

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, June 23, 1992**

2:30 p.m.

Date: 92/06/23

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

We give thanks to God for the rich heritage of this province as found in our people.

We pray that native-born Albertans and those who have come from other places may continue to work together to preserve and enlarge the precious heritage called Alberta.

Amen.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

Bill 42 Motor Transport Act

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 42, being the Motor Transport Act.

The amendments outlined in the Bill will redefine the role of the Motor Transport Board in a deregulated trucking industry and keep our provincial standards in line with the standards detailed in the National Safety Code. Along with this, this Bill provides a more streamlined and simpler process of ensuring that safety standards are followed.

[Leave granted; Bill 42 read a first time]

Bill 46 Pension Statutes Amendment and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1992

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 46, the Pension Statutes Amendment and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1992. This being a money Bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this Bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill, although technical in nature, reflects an awful lot of work in the coming together and the successful negotiation of agreement with all five public-sector pension plans in the province of Alberta and, in doing so, resulted in a lot of effort by the members of the boards and the stakeholders to come to this agreement, which is the first time that a comprehensive review of the pension plans in the province of Alberta has been effected. One single measurement stands out; that is, that the unfunded liability of the province of Alberta as a result of this work is reduced from \$5.5 billion for these plans to under \$500 million.

Mr. Speaker, this Act and the agreement reached here today puts in place a secure pension plan fully funded for the future, providing the finest level of security to the people who are beneficiaries under these plans.

[Leave granted; Bill 46 read a first time]

Bill 48 Teachers' Retirement Fund Amendment Act, 1992

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 48, the Teachers' Retirement Fund Amendment Act, 1992. This being a money Bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Gover-

nor, having been informed of the contents of this Bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation puts in place and legislates the May 29, 1992, memorandum of understanding agreed to by the government and agreed to as well by members of the Alberta Teachers' Association.

[Leave granted; Bill 48 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Glenmore.

Bill 50 Professional Statutes Amendment Act, 1992

MRS. MIROSH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 50, being the Professional Statutes Amendment Act, 1992.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment proposes changes to several statutes: the Optometry Profession Act, the Ophthalmic Dispensers Act, the Health Disciplines Act, and the Pharmaceutical Profession Act. An important change to the Health Disciplines Act is the regulation of midwifery for the first time in Alberta.

[Leave granted; Bill 50 read a first time]

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 50, the Professional Statutes Amendment Act, 1992, be moved to the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

Bill 330 Highway Traffic Amendment Act, 1992

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 330, Highway Traffic Amendment Act, 1992.

Mr. Speaker, this will address the problem of people using their phones while they're driving their vehicles.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, you've certainly caught my attention, I'll tell you.

[Leave granted; Bill 330 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure to table the Public Service Commissioner's annual report for the year ended December 31, 1991, and also returns to motions 222 and 203.

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to table the 1990-91 annual report for Technology, Research and Telecommunications.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to file with the Assembly the answer to Written Question 146.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table with the Assembly four copies of an agreement dated 1979 between the ministers of Business Development and Tourism and Recreation, Parks and Wildlife prohibiting development in Wind valley, an area a part of which lies where the Three Sisters golf course is now being proposed.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, I would like to file copies of a memorandum from Mr. Gordon Kerr, who was then assistant deputy minister of fish and wildlife, declaring the Wind valley lands to be critical wildlife habitat.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Legislature 15 visitors from St. Mary elementary school in Fort Vermilion. This group of young people along with teacher Ms Rosaline Harris, parents Mrs. Debbie Lambert, Mrs. Jean Longard, and Mr. Nelson McLean come from Alberta's second oldest community. In 1988 we celebrated our 200th anniversary, and that makes us 204 today. Their theme was: Where Alberta Began. I'd ask them to rise and be recognized by this Assembly.

