

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, March 25, 1992**

2:30 p.m.

Date: 92/03/25

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. SPEAKER: Immediately following our opening prayer we will pause for a moment to make a memorial on behalf of one of our former members.

head: **Prayers**

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

O Lord, we give thanks for the bounty of our province: our land, our resources, and our people.

We pledge ourselves to act as good stewards on behalf of all Albertans.

Amen.

Harry Leinweber passed away March 18, 1992. He represented the constituency of Medicine Hat for the Social Credit Party, was first elected in the January 19, 1961, by-election, re-elected in the 1963 and 1967 general elections, and served this Legislature until 1971.

Rest eternal grant unto him, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon him.

Amen.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Avonmore.

MS M. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask to present petitions on behalf of constituents and citizens in Edmonton asking that sexual orientation be included as a protected category in the Individual's Rights Protection Act.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to present a petition from the professional staff members of the Terra school urging the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to accord favourable consideration to resolution 226/91, adopted by teacher representatives at the emergent representative assembly of the Alberta Teachers' Association on September 28, 1991.

head: **Reading and Receiving Petitions**

MRS. GAGNON: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the petition which I presented yesterday on behalf of St. Bede's teachers be read and received.

CLERK:

We, the undersigned, as professional staff members of St. Bede's school, urge the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to accord favourable consideration to the following resolution, adopted by teacher representatives at the Emergent Representative Assembly of The Alberta Teachers' Association on September 28, 1991:

Be it resolved, that The Alberta Teachers' Association return to negotiations with the Government with a view to concluding a new agreement in which;

- (a) teachers and the government jointly contribute the full amount of all future service costs to the Teachers' Retirement Fund,
- (b) the government assumes full responsibility for the total unfunded liability related to past service costs and adopts an acceptable plan for retiring that debt,

- (c) the government amends the TRF Act to provide full cost-of-living adjustments to pensions, and
- (d) the other changes incorporated in the May 4, 1991, Memorandum of Understanding are retained.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

head: **Notices of Motions**

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Calgary-McKnight.

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that after question period today I will rise under Standing Order 40 to seek unanimous consent of the Assembly to consider the following motion:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly express its sympathy to the Kurdish community regarding the recent killing of members of the Kurdish community in Turkey.

I do have copies for all members.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

Bill 219

Energy Efficiency Management Administration Act

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a Bill being the Energy Efficiency Management Administration Act, Bill 219.

It's a Bill that would shift the energy efficiency branch from the Department of Energy to the Department of the Environment, where it should more properly be.

[Leave granted; Bill 219 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Bill 266

Business Corporations Amendment Act

MRS. BLACK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 266, the Business Corporations Amendment Act.

Mr. Speaker, if this Act is passed, it will provide for a better monitoring of the receivership process for businesses and companies by expediting receivership proceedings so as to serve in the best interests of Albertans.

[Leave granted; Bill 266 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Wainwright.

Bill 268

Ethanol Strategy Act

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 268, the Ethanol Strategy Act.

The purpose of this Act is to encourage the province to develop a comprehensive strategy for the use of ethanol in our fuels.

[Leave granted; Bill 268 read a first time]

Bill 259

Service Dogs Act

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, I request leave today to introduce Bill 259, Service Dogs Act.

The purpose of this legislation, Mr. Speaker, is to extend to handicapped persons who make use of service dogs the same

protection and provisions that are provided currently to the blind and their seeing eye dogs with respect to public transportation and other public facilities.

[Leave granted; Bill 259 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'm tabling three reports today: firstly, the 1991 annual report of the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association; secondly, the 1991 annual report of the Farmers' Advocate of Alberta; and thirdly, the 1990-91 annual report of the Agricultural Development Corporation.

MR. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege today to present to you and the House the 1990-91 annual report of the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the chartered accountants of Alberta 1991 annual report and the certified management accountants 1990-91 annual report as well. This has already been circulated to members of the Assembly through your office.

Thank you.

2:40

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to table the 23rd annual report of the Alberta Hail and Crop Insurance Corporation for the year ended March 31, 1991.

MR. MAIN: Mr. Speaker, I have here the '89-90 Alberta Art Foundation annual report, the annual report of the Glenbow-Alberta Institute for 1991, and the 1990-91 annual report for the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation. I'd like to table those.

I'd also like to file with the Assembly copies of a letter that I sent to Orest Olineck, who is the chairman of the Alberta Multiculturalism Advisory Council. This letter outlines the government's strong commitment to multicultural objectives in the present and future.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the annual report of the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to table a number of letters from students raising questions regarding the health care training stipends.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to the Assembly today 26 grade 6 students from the Montrose elementary school, which is in the riding that I represent. They're accompanied by their teachers Phil Booth and Wendy Dumont. I should add that I met with them about half an hour ago, and I would suggest to you that this group of students has enough collective energy to keep the lights on in this place for about a year. I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Oral Question Period**

MR. SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition.

NovAtel Communications Ltd.

MR. MARTIN: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to continue with the waste and mismanagement coming from this government. It's very ironic that today Telus, the former money-making part of Alberta Government Telephones, announced profits of \$183 million, and of course this is owned now by private investors. The last time we had information, more than a year ago, our white elephant NovAtel had cost taxpayers over \$200 million, and as far as we know, the red ink is still flowing. Last month the government said that they were going to make a decision very soon on the future of NovAtel. My question to the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications is simply this: given that four weeks have now passed since this task force was appointed, will the minister of technology now tell this House what the government plans to do with NovAtel?

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the Leader of the Opposition raised the matter of Telus' success as a privatized company, and indeed I think all taxpayers should be pleased as well that the privatization of Telus brought \$500 million to the taxpayers' bottom line.

With respect to NovAtel, Mr. Speaker, a management committee was put in place in order to plan for the divestiture of this company. Discussions have been ongoing for some time. They are still ongoing, and when an announcement is ready to be made, I will make it.

MR. MARTIN: Meanwhile the taxpayers lose millions and millions and millions, Mr. Speaker, while they're sitting around doing nothing.

I want to ask the minister simply this question because he's bragging about Telus. Everybody expected it to make money, Mr. Speaker. Doesn't this minister really see the injustice of Telus reporting \$183 million in profits, while taxpayers are picking up the white elephant NovAtel? Doesn't he see something wrong with that?

MR. STEWART: As I indicated, Mr. Speaker, the privatization of Telus netted close to \$500 million to the taxpayers of Alberta. It also removed about a billion and a half dollars of loan guarantees and other debts that were previously existing. The Telus privatization was very much a success for the taxpayers of Alberta, and we would hope that the news with respect to NovAtel would be coming along soon.

MR. MARTIN: We know that it's coming out soon, Mr. Speaker, and we know we're going to lose millions more. That's the reality of it. How this minister can talk about the great deal when we're losing millions I just can't believe.

I'll try another tack, Mr. Speaker. The government supposedly now believes in freedom of information. My question now to the minister: in this new spirit of freedom of information, will the minister table for Alberta taxpayers NovAtel's financial statements for 1990 and make public the company's financial results for 1991?

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the matter of the 1991 financial statements for the company, they're audited by the Auditor General, and as soon as we receive those statements, we will table them in the House in the normal course as required.

With respect to 1990, the moment that we got information with respect to the losses and the write-offs that occurred, which were extraordinary in that case, we disclosed that information publicly.

That information is out there. We will be filing the audited statements from the Auditor General just as soon as convenient and appropriate.

MR. SPEAKER: Second main question, Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MARTIN: Convenient and appropriate for who?

Political Fund-raising

MR. MARTIN: My second question is to the Attorney General. I want to deal with a serious ethics problem. We learned today that after promising publicly to turn over money in a secret slush fund to his constituency association, the Minister of Education decided instead to give this money to charity. Now, we're glad that charity gets money, Mr. Speaker, but what the minister is effectively doing is avoiding disclosure of how much money was involved. At the time when the Attorney General was meeting with him about nine months ago, the minister said that he wanted to live within the spirit and the letter of the law. He clearly hasn't done this. My question, then, to the Attorney General: will the Attorney General confirm for the Assembly that the Minister of Education agreed in discussions with the Attorney General to live within the spirit of the law and turn the funds over to his constituency association?

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the Minister of Education is not here today, but I can confirm for the hon. member that in our conversations of approximately nine months ago I advised Mr. Dinning to get rid of the fund. He didn't need the headache of it being around. He was not doing anything illegal at that time with the fund. He did say that he would get rid of it. As I understand it, he took legal advice not from the Attorney General – the Attorney General is the government's lawyer, not an individual's lawyer – that, in fact, his association could not receive these funds because they could not be receipted funds. On that basis, he made a decision to disburse them to charities. I believe he has confirmed that the two charities received the money.

MR. MARTIN: We have these rules of disclosure for a purpose. My question flowing to the Attorney General. A politician's word should be sacrosanct, Mr. Speaker. Is it not true that by doing this, we will not know how much money was involved and it will not be publicly disclosed? He's effectively got around it.

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, again, it would be better from the member's own mouth. I believe that he is quite willing to give the receipts from the charities that received the cash. In fact, when the law provides that you cannot give the money to your association, I think it is quite great of the member to in fact choose two charities and pass that money through to them.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, it's not the charities that are the question. It's the reality of an act of disclosure. This is a serious matter.

My question, then, to the Attorney General. We will be having an Ethics Commissioner come on fairly soon, Mr. Speaker. Would the Attorney General assure the House that this at least questionable behaviour by the Minister of Education will be referred to the Ethics Commissioner when he assumes his post next week?

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, this type of event would certainly be taken up by the commissioner under the new Act. We don't

have that person in office yet. The member has informed me as of this morning that he in fact has referred the matter to the incoming Ethics Commissioner, but I might put this proviso on it: I doubt that the Ethics Commissioner, once he is appointed, would have the ability to look into it. The minister has done absolutely everything within his means to ensure that this thing is very public and that people such as the charities have received the funds and is trying to live within even the spirit of the Conflicts of Interest Act.

MR. SPEAKER: Leader of the Liberal Party, Edmonton-Glengarry.

2:50

Sex Offenders

MR. DECORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question relates to the issue of sexual assault offences and more particularly to the easy release of offenders involved in sexual offences. There is fear and there is anger, particularly in the Edmonton community, because of a recent sexual offence with respect to the issue of this easy release. My question is to the Attorney General. I know he's had an opportunity to review this matter. Would he give us his assessment of the matter of easy release relating to sexual offences?

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, I certainly concur with the hon. member's assessment that a sexual offence happening, alleged or in reality, is indeed a very, very serious matter. I've expressed that seriousness. The Criminal Code provides, when a person is detained or arrested on an item, for two ways of getting it before the court in terms of whether they're going to be incarcerated or not. One is called an appearance notice, and one is called a bail application. Within the discretion of the arresting officer he can use the appearance notice, which in this particular instance was done. I expressed my concern and asked that it be looked into, and I can confirm for the House that the Edmonton city police have confirmed to me that they have addressed all of the conditions that are before them in using an appearance notice and feel that they have acted properly in this matter. I guess that when the matter comes before the court, we will have the opportunity at that time to know what the evidence is and each person have their own judgment.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I think we're limited in our ability to discuss this case. It's before the courts. My question was much more broad. It was the issue of easy releases, the issue of easy releases relating to sex offenders. This thing has gone too far. What can we do to tighten it up, and what are you doing?

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, I guess it was by implication, and I should spell it out more clearly, that there are two ways when somebody is apprehended to address their incarceration. One is through the use of an appearance notice. These are spelled out, incidentally, in the Criminal Code, which happens to be a federal statute. The other is to arrest, incarcerate, and bring the accused before a judge and have the details without prejudice to the case brought forward so a judge can adjudicate whether the person receives bail or is incarcerated.

In this particular instance, which is totally within the discretion of the police force as spelled out in the Criminal Code, they looked at the conditions you should look at. The first of which is: could the person be identified? Yes, easily identified. Did they think the chance of a recurrence of the offence was an issue? Obviously, on the basis of the evidence, which I can't adjudicate

at this moment, they didn't think so, and they used the appearance notice. So as much as I express my concern, and I have the assurance of the police force that they did look into it and considered these matters, our hands are tied. If the hon. member is suggesting that perhaps the Criminal Code should be changed so that this couldn't happen, I'd be delighted to take his recommendations.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, it's exactly that that I'm trying to get at. The Sexual Assault Centre in Edmonton dealt with 1,106 victims last year. They say that easy release has the potential of creating more victims in Alberta. What, Mr. Minister, are you doing either with the federal government or yourself to ensure that women can leave their homes in safety? That's all I want to know.

