today shows that members of his immediate family, including his wife, own a substantial share in a corporation that has contracts with the CRHA worth over \$1 million. To the Premier: is it the policy of this government that this kind of arrangement is acceptable?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, there are conflict of interest guidelines for regional health authorities. They're very clear, and they have to be followed. If there is deemed to be a conflict and if there is evidence that can be produced to show conclusively that there is a conflict, then the RHA is compelled to take appropriate action to make sure that that conflict ceases.

DR. TAFT: Mr. Speaker, for the record, is it the position of the Premier that the conflict of interest policies of the Calgary regional health authority are adequate?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I believe them to be adequate, but here's what I would suggest. I would suggest that the hon. member file or lodge an official complaint asking for an investigation, certainly in concurrence with the rules of conflict of interest as it relates to the Calgary regional health authority, and see if in fact there is a conflict.

2:10

DR. TAFT: Mr. Speaker, in fact such information has been brought to the attention of the Ombudsman, of the Attorney General,* and of others. Where now should this issue be brought?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm not quite sure of the process for lodging such a complaint or having an investigation into the particular allegation. Perhaps the hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General can shed some light on what course of action the hon. member might take.

MR. HANCOCK: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that the hon. Premier indicated precisely what needs to be done. If there's an allegation of conflict of interest with respect to a matter before the Calgary regional health authority, that is the first place that the complaint should be taken: to the Calgary regional health authority to ask them to investigate pursuant to their conflict of interest guidelines.

If there's information brought to the attention of my office – and I'm not aware that it has been, but I would accept the indication that it's been sent to my office – we will certainly look at it and refer it, as I do with any allegation of that nature that would be brought to the attention of my office, to our special prosecutions section to look at and refer to police if there's a criminal investigation involved or to look into it if it deals with an issue which we should be dealing with through the special prosecutions. But the first place for a conflict of interest allegation to be raised is with the authority in which the allegation resides, and in this case that would appear to be the Calgary regional health authority.

Provincial Fiscal Policies

MR. VANDERMEER: Mr. Speaker, in the days following Budget 2001, as I've met and talked with my constituents, some have raised

concerns about increased spending and whether or not it is affordable. My questions are for the Minister of Finance. Is the \$21.6 billion in spending that was announced in Budget 2001 sustainable?

MRS. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, I won't go through the entire budget debate, but I do believe that what's important for Albertans to remember is that the \$21.6 billion that is being expended this year is actually broken into two components, the first being the \$18 billion for ongoing program spending that our government has supported, and it was the wish of Albertans to see that program spending maintained.

Second is the onetime spending, and it is one time. It's this year only. It's the \$3.2 billion that is being spent through Infrastructure to play catch-up and deal with some of the pressing needs that have been on the list for a number of years. This year we were able to accommodate this because of the additional operating cash flow that we were fortunate enough to experience. An example for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning is that we are going to deal with the long-awaited completion of the Anthony Henday road, that I have heard about, quite frankly, as an MLA since 1989. So we're delighted that the community of Edmonton is going to have that ring road completed through this onetime spending, but it won't be there next year.

MR. VANDERMEER: Mr. Speaker, also to the Minister of Finance: is there any way this government could reduce its current planned spending levels?

MRS. NELSON: Well, actually, Mr. Speaker, that would be a Finance minister's dream come true. We are always encouraging departments: don't spend money where you don't have to; don't spend it because it's allocated; in fact, turn it back in lapsed dollars.

I have to say that in this up-and-coming business planning process I have asked departments and colleagues, when they go through the business planning process, to go inside and make sure that they focus on what are core elements for government. If you're bringing forward new ideas, you have to be pretty much prepared to take the old ones out so that it's not a piling-up. Program spending must be contained. It cannot go up. It has to come down or at least, at the bare minimum, be maintained.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. VANDERMEER: No further questions.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry, followed by the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

Government Aircraft

MR. BONNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are to the Minister of Infrastructure. How many airplanes does the government own or use or lease for its exclusive use?

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, he'll have to repeat the question. I couldn't understand what it was when he said it.

THE SPEAKER: Well, the question was addressed to the hon. Minister of Transportation, and the hon. Minister of Infrastructure responded. Sorry; if hon. members can't hear, they had all better lower their temperatures and start listening. That's their job at this time.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

*See p. 358, left col., para. 11

MR. BONNER: I'll repeat the question for the minister. How many airplanes does the government own or lease for its exclusive use?

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, we currently have three King Airs and the Dash within the government. We also have now I believe it's four water bombers, that are used for forest fire fighting.

MR. BONNER: To the same minister: given that a key strategy identified in the Department of Infrastructure's business plan is to "ensure government aircraft are allocated according to established priorities," what are the priorities for the use of those aircraft?

MR. LUND: Well, Mr. Speaker, the ones that the government owns, the King Airs and the Dash, are used extensively in things like air ambulance. They're used in transporting personnel for forest fire fighting. They're used for the Executive Council. The Lieutenant Governor uses them. There's a host of areas. In fact, they're very, very cost efficient when it comes to moving personnel around, and within the ministries the staff of the ministries use the aircraft. This is a big province, long distances, and this is a very, very efficient way of moving personnel around the province.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. BONNER: Thank you. To the same minister, Mr. Speaker: will the minister release copies of the passenger manifests of flight records from 1997 to the present for all government planes?

MR. LUND: Well, Mr. Speaker, this has been going on for years. These manifests have been available for I don't know how many years now. I believe it was even maybe when the hon. Speaker was the minister responsible for aircraft that he started to release those. So it's many years ago.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Union Organizing Practices

MR. HORNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently a constituent of mine raised concerns about an organizing tactic normally practised in the construction sector called salting. Union supporters or members apply to nonunion jobs in an attempt to organize their workers. Once the union is established, the new employees leave, and employers are often left with union contracts they can't afford. My question is to the hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment. Can the minister tell us if this practice of salting is legal?

THE SPEAKER: That's a legal interpretation here, and you know what the rule is.

The hon. minister.

MR. DUNFORD: Well, salting is a recognized tactic that is used within the union movement and within the construction sector, as the hon. member has pointed out. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, a practice such as salting is legal not only in Alberta but in all jurisdictions within Canada. It certainly falls within the area of the basic human right of an employee to either bargain individually or to decide to bargain collectively.

Now, whether or not the intent of the writers of legislation contemplated such a tactic on the part of the union movement would be a matter of research and probably further debate. But in answer

to the direct question, salting is a legal methodology in this jurisdiction.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

2:20

MR. HORNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is to the same minister. Can employers ask job applicants whether or not they belong to or support a union?

MR. DUNFORD: They do ask such questions with a great deal of risk involved. If they decide to ask the question prior to hiring and then they don't hire the person, under the terms of the Labour Relations Code that employee has the right then to bring an unfair labour practice charge with the Labour Relations Board against that employer. Now, if in fact the employee has been hired and then they ask that question and it's in relationship to perhaps ongoing pension availability and those sorts of benefit type of things, then it is not illegal. But I would want to caution any employer involved in a recruitment plan that if he's going to ask that type of question, he has to be very, very careful what he does with the answer.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. HORNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is to the same minister. Is there any appeal process that an employer can use if they have been affected by this practice?

MR. DUNFORD: Yes, there is, Mr. Speaker. How it works out is a practical matter. When the union, perhaps having used the availability of so-called salted employees, applies for a certification of that union, there is going to be a determination of who are the employees, then, that are entitled to vote on that certificate application. At that particular point in time, if the employer wishes to object to the names that would actually be on the list of those eligible to vote, that would be the time to bring it up. The Labour Relations Board would then make a determination, as they have the right to do under the Labour Relations Code, and of course the majority then of those that vote will determine whether or not a certification goes ahead or whether in fact it is defeated.

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

Teachers' Salaries

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. "I can't get involved . . . as the government in the negotiations directly." These are the words of the Premier in this Assembly on April 13, 1999. Yet through the budget and musings outside the Assembly the Premier has inserted the government into the middle of teacher/school board collective bargaining. My questions are to the Premier. Why has the policy of noninvolvement in negotiations been changed with respect to teachers?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, again I repeat what the Minister of Learning has said a number of times in this Legislative Assembly, and that is that the 6 percent line item is there to give some assurances to teachers that that is the least they will get. There is the flexibility also within the budget for various school jurisdictions to negotiate that amount up if they so desire or to use those dollars in other areas as those areas pertain to education.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, I notice that today is Thursday,

May 3, and the estimate designated by the Official Opposition for discussion today is Learning. Perhaps some of these questions might be held for later.

The hon. member.

DR. MASSEY: Yes. These are policy questions, Mr. Speaker.

My second question is to the Premier. Were teaching contract negotiators consulting on this change in government policy?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, if there was consultation, I wasn't involved. I'll defer to the hon. minister.

DR. OBERG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The most important thing to remember here is that there have not been any changes in the negotiation with teachers. There is a minimum amount that will be given to school boards to pass on for teachers. The negotiation of the contracts will still be between the ATA locals and the school boards involved.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier. How does the government decide which sets of negotiations merit government interference?

MR. KLEIN: I don't know – that's an interesting question – because we don't interfere, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Minister of Learning in conjunction with the Minister of Finance and all of their colleagues in this government are doing the teachers a favour by saying that a line item in the budget will be included to guarantee, to ensure notwithstanding everything else but as it pertains to the funding of Learning: you will get at least a 6 percent increase.

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

Workers' Rights

MR. MASON: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. In the report that I tabled today entitled *Losing Ground: The Slow Decline of Workers' Rights and Privileges in Alberta 1975-2000*, it indicates that the real average weekly wage in Alberta has declined from \$681.97 in 1975 to \$642.81 in real, year 2000 dollars, a 5.7 percent drop. To the Premier. How does the Premier explain this drop in the real wages of working people in Alberta?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, again, all reports are, I would suggest, subjective. You know, you can read into those reports what you want to read into those reports. You can assign people to write reports to obtain the conclusions that might be beneficial or might be of interest to a particular cause or organization like the New Democrats. All I know is that relative to quality of life issues in this province and the earnings of Albertans, I don't hear many people complaining. As a matter of fact, we have people moving to this province in droves to take advantage of our economic growth and prosperity.

MR. MASON: Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. Why is the Premier unfamiliar with the real wages in this province?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I am not unfamiliar with the real wages in this province. I am a wage earner. The hon. member is a wage earner. It doesn't look like he's suffering, you know. Most people

in this province are wage earners, and I get the impression that most wage earners in this province are very, very happy with the money they earn.

MR. MASON: Mr. Speaker, given that the report also shows that unionized workers earn on average 18.3 percent more than non-unionized workers, will the Premier tell the Assembly why Alberta labour legislation makes it more difficult to organize workers than in any other province in this country?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I don't know that to be true, and to shed some more light on it, I'll have the hon. minister respond.

MR. DUNFORD: Well, it's quite a statement. Of course we were talking earlier about lobbying, and I guess this is just another example of it. Under the provisions of the Labour Relations Code any employee in this province that wishes to join a union, there is a process in place. There is ample opportunity for union movement to become certified. The reason that Alberta enjoys such a low union percentage isn't the fact that people can't get organized; it's that they don't want to be organized.