2:40

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly four professional groups who are represented here. First of all, from the Alberta Pharmaceutical Association, Mrs. Kowalishin, president, and Mr. Greg Eberhart, the registrar; from the Alberta Guild of Ophthalmic Dispensers, Mr. Murray Scambler, president, and Mr. Drew Jeffries, executive director; from the Alberta Association of Optometrists, Dr. Irv Zemrau, member of council, Dr. Shane Keddie, member of council, Dr. Larry Gies, chairman of the legislative committee, Dr. Tom Lampard, secretary treasurer, Red Deer; and from the Alberta Association of Midwives, Dr. Peggy-Anne Field, president, Dr. Beverley O'Brien, secretary, Ms Sandy Pullin, treasurer, and Ms Pat Hayes, professor of the Faculty of Nursing of the University of Alberta. Also attending is Mr. Dennis Gartner, executive director of the Professions and Occupations Bureau. There are 13 guests. If they'd please rise and accept the warm welcome from the Assembly. They're in the members' gallery, I believe.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, Fairview College is one of our more successful postsecondary institutions, well represented by the members for Peace River and Dunvegan. We have some very special guests in the members' gallery today. Mr. Trev Deeley of Deeley Imports out of British Columbia has long been associated with Fairview College and has been in business since 1917. There's a very special, unique program at Fairview College dealing with motorcycles. It's a pleasure today to have Mr. Deeley with us from British Columbia. I'd ask the following people to stand and be recognized by the Assembly: Mr. Deeley, the chairman of Deeley Imports, Mr. Don James, chief executive officer. As well, I'd like to introduce Mr. Fred Trotter, the president of Fairview College, and Mr. Andy Smith, who is the co-ordinator of special mechanics at Fairview College. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask all the members to give them a very warm welcome.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Dunvegan.

MR. CLEGG: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege and a pleasure today to introduce to you and to the Members of the Legislative Assembly 34 visitors from the Savanna school in the wonderful constituency of Dunvegan. They are accompanied today by teachers and group leaders Mrs. Holly Pitman, Mrs. Gail Congo, Mrs. Denise Wilson, Ms Marina Buchan, Mr. Lorne Martin, Mr. Gary Friesen, and Mr. Bill VandenDungen. I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head:

Oral Question Period

NovAtel Communications Ltd.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, we find out now that this government is going to shift the responsibility for the NovAtel loan fiasco over to North West Trust. How convenient. In fact, the minister of technology said yesterday that decisions to advance further loans to U.S. companies will be made by North West Trust executives, not by the minister. Now, frankly this is outrageous. What we're going to have is another group of Conservative appointees handing out taxpayers' money. Now, the point I'd make is that this is exactly how the government has wasted more than half a billion dollars of taxpayers' money, by not taking responsibility themselves for these NovAtel loans. It appears that history may repeat itself. To the minister of technology: how can the minister justify giving the responsibility for approving and increasing loans in the NovAtel portfolio to North West Trust? Where is the ministerial responsibility here?

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, the portfolio will be managed under contract by North West Trust. They are people who are professional in this regard. We feel that political influence should not play any role with respect to the management of that portfolio. They will do it in a responsible, professional manner.

MR. MARTIN: Isn't that what they just said about the NovAtel executive before, Mr. Speaker, the one that ran us into millions of dollars of losses? Now we're going to turn it over to another group of Conservative appointees to do precisely the same thing. Will they never learn?

Mr. Speaker, let us not forget that North West Trust was the recipient of a \$50 million government bailout in 1987. What we're really doing, if I may say so, is going from the frying pan to the fire here. My question to the minister is simply this: why should Albertans have any confidence that executives of North West Trust will do any better with the NovAtel loan portfolio than the executives of NovAtel, while the minister shirks his responsibility?

MR. STEWART: Well, Mr. Speaker, they will take over this portfolio on the basis that there will be no new financing commitments given, that they will be honouring the existing contacts, and they will be managing the affairs of the systems financing business in a professional way. In the meantime, Mr. Speaker – and again we look forward to the Auditor General giving his confirmation of this – there is no indication whatsoever that the systems financing portfolio is not adequately provided for insofar as any of the potential losses in that regard. The final figure stands. An assessment has been done. The Auditor General will review that assessment and I'm sure will confirm it.

MR. MARTIN: Nobody believes that. How can you keep saying that?

Now, Mr. Speaker, what they're trying to do here by shifting it over to another group of Tory hacks, frankly, is to avoid responsibility. Remember what they did with North West Trust. The government only owns 99 percent of it. They hand out the bad loans to Softco, of which they only own 99 percent, so we can't get the information from public accounts. In fact, the last time we got information from this Treasurer was over two years ago. My question to the minister of technology is simply this: isn't it true that this is just another cover-up so that the government doesn't have to report its mismanagement to the people of Alberta until well after the provincial election? That's what it's about.

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, may I just reiterate that there's no hiding of information; there's no cover-up. All of these matters have been put in the hands of the Auditor General. How can you contend that there's a cover-up in that?

With respect to the administration of the portfolio, the Provincial Treasurer may wish to augment my answer.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the Member for Edmonton-Norwood would lead the people of Alberta to such terrible conclusions as his misleading questions would suggest.