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, for something that is so serious, I don't think the hon. member has to try and bring it into the political arena. I have had the assurance of the Edmonton city police that in this particular instance, which we're addressing – we're not addressing the broad, broad issue; that is another issue – they did address it. I would be delighted to pass the representations of the hon. member on to the Minister of Justice, the Hon. Kim Campbell, that the Act should be changed. However, I might caution, aside from these types of offences, where in fact the appearance notice is not usually used, by using the appearance notice, which we've even suggested the police use in nonserious offences, we can accommodate a savings in what we spend in the justice system, which I also think the wallet waver was very, very adamant on doing.

Students Finance

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, a number of concerns exist with respect to the Canada student loan program, in particular the default ratio, the cost of the administration fee, the requirements placed on the number of courses the student must take, and the student's performance. I understand that the Minister of Advanced Education recently met with his provincial counterparts and the federal minister. Can the minister advise the House as to whether or not any progress was made at that meeting in resolving these issues?

MR. GOGO: Well, Mr. Speaker, as members may be aware, one in every two students in Alberta applies for and receives student financial assistance. A major item students have raised with me is the so-called 3 percent administration fee, or 3 percent tax, when they apply for a student loan. We've tried for some time with the government of Canada's Secretary of State to have that removed. I traveled to Ottawa on the weekend and met with Mr. de Cotret and was successful in having that 3 percent tax on Canada student loans removed.

In terms of other issues, Mr. Speaker, clearly the default on Canada student loans is a major concern to everyone. We had discussions there, and there were some recommendations as to which ways or which matters could be adopted to alter that. The final comment I'd make is with regard to course load. There was general agreement by all ministers that students in our postsecondary system to be serious about their studies and continue to access Canada student loans take an 80 percent course load during that school year.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, by way of a supplementary. A very general concern and a major one that also exists with the post-

secondary students of the province concerns the fact that the monthly living allowance allowed under the student loan program has not been raised for a number of years. Is any action being taken with respect to making adjustments in this regard?

MR. GOGO: Well, Mr. Speaker, the number one issue with the students in Alberta has been this whole question of the weekly loan amount, which has been fixed for seven or eight years at \$105. We continue to make strong representation because we in Alberta feel very strongly that students must have adequate financial assistance if they're going to continue their studies. The federal minister informed me as well as others that his hands are virtually tied. However, if he could adopt some type of strategy, such as using the Income Tax Act or easing the default rate, which now is approaching a billion dollars in Canada student loans in terms of default, he would give that serious consideration. I would look forward to the federal minister announcing sometime this year, on the recommendation of the provincial ministers, that that weekly allowance of \$105 be increased to some realistic amount.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Jasper Place, followed by Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Pulp Mill Emission Standards

MR. McINNIS: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, residents of the Grande Prairie district are facing a period of uncertainty following the announcement today that Procter & Gamble's pulp mill is up for sale. It's going to be a hard road to find a buyer, at least until such time as the Minister of the Environment discontinues his ad hoc, seat-of-the-pants negotiation strategy on pulp mill standards, all of which masquerades under the title of leading edge technology. I wonder if the minister has decided to replace his system, in which officials stand over the shoulders of pulp mill operators and tell them what latest Swedish technology they should buy and from whom they should buy it, with a single, clear, defensible standard for environmental cleanliness for pulp mills in Alberta.

3:00

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to first of all remind the hon. member that his brothers and sisters in British Columbia and Ontario have just taken over a hierarchy of stinking, rotten, belching, polluting pulp mills that don't in any way measure up to the standards that we have established for the province of Alberta. I would remind the hon. member once again that we have put in place relative to bleached kraft pulp mills the highest achievable standards in the world. What can be better than that?

MR. McINNIS: This leading edge technology is patent nonsense.

Since he does talk about British Columbia, I'm going to ask him this question. Will he go so far as the Hon. John Cashore, the minister of the environment in British Columbia, who announced on January 16 this year that within a decade British Columbia will have total elimination of chlorine contaminants, total elimination?

MR. KLEIN: I find it very, very interesting, Mr. Speaker, that the province of Alberta is already four years ahead of the province of British Columbia. For the information of the hon. member, Mr. Cashore also announced that by the year 1994 they would achieve 1.5 kilograms per air dried tonne of absorbable organic halide, a standard that has been in place in this province for the last year and a half.

Health Disciplines Training

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, once again the government appears to be targeting students in Alberta. This time it's the Department of Health doing it, cutting the training stipend to health students at NAIT, SAIT, the University of Alberta, and the University of Calgary. I'd like to ask the Minister of Health: what's the reason for the action?

MS BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, what I can say is that the program of student stipends is under review between both the Department of Advanced Education and the Department of Health. There is a major inconsistency in the fact that we have 35 health disciplines in training in Alberta and only 16 of them receive a stipend. Even within jurisdictions like nursing you'll have inconsistencies between institutions as to who receives a stipend and who does not. The issue we're trying to address is the issue of fairness and trying to look also at issues such as: should the stipend program more appropriately be run through student finance rather than through the institutions themselves? That review is under way, and I would be pleased to discuss it further with the member when the budget comes down.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, thank you. The question remains: why did the department, under these circumstances, send a directive to the hospitals dated March 2 and not to the educational institutions and no consultation with the students?

MS BETKOWSKI: Well, that's not the case. I've had meetings with several groups of students involved in stipends. It is in many cases the institutions that have the budget for the stipends. Certainly we are working through the issues. No decisions have finally been made, and I'll be happy to discuss it further with the member next month when the Provincial Treasurer brings forward the budget.

MR. SPEAKER: Rocky Mountain House.

Grain Transportation

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many, many farmers in this province have been suffering through some very difficult times that have been brought about by severe weather in some areas and low commodity prices throughout. When there is a bit of a light on the horizon, we suddenly learn that there is a strike out at the west coast that's causing major problems for our exports. To the Minister of Agriculture: could you outline to this House and to the people of Alberta the exact effects of this strike and any demurrage charges that might be pending as well?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is very correct in that one of the terminals at Vancouver is shut down, the Alberta Wheat Pool terminal. It is the largest terminal there, handling about 25 percent of the grain going through the port of Vancouver. About 40 percent of the grain it handles comes from Alberta, which would mean that we're losing the shipment of about 400 railway carloads of grain per day. I can't at this point in time put any value on the demurrage that it's costing, but it is certainly having a damaging effect on not only the cash flow to our farmers but the ability of Canada to maintain its record in delivering grain to its buyers.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Rocky Mountain House.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think and so do many farmers that it is absolutely scandalous when 19 people can hold up that kind of shipment. What, if anything, can the minister do or is the minister doing?

MR. ISLEY: This is basically a federal matter, but we can continue to work on three things. First of all, press the federal government into declaring all people handling grain as essential service workers. Secondly, I think that if we were to change some of the rules by which we carry out the grain business, we would offer other options to farmers. If the farmer were receiving the transportation money instead of the railway, other modes of transportation could then be used when strikes shut down the existing one. Other ports could be used. During the last strike we did do some shipping through the port of Seattle, and maybe that should be reconsidered.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Calder.

Disabled Children's Support

MS MJOLSNESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is good at rhetoric in support of families, but in reality this is not the case. The Department of Family and Social Services has proposed directions for changing the handicapped children's services program which will make the services more regulated, less flexible, and would mean that up to 25 percent of the children currently receiving services could be cut off. I'd like to ask the minister: why has the minister proposed directions to these children's services which are completely at odds with the recommendations of the Premier's council and parents who need more flexible services, not less?

MR. OLDRING: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Edmonton-Calder is being awfully presumptuous. What the minister and what the government is doing is going through the process that we often do, a process of consultation. We have a program for handicapped children here in the province of Alberta to supplement the dollars that the Minister of Education is making available, to supplement the supports that the Minister of Health is making available. Some 6,000 families are accessing these services. We think the program is a good one. We recognize that perhaps there's room for additional improvement, so I'm working very closely with parents across this province. We're working very thoroughly through a consultative process to make sure that the directions and the actions that we take in the future are the appropriate ones.

MS MJOLSNESS: Mr. Speaker, the government's own proposal is for cost sharing and needs testing, the very changes that were rejected in 1987. To the minister: in view of the fact that parents may have to institutionalize their children if they don't have access to these services, will the minister now make a commitment to these children and their families that no child will be denied a necessary service because of cost sharing, needs testing, income testing, or asset testing?

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, again the commitment that I make is to work very closely not only with these families – obviously they're first and foremost in terms of our consultations – but we have some 50-plus meetings scheduled across the province involving hundreds of Albertans: FCSS boards, health units, advocacy groups, service agencies, Metis organizations, Indian bands. An exhaustive list of Albertans are being involved in this

process. In fact, we even made arrangements for the Member for Edmonton-Calder to come out to one of our meetings when she made the request. It was regrettable that she wasn't there. I would have appreciated her input.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Avonmore.

Disposable Diapers

MS M. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Minister of Health. Almost 80 percent of new mothers use disposable diapers without realizing the potential health risk to their babies. For example, diapers which contain polyacrylate crystals, similar to those used in tampons linked to toxic shock syndrome, continue to be promoted and sold. It has been shown conclusively that babies are five times more likely to have diaper rash with disposable diapers than with cloth diapers. In addition, trace levels of dioxins are present even though safe levels have never been established. My question: given the health hazards for babies, will the minister commit to moving towards eliminating their use in Alberta's hospitals as well as informing the public of the risks they impose on their children?

MR. SIGURDSON: Maybe we could Pamper Ralph.

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Let's get the answer. [interjection] Order please in the whole House. Order.

3:10

MS BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, with respect to this question and the one that the hon. member raised yesterday, I have already launched inquiries through the Department of Health along with National Health and Welfare with respect to consumer product and the safety of the product because I think that respect of those jurisdictions has to be guarded. I haven't yet made any such directive as the hon. member is suggesting with respect to hospitals, although, interestingly, many hospitals have chosen to switch over to reusable products just because of the cost of them through their laundry service. However, I don't have a full answer, and I will endeavour to get one for the hon. member as quickly as possible through Health and Welfare.

MR. SPEAKER: Brief supplementary, please.

MS M. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Due to improper usage the 1.8 billion disposable diapers which make up 500,000 tonnes of Canada's garbage each year also pose an environmental health hazard. Failure to rinse these diapers means that bacteria and viruses, including living viruses from recently immunized babies, are sent to our landfill sites. My question: given the dangers of environmental contamination and increasing strain on our landfill sites, will the minister and her colleague the Minister of the Environment commit to acting to address this serious threat to the environment and the health of Albertans?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I believe that we have committed to an overall reduction in the amount of materials, disposable diapers and all other kinds of materials, that now go into our landfills. As a matter of fact, there is a national protocol, and Alberta is very, very much a part of that protocol, to reduce the amount of waste that goes into landfills by 50 percent by the year 2000. Virtually all the container and diaper manufacturers and so on, products that now find their way into landfills, have agreed to participate with governments in achieving this particular objective.

MR. SPEAKER: Westlock-Sturgeon.

Drought Assistance

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta government has had a program in place for about a year now of drought assistance for southeast Alberta farmers. However, it's come to my attention that the government is denying this assistance to some of the farmers who owe money or who are asked for quitclaim on a fraction of the land. In other words, they're being told that they get no drought assistance over the whole farm unless they quitclaim a small part of it to the government. Does the minister condone this form of blackmail?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member has knowledge of something like this occurring, I think he's got a responsibility on behalf of those people to bring the details in and share them with me.

MR. TAYLOR: I'm very interested that the minister is interested in seeing what his people are doing out there. The name is Daniel Greene, Box 64, Carmangay, phone number 643-2417.

Can the minister promise to report on this before one week goes by?

MR. ISLEY: If the hon. member is so kind to send that information across the House, I will report back as soon as I have reviewed the matter.

Speaker's Ruling Reference to a Nonmember

MR. SPEAKER: Did the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon clear with that person that he was willing to have his name mentioned in public?

MR. TAYLOR: Of course, and if you need any more, I'll bring them next week too.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Take your place.

MR. TAYLOR: You asked, and you got an answer.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, the answer is a yes or a no. It's not another introduction to yet another matter or carrying on with embroidery work.

Lesser Slave Lake.

Arctic Winter Games

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my understanding that Team Alberta North was extremely successful in our recently held Arctic Winter Games in Yellowknife. I congratulate all those northern athletes who were involved. The government of Alberta has committed approximately \$1 million to Slave Lake for the first ever Alberta hosting of the Winter Games in 1994. It was a hard fought battle between many constituencies. Would the Minister of Tourism, Parks and Rec indicate how this government will continue to support northern athletes to increase competition, development, and participation in the '94 Winter Games?