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

Seniors' Benefits

MR. MASZYK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the hon. Minister of Seniors. I have spoken with seniors who are concerned about the obstacles they face due to the high cost of basic necessities; for example, rent, food, clothing, and the little things as they occur. When can seniors expect to see the increases in funding to them that were announced in the new budget?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. WOLOSZYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I might start by saying that Alberta has the best program in the country for needy seniors. However, having said that, there is a significant number of seniors who are above the thresholds yet their income is low, where there's a great amount of concern. We have tried to address these special-needs people in this year's budget by increasing the area of the special-needs program. We'll be asking for increases in the special needs also. As well, there is 28 some odd million dollars being directed towards improving seniors' housing. Between the shelter components and the Alberta seniors' benefit programs, Mr. Speaker, we touch about one out of three seniors in this province with respect to aiding them in shelters.

2:30

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. MASZYK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One final question. The increase in funding that they're going to receive: when will they see this increase?

MR. WOLOSZYN: Mr. Speaker, we normally adjust the seniors' programs on July 1. In addition to the 10 to 14 percent increases that seniors in the program received last year, we're looking at an increase of about 4 percent on July 1 of this year to the people on the program. I might say, Mr. Speaker, that this is anticipating a 2 percent increase in the cost-of-living index. We're trying to stay ahead of that.

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

Boilers Safety Association Annual Report

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently the Minister of Municipal Affairs presented to the Legislative Assembly here the 1999 annual report of the Alberta Boilers Safety Association. This report indicated that 10,805 new vessels were produced and inspected in Alberta's fabrication shops, compared to 14,420 items the year before. My first question is to the Minister of Economic Development. Given that this report indicates a 25 percent decline in pressure vessels manufactured in Alberta shops, how is the Department of Economic Development ensuring that Alberta manufacturers are treated fairly while competing for all the work currently that is going on in Alberta?

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. NORRIS: Thank you. I'll decline that to the Minister of Justice, unless I misunderstood the question.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. member, your second question, please.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Economic Development: is it the department's policy to receive quarterly reports from all construction projects in Alberta regarding purchase and contracts awarded by location, divided into the following economic sectors: aboriginal, local, provincial, Canadian, and international?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. NORRIS: Thank you, and I apologize, Mr. Speaker and hon. members. I misunderstood the first question.

I will take that under advisement. I'd like to look at the report, and I'll get an answer back to the hon. member as soon as possible.

MR. MacDONALD: Again, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Economic Development: what policy is the department taking to protect qualified Alberta fabricators from unfair competition from South Korean manufacturers, who are dumping in this province pressure vessels and heat exchangers?

Thank you.

MR. NORRIS: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, not having seen the report he's referring to, I'll look to read it and get an answer to him. I would comment that Alberta has the best business climate in all the world. Our net migration continues to rise. Business increases are at an unprecedented level. So I will get an answer back to the hon. member but remind him that Alberta is the place to be.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Energy Conservation Initiatives

MR. LORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today through you is to the hon. Minister of Infrastructure. The city of Calgary was able to identify and is now proceeding with energy conservation initiatives within city-owned or city-associated buildings, initiatives that are expected to reap \$100 million in benefits just in the next 10 years alone as well as meet an estimated 50 percent of the entire city

of Calgary's Kyoto commitments on greenhouse gas reduction. It was able to do this without incurring any major capital expenditures through performance contracting, in which all costs are paid for up front by the contractors and then recovered by them entirely through energy savings experience. My question is: has your department fully explored all opportunities to undertake performance contracting initiatives within all provincially owned buildings?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. LUND: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we have taken advantage of the very same type of contracting that the hon. member refers to. As a matter of fact, we started out with buildings that we own in excess of a thousand square metres. We currently are 50 percent complete. This has been done through contracting. The contractors will in fact get their money out of the contracts through the savings, and it's basically in the five- to seven-year time frame. We are also now moving forward to complete the whole project, getting into the areas with less than a thousand square metres, and we hope to have that completed within the next year.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. LORD: Thank you. My first supplemental question is to the same minister. Is there a report which could be tabled quantifying estimated greenhouse gas reductions and energy conservation dollars savings that have been produced thus far from the province's initiatives?

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member brought up another area that we've been very active in. As a matter of fact, it started back in about 1995, and that's looking at our greenhouse gas emissions. It's very interesting to note that we have reduced the amount of emissions to some 422 kilotonnes last year. Our target for reduction was down to 464 kilotonnes, so you can see that we're well ahead of the target. As a matter of fact, since 1990 we've reduced our greenhouse gas emissions by some 19.8 percent. The energy savings have gone – as an example, in 1995 we used 1,909 megajoules, and last year we used only 1,812 within our enterprises. So in fact there is very good progress being made.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. LORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental to the same minister. I'm wondering if the minister's department has developed a public relations campaign or effort or nominated employees or departments for awards to promote and highlight the provincial government's considerable accomplishments in this area.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. LUND: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure that in fact we as a government have sold our accomplishments as well as we could have, because quite frankly the government has led the way in conservation and the reduction in greenhouse gases, as was called for by the Kyoto agreement. As a matter of fact, when we started in 1995, what we did was set up a committee that looked at all of the operations within government and took action where we knew there was a payback within three years. That, of course, has been completed, and now we're moving on to the more difficult areas to reduce our consumption and reduce the emissions.

National DNA Data Bank

MR. CENAIKO: Mr. Speaker, the recent provincial budget con-

tained \$1.1 million in funding for the DNA data bank. I'm aware that the data bank came into existence with the proclamation of the federal government's DNA Identification Act last spring. My questions are to the hon. Solicitor General. Is the DNA data bank now available to policing services and agencies in Alberta?

MRS. FORSYTH: Mr. Speaker, the national DNA data bank is in place as we speak. This data bank contains DNA obtained from crime scenes and DNA profiles of adult and young offenders who meet specific criteria. A three-year agreement between Alberta and Canada regarding biological casework analysis is in place, and Alberta police services are accessing the DNA data bank now. DNA samples are being taken from crime scenes in Alberta and from offenders according to the regulations set out. The data bank is a very important investigation tool and is strongly supported by the police in this province.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

2:40

MR. CENAIKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the hon. Solicitor General: how will the \$1.1 million in provincial government funding be used?

MRS. FORSYTH: Mr. Speaker, under the agreement between Alberta and the federal government Canada has paid the costs of DNA biological casework analysis for the past year. Starting in 2001-2002 Alberta will pay 55 percent of the biological casework analysis conducted for police services in the province. The federal government is responsible for the balance of the cost. The cost-sharing agreement is consistent with the way costs are being handled in other jurisdictions, and we anticipate that the cost to Albertans, as the member has indicated, will be \$1.1 million per year. The provincial funding will permit over 400 DNA samples to be collected and examined in Alberta.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. CENAIKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question to the Solicitor General: have we obtained any results regarding the DNA data bank?

MRS. FORSYTH: The answer is yes, Mr. Speaker. In March of this year Alberta received its first hit in the data bank. An offender was convicted of sexual assault in Brooks. The DNA bank registered a match with the offender's DNA against an unsolved sexual assault case in Stony Plain. We're pleased that the project is working. Again, the government supports the police services in this initiative.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, I have exhausted the list of hon. members who wanted to participate today, but just a couple of points of clarification arising out of business yesterday.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, you asked for clarification of a point.

Calgary Regional Health Authority (continued)

DR. TAFT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand to clarify one of my statements. I stated that the issue on conflict of interest in the Calgary regional health authority had been brought to the attention of the authority itself, the Ombudsman, and the Attorney General. I meant to say Auditor General.* I will now see that it's brought to the attention of the Attorney General. Thank you.

Speaker's Ruling **Members' Apology**

THE SPEAKER: Yesterday afternoon in the business of the House there was an exchange between two hon. members, and towards the end of the day the chair called upon the hon. Minister of Economic Development to deal with part of it. The chair now calls on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands to deal with the remaining portion of the matter.

MR. MASON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the hon. Minister of Economic Development stood in the House and apologized for some words that he directed in our direction. I appreciate that, and I accept the apology.

I would also like to apologize in turn, Mr. Speaker, to him and to the Assembly for some intemperate language that I used in response.

THE SPEAKER: May I say thank you to both hon. members, who I believe are honourable.

Hon. members, might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: Introduction of Guests (reversion)

MR. MASKELL: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly during Education Week three of Alberta's finest teachers. These three teachers are 2001 excellence in teaching awards finalists. They teach at Victoria School of Performing and Visual Arts, known by many as Vic Comp. These three outstanding teachers are: Gail Annett, who teaches grade 2 primary years international baccalaureate students; Kelly Chernischenko, who is a mathematics teacher to middle years international baccalaureate students and is also an excellent basketball coach; and Wendy Sorenson, who is a science teacher to middle years international baccalaureate students and is a counselor. These three teachers make learning a joy for their students. Would my three colleagues please stand – they are standing – and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, in 30 seconds from now we'll call upon the first of four hon. members.

head: Members' Statements

North American Occupational Safety and Health Week

REV. ABBOTT: Mr. Speaker, May 6 to 12 is North American Occupational Safety and Health, or NAOSH, Week. NAOSH Week focuses the attention of employers, employees, and the general public in Canada, the United States, and Mexico on the importance of preventing illness and injury in the workplace. This year's theme is Prevention Is the Cure.

In Alberta workplace safety is more important than ever. Our workforce has expanded from 1 million in 1990 to 1.7 million today, and we were short 30,000 workers in the province last year. This means that we have very few veteran workers to be hired, and many new inexperienced workers are entering our job sites.

Inexperienced workers are far more likely to be injured on the job. Forty percent of all lost-time claims come from workers in their first year at a job. Last year for the first time in a decade our lost-time claim rate went up. That fact should concern every member of this House and also every Albertan. We know that a major part of this increase was caused by the inexperience of many workers. In order

*See p. 354, left col., para 5

to reduce the lost-time claim rate, we must make sure that our employers focus on accident prevention and take extra care with new workers and employees. Accidents can be prevented. Care and training is the cure.

NAOSH Week is an excellent opportunity to reinforce and strengthen our commitment to occupational safety and health by increasing public awareness. To achieve good results in occupational safety and health prevention, we need corporate executives who exercise leadership and responsibility, employers who give their full support and commitment, occupational safety and health committees who demonstrate their effectiveness, and governments that exercise vigilance.

Through NAOSH Week we are striving to increase employers', employees', and the public's understanding of the benefits of investment in occupational safety and health, to raise awareness of the role and contribution of safety and health professionals, to reduce workplace injuries and illnesses by encouraging new safety and health activities, and to make information available to employers and workers so they can make their work sites safer.

Thank you.

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

National Composting Awareness Week

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak about national composting week and the importance of resource conservation. Composting is, of course, about dealing with our leftovers and waste.

Long before hip and trendy urbanites began building compost bins behind their homes, farmers were composting. They knew the value of putting the leftovers and waste products back into the land. Composting has become a way of life for many in this province. In 1998 Alberta had 84 of the 344 centralized composting facilities in the country.

The Alberta Agriculture Research Institute has a number of composting research projects that involve large industry and small operators. These projects look at improving the quality of the waste products coming into the process as well as recovering gases and developing markets for the final product. There are significant commercial benefits as well as positive impacts on air and water quality from this type of research. Here in Edmonton 70 percent of the residential waste is diverted from the landfill because of the city's state-of-the-art composting facility and related programs.

As we take time to consider the importance of composting, it is equally important to remember the importance of conservation. The most positive impact we can have on the quality of our air, water, and land is to conserve and reduce the amounts of resources we use. Whether those resources are metal and wood, oil and gas, or water, we have a responsibility to use only what we need. Sometimes we may find that we are using more of something than we really need because of its inexpensive cost. While the purchase price of the final product may be low, we have a duty to consider the environmental impact of all of our purchases.