Mr. Speaker, let me make it very clear that the government acquired North West Trust together with \$300 million worth of worked out assets for not one cent. The taxpayer of Alberta has no money at risk with respect to North West Trust. CDIC provided over \$275 million to the province of Alberta to restructure North West Trust, and in return the province of Alberta took over North West Trust, now a viable financial institution in Alberta and in western Canada. At the same time, we received over \$300 million of assets. It did not cost the taxpayers of Alberta one nickel, and that member knows it. He's absolutely misleading.

Now, secondly, Mr. Speaker, let me make the record extremely clear on this issue. North West Trust is acting as a collection agency, working on a fee for service. It does not at all have any of its money at risk, nor does it have any depositors' money at risk, and this is extremely important, because the Member for Edmonton-Norwood is causing North West Trust some stress. Not one nickel of North West Trust's money is at risk, nor is the depositors' money being used here. Now, let's get the record straight: it's a collection contract only, no dollars at risk. The Member for Edmonton-Norwood is absolutely false in his allegations. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Order. [interjections] Order in the member's own caucus so we can hear what's going on next.

Second main question, Leader of the Opposition.

2:50

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, why doesn't he put out the records from Sofitco? They haven't been out there for two years. Then we'll find out.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to designate the second question to the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place. [interjections]

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

MR. SPEAKER: The question is over. Thank you. [interjections] Order please. [interjections] Order. Edmonton-Jasper Place, as well. Edmonton-Belmont. Thank you.

Edmonton-Jasper Place. [interjections]

Take your place, Provincial Treasurer. Thank you. [interjections] Order please in the whole House. Order.

Edmonton-Jasper Place.

Canmore Golf Resort

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, a former assistant deputy minister of fish and wildlife in Alberta, Mr. Gordon Kerr, has shocked the Natural Resources Conservation Board hearing into the Three Sisters project by revealing the 1979 agreement between the ministers of tourism and Recreation, Parks and Wildlife which binds the government to setting aside the Wind Creek area, part of the Three Sisters project, as a special protection area for wildlife. Mr. Kerr also revealed some government memoranda which

identified these lands, and I quote, as "absolutely critical to the long term well-being of wildlife" in the Pigeon Mountain/Wind Valley/Ribbon Creek complex. My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Recreation and Parks, who combines both of those portfolios. Can he explain to the Assembly why the government would be encouraging development and in fact inducing the local authority with a \$77 million grant to approve condominium and commercial complexes on critical wildlife habitat?

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, we're not.

MR. McINNIS: Now I'm in shock. The minister indicates that the government is not promoting development in this area, yet it has given a \$77 million grant to the town of Canmore contingent upon them approving that development.

In view of his lack of co-operation, I'd like to ask the minister who's in charge of fish and wildlife if he can explain when it became government policy to promote condominium, golf course, and commercial development on critical wildlife habitat.

MR. FJORBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, the way the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place phrases his question is totally inaccurate. The intent of the 1979 memorandum that was signed by the then Minister of Business Development and Tourism and the Minister of Recreation, Parks and Wildlife was respected in the development of the Kananaskis Country and the Bow corridor integrated resource management plans. Not only that, most of the Three Sisters development that the hon. member is raising today is nearly exclusively on private land. What we did was negotiate with Three Sisters and were able to get a significant amount of the critical wildlife habitat back and so have protected and enhanced the integrity of the 1979 agreement.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, why does the minister who's in charge of fish and wildlife expect Albertans to believe that you can have development right up to parts of the province which were committed by the government to wildlife habitat and still expect that wildlife to be protected? How does he expect Albertans to believe that you can do that and carry it off successfully?

MR. FJORBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should realize, first of all, that you can have development. I mean, development can't be restrained everywhere. There have to be some rules, and the rules were established through an integrated resource planning process. The NRCB hearing will look into it. I re-emphasize again: we exchanged land with them and got back, I think, an acre and a half of critical habitat land for every acre of land that we gave up. We've worked with the proponent, and I think the integrity of the 1979 agreement that was signed by the then two ministers is valid, and it has in fact even been enhanced.

Provincial Fiscal Policies

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, the chickens of NovAtel clearly are coming home to roost. Today Standard and Poor's, a major rating agency in the United States, changed its ratings outlook on Alberta, a ratings outlook which was previously shown as stable, to one which they now consider to be negative. This must be a signal of major concern for Albertans. My first question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer confirm what Standard and Poor's and all Albertans know, and that is that we're going to have higher deficits and more and more debt in the province of Alberta?