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, the challenge is out to the communities in northern Alberta to go from the 192 that they had in Whitehorse when they participated in 14 sports, to increase that component. The average of the Northwest Territories, Yukon, and Alaska is some 300 athletes. So there is an opportunity for

expansion to take place. On top of that, there was an opportunity while we were there to invite the Russian delegation, and after some negotiation they've said that they will have at least 50 athletes, six cultural people, and some coaches. So it will be expanded in countries too.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, briefly.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to see that there's some expansion action happening.

Although winning medals is not the primary focus of the Arctic Winter Games, would the minister let all Albertans know how northern Albertans fared at these games?

MR. SPARROW: I'm very proud of the Alberta team, Mr. Speaker. They did very, very well. They were received in Whitehorse and displayed themselves very well in the opening ceremonies. They came out as almost the top team going into it. They did receive 11 gold, 18 silver, and 19 bronze.

Magnesium Plant

MR. McEACHERN: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Economic Development and Trade refused to answer questions both inside and outside the House about the Magnesium Company of Canada plant at High River.

Speaker's Ruling Insisting on Answers

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, I'm sure I didn't hear correctly about making comments about the minister's answers or lack of answers. Just start again. Let's get going without that.

Magnesium Plant (continued)

MR. McEACHERN: This kind of behaviour is particularly unacceptable given that he told reporters outside the House that he knew the answers to the questions asked by the Leader of the Opposition. So my question to the minister is simply this: if the minister knows the answers, why has he refused to tell Albertans the real situation with the Magnesium Company of Canada? What is it that he's trying to hide?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I'm more than happy to respond to the hon. member and to indicate to him that it is our desire to have full disclosure. The difficulty that we're facing is that until the transaction is completed, we don't know what the province of Alberta will in reality be exposed to. The hon. member, in a very misleading way, suggests that we're going to be exposed to all of what we have backstopped as it relates to the Magnesium Company. This is totally untrue. We have suggested to him – and I suggested it to him in previous times during the last session – that once all of it has been finalized, we're more than happy to make all that information available, which we do on a consistent basis, whether it's through this Legislative Assembly or in the public accounts. I'm more than happy to share that information with the hon. member. I would only ask him to be patient, because we cannot share information with him that we presently do not have.

MR. McEACHERN: Well, Mr. Speaker, if there had been no change in the situation, the minister could have said that to us yesterday instead of giving us the song and dance he did.

Yesterday he also said:

We're going to continue with these strong economic thrusts because we recognize that we've got an obligation to provide jobs for Albertans.

Is the MagCan situation the kind of economic thrust that this government is going to perpetuate? Is that what you're saying?

3:20

MR. ELZINGA: I should share with him also that it was in the last session that we released the record whereby we indicated that we have suffered some losses, but the successes are much greater than the losses. One only has to examine the record within our food processing sector. For the first time this year our manufacturing sector within food processing is greater than our primary agricultural production. If one looks at our petrochemical production, Mr. Speaker, again those levels are exceeding what they did years before. The same with the chemical industry, our electronics industry, our exports: all of them are on the increase. They're on the increase because of a number of economic initiatives and economic policies of this government. We're delighted that this province has been buffered from the worldwide recession, but we also acknowledge, as the hon. members opposite have indicated, that we are going through a world recession, and we're not totally isolated from it. Because of that, there are going to be some failures, but we're delighted to report that the success rate is that much greater than our failure rate.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Whitemud.

Multiculturalism

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm quoting from a speech given by the Premier to the Rotary Club.

But I propose that there be a new condition – that multiculturalism should not be a matter imposed by law in Canada.

To the minister responsible for multiculturalism: do you agree or disagree with this statement made by the Premier of this province?

Speaker's Ruling Seeking Opinions

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, better luck at trying to rephrase the question, because all you're doing is asking an opinion of the minister. Look at *Beauchesne*.

Multiculturalism (continued)

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, to the minister responsible for multiculturalism: is he prepared to stand up in this House and say that he supports multiculturalism as it's imposed by legislation in this province?

MR. MAIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have the opportunity to again confirm my position and the Premier's position – I believe were he here, he would confirm this – the government's position as stated in the current Bill that was passed by this Assembly in 1990, in the ongoing programs that we commit to through our Multiculturalism Commission, that the government of Alberta is committed to maintaining a strong, diverse population. We're committed to helping all Albertans, whether they've been here for five minutes or five generations, achieve everything this great province has to offer.

There is no suggestion made by anyone that our department or the laws are going to be repealed, that our protection for individuals under the Individual's Rights Protection Act is going to be repealed, no suggestion that programs are going to be modified in

any way to leave people out. In fact, what we're doing in the current year and in the upcoming year is to expand our reach in our multicultural programs to include everyone. It's a notion that has not been done by anyone before. The Liberal Party is famous for ethnic . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. minister. We have to leave a little bit of time for a supplementary. Let's have it, please.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, to the minister responsible for multiculturalism. Are you prepared to go on record stating that you are prepared to support those . . .

Speaker's Ruling Parliamentary Language

MR. SPEAKER: Excuse me, hon. member. I hate to interrupt your flow. You do not use the word "you" in here. You talk about: is "the minister" prepared? Thank you.

Multiculturalism (continued)

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, is the minister prepared to stand up and support multiculturalism in the sense that the minister stands behind the laws that govern multiculturalism in this country and in this province?

MR. MAIN: Mr. Speaker, I have done exactly that on no less than half a dozen public occasions in the last few weeks. I did it in this House on Friday, I did it on Monday, and I'm doing it again today. I don't know how many more times I have to do it before the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud understands this. The answer to his question is again yes.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
Edmonton-Beverly.

Health Care Facilities

MR. EWASIUK: Mr. Speaker, my questions are to the Minister of Health. Every quadrant in the city of Edmonton except northeast Edmonton has a hospital. The result is that the emergency ward is overloaded now, and even in the future when the expansion is completed I think it will still continue to be overloaded. We also have the Fort Saskatchewan hospital that services the northeast, but also it's unable to carry the load that's required. My question to the minister is: will the Minister of Health now agree that northeast Edmonton is in serious need of a health facility, and will she commit some form of 24-hour care to our quadrant of the city?

MS BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, I think that given the growth that has occurred in northeast Edmonton, certainly we need to look at ensuring appropriate access to health services for citizens of Edmonton living in that area. I don't support a freestanding hospital being built in the area, but I do believe that the proposals coming forward via the Royal Alexandra hospital to look at some options that may be possible are appropriate. When I receive those, hopefully sometime this spring, I will be in a better position to answer the hon. member as to the kinds of options that may be considered to provide the access. I put forward, however, a note of caution that just having a facility doesn't necessarily mean access to health services. I think our primary goal must be access in whatever new form we might contemplate.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Edmonton-Beverly.

MR. EWASIUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that reply. The facility that I am suggesting doesn't need to be a full-sized hospital. It could be a 24-hour community centre with the ability to handle minor emergencies. The minister must be aware that the New Democratic caucus has for years sponsored the cause for community health care centres. My question to the minister: is there any good reason why this government wouldn't try the obvious alternative; that is, to develop a community health care pilot project and to do it in northeast Edmonton?

MS BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, I think the ND caucus needs to look at the economics of health. I know they are all under the impression, from what I've read of their presentation, that by adding on a community health centre we will be saving health resources. The only way we are going to be saving health resources is if we reallocate resources from existing health facilities into community facilities. I'm a strong proponent of that, but an add-on is not something I am a proponent of. I am aware of the Royal Alexandra looking at the possibility of some kind of forum which is not stand-alone to serve the needs of northeast Edmonton. I will await the presentation, which I understand is coming this spring.

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

MR. SPEAKER: First, there are two important matters to be dealt with before we get around to the request under Standing Order 40. The first one is this: throughout the course of today and I believe also yesterday we've had the comments, shouts across the Chamber, about some questions being puffed. I'd remind hon. members that every member here has the right to be heard in this Assembly and to be heard without interruption. The other part of it is that this is not a figure-skating contest where we're going to put up a sign for a 6.5 or whatever as to the quality of the question, no matter which part of the House in which it originates. So I would ask that hon. members please refrain from such types of comments because all it does, indeed, is encourage others then to interrupt you when you're into the process. That really isn't being fair to you or to your constituents.

head:

Statement by the Speaker

Demonstration inside Legislature Building

MR. SPEAKER: Yesterday we had an occurrence occur - I guess most occurrences do occur, don't they? We had an event occur in the foyer of the Legislature. It was raised as a point of order by the Minister of Career Development and Employment. So it is that I'd like to read to the House the following statement.

A disruptive and vocal demonstration did indeed take place just as members were entering the House yesterday and continued while the House was in session. During a conversation on another matter, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods advised the Chair that the participants in the demonstration had been guests in his office prior to the House. The Chair was also advised that Edmonton-Mill Woods cautioned the group that demonstrations were not allowed within the Legislature Building and that other avenues of protest could be utilized. The member expressed his disappointment to the Chair at the disruptive behaviour of his visitors. Upon further investigation it appears that this group of protesters was responsible for arranging the surreptitious entry of concealed banners and possibly subverted security by arranging for

other persons to enter via other doors where entry is prohibited for use by the general public for legitimate security reasons.

The Chair is quite concerned at the extent of the security breach, as the office of the Speaker is responsible for the safety of all members while in attendance during session. Unfortunately, because the Speaker's security staff are not in control of the perimeter of the precincts of this parliament, which they are partially charged to protect, the Chair may find it difficult to prevent further security breaches which could and should properly be dealt with by Legislative Assembly security staff, as is the case in many other parliaments.

Erskine May at page 126 states, quote,

that it is a gross breach of the privilege of this House for any person to obstruct and insult the Members of this House in the coming to, or the going from, the House.

And again:

Members and others have been punished for such molestation occurring within the precincts of the House, whether by assault or insulting or abusive language, or outside the precincts.

3:30

Parliamentary law upholds the absolute sanctity of a member's unrestricted right of access and egress from the precincts of parliament 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. All hon. members are well aware of the privileges accorded to them as members to guarantee their attendance, so much so that a member is immune from certain legal processes to protect the member's absolute right to attend to their parliamentary duties. Anyone violating this most sacred of privileges can be held in gross contempt of the House.

The Chair was dismayed to see and hear a chanting crowd not outside the building but inside the building and virtually at the foot of the steps directly accessing the Chamber. The group conducted themselves in a manner that violated virtually everything that a member has the right to expect when called to attend the Chamber. The protesters intimidated and hindered some members in their right of unrestricted access to the Chamber.

The Solicitor General was placed in a most difficult position. The Solicitor General's department controls the perimeter of the building and is responsible for the general supervision of demonstrations. Under ordinary circumstances the Solicitor General's staff would have removed the demonstrators from the inside of the building. However, the demonstrators were dealing with the Solicitor General in a personal manner rather than in his administrative capacity. Therefore, the departmental staff did not take action to remove the demonstrators from the rotunda.

The Chair recognizes and reaffirms that demonstrators have the right to protest outside of parliament. As the administrative officer in charge of the protection of all members of this House the Chair found the safety and free access of members unacceptably compromised yesterday. The Chair declares yesterday's action to be a gross contempt of the privileges of this Assembly.

In the final analysis it is the members, it is you collectively, we collectively, who should ultimately be the ones in charge of our own security in our own Legislature Building through the Speaker and Sergeant-at-Arms. It is the members who must resolve this matter of security jurisdiction to prevent further occurrences of yesterday's incident and the contempt of this House.

Thank you.

head: **Motions under Standing Order 40**

MR. SPEAKER: A Standing Order 40 request. Someone from the Liberal caucus is going to move this, I understand, on behalf of Calgary-McKnight.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, the Kurdish people have suffered for many years without a homeland and were demonstrating, of course, and the Turkish police possibly overreacting, killing 26 as we saw on TV and other news coverage of the event. Our purpose in moving the motion is not to interfere with the internal policing, you might say, of another country but to try to drive home to the international community that the rule of law has to take place. The rule of law has to eventually be the only type of action that takes place when minorities demonstrate in any country.

To say that it is in another country and that we are interfering with another country, Mr. Speaker, is not proper. If we do not take this stand, it means we are derelict in our duty, because all mankind are brothers and sisters. Wherever people are discriminated against or hurt in the world, it's our business at least to register in the form of a motion or an expression that we find it very reprehensible indeed.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: A Standing Order 40 request again. Members of the House are well aware of it, but those persons who may be viewing this matter, this is not the matter of the validity of the motion; it's a matter of urgency of debate that is taking place here.

All those in favour of allowing the matter to proceed on the basis of urgency, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Carried. Thank you.

Westlock-Sturgeon, do you wish to make additional comments to the motion?