National composting week recognizes the importance of dealing with products at the end of the cycle, but it is equally important to be responsible with what comes into the cycle at the start.

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

Excellence in Teaching Awards

MR. MASKELL: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak about teachers during Education Week, about our teachers

who contribute so much within the school community and in the larger community in which they reside. An important way to recognize teachers is through this government's excellence in teaching awards program. Through this program nearly 5,500 teachers have been nominated for the awards. Whether or not a teacher becomes a finalist, they're honoured by the recognition through nomination by students, parents, and colleagues.

2:50

Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize the four finalists from the constituency of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, the Hon. David Hancock. The teachers are Shelley Lynn Hardie, Lansdowne school; Linda Margaret Jackson, Brander Gardens elementary school; Charlotte Marlene McKellar, Lansdowne school; Dolores Mae Whiting, Lansdowne school.

I also want to recognize five teachers from the constituency of the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, the Hon. Mark Norris: Yvette Aline Casavant, St. Martha school; Karlene Rae Chorney, S. Bruce Smith school; Linda Marie Parr, S. Bruce Smith school; Christine Carol Sankey, Our Lady of the Prairies elementary school; and Janice Lynn Smith, Lymburn school.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate all of the nominees, the finalists, and the 20 teachers who will be honoured in Calgary this Saturday. I'm especially pleased to be able to congratulate the 47 finalists from the city of Edmonton. I would like to table this list of 47 Edmonton teacher finalists.

Thank you.

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

School Board Trustees

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This Education Week I would like to acknowledge the hard work of Alberta's school trustees. School boards have come a long way from the early days in our province, when they were the very first locally elected governance body in most districts. Now they are responsible for multimillion dollar budgets, programs that no one ever imagined would be part of a public school curriculum, and classroom accommodation problems that would amaze the stewards of those early one-room schools.

Changes in the past number of years have made life difficult for school boards. They've been subjected to change that has weakened their authority. They've had their boundaries change, enlarging many into huge geographic areas. They have lost the ability in any meaningful way to levy taxes for local needs. They can no longer independently hire their own superintendent. In spite of these changes, outstanding men and women continue to serve the community in trustee positions. Once elected, they work in the best interests of our children, and they make an enormous difference.

A recent example is the part they played in working with teachers, superintendents, and school business officials to create a vision and an agenda for public education in the province. This hallmark document sets out the goal of educating all children well and then details the conditions that must prevail if that goal is to be accomplished. This document and the daily work of trustees have shown that trustees in spite of what has happened to them will continue to be a powerful force in the education of our children.

Horace Mann once feared that school boards would become yes-men instead of watchmen. Alberta school trustees are neither. They are leaders, dedicated men and women determined to take an active part in improving the public schools of this province.

Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, the chair does never, never interfere or interject when members are giving their statements, but at the conclusion I would just like to point out to hon. members again that it is really not appropriate and within our rules to basically individually name hon. members by name. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, who is a distinguished teacher, certainly knows that in the environment of education one called the educator puts out the message and hopefully the student will absorb the message. This is not to suggest for a moment that this is the relationship, but it's just metaphoric if nothing else.

Just so that there is not an inundation of calls coming to the office in the next few days, the chair would also like to point out that in addition to being Education Week, National Composting Awareness Week, Alberta Library Week, and National Summer Safety Week, which have all been mentioned by hon. members, this part of May is also still part of the Easter Seal Mail Campaign, also part of Girl Guides Sandwich Cookie Weeks, also part of Hire-A-Student Office Openings. May is also Asian Pacific Heritage Month, Better Speech and Hearing Month, Cystic Fibrosis Month, MedicAlert Month, Motorcycle and Bicycle Safety Awareness Month, Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month, Red Shield Appeal Month, Child Find's Green Ribbon of Hope Campaign, and Light the Way Home Campaign. Arbor Day is May 3, World Press Freedom Day is May 3, the 7th Annual International Pet Adopt-A-Thon goes May 4 to 6, Alberta Search and Rescue Day is May 5, and all Albertans will relish in joining the Annual Highway Clean-Up on May 5 as well.

head: **Projected Government Business**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that the government share their projected government House business for next week with us at this time.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday, May 7, under Government Bills and Orders for second reading we anticipate dealing with Bill 8, the Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment Act; Bill 9, the Victims of Crime Amendment Act; and Bill 10, the Traffic Safety Amendment Act. Time permitting, in Committee of the Whole we would deal with Bill 7, the Regional Health Authorities Amendment Act; Bill 2, the Cooperatives Act; and Bill 1, the Natural Gas Price Protection Act. Under address in reply to the Speech from the Throne, it being day 10, the motion to engross and present the address in reply and as per the Order Paper. On Monday at 8 p.m. under Government Bills and Orders in Committee of Supply, day 5 of the supply estimates, the main estimates of the departments of Gaming and Justice, and time permitting in Committee of the Whole on bills 7, 2, and 1 and as per the Order Paper.

Tuesday, May 8, at 4:30 p.m. under Government Bills and Orders for second reading Bill 12, the Farm Implement Amendment Act, 2001; Bill 13, the Farm Implement Dealerships Amendment Act; and Bill 16, the School Amendment Act, all of which are anticipated for introduction for first reading on Monday, and as per the Order Paper. On Tuesday at 8 p.m. under Government Bills and Orders in Committee of Supply the main estimates for International and Intergovernmental Relations and Economic Development, and in Committee of the Whole on bills 7, 2, and 1 and as per the Order Paper.

Wednesday, May 9, at 8 p.m. under Government Bills and Orders in Committee of Supply, as designated, the estimates for Human

Resources, and in Committee of the Whole as per the Order Paper.

On Thursday, May 10, in the afternoon under Government Bills and Orders for third reading supplementary and interim supply bills, bills 5 and 6; Committee of Supply as designated, Children's Services; and thereafter as per the Order Paper.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Okay. We'll call the committee to order.

Bill 5

Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2001

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm happy to have an opportunity to speak to Bill 5, supplementary estimates, at this point in time. We have some serious concerns about the lack of planning within the government's budgetary process. We see before us supplementary estimates asking for significant dollars for the second time in this 2000-2001 year. We believe that the continued resorting to supplementary supply is symptomatic of this government's inability to plan. It's certainly not the way it would have been done in private industry and is a significant issue for us.

Given that we have much other business to deal with this afternoon, specifically the Learning estimates within the budget, I would at this time, Mr. Chairman, ask to adjourn debate on this particular bill.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 6

Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2001

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

3:00

DR. TAFT: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Thank you. I note that this is a bill with a value of \$7.4 billion, and I also note that it appears there is not a single government MLA who has any opinion on spending that large an amount of money. I'm very concerned about that. There is in this bill no mention of objectives for the spending. There are no performance measures. I certainly realize that there will be budget debates that incorporate some of these issues, but frankly those come after the money is approved, as I understand it, and it's like closing the barn doors after the horse has gone.

I do think it's worth reading into the record the percent of a number of the departments' budgets that are being approved here with no meaningful debate whatsoever. For example, we will be through this approving 58.1 percent of the entire annual budget of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. We are approving here, apparently to nobody's particular interest in the Assembly today, 51.9 percent of the Agriculture, Food and Rural Development budget. We are approving a third of the Children's Services budget. We are approving 35 percent of the Community

Development budget. Again, no debates. A quarter of the Economic Development budget.

MR. HANCOCK: A point of order.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Point of order. The Government House Leader.

Point of Order

Allegations against Members

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's unfortunate that I have to raise a point of order for the first time in this session. Under section 23(h), making allegations against members, I think it's entirely inappropriate for the member to use time in debate in the House to suggest that other members are not interested in the debate because they have not had either the opportunity or the inclination to speak in the House on a particular matter. It's totally inappropriate to try on a unilateral basis to put that type of a statement on the record of the House when we have had many different opportunities to speak about the estimates. In this case in particular, we're talking about interim supply, which of course, as every hon. member knows, is supplanted by the main supply, which is what we're dealing with as soon as this debate ends.

So it's quite inappropriate to impute motives or to make allegations against all members of the House that we're not interested in supply and we're not interested in the money that's being spent and allocated by this appropriation bill, and I think he should be asked to withdraw those comments.

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

MS CARLSON: Mr. Chairman, on the point of order, there is no point of order. The Government House Leader is being argumentative in nature. My colleague from Edmonton-Riverview was simply stating the obvious, that on these particular estimates we have not seen the government or other members from the government caucus participate in this debate, and he was stating a fact.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: On the point of order, hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

DR. TAFT: I shall continue, Mr. Chairman.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Did you want to speak on the point of order?

DR. TAFT: No, I won't speak on the point of order. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Well, this is an opportunity for anyone to participate in debate, and that opportunity is provided to everyone. Members have the option of either speaking to any subject or not speaking to that subject, and there are many different stages of the bill at which members can speak. Therefore, I think it is probably inappropriate to generalize such statements for every member of the House. So hopefully you will all take that into consideration before you generalize a statement that impacts every other member of the House.

You may now proceed.

DR. TAFT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I shall continue with some observations, but I'll take the hon. member's comments and the chairman's comments into consideration.

Debate Continued

DR. TAFT: We are approving here over 40 percent of the budget of the Department of Environment, 48.5 percent of the budget of the Department of Finance, 68.5 percent of the annual spending on Infrastructure, 36 percent on International and Intergovernmental affairs, 40 percent on Sustainable Resource Development, and almost 42 percent on Transportation. In my opinion, although I understand how this fits into the budgetary process, for us to be in a situation where we are having to make these approvals is unfortunate, and I hope that we're not in this situation again.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would move that the committee now rise and report progress on bills 5 and 6.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following: bills 5 and 6.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Opposed? So ordered.

head: Committee of Supply

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The chair would like to make a brief statement just so all hon. members are clear on what will occur this afternoon. The Official Opposition has designated the estimates of the Department of Learning for consideration by the Committee of Supply this afternoon. Under paragraph 9 of the House leaders' agreement of April 10, when appropriation bills are considered prior to the calling of the Committee of Supply, the committee shall vote on the estimates of the department it is then considering by 5:10 p.m. The Committee of Supply will then rise and report.

Of course under Standing Order 61(4), when any appropriation Bill has been considered by the Committee of the Whole, the chair is to put a single question on the bill or bills which must be decided without debate or amendment. This must occur at 5:15.

Accordingly, if consideration of the estimates for the Department of Learning is not completed by 5:10 this afternoon, the chair will call the question on the estimates pursuant to the House leaders' agreement, after which the committee will report to the Assembly in time to resolve back to Committee of the Whole to consider the appropriation bills.

head: Main Estimates 2001-2002

Learning

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Learning.

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I will keep this

extremely brief. In accordance with the House leaders' agreement I will not be speaking again to these estimates, and I will be taking the questions that have been asked by the opposition under advisement and will respond to them on a written basis. Therefore I look forward to the questions as they are put forward in the Assembly.

I would say that we are presently voting on an estimate of \$4.8 billion, Mr. Chairman, which represents an increase in the basic K to 12 education system, an increase for the school boards of 8.4 percent, for postsecondaries of 8 percent, and in student finance of adult learning of 22 percent.

Mr. Chairman, I feel that this is an excellent budget, and I look forward to answering the questions that the opposition will pose before us.