MR. JOHNSTON: Well, Mr. Speaker, let's be absolutely clear as to what Standard and Poor's did do today. They confirmed the province of Alberta's credit rating as the second best in Canada, and no change at all in terms of the credit rating of this province. We can borrow money as reasonably as anybody, in fact cheaper than any province in Canada, and the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry knows full well that he's shading the truth when he makes this kind of a question.

MR. WICKMAN: It's a disaster; it's a disaster.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please, in the member's own caucus.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, just for the record, the ratings outlook by Standard and Poor's says that they expect for Alberta "continued sizable budgetary imbalances over the medium term . . . and sizable increases in provincial debt." Just for the record, Mr. Treasurer, get your facts straight and tell Albertans the truth.

Now, my second question to the Treasurer is this. The Treasurer was laughed at when he brought forward his Spending Control Act, and it's obvious that Standard and Poor's don't think much of it either. I'd like to know when the Treasurer is going to take the first real step and commit to cleaning up this Spending Control Act to cover all government expenditures, not just the selective ones that he's included.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, let me say that we did introduce some important legislation which deals with spending control, which will be debated very soon in this Legislature. In part, the reason that in fact we have been able to maintain this very high rating in the world of capital markets is that we have this strong expenditure control in place, both historically and now legislated. Since the member wants to quote from Standard and Poor's, it's only fair that I also provide the balance quote, which states, for example, that "the ratings are based on Alberta's comparatively low debt burden," very low debt burden, strong financial assets in the heritage fund, and strong economic performance. It is that that is confirmed in the Standard and Poor's rating. Along with Moody's, as I've said before, our rating allows us to access every capital market in the world. We can borrow cheaper than any other province.

Still further, today the legislation which I introduced, complemented by the legislation introduced by the Minister of Education, reduces, in the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry's own terms, the liability of the province of Alberta by \$9 billion, Mr. Speaker. To quote the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry, the exact words that he used on May 17, 1991, in this House: what are you going to do with the \$9 billion of liability? Well, we've just struck it off the balance sheet of this province, ensuring the strong fiscal position of this province in the future.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, this is the same Treasurer that told us that we were going to have a balanced budget last year. Nobody believes you anymore, Mr. Treasurer. We've had seven consecutive deficit budgets. Moody's says that our consolidated debt is now over \$20 billion. I want the Treasurer to tell us when he's going to put in a real plan to deal with deficits and to start paying down our debt. When are we going to see that real plan, a detailed plan?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, I've already indicated to the member time and time again that as of March 31, '92, the debt of the province of Alberta, as filed in this Assembly, was \$12

billion. We've expected it to increase by \$2.3 billion, which is the amount of the deficit which we forecast, and that deficit has allowed us to move out of the recession which has captured the rest of Canada and to some extent has affected us here in Alberta with an economic downturn. As I've indicated already, the liabilities of the province of Alberta are in fact well balanced with assets. Still further, the liabilities which are associated with the pension plan liabilities have in fact been essentially reduced and struck off the balance sheet of this province by the comprehensive review of pension plan legislation which was put in place.

On top of that, Mr. Speaker, we have been working on a business plan which started in 1986, and that plan, which moved our debt from the oil shock of 1986 down through the 1992 period, has been fully debated in this Assembly. Now the current plan before the Assembly is in fact the following: we have a three-year plan which builds on our strengths and successes in controlling our expenditures by controlling our expenditures on the program side from 2 and a half down to 2 percent. Still further, all ministers are now talking to their own client base about new efficiencies and improved ways in which we can deliver programs. We're rethinking the process of delivering government services to the people of Alberta, and we're asking Albertans to be part of that process. Unlike the top-down dictatorial socialists across the way we're seeking consultation and seeking a joint way in which we can . . .

3:00

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. [interjections]

Drumheller, followed by Stony Plain. [interjections] Order please. [interjections] Thank you, hon. members.

Drumheller, followed by Stony Plain.

Constitutional Reform

MR. SCHUMACHER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the hon. Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs, and it arises out of the fact that over the past three months the province of British Columbia has reportedly advocated six different proposals regarding Senate reform. I would like to ask the minister whether the sixth proposal brought by Mr. Sihota, the British Columbia minister in charge of constitutional matters, to his meeting with the minister yesterday is a helpful new suggestion in the area of Senate reform.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. minister Mr. Sihota, in his remarks to the news media yesterday following his meeting with me, indicated that what they had proposed was a reversion to an idea that has been around for some time, that being the creation of a council of the federation or a House of the provinces whereby elected representatives from individual Legislatures would form the upper House in our federal Parliament. He did propose an option, of course, which was of some interest, and that would be that each province could determine whether or not those members would be just appointed from individual Legislatures or elected by a popular vote provincewide.