Massacre of Kurds in Turkey

Moved by Mr. Taylor on behalf of Mrs. Gagnon:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly express its sympathy to the Kurdish community regarding the recent killing of members of the Kurdish community in Turkey.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, there's very little I could do to enlarge on what I said earlier. It is just our wish that this House – which apparently has already by approving at least the urgency of the thing – go on record as disapproving the use of force to keep any minority from exercising their opinions and their rights in any country. I realize that's as far as it goes, but when it goes that far – we have just seen the example of South Africa. A moral and trade restriction, that admittedly took nearly two generations to take hold, did take place. It did go. The rest of the world did it without force, without starving people, without beating people, and it brought it around. I think if we're ever going to get the rule of law to take place, we have to notice things like this that go on, not assess the correctness or the incorrectness of the minority whether they're demonstrating or not, but censure the majority for using force in trying to subrogate or kill dissent in any country.

Thanks.

AN HON. MEMBER: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Call for the question. The motion is before the House. All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. The motion carries, let the record show unanimously.

The Chair will also be in contact with Calgary-McKnight to find out where the appropriate notification is to be sent.

head: **Orders of the Day**

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

Moved by Mr. Lund:

That an humble address be presented to His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To His Honour the Honourable Gordon Towers, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta:

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

[Debate adjourned March 23]

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, I rise to respond to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech from the Throne which we heard last week. Not surprisingly I have to express my disappointment with the content of the speech, in no way my disappointment with His Honour's extraordinary and very proper delivery of the speech. I must say that the content of the speech left me and many of the people that I am proud to represent somewhat disappointed. The absence of substance really is what is at the centre of these comments.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to continue to represent the constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar. This is a stable 35-year-old community. My family and I have lived there for a good many years. It's well designed. It has excellent parks and recreation facilities. One of the last communities of Edmonton that was designed with large lots, lots of open space, lots of good transportation systems, like many of the communities in the urban scene it's growing older. We're pleased to see many young and new families moving in. Families in fact are coming back again. Children of families that lived there in past years, finding this to be a wonderful and healthy and safe community, are coming back to Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Like many other communities it has its problems as well. As I move around the community, I find unemployment, family problems, domestic problems, difficulties with young people, as we see throughout the province.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

The people of Edmonton-Gold Bar have always given me good advice, Mr. Speaker. I go to them for advice, I go to them for help, I go to them for their opinions on needed programs and legislation, and they have never failed to give me good advice. I was interested. I took the throne speech to a meeting in Edmonton-Gold Bar and held it up to the membership and said I wanted to speak to what was in this throne speech, and they all laughed. Because this is what's in the throne speech.

3:40

AN HON. MEMBER: Nothing.

MRS. HEWES: This is exactly what the response was. That's what was felt by the people in my constituency, regardless of what members opposite think about it. That was the kind of expression that was given to me.

Mr. Speaker, we're given to sort of buzzwords and phrases in our throne speeches. In 1991 the throne speech talked of chal-

lenges and goals on fiscal, social, environmental, and constitutional issues. Last year we heard that "striving to balance the budget remains a priority." This year we hear that the first priority is stimulating the Alberta economy. Last year we heard about the success of the government's diversification policies, the introduction of environmental protection legislation. This year we heard of the government's new plans, new this year, for economic diversification and the introduction of that same environmental protection legislation that we were promised last year. The true theme of the throne speech is, it seems to me, an admission of failure on the government's part, failure to achieve the goals of fiscal management, balanced budgets, or leadership in the environment or elsewhere. This year the buzzword is "realities," the realities that we face. Well, let me tell you, the realities that I see and that the people of Edmonton-Gold Bar see and the people of many other constituencies in this province see are not the realities that are expressed in this throne speech.

In 1987 the Treasurer promised this House that, and I quote, "This government is determined not to allow the accumulated provincial deficit to grow unchecked." Well, the last time I looked at it, the Canadian Bond Rating Service calculated the net provincial debt at \$17 billion. In 1987 that figure was \$7.9 billion. The people of Alberta were promised in 1987 that the Treasurer could balance the budget in 1990. In '89 he revised that to 1991. Last year the Treasurer led us to believe that he could achieve that goal and introduced a budget with a supposed \$33 million surplus. Well, it's pretty painfully obvious to everyone in this House today that this year's budget is going to be a deficit budget and a large one, perhaps at over a billion dollars.

Mr. Speaker, while the Treasurer failed, as most of us believed he would, there was still hope on this side of the House that he would persevere in his task. This throne speech marks an abandonment of the policy of balanced budgets. It seems to be an admission of failure on the government's part. Talk of stimulating the economy should be translated to read: more deficits on the way, and we can't figure out how to balance the budget.

This year has seen the utter collapse of the government's diversification strategy. The plan of loan guarantees, direct investments in such examples as MagCan, CarboVan, Northern Steel, NovAtel - I'm sure all the members over here know the list and remember the names - has proven to be a complete failure. Those firms are either bankrupt or struggling. The government, however, refuses to inform the taxpayers what the final cost to the province will be. Well, our research suggests that the loss now totals over \$493 million. That money is gone. Another \$205 million is calculated under probable losses. Here we list Gainers, MagCan, Lakeside Centennial. There are some assets left, but how much the government will get back is certainly uncertain. Then tack on questionable loans and guarantees to NovAtel, Alberta Newsprint, Glacier Ammonia, and you get a grand total of \$947 million of taxpayers' money at risk.

I do congratulate the government on a number of issues that they have promised legislation on, one of them being access to information. I would have preferred to see this titled "freedom of information" as our party has introduced in the House for the last three years.

The government is also responding to an increasingly strong voice from the people of Alberta that they need a window on government. An effective freedom of information law gives people the chance to scrutinize the workings of government and may go a long way to restore the public's faith in government and politics. I'm worried, however, that while the government may still disappoint us by producing a watered-down version of our Bill, we may not get what in fact we have a right to. Exceptions

to what information is made available, Mr. Speaker, are crucial to protect the personal privacy of Albertans. What is allowed is of tantamount importance. The proposed Bill must not shelter government decisions from public view.

Mr. Speaker, I have commented that we are pleased to see that access to information will come forward in this session. I am also pleased that the government is finally – finally, finally – dealing with the pension liability. However you look at it, it seems that the beneficiaries are having to pick up the cost of government shortfall. In fact, as there have been some settlements agreed to, beneficiaries have said, “Well, this is about the best we could get or expect.” So we are beginning to see a resolution of that.

Mr. Speaker, I also support the notion of a referendum on the Constitution. I have spoken publicly on this matter. I believe this is the correct way to go, and I am pleased this government is going to assure Albertans that they will have that opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also pleased to see the government has committed to the recommendations of the family and community support services report that was done under the chairmanship of the Member for Highwood. This is a significant activity that has been conducted in our province. It's one that I personally am deeply committed to. I'm glad to see that that's in the throne speech, and I hope it will come true sooner rather than later.

Mr. Speaker, if I can just turn to the content of the speech itself and some of those realities that I mentioned that the speech attests to that are very different from what I am experiencing and what many people in our province are experiencing. If we look at the section on economic and fiscal reality, the government fails to show us any indication that they plan to deal in any strategic way with the immense debt. Now, is there a plan? Occasionally we hear mention of some sort of economic development strategy, some strategy to deal with the debt. As yet there is no visible plan. There is nothing in this speech that tells us that. There is no indication that it's going to be there, simply an acknowledgement that the challenge is there. Well, of course we know that, but what Albertans need to see is something from this government that not only acknowledges that the debt is there but that this is how we plan to deal with this debt over time. We have pleaded with the government to level with the people of Alberta and tell us. If there is a plan, tell us what it is. If there isn't one, then admit that, admit they don't know what they're going to do about it.

Mr. Speaker, similarly with the deficit of last year we were not able to convince the government that we should have a fall session of this House in order to deal with the circumstance of the budget, so we are now faced with over \$400 million in interim funds having been spent since we last considered the budget, with a deficit of probably over a billion dollars. We have no indication in this document, no indication whatsoever – it's a blank page – on how the government plans to deal with their annual deficit. There is nothing here to speak to the size of government, to the need to curtail the growth. There is nothing here regarding fiscal reform. There is in fact buried in the document some notion of parliamentary reform. I'm glad to hear that. That's something we have begged for as well and have produced a number of documents indicating where we believe this can happen and some immediate first steps that can happen to improve our circumstances here in this House. As yet there is nothing from the government on fiscal reform.

3:50

Mr. Speaker, the unemployment rate is not really mentioned as being a problem. While my figures tell us that the rate for the province as of February of this year is 9.6 percent, and that's up

4 percent over the same period last year, the national average is 10.6. Roughly 129,000 Albertans are out of work. The Calgary unemployment figure is 10.8 percent; Edmonton is at 10.9 percent. The throne speech makes no effort to deal with what is a very serious situation for people in this province who are unemployed and who are underemployed. There is no plan, no strategy here to deal with their circumstances. Further, the service sector, a low-income sector, is providing all the growth in employment in Canada. Service industries accounted for 94 percent of the total job growth between 1980 and '89. Seventy-one percent of working Canadians are employed in service industries now, a 47 percent increase since 1951. These are not trends that are productive or satisfactory, and this government proceeds never to deal with them.

Mr. Speaker, I look at the section about new initiatives and Toward 2000 Together. Well, here last year we had the brave statements about diversification, about the economy. This year we're talking about how we're consulting with Albertans. There's nothing wrong with consulting with Albertans, but does this not tell us that this government didn't have a plan that they were following and are now grasping for some way to deal with the circumstances? The next paragraph speaks about dismantling interprovincial trade barriers. As yet we have no knowledge about how well the Western Accord is working, if it is working to advantage to business in Alberta, just simply a statement that they have done it, that it is encouraging. I'd like to know from the province in the throne speech what the success rate has been. I'd also like to know what real moves the government plans to make in expanding natural gas sales outside Alberta and in this business of conducting a review of our natural resource royalties. What are the plans? Are they going to be revealed to us from on high? When do we hear what the proposals are?

The environmental reality. Still no suggestion here of the promotion of a municipal recycling program, something that is working well in some of our cities and towns. No leadership from the government whatsoever in solid waste disposal, in regionalization of solid waste, the kind of leadership I would have expected from them.

If I can go to the social realities, here the list is so long about the difference between the government's realities and my realities that one hardly knows where to start. We've been given something called the family grid. This is a sort of charter that gives us the checklist for government legislation and government programs against which they will be checked to make sure that these programs are benign for families and in no way injurious to families. Well, I would like to think that we never do create legislation that is injurious to anyone, that our programs are always benign to families. I really question what this says about former members of this Legislature or even current members of this Legislature. Has the kind of thing that we've been in the business of doing been injurious to families? What is it we're going to have to correct that has been difficult in the past?

We have a section of a department on family violence. We don't know exactly what they're doing. We don't know whether or not they have any statistics to indicate that their work so far has been successful whatsoever in curbing this most tragic of circumstances. In fact, on the contrary we have increasing numbers of incidents of family violence. We have increasing numbers of women having to seek shelter. I visited a satellite shelter in northern Alberta not too long ago and found to my surprise that while they are funded – and I congratulate the government for getting into the business of funding satellites – in fact they're expected to do far more than that. They are expected to deal with runaway children, with information services, with social assistance,

social allowance, and many, many other details for which they receive no assistance whatsoever. We need to correct some of these very extraordinary circumstances that we have allowed to crop up. Mr. Speaker, I have begged the government to look at the London model of dealing with family violence. It appears to be working well. I don't know what the resistance is. I'll be pursuing that in question period and during our budget sessions.

We have not mentioned poverty in the throne speech, the very difficult circumstances that many, many families are living in. The statistics on children are frightening. It's estimated that 400,000 Albertans live below the poverty line – 28,000 of those are working people who are earning the minimum wage – that one in every six Alberta children is living in poverty, and this in a province that prides itself on being able to care for our poor people and those who for whatever reason are not able to earn sufficient income. The Edmonton food bank use is up 32 and a half percent over the same time last year. Calgary food bank numbers show that 5,571 people have had to rely on food banks, and 49 percent of those were children. This is not, to me, an acceptable situation, and I don't believe it's acceptable to the people of Alberta to allow this to continue. The minimum wage was increased last year to \$5 an hour, but it's done very little to help people who are struggling to survive on low wages. At the new wage, Mr. Speaker, a single person would have to work 57 hours to reach the poverty line; a single parent with two children would need to work 98 hours a week to earn enough to come up to the poverty line: outrageous statistics, something that we cannot allow to continue, yet no mention of it in this so-called Speech from the Throne that is going to direct our activities for the next year.

Mr. Speaker, the circumstances with foster parents have come to our attention in rather grim fashion. The minister, to his credit, has announced two studies, one by the Ombudsman and one by the Children's Advocate. We look forward to these studies, but I would remind members of this House that we have had many studies. We have had studies done over many years that are still collecting dust on shelves, back to the 1970s. We know what needs to be done. The Foster Parent Association knows what needs to be done. I'm sure there are many good workers in the minister's department that know what needs to be done. As yet no action and we're doing two more studies. Well, I hope this time we'll not only get the studies but we'll get some action.