Thank you.

3:10

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the minister being willing to respond in writing to the questions that we raise this afternoon.

It is a lot of money. I'm not sure what the calculation would be in terms of how much we're spending per minute on this particular budget item, but it's a very important budget for Albertans and one that affects some of our most valuable citizens, our children and young people.

I'd like to start off with looking at goal 1 on page 273 and to ask for some comments and make some observations about the program there. The strategy is to

develop policy and program responses to recommendations from the Native Education Policy Review that will support the Government of Alberta goal of improving Aboriginal well-being, self reliance and employability.

That's an important goal, Mr. Chairman, and it's coupled with the strategy that follows: "develop a plan to collect Aboriginal student data and monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of programming." I applaud the department for doing this at this time.

I think there has been some very, very unfortunate public airing of the performance of native students in the province. I'm not sure what the motive was for making those achievement measures public, but I do know that the public airing of results when they aren't the best is a disservice to the people who are working to try to make things better. They find it very disheartening to see the results of their work, as hard as they work, made public, and they suffer a kind of criticism from that publication. It makes their work in the classroom and in communities much more difficult. So I'm delighted that the government has seen fit to include this as a strategy and to include it under goal 1, having a high-quality learning environment.

With that I would have a couple of questions. Just how soon will the policy and program responses be available? When can we expect to see them? What programs is the government actually looking at? What specific programs are they looking at in terms of that particular strategy?

The achievement data from aboriginal students I assume will be similar to the achievement data collected on other students in the province. I would ask if it's possible, not just with the aboriginal student data but with achievement results for all students in the province, to get an indication of the performance of female and male students, whether that can be sorted out. I've had a visit from a citizen who's really concerned about national figures and international figures that show the performance of boys lagging far behind that of their female counterparts. I think it would be an important

piece of information to have to see if that is the situation in Alberta, that boys don't perform as well as girls.

What prompted the question to be raised by the visitor was the Rutherford scholarships and his attendance at an awards ceremony where he noted that the number of Rutherford scholarships that were awarded to female students far exceeded those that were awarded to male students. I think it would be an interesting piece of information to have, and it would be a useful piece of information, particularly when we look at native populations. So I'm pleased the project is under way. I look forward to the information.

I wonder, too, just before I leave that, if achievement test data from that population is as important at this point as maybe diagnostic information. I would ask the government if they have considered implementing diagnostic tests that would actually help teachers working with aboriginal children plan programs for those children based on their situation at the beginning of the year instead of what we seem to be into, a cycle of constantly measuring and measuring and measuring at the end of the year. So that would be my question. Have they considered diagnostic tests, and if not, will they in terms of actually helping make a difference to the performance of these youngsters?

I'd like to talk about special education. A strategy here is to "develop and implement an action plan to address the recommendations of the Special Education Review." Special education, I think, Mr. Chairman, really does need some attention. I must have, as many MLAs in the Assembly must have, at least a dozen or 15 really, really difficult cases where I've heard from parents about their concerns with the inability of the school system to meet the needs of their child. Most of them are long tales, tales of parents trying to work with schools, tales of schools trying to provide programs, parents going to the private sector for help, trying to hire their own specialist to help, yet in the end all of it not proving satisfactory in terms of providing programs for their children.

I don't know what can be done. There's a high level of frustration in terms of special-needs programs. We took the opportunity last fall to hold two town halls. One was held in Edmonton, and one was held in Calgary at McDougall Centre. Parents with children with special needs attended those sessions, and it was a listing of the kinds of difficulties that these parents are experiencing with the special-needs programming as it now exists in the province. So any information that we can get in terms of that action plan. Who's going to be involved in it? I would really hope that parents who are having difficulty with special-needs programs would be contacted and would be asked to make a contribution to putting in place that plan. I think it would be worth the time and effort that involving those parents would involve.

I'd like to comment on the evaluation of the results of the class size reduction pilot. I'm not quite sure what it means to evaluate that project. It was \$500,000 that was spent. The results were known before the project was undertaken. It confirmed the research that has been found across the continent, that class size does make a difference. Certainly other things make a difference: the teacher, the number of children you're working with, the kinds of resources, the subject you're working on. Those things all make a difference, but overlaying all of that is class size, and we know it makes a difference.

3:20

I urge the government to come forth with some targets, some idea of where we're going in this province with respect to class size. The Official Opposition later in this session will be introducing a bill to that effect, again to try to keep on the public agenda the issue of class size because it is so important in terms of the achievement of youngsters in our schools. It's one thing we know. A lot of

educational research is not very conclusive, but this is one piece of research that is conclusive. We know it makes a difference, and I think it's time to stop procrastinating and do something about it. The time is now with this item in this budget.

Some questions about the Minister's Forum on Lifelong Learning. We've been to a number of ministerial forums in the last number of years, and there always seems to be a bit of a disconnect between the things that are said at those forums and what actually happens in the classrooms and the laboratories and lecture theatres of this province. I wonder if there has ever been any evaluation of those forums and if there is an evaluation planned of this forum to ensure that the things and the recommendations that come out of those discussions actually make a difference to learners in this province.

There's an interesting notion that's going to be looked at in the forum, and that's Campus Alberta. I think that'll be welcomed by postsecondary institutions in the province, where there have been more questions raised about Campus Alberta than any real knowledge of what exactly it means and what exactly the goals are and what the implications are for the 27 institutions in the province as that concept is implemented. I'll look forward to the work that's done on Campus Alberta.

I would also like to know in terms of that forum: who will participate? How is the list drawn up? Again, on what basis are people invited to that forum? I think it would be a useful piece of information to know who is represented there. I've been to a number of the forums, as I indicated earlier, and going back to reflect on some of those forums, I had no idea, for instance, that degree-granting status would be offered by private vocational schools in the province. It seemed to come right out of the blue. I don't recall any previous discussions about that, and that I guess is one of the reasons that what goes on at these forums and tracking what happens to the recommendations I think is important.

I look at the request for a framework for Access and Learning Television, an accountability framework, and I think that that's something we can look forward to. I'd like to know who's going to be involved in that framework, who will be making the contributions. What is the nature of the accountability that the Department of Learning is looking for? Is it in terms of viewing audience? Just what is the nature of the accountability that the department is pursuing?

Implementing the recommendations of the school councils again is a good step. I think it's timely that those recommendations are being implemented, and I'd like to know who's involved in making the decisions in terms of which recommendations will be implemented. Will those recommendations be accompanied by performance measures so that unlike the recommendations that have come out of special-needs reviews, somewhere down the road we'll be able to look back and say: this is exactly how far we've come along in terms of this recommendation; this is where we are? So the performance measures there I think will be an important part.

I'd like to, if I might, look at the strategy to implement a kindergarten to grade 12 information and communication technology program of studies. It seems to me that the department has gone ahead and seems almost oblivious to conditions in the classrooms and in schools as they make their plans. Acquiring hardware, acquiring software, and evergreening are extremely huge problems for schools. Many schools are not able to hold casinos and have the proceeds of those casinos offered in terms of buying software and hardware. In talking to school after school, it's a very, very difficult problem. How do they keep up-to-date? How do they acquire equipment in the first place?

To proceed with a curriculum and program specification without first ensuring that there are going to be the tools in schools and in

classrooms and in teachers' and in students' hands to ensure that the program can be conducted seems to me to be almost irresponsible. I would look forward to some comment from the minister in terms of how money is going to be spent to ensure that the basics are there before teachers and students are asked to embark on a program of studies.

Connected to that is the safe and appropriate use of the Internet project. It would be interesting to know if there has been a pilot project done on this. Has there been some work done preliminary to this item appearing in the budget? How many schools are going to be part of the project? Is it to be a universal program, or is it to be selective? Again, will there be some performance measures that we'll be able to look at a year or two years hence to say, "Yes, we've made progress," or "No, we need to do more work in this area"? It's an interesting project. I think it's one that concerns parents.

I've heard from parents from a variety of school jurisdictions across the province concerned with the access that their youngsters have at school to the Internet, concerned with some of the releases that they've been asked to sign in terms of their youngsters' use of the Internet in the schools. Many parents are just a little worried in terms of what's happening with the Internet and the school's use of the Internet.

I had one parent ask if he could have his youngster excluded from the use of the Internet in school, and he was a little upset when he was told that, no, that was not possible, that that was part of the school programming, and that the school would not take any responsibility should the youngster stray onto sites the parent thought were inappropriate. It's an area that needs some work, and it needs some measures so that we can tell whether or not we've achieved the kinds of goals that we think appropriate.

Those are some of the questions I have in terms of the program of studies, except I'd like, if I could, to talk a little bit about the western Canada protocol in social studies. I have had a representation from a teacher who is very, very concerned with the western Canada protocol in social studies. I think one of the major complaints was that the protocol has pushed content down from upper grades into lower grades, and it's now going to offer an inappropriate academic load for students at all grades. The whole appropriateness of the protocol has at least this individual very worried, and it's an individual who I respect and has some background in teaching.

3:30

So I would like to know what kind of critique of the protocol is being done. Are there external evaluations of the protocol that will assure us that the demands being made, both contentwise and learningwise, are appropriate for the age level that the protocol is aimed at?

I'd like to also know who represents Alberta Learning at the protocol deliberations and if we could have a list of not the names but the positions those people hold in terms of making decisions about what is appropriate for social studies classrooms in this province.

I wonder if we could have some information on the cost of the protocol, what it's cost to this point and projections of where we may be going. I know it's a huge project. It's a very ambitious project, and it's one where support has come and gone in some provinces, but the project still seems to be held together, so I would like some information.

I think that that's my time for now, Mr. Chairman, and I look forward to asking questions further on. Thank you.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm happy to have the opportunity to speak to the Learning budget estimates for this upcoming year, the year 2001-2002. Learning is a big deal in my constituency. Certainly, in the past election it was a serious topic of discussion at the doors and at the forums. People are very concerned that their children are going to have adequate access to education both at the postsecondary levels and in the K to 12 areas. They have specific concerns with a variety of issues, particularly, as my colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods talked about, learning difficulties and issues such as that within the school system.

We spend a lot of money on education in this province, Mr. Chairman, but the question, I don't think, and the point of this discussion is not how much is spent but whether we're getting value for those dollars that are spent. This continues to be a huge issue, and it would seem that the answer is: not always. In fact, we may have a misplacement of dollars in some particular areas.

When talking to people in the constituency during the election, I would ask what their key areas of concern were. Education was always the number one, two, or three issue. That hasn't changed since the first time that I was elected back in 1993. It continues to remain to be in the top three of concerns for people in the area.

Something did change this time though, and that was the areas of concern for people. When they would express education as an issue, I would say to them: are you most concerned about postsecondary education, K to 12, or both? The first two terms that I ran, Mr. Chairman, people said K to 12. They saw that most of the funding problems and the areas of concern for them in terms of service delivery were in the K to 12 areas. This time many more people said that postsecondary education was a priority, but the vast majority of people said that both areas were their key concern.

That's an interesting change, Mr. Chairman, and when we take a look at the makeup and the demographics of the constituency, we can see that it's aging, that many more people like myself and our own family are taking a look at the next stage of education for the children. They're getting older. They're starting to graduate. They're looking at postsecondary institutes, and they're seeing a number of challenges there. They're seeing that it's costly to get into postsecondary education. They are seeing that it isn't always that easy to have access to those areas, that there are some limitations on what it is that they can take and also that not always do we have a preparation system in the K to 12 system that adequately gets them ready for going into postsecondary education: in particular, concerns around the math programs and a disconnect between what people in the K to 12 system as teachers and counselors have been told and are passing on as information to these kids getting ready to go into advanced education, as there are requirements that advanced institutions of learning have for these kids coming in.