The idea, of course, had been suggested to Albertans in the document circulated by our government in 1981-82, I think, and was the subject of discussion by the select special committee chaired by the Hon. Dennis Anderson. It was taken to Albertans for their consideration and rejected quite overwhelmingly by Albertans who made representations to that committee, and from that discussion flowed the select committee report which was unanimously endorsed twice in this Assembly and again approved in principle by the select special committee as a result of our most

recent hearings. I was able to point that out to my colleague from British Columbia.

While I'm sure his visit here and the idea were well intentioned, it has not in the past proven to be acceptable to Albertans nor has it, in my view, been debated or discussed really in any adequate way during the course of the last three months of meetings in which I've been involved on behalf of Albertans.

MR. SCHUMACHER: A supplemental, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister report on meetings held this morning between his officials and officials from the federal government regarding this constitutional reform file?

MR. HORSMAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, as everyone in Canada should be aware, the Clerk of the Privy Council, Paul Tellier, visited with Atlantic provincial officials yesterday and today met in Calgary with representatives of the western provinces. Clearly the subject of Senate reform remains a major concern to Albertans. One of the arguments advanced in particular, which I think was dealt with this morning by my officials, was that by having a triple E Senate, we would subject the government to the rule of 17 percent of the population of Canada as represented by the smaller provinces. We were able to point out in that meeting that in similar equal, elected, and effective Senates in Australia the percentage of the least populous states is 13 percent and in the United States of America the population of the 25 least populous states is 15 percent. So that principle which had been so seriously urged upon us by the opponents of triple E I think is effectively answered, particularly with respect to Australia, where the British parliamentary system is in place and where 13 percent of the population is represented in the smaller states. So I think we were able to answer that argument today, and in all other respects, I don't think much changed as a result of the meetings that took place in Calgary this morning.

MR. SPEAKER: Stony Plain, followed by Calgary-North West.

French Education

MR. WOLOSHYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to commend the Minister of Education for introducing legislation that entitles the Francophone community to operate their own schools. I'm glad the minister has finally agreed to abide by the Supreme Court decision. Unfortunately, Bill 41 also includes a number of other amendments that are irrelevant to Francophone education. Albertans were led to believe that the Francophone education legislation would be freestanding. Given the importance of Francophone education legislation, could the minister explain why the legislation was not introduced as a stand-alone amendment thereby giving Francophone education the status it deserves?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, the Francophone education management and control structure as spelled out in the amendment to the School Act will, when it's all said and done, be contained within the entire School Act, which doesn't just meet the needs of one particular group but speaks to the needs of all Albertans, including those Albertans who enjoy rights under section 23 of the Charter.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Mr. Speaker, the minister is sending the wrong message to Francophones in Alberta by introducing their education Bill very late in the session and then insisting that it be included with a variety of other general amendments like the additional subsection (5) to section 110, which makes attendance

board rulings confidential and which in itself needs considerable debate. Splitting Bill 41 would allow for a focused debate and for approval for Francophone education legislation. Why is the minister holding Francophone education legislation for ransom by complicating the Bill with additional amendments which should be debated separately and only get in the way of Francophone education legislation?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, what the legislation does is send a message to all Albertans, including Francophone Albertans, just as I spelled out in the Assembly when I introduced the Bill on Friday, and that is that we put in place a structure for management and control of Francophone schools by Francophone parents who enjoy section 23 rights. That structure respects the Supreme Court judgment, it fits within the Alberta context, and it's what is best and what's right for children's education in the province of Alberta.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-North West.

NovAtel Communications

(continued)

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 1987 when the government had to bail out two failing finance trust companies, it set up 354713 Alberta Ltd., also known as Softco. Since the government doesn't own 100 percent of Softco, they've used it to hide a variety of information from Albertans, and I'm afraid it's going to happen again. My question today is to the Treasurer. The Treasurer said that the \$300 million systems financing portfolio for NovAtel is going from NovAtel to North West Trust. Will the Treasurer commit that it will remain in North West Trust and not be hidden in Softco or any other numbered company they may set up like it?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, I'm assuming that the member is seeking information, and I'll treat it that way as opposed to the rhetoric you see from the opposition parties normally.

To make it very clear, what has happened here is that North West Trust is acting as a collection agency for the government. A collection agency, Mr. Speaker, will not take back onto its account any of the liabilities. It's much the same as any other collection agency: you have the asset over here; I provide the service. That is to say, I collect the account for you. For the collection of that account I charge a fee, and the reason that I'm in the business of doing that is that I have the expertise to collect these kinds of accounts receivable.