4:00

Mr. Speaker, I'm concerned about some recent developments with the Children's Advocate. Again, no mention in the speech about how well that's working, whether that position is, in fact, protecting children in the province. It appears that when the advocate did attempt to begin some inquiries, these were not followed through and the support was not there from the minister.

Mr. Speaker, last year at this time the Minister of Family and Social Services announced a new program of social assistance called supports for independence. That's a good title, and in theory that's a very good idea. To my knowledge there has been no study done. There is no indication at this point in time whether it's working. On the contrary, we see special warrants to the tune of over \$150 million that have had to provide more support for this department because more people need social assistance, not fewer. Is supports for independence working? Are people getting jobs? I doubt it. I don't think that program has produced the results or the effect that it was promised to produce, and I think it needs serious examination. I regret to say that I don't believe that kind of analysis was ever built into the program to begin with, so we probably never will know. There are problems with handi-

capped children, with getting support for them for out of school, for handicapped children running into problems with home care where they are having to be kept in hospital as opposed to in their home because of arbitrary limits on the amounts.

I've already spoken, Mr. Speaker, about my pleasure to see the response to the FCSS study, and I hope that will come true.

The department reorganization and the continual decentralization, I believe, is not a good plan. I have seen nothing yet that has convinced me that we will have a more efficient system that will get more help to the people who most desperately need it.

Day cares: as yet no indicators as to the need for parents to see the results of monitoring of day cares and to build that into our regulations.

Seniors: well, we know that in spite of what's being said here that the cutbacks are still in effect and that seniors are suffering.

A year or so ago social workers went out on strike because of caseloads. Caseloads have not gone down accordingly.

Mr. Speaker, last week we had a rally of students protesting the circumstances around student loans and their capacity to get into postsecondary educational institutions in the province, but here we have simply a statement that says, "My government will respond to the changing educational realities."

Mr. Speaker, all of these tell me that the throne speech, lacking in substance, is also not providing for Albertans the kind of change or difference that we have a right to expect from this government and is certainly not dealing with the kinds of realities that Albertans are experiencing. It does not deal with the economic situation. It does not deal with the debt. It does not deal with the deficit. It does not deal with unemployment. It doesn't deal with the social realities that you and I see in our constituencies every day.

It is interesting that while we talk about the realities of the province, the one reality that is missing is the political reality. That section is conveniently absent in this report. It isn't there. It doesn't tell us that Albertans are fed up. It doesn't tell us that Albertans believe they want a government that will respond to their needs and will, in fact, consult them when dramatic changes are going to be made that affect their lives. Mr. Speaker, the political reality is one that I think we all as members of this House need to deal with. The political reality is that people in Alberta are uncertain. They are facing very uncertain times, and they are very fearful. The political reality is that they want to see some leadership, and the unfortunate reality is that this throne speech does not give it to them and is sadly lacking. I regret that. I am disappointed. I would have hoped for more from this government in this year of great difficulty for Albertans.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater-Andrew.

MR. ZARUSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today in reply to the Speech from the Throne, which was so diligently delivered by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor. Congratulations to him. I also want to congratulate the mover, the hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House, and the seconder, the hon. Member for Highwood, who also expressed support for this great Speech from the Throne, this government's direction for the future of this great province. I also want to congratulate the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker on the grand job they're doing in their capacity as referees, I guess you call it, of the House. They've got a difficult job and do it diligently, so congratulations to you.

Mr. Speaker, as you can see, this speech is one that everybody can understand and read and know the direction that government

has to take in this province in this decade and beyond the year 2000. Everybody in this province knows, and I hope the opposition do too, that Albertans are ready to face the challenges of a changing province, a changing country, and also a changing world. Changes are happening all over, and I think it's very important that people understand that.

MR. McINNIS: Call the election now.

MR. ZARUSKY: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place wants an election. Well, let me tell you, you'd be wiped out if we had an election now. I think every member on this side is ready for an election any day.

Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, on the challenges facing Albertans the economy and jobs are naturally the priority of this government and also all Albertans. All the things this government has done naturally favour Albertans and their future, because without a future I don't think we'd need a government. Since 1971 this has been the challenge and the direction of this party and this government and very well accepted by Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just mention a few things about the Redwater-Andrew constituency. It's a constituency that's very diverse in both agriculture and government services and also the energy sector. As many other areas, it has its ups and downs in the economy and also in the way things happen. Unfortunately, agriculture in some areas is not faring as it should, especially in the grain sector. Fortunately, the Redwater-Andrew constituency is a predominately mixed farming area and farmers are getting the benefits of raising some livestock to feed some of their grain. As far as the grain sector goes, and many others, this government has, along with some federal government programs, I think looked after the farmers in the constituency the best possible with the GRIP program, the NISA program, many of the red meat stability programs, the fertilizer program, the fuel program, and the Crow offset program. I can keep going on and on, as everybody in this House and also in the Redwater-Andrew constituency knows.

4:10

Also, I guess the petroleum industry has seen some ups and downs. We've got some oil fields that are still producing – some a bit older in the Redwater area but still trying to get the resources out of the ground through some enhanced oil recovery – and creating jobs. I can tell you there are still jobs in the area. People are working, some off farm and others living in towns, and they're all making a decent living. Also some industry: the large Esso fertilizer plant which is, I believe, now working to capacity in the Redwater area and shipping fertilizer not only for the local market but all over the world, because as other countries open up, the demand is there for fertilizer. We've also had some opportunity for a few new industries in the southwest part of the constituency in the county of Lamont – some sodium chlorate plants for the bleaching process for our pulp mills that are working in this province with the diversity of the forestry industry – and the large Dow Chemical expansion in the county of Strathcona.

As you get farther east, I guess that's where some of the problems came this summer and fall with the dry weather, some dry areas. Mr. Speaker, I think both ministers of Agriculture were very willing to meet with the constituents of the northeast area, Redwater-Andrew and some of the other constituencies as well as all the MLAs in the northeast area, and tried to do as best possible, but as the report came out, certain pockets of the area had decent crops and decent hay crops, some others didn't. I know it's the direction of the minister to look at these isolated individual cases. I know it's happening because some of my

constituents approached me and definitely the minister was very supportive to look at these individual cases and make sure that these people enjoy their lives on their farms and in their communities, which is so important to this province.

So basically I think the Redwater-Andrew constituency – and hopefully after the boundary changes it still will be in existence and the people will be looked after as well as they have been in the past.

Mr. Speaker, somebody in I think the NDP opposition said yesterday that there was nothing on agriculture in this budget. Well, as I've outlined, this government has a lot of programs . . .

MR. SIGURDSON: It's not the budget.

MR. ZARUSKY: Sorry. Thank you for correcting me. It's the throne speech.

Agriculture was certainly mentioned in the throne speech. When the budget comes, you'll have your opportunity to see the great stuff done for agriculture.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, as we go on here, agriculture is definitely the top priority of this government. It always has been, and as I've outlined, some of the programs that are in existence for my constituents of Redwater-Andrew indeed are there for the whole province of Alberta. I think we're going to see many changes in agriculture also as time goes on. As the world is changing, definitely production patterns for grain all over the world will change, and maybe our country will have to look at different ways of using grain. That's where our government's directions I think outlined in the throne speech and many other places will follow with a change in the transportation method, a change in the use of our grain with promoting secondary industries relative to grain. I think that's going to have to happen, and I can tell you that many Alberta farmers are looking at this. They are changing to other methods of farming. They're including something else in their farming. Many areas are looking at something completely diverse from what their parents or grandparents have been doing.

I can tell you that these young farmers are really energetic and looking at ways of farming and telling me: "Without government subsidies." This is the way they want to do it. I know firsthand because I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that my son is very involved in the family farm right now. He's looking at making a go of it, and I know he will, because he's one of those that's looking at diversifying the farm into many different areas of agriculture. Certainly I can tell you my son definitely does not attend any agricultural rallies or anything because he's out there working and making sure that he makes it on his own. I congratulate him and many of his friends in the area and many young farmers in Alberta for the direction they're taking.

Mr. Speaker, another area I guess that's very close to our hearts in this government and with Albertans is the topic of privatization and letting the private sector do it. As I've said before – I've said it publicly, I've said it everywhere, and I'll say it here once more – good government business is for government to stay out of business. I think that's what all Albertans agree with. Government should be involved in maybe some regulations, a few laws, but not running any businesses. The leader of the NDP opposition was ranting and raving today saying that Telus or AGT has made a profit. Is "profit" a bad word in this province? That's what the private sector is all about. That's what people want. They want to make a profit. But these people don't understand that. I guess this is why we have to explain it to them step by step, and I guess as this session goes on you will hear it all.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, privatization is something that built this country. The pioneers of this country are the ones that built it.

When my grandfather came to this country, there was no such thing as health care; there were no social programs. He was put out there on the farm, and he did it. He worked hard, along with every other Albertan, through their sweat, and you know what? This is why we have it easier now. This is why it's much easier in this province now: because these people worked. They knew what work was, and they were willing to put in a day's work.

MR. SIGURDSON: Free land.

MR. ZARUSKY: There's still land available. [interjection]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. ZARUSKY: Anyway, as governments went on, naturally the private sector worked and created jobs and is going to create jobs. Myself, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, when chairing a task force on privatization, it makes me feel good when I meet with the private sector on the things they want to see government doing: giving them freedom, deregulating, cutting government bureaucracy down. There are many things that come out. I think we're on track, and we definitely will do it. When the opposition and others speak about losses in maybe one fraction of a percent of government entities, maybe if the private sector had been running this, they would have made it or would have got out of it before the losses occurred. So you can see, then, in business things happen very quickly, and things are corrected quicker, or somebody else takes over.

Even right now, Mr. Speaker, I know the unions want to work with government on privatization; they want to be involved. They are involved. They are asking us to make sure that they're involved in the way privatization is done. These people that are in the Union of Public Employees or others, they're not afraid who takes over or who runs it. They're capable people, all of them, and they know that they can do a job. This is what we're hearing; this is what's coming out.

4:20

Mr. Speaker, as we go on, somebody said that government does not consult, does not go out there and listen to Albertans and get their input. Let me tell you, the public meetings on *Toward 2000* are a perfect public consultation process. I think some of these are ending tomorrow and Friday right here in Edmonton. Then in the latter part of May the Premier is going to be chairing the final session on *Toward 2000* and putting together what Albertans have said they want this province as in this decade and beyond. That's public consultation. That's not hiding anything; it's bringing it out there and showing the people it can be done.

Mr. Speaker, as we go on, I guess one other thing is very relevant and important in this Speech from the Throne, and that's our celebration this year, Canada 125. I think it's very important that we recognize this in this province also and help all Canadians and ourselves celebrate this historic and important occasion. I hope we can get some decent resolution to the constitutional problems. I know that our Premier and our Deputy Premier are certainly working at this. They're not going to let Albertans down on constitutional talks. Alberta is going to have its say in what happens in this new Canada and Alberta as a province and let our people in this province have the same rights as everybody else.

This leads me on to another very important area which I also have the opportunity to be involved in as chairman of the Multiculturalism Commission. Lately that's been a topic for discussion here, and the minister has handled it very diligently. Mr. Speaker, multiculturalism is an area that's very important to

this whole province and to this country because, whether we know it or not, over a million Albertans are of origin other than English and French. So you can see that it's a diverse province, and that's what this province was built on. This is what we've stressed, and I guess I can repeat here that this government's support for multiculturalism is definitely one of the best in Canada and maybe the world. We've got a Minister of Culture and Multiculturalism; we've got a Multiculturalism Commission which is always chaired by an MLA. We've got a Multiculturalism Advisory Council which is chaired by the vice-chairman of the Multiculturalism Commission, and we've got a Multiculturalism Act, which was amended in 1990. If that's not support for multiculturalism, then I don't know what is, and I don't think we need any more motions anywhere in the Legislature because this is the government's commitment to multiculturalism. The feedback is very positive. I hear it every day. I'm about in the province in all areas all of the time, and it's very supportive.

Mr. Speaker, I guess we should mention at this time another historic occasion that took place. It started in 1991 and is ending in 1992, and that's that centennial of the first Ukrainian settlers to this province. I'll just mention a bit of how it went, and I can tell you it was very successful. I was very fortunate that the first settlers that came to this province from the then Austro-Hungarian empire settled in the Redwater-Andrew constituency in the Lamont-Star area. To me it was a very historic occasion, being the MLA and the chairman of the Alberta Multiculturalism Commission and also of that origin. This government's commitment to that centennial, I think, was one of the best in Canada because the Canadian opening took place right here in Edmonton, Alberta and in northeastern Alberta. At this occasion we had the Premier attend. We had the Deputy Premier attend. We had the Minister of Culture and Multiculturalism and many other members of the PC government.