These new math pure programs are causing a great deal of concern. Counselors and teachers are telling the students that they don't need to have math pure to get in to all faculties and all postsecondary institutes, yet these very same institutes are demanding that that's a preliminary standard that the students coming in have. So that's an issue, and it holds people up in their planning.

I think the transition from a high school to a postsecondary institute is tough enough on kids. We don't need to add any extra burdens. They don't need to get to the end of grade 12 or the last quarter of grade 12 or make their applications to postsecondary institutes and find out that what they've taken, regardless of what they've been told by instructors and counselors, isn't going to be good enough to get them into the faculties they want. That's an issue that I would like the minister to respond to and tell us how that particular problem is being satisfied. I think that's an issue that needs to be addressed.

Student loans, still a big problem in my constituency, Mr. Chairman, and the access for students who are living at home and who have parents who are working and are middle-class earners – that's the vast majority of the people in my constituency. Most of those young people don't qualify for student loans. It's tough for them to find the dollars to be able to go to school at today's costs, and at the kind of minimum wage and the kind of job offers we see for young people, few of them can earn enough money throughout the school year or over the course of the summer to pay for their tuition fees aside from other costs. Sometimes they can pay them in portions, in which case they pay a penalty. They end up paying surcharges on those dollars. So that's an issue that needs to be addressed.

I know the minister likes to talk about remissions and things of that nature, which work very well for those who qualify, but what about for those young people who don't? I still think that there are some ongoing issues there. The degree of debt load that young people are coming out of institutes with is amazing and formidable, and sometimes I wonder why they're prepared to undertake that kind of a debt. It shouldn't be necessary in this kind of a province.

Mr. Chairman, we're penalizing our young people by not allowing them access to a public education system that will prepare them to be competitive in the global marketplace. We are also penalizing ourselves when we do that because bringing up the average wage and education level of the people who inhabit this province is a benefit to all of us regardless of where we stand in the social structure of the province. It is particularly a benefit, can be a benefit to low-income earners, because as people earn more income and pay more income tax, there are more dollars available for those kinds of baseline programs that help people in this province. I would like the minister to consider that and give some feedback on that particular point.

I was interested in the comments my colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods had to say about the Supernet. I think that is an interesting program that the province has undertaken, one that they're quite happy to pat themselves on the back for, Mr. Chairman, but one that is also fraught with a number of difficulties.

Recently I had the opportunity to talk to a fellow who is actively involved in bringing the Supernet to the outside borders of communities and schools. I asked him how he thought the schools were going to bring those lines inside and into the classroom. He said that it didn't really matter, that the issue was really getting it to the outside of the building and that people would find a way to bring it inside. I said to him: "What about the kinds of funding constraints we see on education institutes right now? Are those dollars going to be available to bring it inside?" He said: no, he didn't expect so. He thought that schools and parents could find innovative ways of providing that service delivery.

3:40

So then I said to him: what are you doing in your own kids' school? He's got kids in high school. He said: we have no idea, but we'll probably look for a corporate sponsorship or do some kind of fund-raising endeavours or the teachers can make choices, and we can have fewer teachers or fewer other services in order to spend the dollars to bring the lines inside. So I thought that was an interesting choice. He was willing to sacrifice quite a bit to get those lines inside the school, certainly willing to sacrifice teachers or any other supplies they may need for the year. That's interesting, because those same teachers are going to be needed to help those students move along in terms of their learning process with the Supernet itself. So he didn't really care. He said: if you bring it there, they'll find a way in. I said: "What about low-income schools? There are lots of schools who are not going to be in a position to be able to

fund those lines inside.” He said: well, too bad. His kids didn’t go to a low-income school, so it didn’t really matter to him. That was an interesting comment on the part of social responsibility for the province.

I said to him: do you believe that corporate sponsorship is the way to make these computers accessible inside the school system? He said: whatever it takes. He didn’t see anything wrong with having Coke signs stamped on the side of the computers, and if that’s what it took to get them in, then that was more important than not having access in there and that, in fact, corporate sponsorship could take care of evergreening issues and things of that nature and other kinds of technical support. So it’s interesting that that’s where he thinks this is going. I don’t necessarily disagree with him in terms of that’s where it’s going, but I certainly disagree with him in terms of that’s the right way to handle the situation.

I think those are the kinds of issues that we should have before us for a matter of debate in this Legislature and so far haven’t, Mr. Chairman. This is going to be another one of those decisions that is made behind closed doors, where the ball is bounced across to the schools to pick up, and then the government turns its back and doesn’t really care how it happens. It’ll be interesting to see how this unfolds in the coming year. I’d be interested to hear the minister’s comments on what he thinks about corporate sponsorship, what he thinks about what low-income schools would do in this regard, and how he thinks schools are going to fund this. Not only that part of it, but what about the in-service training for the teachers who are going to have to keep on top of the kinds of issues that there are with regard to the Supernet being available in the schools? So if we could have some feedback on that, I’d appreciate it.

I’d like to now go specifically to some of the programs and ask some questions there. When I take a look at program 1, which is the ministry support services, it’s interesting to note that more dollars are being asked for this year. There is, in fact, an increase in ministry support of 1.8 million additional dollars being asked for in these particular estimates, so I’d like some information, Mr. Chairman, if we could, on what those dollars are going to be spent on. Always a concern when we see more dollars going into administration in education rather than on frontline support, where we know that it’s desperately needed, which would be in the classroom. What are we going to see those dollars spent on in terms of full-time equivalent positions within the ministry? How much is going to be in administrative support? Could we get some kind of a breakdown of what those dollars would be? I think particularly we need to be quite insistent that specifics on administrative dollars are available to people so that they can judge whether or not those dollars are being well spent.

If we take a look at program 2, we’re talking here about supports for basic learning, and I have a few questions here. Once again we see an increase here, \$1.3 million in this case, Mr. Chairman. That’s a question for us. That \$1.3 million is the total 2001-02 being higher than the estimated actual of 2000-01, so some specific explanation in terms of why those dollars are there would be helpful.

When we take a look at the total 2000-2001 estimate, the actual is \$2.3 million higher than the 2001-2002 estimate. Once again, the question here is why? Some detail in terms of what the increase is allocated to. Are we seeing full-time equivalent positions being added in this case? What will those positions be? What new programs are being supported by this increase? I think that we’re quite interested in new programs that add value, not just reorganizing of old programs but something that is benchmarked and monitored for value. That’s the issue, I think, for us, and certainly for me as a parent that’s what I want to know, how those dollars are being spent.

How many programs are being supported by this increase, Mr. Chairman? If we could have that information, too, it would be very helpful. In fact, the breakdown of all the programs being supported by this line item would be helpful. We don’t get that information. It’s very much consolidated in these budget books. We don’t have briefings by the department in this regard, which would be helpful. If we had a little more detail on where the government was going and how they were spending their dollars, it would be helpful. I know that I can often get those kinds of briefings in the ministries that I’m the critic for, and I find them immensely helpful. It cuts down on some of the concerns that show up in question period, and it sometimes helps us share good-news stories that the government is involved in. So I would suggest to this department, too, that that is something they might want to take a look at.

If we go to vote 2.2.1, operating support for basic education, I’ve got a few questions. Quite a bit of money is being spent here, \$1.9 billion that we’re taking a look at on the operating expense side. Can the minister tell us why there is a \$3 million increase in the operating expenses for education? What operating expense items does this cover? We’d like some detail once again here. How much is allocated to each expense item that this increase covers? There’s not a concern about spending more dollars if we’re getting value for the dollars, but the issue always is value, and we can’t determine that if we don’t know what the detail is. Then we can compare it to outcomes. So that’s quite helpful for us.

In this line item, too, are operating expenses funded by the lotteries. I have issues with lottery dollars being spent on education, but perhaps I’ll keep those concerns for when we get into the lottery debates. I’m not sure why these dollars aren’t just consolidated in here when it looks like virtually everything else is consolidated. Maybe we could get from the minister an explanation for why these are specifically broken out.

Questions on this. Why has the 2001-2002 line item for operating expenses funded by lotteries doubled from 2000-2001? Why are the lottery funds being used to fund education operating expenses in general? There must be some kind of rationale that the government has for that. We’d certainly like to hear it, and I’d like to be able to share that information in a format that we can send out to the PACs in the constituencies because it’s certainly a concern for them. In fact, some schools are deliberately choosing not to do additional fund-raising in their schools through gambling revenues, yet in fact some of their operations are being funded by the government from gambling revenues. So if we could get some information there, that would be helpful to us.

We’d also like to know if it’s sustainable to use lottery fund revenue to fund education in the future. Sustainability is important in some of the other areas, but it’s crucially important here in education that we know our children can receive the same quality or higher quality education from year to year. So we want to know what will happen to those funds if lottery revenues dry up or if it’s deemed fit that they should be used in some other area. If we could get some explanation there, that would be helpful.

3:50

Another question on this particular line item: will the ministry continue to increase its reliance on lottery funding for education? We’ve seen since I’ve been in this Legislature a significant increase in the number of dollars that we receive from lottery funding. It’s been a big concern for us. We certainly ask for that kind of funding to be stopped. The removal of VLTs some years ago I still think was a good idea. When we see the vast number of dollars coming in in general revenue, we see that the government is quite happy to take those dollars and allocate them to whatever catches their fancy for

that particular year, not sustainable, I don't think, when we run it right into program funding and of concern to all of us. So we would like some information on why they've decided to undertake that kind of funding, how they justify it, information that we can literally share with people in the community.

I think, Mr. Chairman, those are most of my questions at this time. We'll see where everybody else gets on these particular estimates. I do have concerns about early childhood services support, private schools, and public and separate school board support.

So with that, Mr. Chairman, I will take my seat at this time.

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

MR. BONNER: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure this afternoon to speak to the budget estimates for the Ministry of Learning and, as well, to look at one area in particular in the budget that deals with our apprenticeship and industry training programs here in the province.

Now, then, we realize that the apprenticeship and industry training programs here in the province are industry driven and that these programs are supported by the government. Under the guidance of the apprenticeship board, the system relies on an Alberta-wide network of local and provincial apprenticeship committees and operational training committees, and their responsibility is to represent the interests of over 50 trades and crafts here in the province. As well, their responsibility is to set industry-based standards to develop course outlines upon which the technical training is based for our young people or for people entering apprenticeship and industry training, a very, very critical responsibility here in the province. It deals with an area in industry and in business today where we have a tremendous shortage of workers.

Part of the reflection that I take upon this is that when we look at the average age of our people in the trades industry here today, it is somewhere in the neighbourhood of between 46 to 48 years of age, and of course that represents a huge top-end or older population. It presents a problem as we look to the future. We are going to have a very, very serious shortage of tradespeople in this province in the very near future. In fact, I think one of the limits to growth in this province, particularly right now, when we do have an enormous strain for trained and qualified personnel, is that companies cannot get the trained personnel they need. As a result, we certainly see some raiding on other companies. We certainly see a great influx of workers into this province as a result of our high demands for skilled labour. We do have a very, very serious shortage here in this province.