3:10

On the assumption that the member is simply seeking information, I'm offering to him an opportunity to provide an objective display as to what the government is doing here and to provide as much information as possible. Those are the facts. It will not come back onto the balance sheet of North West Trust. It's not going to be for the account of North West Trust or any numbered company North West Trust may have. As I've said earlier, Mr. Speaker – and this is extremely critical – the depositors' money in North West Trust is not at all impacted or affected by any decisions the North West Trust board has made to collect on behalf of the government these accounts receivable.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, his skating job is interesting. I still don't know whether it's going to stay with North West Trust or not.

Let me ask the question then. The minister talked about collection fees that are going to be paid to North West Trust. It's my understanding that these collection fees can be as high as 50 percent of the amount collected, and the government has said that there's \$216 million going to be collected, so it's possible that the fee is \$108 million. Is this simply a way of the government putting money into North West Trust, which has had financial difficulty in the past?

MR. JOHNSTON: Well, Mr. Speaker, let me make it very clear that North West Trust has not had financial difficulty since it was corrected and fixed and appropriately restructured as a result of CDIC providing money to the government. We now have a company which is quite viable, which has assets close to \$800 million, and which is now making profits and has consistently made profits since the start of that entity.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, we have worked out the difficult assets which were part of North West Trust's portfolio which were given to the province to manage and had no cost attached to them. We undertook to work them out to ensure that we put them back into the marketplace, into the private sector on a reasonable basis without disturbing the market, and we have done just that. If you include in that the adjustments for the credit union system, approximately \$600 million to \$650 million worth of real estate has been moved out of the government's hands into the private sector by effectively taking the time to work up the properties, finding reasonable financing for them, and putting them in place. So we know that we have the expertise to handle these kinds of problems.

Let me stress again that the government has negotiated with North West Trust and the board of directors there on a fee-for-service basis which is based on reasonable commercial terms, not at all like what the member has just described, which will allow North West Trust to generate some fee revenue and in fact will allow them to work out the portfolio that's been presented to them and will not at all impact on the balance sheet. That's the up-front statement, and that's the way to . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Calgary-Glenmore, followed by Edmonton-Highlands.

Tire Disposal

MRS. MIROSH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many Albertans are expressing concerns with regards to the tire recycling issue. There are a number of men and women in the business who want to remain in the business, and we know that there's been a cabinet decision with regards to pyrolysis and the incineration process. We also know that the Premier has asked for a scientific review with regards to this recycling process. My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Could the minister please explain the whole process of reviewing this scientific study and again reconsider these proposals using the pyrolysis and incineration method?

MR. KLEIN: Well, quite simply a committee was formed under the auspices of the Premier to look at pyrolysis and incineration on a scientific basis, and this is being done through the Alberta Research Council with the assistance of Dr. Tollefson from the University of Calgary, who is an incineration expert. Basically they will be bringing back a report to tell us exactly whether or not pyrolysis and incineration are environmentally safe and are reasonable technologies from an economic point of view. After that, a report will go, I expect, to government, and we will make

a decision at that time as to whether the proposals that have been submitted relative to pyrolysis and incineration will be reconsidered.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

MRS. MIROSH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My supplementary question is with regards to the tire recycling fee. Could the minister outline if all companies, especially the small tire recycling companies, would have access to this tire recycling fee?

MR. KLEIN: It was always intended that the very small recyclers, the so-called cottage industries, would have access to the advance disposal fee. Basically, the implementation of the advance disposal fee has been delayed for two reasons. One is that we really don't have the legislative authority to put it in place, and we won't have that authority until that section of Bill 23 is proclaimed. We don't know exactly when that is going to happen, so we have delayed the implementation to September. The other reason is that some of the tire dealers are still concerned about having to collect the advance disposal fee and would like some more information on the kinds of promotional and educational materials that are going to be provided, and they want more details on the administration of that fund. So we're attempting to talk to as many of these dealers as we possibly can between now and September 1.

Prescription Drugs

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, the technology minister has cost Albertans well over half a billion dollars just by two little transactions: buy/sell, buy/sell. Now, on Sunday the minister issues a news release saying that he's in favour of extending patent protection for pharmaceutical companies; in other words, brand name drugs. The generic drug industry saves the health care system in Canada about \$400 million a year. Why on earth is this minister, who's already cost taxpayers money they can't afford, advocating changing the patent protection laws, which is going to cost our health care system?

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, obviously there will be a balance achieved, but in the meantime it's important that there be investment in research in Alberta.