It's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you. People who are bringing motions in now – the leader of the Liberal Party did not attend one function. No Liberal member attended. They weren't there. The Ukrainian community, I think, was very disappointed in this. The same thing with the leader of the NDP. He never attended, never acknowledged these people. I don't know why they would be bringing motions in at this point, all of a sudden, saying that multiculturalism is so important to them. It's just a few people that . . . [interjection] He was in attendance where 4,000 people attended, at the Ukrainian Village. I think that should be recognized. Some things the opposition do not want to hear: you know, the good this government is doing. That's what's in here. It's the good this government is doing and is going to do.

I guess there was some mention of seniors. I wouldn't take too long on seniors, but our seniors are to be recognized because many of them worked hard to bring us to where we are today with our different health programs and other things. This government did recognize them, starting way back in 1971, and came in with all sorts of programs for seniors. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, I know that the seniors of Redwater-Andrew as well as many in the province are very satisfied with our government programs. Maybe some have experienced some hardships, but if they would go to their member of the Legislature, I'm sure these individual few cases would certainly be looked after because I know our ministers are very responsive to this.

Mr. Speaker, let me just touch a little more on seniors. Just last spring I had the opportunity to attend a wedding in British Columbia – it was more a family and friend thing – and many seniors were in attendance. They knew I was a Member of the Legislative Assembly for Alberta, so many of them came to talk to

me and said, "Boy, are seniors lucky in Alberta; they've got many more programs than we have." This is something that's coming from outside Alberta, so I just want that to be on record, that I think our seniors are very well looked after and certainly will be in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I think that sort of outlines what this government's direction is and what we are doing for the people of this province. We're elected by the people of this province, and why shouldn't we make life as good as possible for them? As I first started, I think Albertans are ready for the challenges and changes that are coming, and I think they're ready to work with their government to make sure it happens in a way where they're not going to suffer but are going to benefit for the betterment of this province. This province was built on a solid foundation, and I think that's how we should keep it.

Again, I would like everybody to just look at the Speech from the Throne once more and see that it is the direction of government. I'm sure we'll implement it as time goes on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to get up and reply to the Speech from the Throne and I suppose punch a few holes in some of the nonsense spoken in the speech and also from the members across the way when they spoke on the Speech from the Throne earlier.

The majority of my comments will be related to the newfound priority of the government, the idea of stimulating the economy. The shift from the fiscal management theme and the balanced budget theme of last year to the stimulating the economy theme of this year is a very interesting switch, and I will talk mostly about that. However, there are just a few other things I wanted to mention quickly before I get into that.

One of the things that the Speech from the Throne says is that the government has decided finally that we should have a freedom of information Act. Of course, the Premier stood up the other day in front of a camera and sort of said: well, we don't really need one; we give out all this information all the time regularly anyway. Well, I would like to ask him where the public accounts are. They've been ready since October. The Auditor General's finished with them, but the Treasurer is sitting on them. His purpose, as I said the other night in the interim supply Bill debate, is so that the people of this province will be faced with three budgets all at once: the public accounts ones for 1991, which we still haven't seen; the forecast that he will put in for this current year that we are just finishing, '91-92; and the new budget, planned expenditures for '92-93. So there will be these three budgets in front of the population and reporters all at once, and most of the world will not be sure which one we're talking about half of the time unless we very carefully specify it. Then they have to stop and reorient themselves to the different budgets to try to figure out what it really means, because of course it's easy to confuse the three of them. It's bad enough having the forecast and the budget together. That's sort of inevitable, and I accept that, but we should have had the public accounts last October.

4:30

We asked the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications just today: where is the 1990 annual report for NovAtel? In this House last year he promised to release it shortly. He said: as soon as I've had a chance to peruse it, I will release it. I talked to him in December and said, "Where is it?" He said: oh, I'm not going to release it because, you know, there are some

very sensitive negotiations going on. We're trying to sell the company. We couldn't possibly release it. I said, "You mean there's more bad news in there than you've already told us?" No, no, no; I don't say that. In fact, today he said there isn't any more bad news in it than he already told us. Why doesn't he release it then? Why hang onto it? It's time we had the 1991 statement as well.

If you're going to talk about NovAtel and AGT, you've got to answer the question of the previous speaker: are we against profits? Look, AGT was a profitable company owned by the taxpayers of this province. It was a \$3 billion company. It was doing fine until the government decided to privatize it. All of a sudden a few shareholders are making a fortune out of it because we held a fire sale. He's trying to say we got \$500 million out of it. We got \$500 million of it back into the heritage trust fund, when in fact we had a billion and a half in debentures in AGT when we were elected in 1986, and they were good debentures that paid interest every year. The interest payments were made, and it was a good investment. It was a good company, and it was serving Albertans well. This government sold it off so a few private people could make a fortune out of a fire sale . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: A few?

MR. McEACHERN: Yes, a few. A hundred thousand or so. Compared to the 2 and a half million in the province, most of whom couldn't afford to buy any, it was a few.

. . . and left the taxpayers holding the bag with the dog NovAtel, the high-tech, high-risk company. We've got about \$900 million invested in that. We don't know how much of it we're going to see, and the minister won't even release the information. No, this side of the House is not against profits, but we're for seeing to it that the people of Alberta are well looked after, all of the people of Alberta, not just a few friends of the government.

There are other reports that we don't have. The Softco report is a perennial one. Every year I have to put a motion on the Order Paper asking for the annual statements. Last year when the Treasurer finally gave us the report for the last year, we were 27 months behind to know anything about what was going on with Softco. When he released the statement, we were then only 15 months behind. I suppose we'll go through the same song and dance this year. At this stage we're just two years behind. It's totally ridiculous. We talk about a freedom of information Bill. I wonder how much teeth it will have in it.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

I wanted to get back to the government's deathbed conversion from talking about fiscal responsibilities to deciding that in fact we do have a recession in this province and that we should do something about it to stimulate the economy. I agree. We've been saying that for nearly two years. This country has been in a recession for two years; Alberta has been in a recession. The Treasurer spoke some kind of nonsense last year in his speech from the throne that Alberta was going to grow this year, that we're just finishing at three times the rate of the United States. Well, three times zero is still zero, I guess. But the United States has started to grow, and we're still not. This country does need some help, and I hope that the Premiers and the Prime Minister can come to some agreement to start moving the economy along a little bit.

I wanted to go back to just see how bad this fiscal situation is that the Premier is trying to avoid. The fact of the matter is that it isn't that the Premier has suddenly discovered he's got to help

Albertans. I mean, he wants a good excuse to talk about that because election time is coming again, and I'm sure that it's natural rhetoric for this stage of election timing in this province. But the most important fact is that he doesn't want to focus on the fact that they didn't achieve their balanced budget in this fiscal year we're just finishing. That's why we've suddenly got this switch to stimulating the economy.

I want to just look at how bad that deficit really is. I gave some of the facts and figures in the debate the other day on the interim supply Bills. [interjection] Yeah, there's a few more. I didn't finish the job. I just thought I'd lay out some. I'll run over them fairly quickly.

I want to look at this particular fiscal year that we're just finishing, the 1991-92 budget. The Treasurer said he had a \$33 million surplus in his budget part. Now, we all know, and the Treasurer admitted, that that didn't include the Capital Fund, where there was some \$215 million in expenditures for which there were no compensating revenues. It did not include the \$110 million in the heritage trust fund expenditures. There was an over \$300,000 deficit even as the Treasurer brought in all his books, so for him to sort of brag at great length that we had a \$33 million surplus was a bit misleading. Now, when the Auditor General gets finished with the books, he'll take those three figures and put them together, plus he'll throw in a few provincial agencies and a few commercial enterprises that the government's involved in. The numbers will be adjusted a little bit more, usually a little more upward from those three figures just added together, to get each year what is called the consolidated deficit of the province.

I just want to go through what those deficits have been each year for the last few years. Starting in 1986-87, the year that we were all elected, the year that the present Premier took over and Dick Johnston, the Treasurer, took over, the consolidated debt of this province was \$4 billion. That was the year that oil prices collapsed. The next year, in 1987-88, in spite of the fact that the Treasurer collected a lot of extra taxes that year, as I explained the other day, the deficit was \$1.4 billion; the consolidated deficit was \$1.4 billion.

AN HON. MEMBER: Where are you getting these from?

MR. McEACHERN: These are from the public accounts. You could look them up yourself, if you want.

AN HON. MEMBER: I thought you were talking about Ontario.

MR. McEACHERN: I'll come to that.

In 1988-89 the consolidated debt was \$2 billion. In '89-90 it was \$2.3 billion, and in 1991, which we don't have the public accounts for – there's no excuse for not having them; we've had to guess as best we could – I was rather generous and suggested that it might only be \$1.7 billion. I'm betting it's going to be closer to \$2 billion, but I'll use the figure \$1.7 billion for the moment. In 1991-92, this year we are just finishing, the Official Opposition has documented why the consolidated debt will be \$2.55 billion.

There's really no escaping these numbers. For one thing, the Treasurer in his claim that he had a \$33 million surplus in his budget, the budget part of his address last year, was just kidding us. He really didn't mean it. There were several places where he was \$200 million out, purposely so. He had no good reason to put those figures in. He just wanted to get a balanced budget so he could take it to the convention and have a little political hoopla and say oh, what a wonderful job he's doing. The fact of the matter is that anybody who had followed the books for a few years

could take a cursory glance at the budget last year, as we did immediately when it came in, and say that there is a billion to a billion and a half dollar deficit built into this budget but the Treasurer has just doctored the books to make it look like it will be a balanced budget.

The year, unfortunately, has turned out to be a bad one. The economy has suffered most of the year, and the deficit is going to be probably \$1 billion higher than that. Depending on if you take just the budget itself, our estimate is that the budget deficit will be \$2.17 billion, and when you throw in the Capital Fund and the heritage trust fund expenditures plus a few other commercial enterprises, provincial agencies, and so on that the Auditor General throws into the works, the consolidated deficit for 1991-92 will be \$2.55 billion. There's really no escaping those numbers.

I'll go through a few of the calculations and estimates that we've come up with in watching what's happened this year. In terms of revenues, we estimate just on the Treasurer's budget that he has overestimated a number of things, natural gas royalties by \$409 million. These figures were updated as of March 12 with the latest information we have in. He's overestimated crude oil royalties by \$240 million, oil and gas rights sales will be down \$313 million from what he said, corporate taxes are down at least \$200 million, and heritage fund transfers will be down \$155 million. That's \$1.32 billion less than what the Treasurer estimated in that area alone.

4:40

Borrowing costs will be \$100 million higher than he said, and I want to take a little bit of time on the way the government borrows quite a lot of money. Last year you'll remember how we made mock of the Treasurer when he brought in a Bill asking to borrow an extra \$2 billion. He wanted to raise the borrowing power from \$11.5 billion to \$13.5 billion, yet he said he had a balanced budget. We were saying, "Well, you know, you don't need \$2 billion more if you have a balanced budget." He said: No, we need some interim funding to turn over some of these debts. They're ongoing and we have to pay some out. We need more money to pay them out; it's just a timing problem. Well, let me say that the budget book from last year shows that as of December 31, 1990, we had borrowed in long-term debt \$9.98 billion; in other words, \$10 billion.

In 1991 the Treasurer borrowed three and a half billion dollars, so we're pushing every cent of his borrowing power. We've borrowed all the borrowing power that he is allowed. I'm sure that he doesn't have any margins left over or any room to manoeuvre or is not going to turn any of it back to anybody. He has needed every cent of it. In fact, when you add up these figures I was going through for the yearly deficits, you find that the debt at March 31, 1992, will be \$13.9 billion. Since I've been a little generous on 1990-91, you can say to all intents and purposes a \$14 billion debt at the end of this month for the province of Alberta.

Now, we do have a heritage trust fund, which a professor at the university – I've forgotten his name, and I apologize to him; he deserves to have it mentioned for having done the work – suggested that the heritage trust fund was worth about \$9.3 billion. The Treasurer puts a \$12 billion figure on it. It probably is around \$9 billion or \$10 billion in actual worth.

Of course, those figures also don't include the unfunded pension liability, and I want to take a few minutes on that. I could not believe the gall of the Treasurer last July when he started talking about pensions. He finally decided he was going to have to do something to deal with the unfunded pension liability. He came up with a plan of how everybody was going to put more money in,

and he was going to try to shove that down the throats of the various pension groups. As it turned out, of course, they rebelled. He's had to back off and come back again with a different plan, and he has had some success in getting a couple of the unions to agree to some plans he has now.