Now, as well, this puts other stresses on the system. Certainly institutions such as NAIT and SAIT are major trainers of our tradespeople here in the province. Of course, they take time out of each particular year for experience on the job and return to these education facilities to get the education part of the trade completed.

In looking at the budget items here, I cannot determine whether these institutions have had an increase in their funding, whether their funding has remained the same, or whether their funding has decreased, particularly at this critical time when all indicators show that we definitely need more people in skilled labour, not only today but down the road as well. When we see indicators in the economy that we are having growth periods until at least 2005, when we have indicators that show us that many of the people in the trades will be retiring in the next five to 10 years, then of course it certainly indicates that we are going to need an influx of skilled labour.

When we look at what the product is that our institutions in this province have put out in the way of skilled labour through the

apprenticeship training programs, we see a very, very high-quality skilled worker. These workers are not only respected in this province, Mr. Chairman; they're respected in this country and in other nations throughout the world. I think of our workers particularly in the oil industry and the pipeline industry that have absolutely no difficulty getting jobs anywhere in the world. In fact, they're sought after and sought rather highly for their talents.

One of the things that we are experiencing even in industry here today is that when other tradespeople come to Alberta, there is no standardization of training between provinces. The standards as set, for example, in Newfoundland or Quebec or Ontario are different from what we have here in Alberta. I heard the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods speak earlier of the western Canada protocol. Certainly in our school system we are making every attempt to harmonize our education system across this country and, particularly through the western Canada protocol, to do it in this region of the country. I know that there are certain attempts by organizations in the various provinces to get together and try and harmonize these standards. So what I would hope the minister could provide is an update as to how these standards are going to be harmonized and where the discussions on that are at this particular time.

Now, then, what we have here because of the different standards is different barriers for each of our somewhere over 50 trades to mobility between the provinces. Not only do we have that difference, Mr. Chairman, we also have differences in the level of certification when it comes to workers in this province compared to other provinces. As well, in this province we also have a number of apprenticeship centres in the major centres, and they have a specific responsibility to monitor the apprentices when they're out on the job. I think overall, from the results that we see, they do an excellent job.

As well, what's happened here in the province is that we have a number of emerging growth centres, areas in this province where we've had rapid growth, where we've had a great deal of demand for apprentices, where they are working. In these particular communities, what I would like to know is: what are the plans to establish in these emerging growth centres apprenticeship centres so that apprentices in these rapidly growing areas will also have the same quality of help and assistance as they go through their apprenticeship?

4:00

We certainly know that local apprenticeship committees have played a very, very major role in this province. They have certainly led to greater communication amongst all apprentices, and this has certainly led to a great strengthening and development of partnerships throughout the province. It certainly is one of the reasons that we have been able to develop the quality of apprenticeship program that we do have here.

With growth and with the demand for skilled labour and apprentices in this province I think we have to look at another side that we have to concentrate on as well, Mr. Chairman. That is that when I look at the statistics for 1999 of workers who were injured in the workplace or encountered industrial disease, it was serious enough in this province that 35,000 workers had to miss at least one day of work. When we also look, there were 27 workers a day who were injured in this province and were in their first six months of being on the job. So certainly experience on the job is a big problem.

We can't help but wonder in this situation if some of these apprentices were being asked or required to do jobs that they were not trained for yet or whether they were not properly supervised. Again I think that it is critical that we have in place the proper apprenticeship centres that can monitor new apprentices and

certainly to make the workplace a much safer place, and this is through the education of these apprentices. We certainly all realize in this Assembly and in the workplace that this is money well spent, that if we can prevent these workplace injuries, then it certainly is a much lower cost item in the long term than the strains and the demands that it will put on the system. So my next question to the minister in this regard is: how are we dealing with monitoring these apprentices in these particular areas of growth, the emerging areas of growth? What is the opportunity of developing and establishing these centres where we can monitor apprentices?

As well, what is happening here in the province is that the rate of injured workers, particularly young workers, is growing at a much greater rate than our workforce, than the percentage that our workforce is growing. It indicates that we don't have enough training in safety for these people. I know that the WCB certainly has done an excellent job in developing safety programs, but it also indicates here that we have not done enough.

DR. TAFT: A lot of injuries occur in the first six months.

MR. BONNER: Yes, especially when the injuries are occurring within the first six months.

Therefore, what I would like to know is if the ministry has looked at the possibility of introducing a safety component into the apprenticeship program or expanding what is in the program presently.

In looking at the business plans for the ministry, I was quite happy to see here that the percentage of Albertans age 17 and older that are attending credit and noncredit program courses grew from 32 percent in 1998-99 to 33 percent in 1999-2000. I see that our target for next year, the year 2001-2002, is still 33 percent. When we have such a demand in the skilled trades area, why wouldn't we expect this figure to rise, especially when I see that the target for the year 2003-2004 is 36 percent?

Now, Mr. Chairman, when I look at goal 2 in the business plans, I see that the outcome here is that "learners demonstrate high standards." I see as well here that under this section one of the bullets is to "enhance awareness of education and training attained in other countries for entry into trades and professions and educational institutions." Certainly we do want opportunities for people that arrive in Canada, but it would seem to me that rather than us looking for people from other countries, again, we train our own. It is the same situation we have in education, where we are all of a sudden short of teachers, so we're going to look outside the province of Alberta when we have an excellent facility right across the river which has a remarkable record of training teachers for this province. These are foreseeable, these are predictable, and that is why I can't understand why we wait until we are in this situation, why we haven't properly prepared for these.

Now, one of the programs that I'm particularly happy to see and that is gaining popularity is the high school registered apprenticeship program scholarship initiative. This is one of those areas that will certainly attract our graduates here in Alberta to enter the apprenticeship program, and it is also an excellent opportunity and a new opportunity for school-to-work transition.

When we are promoting the high school registered apprenticeship program, I do have a few questions here that I would like to ask the minister. The first question is: how is the registered apprenticeship program scholarship initiative going to be promoted to high school students? Again I think that this is critical, because every indicator is that we are going to have a tremendous shortage in this province, and who better to attract into those positions than our own youth, who are constantly looking for these good jobs?

Now, then, as well I would like to know: if we are going to pay proper attention to the registered apprenticeship program scholarship initiative, then what is this promotion going to cost? How many young people will be impacted by it? Could the minister please indicate which communities will receive the benefit from this program? Is it going to be open to students across the province, or are they going to have to be in certain cities or just where we have apprenticeship boards or whatever? So if the minister could please provide that information for me. Another one of my questions is: how much is the total program going to cost?

4:10

Now, Mr. Chairman, I did have some questions here as well on program 3, the support for adult learning. Under apprenticeship and industry training I see that our gross expense for the fiscal year 2000-2001 was \$10,793,000 – that was under the operating expense – and for this year it is \$12,337,000. My question here to the minister would certainly be: where are these extra dollars going in the operating expense? To what institutions are they going? Again, is that amount for our facilities at NAIT and SAIT increasing, decreasing, or remaining the same?

Finally, when we look at our amortization of capital assets, I see that in last year's fiscal program it was at \$36,000, and this year it has increased to \$186,000. That is quite an increase in the amortization of capital assets.

So thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

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

DR. TAFT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm delighted to rise and speak to the estimates for the Department of Learning, in large part because the largest single educational institution in Alberta is in my constituency – and indeed it's one of the largest in the country – the University of Alberta. As well, there's a campus of Grant MacEwan Community College in my constituency and in addition, of course, a large number of schools.

There's no question that for me personally and for my constituents education is an exceedingly high priority, a highly valued government program, a public service that ranks up there with health care and justice and other areas as being of absolutely paramount importance to a successful society and, indeed, to successful individuals.

In going through material from the Department of Learning in the Budget 2001 business plans, on page 278 I notice in the outcomes two or three areas worth commenting on. One is the outcome that "learners are well prepared for citizenship." That gets at perhaps the single most important aspect certainly of advanced education and of all education.

I know so much of our education system now seems to be geared towards training people for jobs, and that's commendable and that's fine and important. But in doing that, we don't want to lose track of the role of education, the fundamental role and perhaps even the original role of education going back to the academies of ancient Greece: creating citizens. I'm pleased to see that the business plan for the Department of Learning pays some attention to that. They have strategies to "develop learning opportunities that will build an active and responsible citizenry." I would be curious to know how citizenry is defined here, what it means, and indeed how this information presented on page 278 of the plan is compiled.

It does suggest here that public satisfaction that learners are well prepared for citizenship among high school students actually is a bit

low, 41 percent. The target I guess isn't that high either. It's 42 percent. I'd encourage both the target and the achievement of that target to be raised. The results are a bit higher for postsecondary, for adult learners, at 65 percent. Nonetheless, it's a difficult concept to measure, and I would like more background on exactly what is being measured here, but commendation to the minister and to the department for paying some attention to that.

On the same page there is a graph or chart discussing the more practical or certainly the more economically oriented aspect of education, which is employment rates. It's worth noting here how high education corresponds directly with employability. I note that employment rates for vocational college graduates are 85 percent, and then the employment rates rise from there to the highest level, which is not private university colleges but in fact the general universities, which I assume mean the University of Alberta, of Calgary, of Lethbridge, and Athabasca University, of which 96 percent of graduates are employed. I think that's commendable. We need to keep on that kind of a target, of course remembering that it's not just the education but the entire economy that assists us in achieving that.

There are some specific issues I would like to raise in these discussions concerning postsecondary education. I have had inquiries, that I have in fact raised here in question period, from constituents who are concerned about the cost of education and, in particular, specifically the cost of housing at universities. There is some attention paid here to reviewing the tuition fee policy for universities.

I think we mustn't lose track of other living expenses that students face when they are attending university or college, and among those probably the greatest are housing costs. So some attention by the department to housing costs would probably be in order. We're going to see those costs jump as a result of the soaring costs of natural gas and electricity, and I would repeat my encouragement to the department that in their budgeting and in their financing they ensure that any rebates that are provided to educational institutions for energy costs flow through and cover that and offset the costs of student housing.

Tuition fees are also an ongoing issue for many of my constituents and of course for citizens across Alberta, not just the students themselves but their parents, their grandparents, who may be supporting them as they attend postsecondary training. I am very concerned that the tuition fee increases in the last decade have far exceeded the rate of inflation. While they have doubled or tripled, I don't think there is any measurement that would suggest that the quality of education the students are receiving has doubled or tripled. We need to watch tuition fees, and I would encourage any budget activity at all that was undertaken here to ensure that tuition fees are flattened right out and, indeed preferably, that tuition fees be reduced. So I have questions here about how soon the tuition fee policy review will be completed and what it's likely to find, what its recommendations will be, when we can see that tabled in the Assembly.

I would also like to just raise a handful of questions around education for aboriginal populations. I notice from time to time in the business plans there is mention of opportunities for aboriginal groups or aboriginal individuals to further their education. I would encourage that particular attention in resources be paid to that area, as we are all I think well aware of the particular problems that our aboriginal populations face when it comes to achieving levels of education that will help them get along in a modern society.

So with those comments, Mr. Chairman, I think I will take my seat. Thank you very much.

4:20

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The leader of the ND opposition.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will try to focus on issues that have received less attention than others. Several of my colleagues in the House have already spoken on the estimates for this very important department in our government. I heard a few comments that encourage me to believe that government is paying more attention than it has in the past to issues of chronic underfunding for our learning system, both K to 12 and postsecondary. There are some indications here that some steps are being taken. So I certainly want to acknowledge that. Looking at the business plan, there is certainly more attention to detail in this department's business plan than I found in some other departments. So, again, I think the minister and his staff deserve some credit for this.