MS BARRETT: Well, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you. All four western provinces enjoy only 8 percent of Canada's R and D, and it's dropping year by year ever since his federal counterparts introduced that rotten legislation in 1987. So is the minister telling us that for the \$40 million more we're going to pay in Alberta for prescription drugs, we're going to get \$40 million more in R and D? Nonsense. Will he confirm that?

MR. STEWART: In fact, it could be more, Mr. Speaker. It's important that the legislation be on the same basis as the rest of the world. In that way we will get research dollars in this province.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Avonmore.

Child Support and Maintenance Payments

MS M. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the minister responsible for women's issues. Low child support orders disadvantage many Canadian children because they cover

less than half the minimum costs of raising a child. Government legislation and policy often further disadvantage children by reducing even this minimal support. For instance, the federal government's policy of taxing child support payments means a reduction of approximately 30 percent in support payments to needy children while giving a tax break to the higher income noncustodial parent. Will the minister now lobby the federal minister responsible for the status of women and the federal minister responsible for finances to change the provisions of the federal Income Tax Act to remove these unjust and discriminatory sections?

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, that actually was one item in a number of items that we talked about at the recent federal, provincial, and territorial ministers' meeting on the status of women all across Canada. An even more fundamental issue is the practice of our courts in awarding maintenance and alimony awards which are inconsistent, to say it politely, and often far too little, recognizing the true costs of raising children today.

MS M. LAING: Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the taxation should be on the income of the noncustodial parent and not on child support seen as income to the mother.

Mr. Speaker, in our own province despite the reality that after divorce a man's average income rises and a woman's falls and despite the very high rate of poverty among female led, lone parent families, the policy of this government's Department of Health is that custodial parents, usually women, must be responsible for paying child health care premiums. Will this minister now lobby the Minister of Health to change the policy which places a further burden on low-income custodial parents who are struggling to feed and clothe their children?

MS McCOY: I'll certainly look into that issue and discuss it with the Minister of Health.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Gold Bar.

3:20 Access to Children of Divorced Parents

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Labour's scheduled meeting tonight to discuss child access with noncustodial parents has raised some very interesting questions. I understand that the invitation list is clearly comprised of people committed to improving child access and government employees, who make up a third of the list. The agenda and objective of this exercise, however, remain a mystery. My questions are to the Minister of Labour. Will the minister be introducing the government position tonight or possible legislation that's coming forward? What is the real agenda for this meeting?

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, this evening the Member for Banff-Cochrane and myself have the pleasure of convening a meeting of various stakeholders. There are in fact representatives of noncustodial parents and noncustodial grandparents. There are also some practitioners in the family law field, including a judge and barristers and a person who works in mediation services. There are also various people attending who study these issues in a professional way both from the family point of view and the legal point of view. There is one representative from each of the family council and the women's council. Then we do indeed have some staff members who will be assisting in the evening.

We intend to have three discussion groups, a variety of stakeholders' perceptions of interests around each table, to explore

various issues related to access to children after a divorce. There is no position whatsoever being put forward by the government. Certainly my interest is in learning more about the issue, particularly having said that in these issues there is one interest which must be paramount; that is – and I think everyone agrees with that – the interest of the child or children that are involved.

There is a diversity of other interests. Another diversity I think we need to recognize is the diversity of situations in which this issue can arise. What I think certainly we all need to do is have as full and as textured an understanding of the issues and of what is being done across Canada in a variety of ways as all of us work towards . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. minister. I think there's a supplementary coming. Thank you.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'd be reassured, too, if the minister will answer: does the minister plan on holding a follow-up meeting with the unconverted here in the House, namely the government caucus, to bring them onsite? These are the people that really need the education and consultation.

MS McCOY: Let me reiterate. The purpose of this meeting is to explore among a number of stakeholders, those who are involved with the issue, initiatives that are occurring across Canada, including some that are being taken by the federal government in some changes to their laws and practices in the divorce field, and also to gain a deep and textured understanding of the diversity of interests and situations in which this issue arises so that we can begin to focus on practices and procedures as well as possible legislative changes, although not all of the solutions for individuals who are caught up in unhappy access issues are indeed legislative ones.

MR. SPEAKER: Smoky River.