What really appalled me in July was when he came out and said that the unfunded pension liability was \$3.4 billion. Now, if ever anybody was playing with figures or mucking people around or telling untruths to the world, it was that figure. What the Treasurer was doing was quoting the last hard figure we have from the adjusters who look at the fund every three or five years; I'm not quite sure which. The last figures they had were for 1988, and that figure for all the pensions except the teachers' pension was \$3.4 billion at March 31, 1988. That's the figure he chose to use. So there we were in July of '91, and he was ignoring all the things that had happened since then.

Now, the Auditor General doesn't do that. In spite of the fact that the Treasurer won't let the Auditor General put the unfunded liability into the books, the Auditor General does insist on at least putting in a footnote explaining what's going on. Based on that 1988 figure from the accountants that had taken a really good look at the fund at that stage, each March 31 the Auditor General then projects how much more it probably is. I'm sure the Auditor General is a very competent person and gets competent people to help him, and his estimates should be considered. The last figure we have, of course, because the last public accounts we have is for March 31, 1990 – the Auditor General said that that \$3.4 billion had grown to \$5.7 billion. Yet here was the Treasurer, a year and some months later, still trying to claim he could use the \$3.4 billion figure and not the one the Auditor General had put in of \$5.7 billion.

Now, the Auditor General's figure at March 31, 1990, was \$5.7 billion for those public pensions, not including the teachers. He also in the same footnote said that the teachers' unfunded liability was \$3.3 billion at that stage. Now, that's \$9 billion at March 31, 1990.

It is now almost two years since then, and anybody projecting from what happened in those years – and you can look back even further into the '80s if you like and watch the growth of the unfunded pension liability – would know that the present unfunded pension liability has to be in the neighbourhood of \$11 billion. It must have been at least \$10 billion or over when the Treasurer was speaking in July of last year, yet he was proposing a plan based on a \$3.4 billion unfunded pension liability. Anybody else that could read that footnote would know that we were over \$10 billion, heading for \$11 billion. I find that just scandalous, Mr. Speaker, that the Treasurer can't do better than that when it comes to explaining what's going on with the books in this province. Boy, do we need a freedom of information Bill and one that puts things up to date.

Now, somebody had the gall to ask me what's happening in Ontario. I'm not going to spend a lot of time on it, but there are a couple of really encouraging things. One is simply that the figures quoted by the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark the other day – what a lot of gall he has. He stood up and started beating up on Ontario for their deficit. It was their first budget. They'd only been elected in October, and they brought in a budget in February, so obviously what was happening in that budget was the result of what had gone on in the previous years. The fact is that we had a Liberal government in Ontario for some six years that presided over a boom in Ontario of unprecedented proportions and blew it. At the end of the time, they handed on to the new government something like an \$8 billion problem. In fact, things have turned out to be even worse, and it's going to be in the

neighbourhood of \$13 billion. That's not a secret. The Ontario government isn't going around trying to hide. What they're saying is, "Look, we've got a lot of problems."

You know how they're going to make their next budget? With some public input. They have put out a 44-page document detailing the problems of last year, the problems of this year, and what they expect to happen next year. It's out there for the whole world to look at and talk about and give them advice on what should be done with government finances. Contrast that to the budget we're going to get sometime next week or the week after, made totally in secrecy with the Treasurer talking to a few colleagues perhaps and, I don't know, a few business groups around town and everybody being sworn to secrecy. Nobody knows what's going on except that we know we're being conned.

The deficit of Ontario, that \$9.7 billion deficit in their first budget that's now turned out to be a little higher, amounted to 18 percent of their expenditures that year. The Alberta government in 1986-87, when it came in, also inherited a horrendous problem, and it was not your fault. Well, it was partly. You had been in government before, although with a different Premier, and had insisted on deregulating the oil industry right at the wrong time. When oil prices plunged to \$8 American a barrel, you found yourselves short 3 and a half billion dollars in revenues from the oil industry, with a consolidated \$4 billion deficit. That \$4 billion deficit represented 31 percent of the expenditures of the province, not 34 percent as the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark said the other day. He should at least get his facts straight and should also put the blame where it belongs.

The New Democrat government of Ontario has not been there long enough to be responsible for the mess they inherited. [interjections] No, we'll see what happens this time around. They will be very responsible, and it will be open to people to have some input into. No other Premier in the history of this country has ever done an open kind of budgeting process like Ontario is about to do, and I commend them for it. Open and honest government is what you're going to get from New Democrats right across this country in the near future.

The Treasurer, then, has a horrendous problem at this time. I can't help but conclude again, Mr. Speaker, that the reason for the Premier's conversion to the need to stimulate the economy is not that he's now started to listen to Albertans that are hurting – and there are lots of them. We've got the people on welfare that are living in poverty. We've got people on UIC that are living in poverty. We've got the working poor that are living in poverty. There must be 30 to 35 percent of the population in that category. They cannot afford to buy the goods and services that we have all the brains and ability to produce in abundance. We have the resources to produce them, but we're running a miserly, miserable economic system that rewards the rich only and impoverishes the poor. The 1980s was a decade of great prosperity in this country, yet at the end of it we had more people living in poverty than we had at the start of it. There are a lot of middle-income people struggling under the taxes they're having to pay in order to pay the welfare for those people that are struggling at the bottom end of the scale and to make up for the taxes not being paid by the people at the top end of the scale. Almost all the wealth has been concentrated in the hands of a few very wealthy people.

4:50

I hope the Premier is serious about his conversion to wanting to stimulate the economy, but I don't really believe for a minute that it's anything more than a cover-up for the fiscal mismanagement that has resulted in a series of . . .

Speaker's Ruling Imputing Motives

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. The Chair has been listening carefully to the hon. member's remarks, and I would like to caution him with respect to those remarks with respect to imputing motives to members of the Assembly. I caution him in the use of such terms.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure just which remark you meant, but I'll be more careful.

Debate Continued

MR. McEACHERN: I wanted to take a few minutes on one of the things that the government has decided to do that could have some economic benefits, I hope, and that is embarking on this Toward 2000 Together program. The government is running some expensive ads on television right now telling everybody how wonderful it is. It's a little late now; the program is nearly over. I do want to make a few comments about it. It does have some merit, but it also has some problems.

One of the first things that I found rather strange was the questionnaire that the government put out in that program. They're a bunch of mushball questions, quite frankly. You know: what should be the involvement of the government in the economy? I mean, this is the government that keeps talking about private enterprise, but it interfered more in the economy than anybody I know and in all the wrong ways.

I could just go through a list of some of the companies that this government has lost money in. One of the things that's going to cause this big deficit of \$2.55 billion, the consolidated deficit for this year we're now in, is the list of companies that have gone under that this government has invested money in. The government has allowed \$151 million toward those kinds of losses for this year. If you look at some of the companies, you'll really scratch your head and wonder how they're going to keep it to that. Our suggestion is that it will probably be a couple of hundred million more than the \$151 million. Just listen to this list. Now, these are what's at stake and won't necessarily all be paid out in this fiscal year that we're just completing. Nonetheless, what we're suggesting is that the Treasurer is going to have to do a lot of careful manipulating to not have to pay more than his \$151 million. For instance, we have \$151 million in the Magnesium Company of Canada. We have a problem there. With NovAtel, a \$228.3 million problem that we know of; we don't know what happened in this last year. We don't have the books for the year before last yet, let alone last year. We know that we have probably as much as a hundred million dollar problem with Softco. Now, we won't have to pay that all out at once; nonetheless, some of it will start to come due.

By the way, against what the Treasurer said, when he took over the company in February of 1987, he said that the federal money from CDIC would take care of all the debts out of North West Trust and Heritage trust together. He set up Softco to take those bad properties, and he claimed that it was all taken care of, that the taxpayers of Alberta alone would not be responsible for any. That clearly is just not true. If you look at the last annual statement that we have, all that money has now run out, and for the last year at least, if not the last two years, we've been on Alberta taxpayers' money for the losses of those corporations.

Another one. Up to \$400 million for Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and I think our researcher was being very generous on that point. I think Alberta Mortgage and Housing has already cost at least \$700 million over the years since I've been

elected in the sorting out of the mess that this government created when they started buying incredible amounts of property all over this province in '79, '80, '81, and then we had the subsequent real estate bust. This government has been scrambling ever since to cover up the incredible losses of the taxpayers. It's probably bigger than any of the other boondoggles, probably bigger than Principal, bigger than North West Trust, bigger than NovAtel – well, that's questionable. Those two are probably on a par.

Speaker's Ruling Parliamentary Language

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. I would once again caution the hon. member with respect to his terminology in the imputing of motives. I would refer him specifically, because of his recent remark regarding the word "cover-up," to 492 of *Beauchesne*.

MR. McEACHERN: Are you saying "cover-up" is unparliamentary? Okay. The boondoggle, the misrepresentation – I don't know what word one can use.

Debate Continued

MR. McEACHERN: There are others: at least \$71 million for Gainers at stake; \$25 million for Alberta canola crushers. There's Alberta-Pacific Terminals, Chembiomed, Peace River Fertilizer, Emery Apparel, Northern Steel, a whole raft of others, and the Treasurer will really be magic if he can keep the actually accounted-for losses from those companies to \$151 million for the year 1991-92. Now, if he can, all that happens is that some of those losses end up in the next year and the year after, so we really haven't saved anything; we've just put off the day of reckoning a little bit.

So I'm hoping the conclusion that Toward 2000 Together comes to isn't that the government should be putting more money directly into specific companies. I believe they won't come to that conclusion, even though they have in most cases selected the people that are going to go the hearings very, very carefully, as they did to the six regional hearings, to make sure they were good supporters and people that thought the same way as the Tory party does. It seems to me that even the right wing in this province, the businesspeople I've been talking to – and I've talked to chambers of commerce and the economic developers association people and all kinds of individual businesspeople. Everybody has agreed that the one thing that the government should not do anymore is have ministers handing out money on an ad hoc basis to individual corporations, be it for the lofty goal of trying to pick a winner or trying to create jobs or trying to diversify the economy or, heaven forbid, to help out an old friend. I'm afraid that happens a little too often. Whatever the reason, most people know that it's not a good idea for the minister to hand money out of the taxpayers' coffers, if you like, straight to individual corporations. That idea has got to go.

If you must get involved in the economy, you must at least set up a program like Alberta Opportunity Company. It has its troubles, but at least it has some merit in its structure and its criteria for who it invests in, what companies can get funding. There's a semi-independent administration; how independent depends on the minister. I don't really know how independent it is, but it should be at least semi-independent from the minister. That is, he should have some responsibility to report back on it, but he shouldn't be controlling it and telling them to put money into this or that company is what I mean by semi-independent.

Toward 2000 Together, besides having a set of questions that were really mushballs, did ask a couple of good ones. There was

one about rural Alberta that was good – what can be done to help rural Alberta? – and another one about what should be done with the heritage trust fund. In fact, our party has done some work on that. We passed a resolution at our last council suggesting that the heritage trust fund be rationalized into three different sections, the first one being a commercial investment section taking in the cash and marketable securities section . . .

[Mr. McEachern's speaking time expired]

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of the Environment.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and a pleasure to have this opportunity today to debate the Speech from the Throne.

At the outset, Mr. Speaker, I was somewhat amazed that the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar would say that we are not addressing the political realities and that we're not consulting Albertans. I think we should take a moment to look at some of the realities in the throne speech and how indeed Albertans are being consulted in addressing these realities.

First of all, I think we should look at the economic reality and, very specifically, the program *Toward 2000 Together*. This to me represents one of the most meaningful forums of public consultation, and judging from the remarks of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Kingsway, it's quite obvious that he hasn't bothered to attend any of the meetings.

5:00

MR. McEACHERN: A point of privilege.

MR. KLEIN: Oh, I'm sorry.

MR. McEACHERN: We tried to, but we were told we couldn't. We asked. But we will be attending the final . . .

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. [interjection] Order please.

MR. KLEIN: Well, with respect, Mr. Speaker, there is nothing – believe me, there is nothing – to stop the NDP, the Liberals, or just ordinary citizens from attending those meetings. I allude to a comment once made by a dear and departed former colleague of ours in this Legislature and a former member of Calgary city council, who said one time, “I don't want to hear from any more aldermen at this time, just people.” Really, it's not the case; you're invited. You're invited to listen. You're invited to be there and to listen and understand what Albertans are saying relative to the economic future of this province. If you're really interested, if this member is really interested, he would attend the meetings. Obviously, from his remarks, he hasn't attended the meetings.