Having said that, the key issue that I will focus on, of course, at the postsecondary level is a worrisome development that has taken place over the last 12 months, that I want to visit for a moment: the approval of a private, for-profit postsecondary institution in this province being given the accreditation for it to offer degree-granting status so that it could offer degrees to Alberta students and others who may enroll in its programs. This is not only a private college; it's a private, for-profit corporation, a large one with a great big array of commercial activities, a corporation that's listed on the New York Stock Exchange with billions of dollars of capitalization and therefore has shareholder interests to look after as distinct from educational challenges to meet seriously. The first and foremost obligation of a private, for-profit corporation listed on a reputable stock exchange is a force to generate and maximize profit and to be accountable first and foremost to its shareholders.

I asked the minister some time ago a question on whether or not this college will now receive public funds, and his answer to my question at that time was unequivocally clear that not a cent of public dollars will go to this. I was certainly reassured by his clear answer, but the questions do arise, given the fact that we live within a framework defined by NAFTA, as to the rights of corporations to have access to resources, facilities, conditions that apply to local or national economic players. So the national treatment chapter of NAFTA gives me some concern, and I would like the minister perhaps in his response to explicitly address that issue.

Has he got sound legal advice on it, and will he be willing to share that advice with us so that we are assured that the DeVry institute's accreditation to become a profit-making, degree-granting institution in the province will not subject provincial revenues and resources to go to all other claimants that might want to enter the field and thereby open the opportunities for privatization of postsecondary education? That certainly is an issue that continues to worry me. I know that the minister takes concerns like this seriously, so I expect that I and the House will be hearing from him on this specific issue.

Looking at the business plan – again, I'm looking at page 275 – there is the issue of the section on outcomes: "affordability, financial need," and "the learning system is affordable," and "accessibility." These three sections, I think, deal with the issue of equal opportunity, which has long been very closely linked to the goals of publicly funded public education systems in Canada and elsewhere over the last 50, 60 years. I'm trying to track down here a reference to the words "equal opportunity," and I have not as yet been able to find it. Maybe the minister can assist me to see whether or not there is an explicit commitment or statement of intention of the government and the minister stated somewhere here. The reason I raise this question is because some of my constituents certainly are affected by this government's tuition fee policies relative to postsecondary education in particular.

I was visiting a storefront high school on Whyte Avenue in my constituency about six months ago. I visited with students and teachers and talked with students who had for one reason or other dropped out of school some years ago and had now returned and were doing well and on the way to completing their high school diploma at a level of performance that would qualify them to enter, if they so chose, college or university education. When I asked them about their plans for college or university, the clear answer was: no way; can't afford it. So this question of affordability, when it's addressed without linking it to ensuring opportunity for every Albertan who is qualified and willing to go to a postsecondary institution, without linking the whole question of opportunity and how it is the obligation of a government, the obligation associated with good governance that all qualified citizens be treated equally – that kind of commitment I think is missing here. The word "affordability" seems to not address the question that I'm raising here, so maybe the minister will help me understand how he and his plans plan to address how this budget reflects the commitments to the ideal and the principle of equal opportunity.

4:30

Another matter, Mr. Chairman, a general matter that I want to raise – I was at the press conference this afternoon at the press availability of the Premier. He was asked some questions about skilled labour shortages, the shortages of people in Alberta with high levels of skills which will require postsecondary education training. He started musing about perhaps the need to enter into agreements that will facilitate easy movement back and forth across national borders so that in this province we could address the problem of such labour shortages by importing people and immediately followed it by saying that he wanted to assure Albertans that any such entry, if it's eased, will not be at the expense of job opportunities for Albertans.

The point here that he missed, of course, is: why these shortages? They are not merely the result of the economic growth that's taking place. It's clearly also the result, the cumulative effect, the impact of the ever growing cost of postsecondary education that impacts students' decisions once they are about to finish their high school on whether or not to proceed to the postsecondary level to seek or obtain the qualifications and the skills they need to enter the labour force at a level of skill and training for which we are now saying there aren't enough people around.

I think we need to pay some attention to this. There's no point, on the one hand, of alluding to the problem of growing labour shortages and then not being able to link it to the very policies of the government that may over a period of time have created the situation that we're now trying to address. If we don't pay attention to it today, then the situation is likely to get more serious rather than abating. So that's the other issue that I wanted to draw to the attention of the government and the minister for some comments, if possible.

Making education more costly is clearly something that needs to be acknowledged. When you make it more costly, you're going to reduce the demand for it. To some extent that's a simple, I guess, economics 101 kind of observation that I make.

I was speaking this morning to Alberta high school students who were here at the Forum for Young Albertans. I was listening to them very carefully in terms of the questions they were asking. They're concerned. Many of these students come from perhaps relatively economically well-off families, but they're concerned about their own perception about the very high cost of going to college or university in this province. I'm talking about just a few hours ago. Five or six hours ago I was speaking with these students, addressing

their questions, and I came back with the clear impression that there is a growing concern among young Albertans about the government's failure to take action in order to contain the costs of going to college. They don't understand why in this province there should be such indifference on the part of the government to addressing this question.

Of course, there is in the business plans an indication that the government is undertaking a review of the tuition fee policy. I guess my question to the minister on that one is: what are the terms of reference? Is a reduction of tuition fees, a rollback of tuition fees one of the possibilities included in this review? What's the time line? When would we hear about it? When will the government in fact complete this review and act upon this review? Who is doing the review, and to what extent is public input sought and secured on a very wide basis before this review is completed and recommendations or conclusions are drawn from it?

The next point I want to make again of a general nature is that there's a danger, Mr. Chairman, that I read into the way the targeting of additional funds to universities for faculty retention is being used here. They are certainly targeted to certain faculties, certain areas, very specific areas which are perceived to be directly connected with the economic growth needs of the province. I submit that this is a very narrow view of the role of postsecondary education, I expect more or less exclusively seen as a means of economic growth rather than as an endeavour worthy of our investment and commitment as a society that's highly educated and civilized and is committed to the ideal of pursuit of knowledge in all areas of human activity, be it philosophical, cultural, artistic, social, or economic and scientific.

The result, as I hear from my colleagues on campuses across this province, of such policies of targeting funds specifically only for certain areas in the university is the growing marginalization of studies in liberal arts and humanities across our campuses, and I think that's a dangerous trend that needs to be stemmed. It's not just a perception on the part of a few who may be concerned about this as a very generalized concern. I hear about it quite a lot regardless of which campus I visit or what time of the year I go there.

So there is, I think, a blind spot here in the business plan, in the vision that directs the business plan and the budget, the issue of what postsecondary education and what education as a general human endeavour is about, whether we need to conceive it more broadly, more imaginatively or whether we should reduce it simply to skills training and production of knowledge merely and exclusively for the purposes of enhancing economic growth. Not that economic growth is not important, but to reduce education to that purpose and to that purpose alone is shortsighted, is misguided.

Mr. Chairman, let me see if there are a few other points I can make here in the remaining three minutes or so that I have. I also want to not be remiss in noting that the business plan does include a reference to education for citizenship. Citizenship as a goal of education is a very noble goal, a very important goal for a democracy, for a democratic government, and for our future democratic developments, particularly in light of the risks that we face as we meet the world under the new model of corporate globalization. The threat to democratic norms, the attempt to narrow the view of democratic forums such as Legislatures is real, and we need to pay more attention at the level of education of our young to make sure that they begin to look at citizenship in this new light, in the new context, which does pose some serious threats to the viability of vibrant, democratic institutions and their functions and the role of citizens in determining and shaping their own future as democratic actors in the process.

These are some of my general comments. I have some specific

questions on the budget, about three or four pages of questions, but I think I will now wait for another opportunity, maybe this afternoon if I have it, to put that on the record.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to continue and look at the K to 12 system with some questions about the Alberta initiative for school improvement. I notice that there's been a dramatic increase in the budget to \$65 million for that project. Again, I wonder what the intent of the government is in terms of that being a continuing budget item and also raise the concern in terms of adding to the increased number of earmarked funds that school boards have to work with. It, I think, detracts from the need to make adequate the basic per pupil grant and to address the problems of that grant being inadequate.

4:40

I have some specific questions about the AISI projects, and I would like to know how the results of the projects are going to be communicated so that all students in the province benefit from the research that's being undertaken. I guess I would like some assurance that the projects aren't being initiated because boards are underfunded and they're using this as a mechanism to bolster their budget as one of few alternatives they have in terms of adding to the basic budget. I'd like to be assured that that's not the case.

In the case of the class size study in Edmonton I was disappointed with the spin that was put on the results. The results, I think, were fairly conclusive in terms of the benefits of smaller class sizes, yet having spent the \$500,000 to confirm what was known from jurisdictions elsewhere, it seems that the government made every effort to downplay those results and to negate the findings. I find it curious to spend the money, to get the results, and then to deny that the benefits should be applied to all students across the province.

It makes me a little suspicious of the AISI programs. I know from discussions that there are some exciting projects under way. There are some good things being done, but I'm, again, suspicious of the context that we find ourselves in and somewhat alarmed at the rapid growth of the budget for those earmarked funds.

I'd like to move, then, from that to the "strategy for parents with children aged 0 - 6 to improve family literacy practices and children's readiness for school." I applaud this strategy and the resources that are being put into it, Mr. Chairman. It seems to me that this is money that's going to be very well spent.

I look at some of the rather ambitious programs undertaken in some of the American states to improve literacy: a state where the governor got personally involved in leading a tutorial project for parents and interested members of the public who were interested in working with youngsters in a tutorial capacity, projects where industry and businesses were encouraged to have employees devote part of their week to reading to children or working with a specific child in a school. Those industries and businesses were willing to give employees time off to go to the schools to do that kind of work. I think it's part of that recognition of how important it is for us to get to young children at a very early age to make sure they all end up capable of reading and having the kind of skills that they're going to need to be successful once they hit the formal learning system.

I wondered in terms of this specific strategy who has been consulted. Who are the stakeholders that they have talked to regarding this strategy? Is there a priority in terms of the communities where the work will be undertaken? For instance, are our inner-

city, low socioeconomic areas on a priority list, where the work will be first done? Again, will we have in place a group of performance measures that will allow us to see the progress on this project? I think it's a worthy project and one that the opposition certainly supports.

The second part of that is the "best assessment 'tools' for describing levels of development and learning in preschool children." Again, a long-overdue project and a long-overdue investment in terms of young learners, preschool children, in helping make sure that we diagnose at an early age any difficulties and the strengths that those youngsters have.

I have some questions about exactly what the inventory is and how it's going to be applied. Who's going to be responsible for the inventory and working with youngsters? Is it one that's going to be generally available in schools, or will it be through the children's initiative? Just exactly how is the inventory going to be delivered, and who's going to be involved in assessing the results of the project and the progress on it?

That leads to the third strategy: "develop an action plan to implement recommendations from the Primary Programs Curriculum consultation." Again, a good project, a good strategy that needs our support. I'll be interested in the action plan that actually comes forward. I'd be interested, again, in knowing who is going to be involved in developing that plan and what kind of time lines they have in mind in terms of completing and implementing those recommendations. Is there a time frame being attached to that work? Again, will there be performance measures so that we can come back to this at a later date and assess progress?

I think the evaluation of the early literacy program is worth while. It's one of those projects that I think was destined to be successful before it was ever undertaken. If you talk to people that have been involved doing it, they're certainly enthusiastic. I feel that the resources committed to that have been worth while. The only caveat is that, again, it's money that's earmarked for a specific reason, and it takes away the flexibility of schools to respond to the needs of students as they best see fit.

I did have a question in terms of: will youngsters that have been home schooled be part of that evaluation? What about charter schools? Will they, too, be made part of that evaluation? I have some questions about home schools and their participation in a number of these initiatives. Has there been thought given to an evaluation of the home schooling that goes on in the province other than the kind of monitoring that goes on by boards that umbrella those students? How successful is the home schooling program, and are we certain that children are being well served with the program?

I would like, then, if I could, to skip over to that portion of the budget that deals with financing postsecondary institutions. In particular, I have some questions about program 3, support for adult learning, and item 3.1.5, other program support. Just what exactly is included in that line item? It's gone from \$9,870,000 to \$15,540,000. It's a dramatic increase, so I'd be interested in knowing what's happened in terms of expansion or just why there is such a dramatic increase and what that increase covers.

4:50

A similar question with the line below it, 3.1.6, the international qualifications assessment. I know there are a lot of students coming to the province, but it seems to be a fairly large increase from the previous budget. Could we have some explanation as to what caused that increase?

As I look down at the grants to postsecondary institutions, Mr. Chairman, I notice, for instance, that the grants to universities on line 3.2.4 have increased by about 4 percent over the last budget and that

the grants for technical institutes – my math may not be right, but I think it's something less than 3 percent that those basic grants have increased. That seems to me not to really cover the cost of increases that those institutions would face over a year, to say nothing of salary grid advancements by faculty and instructors. I guess when I look at the earmarked funds and the growth in them, I get the feeling that there is less and less confidence by the government in those institutions to spend the money that they have wisely. So the overall grants are being kept minimal, yet earmarked funds again, money under the funded envelopes, have grown rapidly.

In particular, the one that I think concerns me the most is the money that's now found its way into the access fund. It's gone from \$70,331,000 to \$101,004,000 in terms of funding those access places, and it seems to me that the major criteria for that fund has been the opening of student places in institutions. I've heard time and time again that the fund does not adequately cover the costs of opening those spaces, that it's a way of controlling the faculties and institutes and colleges. There's an inordinate amount of money spent in trying to get the other proposals and to administer those proposals once they've been accepted. I wonder if the government and the ministry have considered evaluating the access fund from any other perspective than the number of student places that it opens. I worry about the large growth and the impact that has on the autonomy of institutions to determine where they think the resources to serve their student body are best spent.

I also look at, again with a little alarm, the faculty retention envelope. I'm sure it's welcomed by the institutions, but again it earmarks money for a specific area and takes away the autonomy of those institutions to deal with faculty retention difficulties in ways that might more appropriately fit their institution. I haven't got the figures before me, but if you look back over the amount of increase in earmarked funds through the funding envelopes over the last number of years, the increase has been really very dramatic. I think it may have accomplished some good things, but I think it comes at a high price for the independence of institutions.

I wanted to spend a few minutes, if I might, looking at item 4.3, the student loans issue. Again, I have some questions about the loans and the loans program. The government is I think rightly proud of the remission program, and I was pleased that the remission program has now been made automatic. There were a number of students that left institutions unaware that they were eligible for remission. I talked to a number of students who said that even though they knew about it, they were sent running around from place to place trying to find exactly how they applied for the remission. So I'm glad now that it's an automatic remission that they get.

In talking about the loans program, I wonder if the government really does have a good handle on how much students are in debt. The debt that the government accounts for is the debt that's accounted for through government programs. As I talk to students, the loans that they have from government sources are for many of them only part of the debt that they've incurred in trying to secure an education, and many of them are carrying large amounts of private debt that add to that burden. So I think we may fool ourselves when we just look at the amount of debt that's been incurred to government. I wonder if the government has ever considered undertaking a study, an evaluation of the loans program and trying to get a handle on what students' costs actually are in accessing programs and the kind of financing that they find themselves forced to engage in in terms of completing those programs.

I would be interested in knowing just exactly the impact of tuition increases and the loans program on students. I hear students talk about having to have a number of part-time jobs to keep going, to pay expenses. The welfare loads at institutions have increased. So

I would encourage the government to undertake a fairly thorough study of student costs in our province and the ability of students to finance those costs.

One of the other questions I had about the remission program was the impact on students who have incurred debt previously and weren't aware of or didn't access a remission program. Is there any retroactivity in those programs? Can they go back and ask for relief if they left the institutions three or four or five years ago and didn't seek that relief at that time? I'd be interested in knowing if the department has addressed that problem.

With those comments, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. leader of the ND opposition.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm cognizant of the fact that only limited time remains, so I will try to limit my comments to the K to grade 12 level in my specific comments on the estimates in the budget. I note that the budgetary increase this year comes from a 3.5 percent increase in per pupil grants and a further 4 percent provision being made and intended to cover increases in teachers' salaries. On the issue of teachers' salaries, lots has been said in this House over the last week and today, but I want to put on record some of my concerns here.

5:00

It was clear that it's the first time, that I'm aware of, that the government has actually tried to set the fiscal parameters around collective bargaining between the Alberta Teachers' Association and local school boards. There is no question that this is a significant departure from past practice in which school boards negotiated collective agreements with the teachers and other staff and government provided the necessary financial resources to assist school boards in meeting their obligations.

In this year's budget, in my view, the government's approach certainly looks heavy handed, arbitrary, and represents unacceptable interference with free collective bargaining. My question, of course, to the minister is: why are teachers being singled out in this way? The government has not taken this approach in negotiations between provincial health authorities and nurses. The government has not taken this approach in terms of negotiating with doctors. The government has not taken this approach in negotiations with other staff, nonteaching staff employed by school boards. So why this double standard when it comes to the provincial teachers?

Meeting with the press the other day, when they asked me, I tried to be charitable towards the government and simply said: it's unfortunate that teachers' negotiations are coming off; the election is over. For the nurses and doctors the negotiations came just before the election. So it's the reality of politics, that every government, including this one, responds to pressures more quickly and positively on the eve of an election. But once the election is over, those pressures are gone and teachers get treated rather shabbily.

There was another suggestion made to me and that was: are teachers being punished because of their role in the provincial election? I said: I don't think so. Both of these explanations, in light of the fact the government has really failed to explain why it is making this radical departure from previous practice, do meet sort of a test of plausibility. So take your pick: whether it's teachers being targeted because they did things politically that the government didn't like or whether they simply happen to come for consideration after the election, not before it.

Depending upon how you add up the numbers, doctors and nurses received increases between 17 and 30 percent in their remuneration packages for the next two or so years. Yet teachers are being

restricted to – it's called now a minimum – 6 percent over two years. The president of the School Boards Association expressed their concerns that this really is putting school boards in a very difficult situation, where they have to choose between cutting back services provided at the classroom level, including their ability to consider reducing class sizes on the one hand, and paying teachers what school boards think they, in fact, deserve.

So why the government has taken this step is a question that continues to be asked again and again. The government's explanations simply don't cut the mustard or don't make sense. They are not persuasive. I submit that this is a recipe for conflict with the province's teachers at a time when there's a growing teacher shortage, and it's unfortunate that the government seems to be mainly responsible for creating this potential for conflict.

My final question on teachers' salaries is this: how does the minister plan to allocate these funds to school boards? The formula for allocating per pupil grants is fairly well understood, but what formula will be used to allocate the increases for teachers' salaries to school boards?

My second set of questions relates to this government's failure to take meaningful action to reduce class sizes. A report on class sizes, which included a pilot project involving 12 public schools in Edmonton, was completed last November. This government sat on the report until the election was over. They didn't allow the issue of class size reduction to become an election issue on the pretext that they were still considering the report. The minister tried to give the impression that he was favourably inclined to take positive action on this but no action in this budget. The class size report clearly shows that the vast majority of students benefited from reduced class sizes in the pilot project, yet one searches in vain for a specific allocation in these budget estimates to assist school boards in reducing class sizes. The 3.5 percent increase in per pupil grant is there. I welcome this, but it will simply allow school boards to more or less keep up with the inflationary side of the equation and not be able to take positive steps towards the reduction of class size. Why would the government on the one hand provide an allocation for increases in teachers' salaries and yet on the other hand fail to make a specific provision for a reduction in class sizes, especially in the lower grades? All I can say is lack of political will or disingenuous interest in reducing class size by doing nothing about it.

My next question at this level relates to support for private schools. I note that there is about an 11 percent increase in estimated spending for instructional grants to private schools. This is on top of an even larger increase in private school funding last year. In total over the two years there has been a 40 percent increase in private school funding. My question is: why? Is the increase driven by an increase in enrolments in private schools? Is it driven by some other considerations? I think the minister owes us an answer.

There are only a couple of minutes remaining, Mr. Chairman, so I guess I won't start on the next segment of my speech here. I'll conclude by saying that I'm disappointed in the fact that the minister hasn't addressed the questions I've raised, certainly not addressed to my satisfaction. I know he has not addressed these questions to the satisfaction of school boards, and he hasn't addressed this question to the satisfaction of parents and public education advocacy groups and certainly not to the satisfaction of teachers in this province.

The postsecondary students who are expecting the minister to take some action, to give them some hope, to take some action on his promises that he was making to students – and again we find that there's no action on the question of either freezing tuition fees or much less any indication that any time soon this government is thinking of beginning to roll back or reduce tuition fees in this

province for our postsecondary students. That's a real disappointment, I guess, for the thousands and thousands of postsecondary students who made representations to this government through all kinds of means, by meeting with the standing committee, by signing petitions, yet there is no action. Again, I don't understand why, why the government is refusing to take any positive action on that score.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will now vacate the floor.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I see that we have a very short time remaining to us, and I'd like to put some concluding remarks on the record in terms of the Learning budget estimates. We see that we spend a lot of money in this province on learning, but what we also see is that there are still a great many areas where we're having problems with how those dollars are spent. So I would urge the minister to respond not only to the questions raised this afternoon but to the heart of the issues and tell us how in the long term he expects to respond to the issues that have been brought forward, I think all legitimate and substantive in nature.

We're looking forward to getting his responses on this, Mr. Chairman. We hope that we will see those responses before the end of this particular legislative session. The speed at which we're rolling through these bills, it's going to be before the end of this month. I know that puts some pressure on his department, but certainly it would be helpful for us, so if we have follow-up issues, we can follow a particular point.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but pursuant to the leaders' agreement I have to put forward the question. After considering the business plan and proposed estimates for the Department of Learning, are you ready for the vote?

5:10

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

Agreed to:	
Operating Expense and Capital Investment	\$3,582,159,000
Nonbudgetary Disbursements	\$83,000,000

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Shall the vote be reported?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would move that the committee now rise and report and beg leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

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

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2002, for the following department.

Learning: operating expense and capital investment, \$3,582,159,000; nonbudgetary disbursements, \$83,000,000.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

[Title and preamble agreed to]

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Opposed? So ordered.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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Committee of the Whole

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The hon. Government House Leader.

Bill 5
Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2001
(continued)

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would move that the committee rise and report and beg leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[The clauses of Bill 5 agreed to]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following: bills 5 and 6.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

Bill 6
Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2001
(continued)

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Opposed? So ordered.

[The clauses of Bill 6 agreed to]

[At 5:16 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