I had the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, of attending a meeting in Medicine Hat, and I would like to give this Assembly an illustration, perhaps, of some of the comments that came forward from ordinary Albertans, committed citizens, citizens with honest concerns, citizens representing various municipalities, irrigation districts, educational institutes, and so on. Some of their remarks are very interesting, and some of them indeed are critical of the government. But I should point out that this is honest, straightforward criticism, criticism that comes from the heart, not the political rhetoric and useless kind of criticism we get from members across the way.

Let's look at some of the comments that Albertans are making relative to Alberta's economic future. Bryce Smith from the Bow Island chamber of commerce says that the Alberta government should follow the example of perhaps Manitoba and Saskatchewan in initiating legislation to set up community bonds. Well, as a matter of fact, that is under active consideration, and we've had a lot of input on this particular form of economic instrument. From the town of Brooks . . . [interjection] Listen to this, Nick. You might learn something, since you haven't been attending the meetings either.

The town of Brooks, the Eastern irrigation district, the county of Newell No. 4, and the Brooks & District Chamber of Commerce have formed a partnership to jointly pursue economic development on the theory that far more could be accomplished together than by working independently. The resulting Newell region economic development advisory committee also includes the town of Bassano and the villages of Tilley, Duchess, and Rosemary. In a survey to gather public input on a regional . . .

MR. TAYLOR: A point of order.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please, hon. minister.

MR. TAYLOR: I just wanted to correct . . .

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: You have not been recognized. Please sit down. Order please.

Point of Order Factual Accuracy

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for Westlock-Sturgeon on a point of order.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you. The hon. member mentioned that I wasn't at a meeting, and knowing the types of meetings . . .

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. Order please. When you rise on a point of order – and I would remind the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon as well as all members of the Assembly – you must quote the citation or the basis for your point of order. I have heard no such reference.

Minister of the Environment, please proceed with your remarks.

Debate Continued

MR. KLEIN: I was there, yes.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, this is strictly in error, to say that I wasn't present at a meeting. That comes under “lie.”

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. Order. Will the minister please proceed.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can assure you he was not at the meeting I'm talking about. I was there. [interjections] Yes, I was. But anyway . . . [interjection]

Speaker's Ruling Interrupting a Member

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. [interjections] Order please. The Chair would observe that we are supposed to be debating the Speech from the Throne. If there is some specific difference over attendance at a meeting, perhaps the two hon. members could discuss this outside of the Chamber following the hon. minister's remarks.

Please proceed.

Debate Continued

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the meeting I attended, the committee suggests that its model can be used on a larger scale to formulate provincial economic development policies.

From the Eastern irrigation district, Mr. Wade Alston* espoused giving rural regions access to economic development support programs and recognizing rural regions as a major growth opportunity in terms of population and economic diversification.

The Medicine Hat chamber of commerce is proposing programs that would allow government and businesses to make quick decisions in a competitive global economy, saying we must streamline bureaucracy and eliminate unnecessary regulations to convey an open-for-business image. Interprovincial trade barriers should end, and environmental health and safety standards should be harmonized among the provinces.

From the town of Taber, the mayor suggests that there should be development of markets, both local and international, development of a transportation system at a reasonable cost to get our products to market, education of the public to buy locally, financial assistance in the establishment and expansion of food processing enterprises, especially when new markets are available, expansion of the relationship between local and provincial economic development exercises.

From Medicine Hat College, Dr. Fred Speckeen talks about educational institutions providing a reasonable balance between theory and hands-on training and suggests that the Alberta Research Council could play a greater role in helping manufacturers to become more productive and to create quality value-added products, perhaps by serving as a catalyst between education, research, and industry.

From the city of Medicine Hat, their brief recommends a review of provincial taxation, an introduction of measures to encourage the formation of capital pools and to stimulate private investment in business.

The environmental services association of Alberta, representing 182 businesses involved in environmental technology and various other components of environmental entrepreneurship, feels the proposed ban on the importation of hazardous and recyclable waste is a restraint of trade and will isolate Alberta from international and interprovincial markets. This will erode development of new recycling technology and the competitiveness of the industry, making it vulnerable to encroachment by out-of-province firms that have a critical business mass. I know that's the kind of thing that the NDP does not want to hear, Mr. Speaker. It may be valid or it may not be valid, but at least it's a comment that is being made by a representative of 182 environmental businesses in this province.

With respect to the Alberta Pulse Growers Commission, zone 1, that commission points out that Alberta Agriculture's market development division is severely underfunded – I don't know if that's correct, hon. minister; however, that was a comment that was thrown out there – leaving Alberta vulnerable in an era of globalization and specialized marketing requirements.

From the Youngstown public school the submission urged a return to a more structured learning model, stressing grammar, geography, history, science, and mathematics taught in an orderly manner in a curriculum that is standardized provincially.

5:10

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, from a private citizen, Gary Lehr. He feels the provincial government has only one responsibility in economic development and that is to provide a healthy business environment,

including low taxes, limited red tape, an educated population with a work ethic, clear and concise policies and regulations, a free enterprise philosophy, an ability to make quick decisions, a well-developed infrastructure, and a willingness to co-operate with business.

Mr. Speaker, these are the comments of Albertans. These are the kinds of comments that we're getting throughout the province as we go from town to town, from region to region, to consult with the public on our economic future, *Toward 2000 Together*, so to suggest that there has been no public consultation in this regard is absolutely false and, I think, irresponsible.

Let's look now at the environmental realities. Again, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar suggests that there has been no public consultation, that we're not in touch with what Albertans want in terms of meeting today's environmental realities and environmental expectations. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to take the hon. member through the process on – well, we'll just pick out three different exercises. We'll start with Bill 53, where we first put out a vision statement and received over 5,000 responses from Albertans as to where they thought we were in terms of addressing environmental matters and where they thought we should be going in the future. We then took those concerns, and we incorporated those concerns into a piece of draft legislation. Under the capable leadership of the hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane, a task force went throughout the province to towns and cities and held numerous public consultation processes and workshops to gain further the ideas of Albertans and to have Albertans tell us that we were either on the wrong track or we were on the right track and where this Bill should be changed.

As a result of that public consultation process, we now have in the preparation stage a Bill that will be tabled before this Legislature that will truly reflect today's environmental realities and expectations, a Bill that will be much more than just a set of laws and indeed will be an environmental agenda that will take us through this decade and into the next century in an environmentally responsible manner. That was a Bill that was virtually written by Albertans, written by Albertans with full, full input. Even the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place turned out to some of the sessions, and I applaud him for that.

We look also at the public consultation process that was undertaken for the Clean Air Strategy for Alberta, an 18-month exercise involving people from the agricultural community, from the energy community, from the health community, from the legal community, again conducting workshops throughout the province to determine what is right and what is reasonable from Alberta's point of view in establishing a clean air policy, determining what we can reasonably do to reduce gases that contribute to depletion of the ozone, to reduce the gases that contribute to global warming, and in a realistic fashion develop an Alberta position. Again, people coming together, people from different walks of life with different views at the outset but who at the end of the day were able to reach consensus as to what a clean air strategy should be.

I refer now to the Water Resources Act, a complete rewrite of this extremely significant piece of legislation: again the subject of full public consultation, of workshops throughout the province to determine the kind of legislation this province should establish in terms of regulating and controlling and protecting the quality and the quantity of water in this province. A very, very significant rewrite of a Bill, a Bill that ostensibly hasn't been rewritten since 1894, when it was introduced as a territorial Bill, updated somewhat, I understand, in 1931. It was a Bill that was designed, really, to reflect the allocation of water. Well, we want a Bill that

*This spelling could not be verified at the time of publication.

says there is much more than the allocation of water. We want a Bill that is going to address, first of all, Alberta's very special role in terms of being the guardian of water, the water that comes off the east slopes into the Mackenzie River system, into the Saskatchewan river system, into the Belly, and down into the . . .

MR. TAYLOR: Milk River.

MR. KLEIN: Milk River? Is it the Milk or is it the Belly? [interjection] It's the Belly. I've got it from one of the fellows who lives down there, Nick.

MR. TAYLOR: Don't talk to Cypress-Redcliff. He didn't see water flow until he was 20.

MR. KLEIN: Well, that's why we want to manage it. It's extremely important that we put in place this kind of legislation that really allows us to manage water from a quality and quantity point of view.

But the point I'm making here, Mr. Speaker, is that there has been consultation. There has been a tremendous amount of consultation to face up to the environmental realities of today, as indeed we're undertaking consultation to face up to the economic realities of today, because we want to know what Albertans have to say about these issues and we want to take their views into account when we draft legislation.

Another area of public consultation – I'm really surprised. First of all, I was amazed, then I was a little disappointed, and now I'm surprised that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar wouldn't have referred to the extensive consultation process that was undertaken by the Select Special Committee on Constitutional Reform to address the constitutional reality. Members from all the parties agreed to that. That was brought about as the result of consultation, full-blown public consultation. It all fits into the political reality, hon. member. It all fits into the political reality, because again what we're doing is reflecting the views of Albertans, reflecting their expectations in terms of environmental realities, economic realities, constitutional realities.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to address very briefly the fiscal reality. If I can, I would like to quote, because I think it's important that this issue be addressed again, from the Speech from the Throne, page 2, third paragraph:

By listening to the people, my government knows Albertans recognize that the resources of my government are limited and that they must have realistic expectations with respect to what a government can provide in a fiscally responsible manner.

Isn't this a much better formula for proper fiscal management than, let's say, the NDP manifesto, which states quite simply that to make a small fortune, we must first be given a large fortune. One only needs to look to NDP Ontario to see the proof: a \$14 billion deficit, a testament to NDP fiscal policy, a policy that took a perfectly healthy province to fiscal and economic ruin.

Thank you.

5:20

Point of Order Tabling a Cited Document

MR. SPEAKER: I see somebody waving one of my favourite books at me: *Beauchesne*. Do I assume this is a point of order?

MR. McINNIS: It's one of my favourite books too.

Beauchesne 495 says that a minister who reads or quotes from a dispatch must be prepared to lay it on the Table, and I believe the minister referred to the document *Toward 2000 Together*. If it's not a public document already, I would encourage him to lay the document on the Table.

MR. KLEIN: No problem.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. minister has just undertaken to do so. Thank you very much, hon. members.

Debate Continued

MR. SPEAKER: I see no one rising in debate. Shall we call the question?

Edmonton-Beverly.

MR. EWASIUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to respond to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech from the Throne. We welcome his speech, and we welcome the opening of the Legislature so we can again get into the House and deal with the issues facing the people of this province, the difficult time that many of the people are facing in this recessionary period.

Before I do that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a few moments to say a few things about the constituency of Edmonton-Beverly. It is amongst one of the largest numerically in the province of Alberta. It is also a constituency that has a rural/urban mix and has had for a long time. Like many of the constituencies on the periphery of Edmonton, we do have already an extensive mix of rural and urban constituents, and I think they work out quite well. We also have, I'm pleased to say, a good age mix, where we have the residents who have been there for a long time. We have, of course, new people and new districts developing there, but primarily the constituency is a blue-collar one where men and women each day leave their homes for employment; at least they have over some years.

But I must say, Mr. Speaker, that in recent times this province, like other provinces in this country, has been subjected to the recession, and unemployment in Edmonton-Beverly is substantially high. Many people are getting by on UIC benefits. When those run out, they have to resort to social assistance. There's a housing shortage, or at least certainly a shortage of affordable housing, and the action of the government and particularly the housing department, the MPI, which is forcing people out of their homes in order that they can sell these, is adding to the poverty of the people in Edmonton-Beverly. They are now forced to use food and clothing – to sacrifice those components of their well-being to pay the rent. Social services has fallen short in assisting many of these people. Many, of course, have to rely on the food banks to survive. This is very evident in our schools. While we have excellent schools with very good teachers, our schools have to work very closely with community groups to help students who quite frequently are arriving at school hungry, who haven't had any breakfast. At other times they are required to supply lunch for them as well.

The Minister of the Environment outlined the many groups that he was in contact with and how the consulting process has worked with the government. I have also done a consultation with Albertans, Albertans who are very proud of this province. Many of them have spent a great deal of time in Alberta; others are new arrivals. They're old and they're young. But most of these people are the grass-roots people, if I can use that term. They are people who live in my constituency and people whom I come in contact with quite frequently either within the communities or in their visitations to my office. They're asking one basic question, and

the question is: what have they done to deserve this government? They wonder what's the rationale in increasing the level of a lake when in fact their children are going hungry to school and their rents are increasing.

In light of the time, Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member.

All those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. The motion carries.
Government House Leader.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, by way of information to hon. members, the government business tomorrow evening will deal with interim supply. I move we now call it 5:30.

MR. SPEAKER: Before I put the motion, I'd just like to remind all hon. members that tomorrow at the commencement of the sitting we will be introducing the new member to the House.

[At 5:26 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Thursday at 2:30 p.m.]