Alaska Highway 50th Anniversary

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I asked a question in the House of the Minister of Transportation and Utilities regarding the signage regulations along numbered highways in Alberta. Now, at that time the opposition suggested that it was nothing more than a puffball question. I assure you that to the communities in northern Alberta that are trying to promote their communities as tourist destination sites, indeed this is not puffball. To the Minister of Transportation and Utilities: are there any alternatives that these communities could explore with the idea of promoting the 50th anniversary of the Alaska Highway route to better develop their tourist potential?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, when I responded to the Member for Smoky River a year ago – a week ago; it seems like it was a year – I indicated at that time that the three signs that were being discussed were illegal and that the policy right now right across the province is that the placement of signs on primary highways is 300 metres, or 1,000 feet, back from the highway or 800 metres, or 2,600 feet, from an intersection that's primary and secondary. Yes, I think there are some alternatives. I think that if they're prepared to sit down with any community in the province, they may be able to get them to agree to a sign within the municipal boundaries of that community for some small payment.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Also to the Minister of Transportation and Utilities: does Transportation have any regulations for the signage within the enclosed municipalities?

MR. ADAIR: Well, Mr. Speaker, within the municipal boundaries that's the responsibility of that municipality. We do not suggest in any way, shape, or form that we would interfere with the decisions of that council within that municipal boundary. So there are no regulations that are tied directly to a decision like that.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Beverly.

Horse Race Betting

MR. EWASIUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In February of this year the federal government dropped its regulations on age limits on betting on horse races, deciding that it was properly the responsibility of the provincial government. Because the provincial government has subsequently not taken any action in filling the legislative void, we now have a situation where eight-year-olds are making bets on horse races both in Edmonton and Calgary. My question is to the Solicitor General. Given that Alberta knew of the impending changes to the federal legislation, will the Solicitor General explain why the Alberta Racing Commission, for which the Solicitor General has the responsibility, took no action on this matter until June of this year and even then only sent Northlands and Stampede park a letter asking if they thought the province should become involved in this situation?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, it was a long lead in, and I didn't hear it all unfortunately, but the Racing Commission does not lie with the Solicitor General's department at this time. I would ask the minister responsible for lotteries to comment on that.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, the responsibility for the Alberta Racing Commission rests with this minister, and action has been taken with respect to the question that the member raised.

MR. EWASIUK: Well, perhaps the minister could explain as well when the action was taken, Mr. Speaker.

It's unacceptable to permit young children to gamble on horse races. The matter is compounded by the fact that some race tracks are licensed for beer, and children have been seen drinking beer ordered by adults on those premises. Given the Solicitor General's view that the drinking age should be raised from 18 to 21 years of age, what would the Solicitor General say about the impression that his position is only hypocritical grandstanding when he allows young children to gamble in licensed Alberta facilities

3:30

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, I assume from that comment that it was an opinion he was expressing rather than a question, but it's hypothetical at this time.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. [interjections] Order please.

Speaker's Ruling Access to the Chamber

MR. SPEAKER: Earlier today, at the beginning of our session, a considerable number of members arrived late. In the Speaker's procession on the way in I noticed that there seemed to be an uncommonly large media scrum taking place in the east hallway. While that's fairly normal, I would hope that members of the press gallery would pay attention and perhaps be a little more

accommodating in allowing members access to the Chamber so they can get in here for what is indeed their duty.

Now, the Chair is very much aware of the fact that the Premier and cabinet ministers get scammed constantly, and that's fine, but the Chair was very concerned today that the Deputy Speaker and the Deputy Chairman of Committees were not allowed access. Under most normal circumstances there is no immediate requirement for their presence in the House . . . [interjections] Order. The Chair puts this out as a point of concern: that officers of the House are required to be in the House as well as the other members and that hopefully steps will be taken in the near future so that continued access, which is indeed part of the privilege of all members, will be granted to all members.

Thank you.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Written Questions**

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I move that the written questions on today's Order Paper stand and retain their places.

[Motion carried]

head: **Motions for Returns**

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I move that the motions for returns on today's Order Paper stand and retain their places except for the following: motions for returns 250, 268, 342, 347, and 353.

[Motion carried]

Community Facility Enhancement Program

250. Mr. Wickman moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the amount of money allocated from October 1988 to March 1, 1992, by the community facility enhancement program by group and by constituency.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, Motion for a Return 250 is one that I've had a brief exchange of paper with the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud on. The government is not prepared to accept the motion as it's written, but if there's an amendment forthcoming, we could certainly live with it.

Perhaps I just might point out what the changes would be, in essence, to allow us to deal with this. The order basically asks the amount of money allocated from October 1988 to March 1, 1992, by the community facility enhancement program by group and by constituency.

In fact, if we had wording along the line that basically said, "the amount of money allocated from October 1988 to June 30, 1992, by the community facility enhancement program by a listing of individual projects," and end it there, we would certainly be able to deal with that.

Mr. Speaker, these funds are not allocated according to a constituency basis, and they're not allocated according to any formula, but they're disbursed in response to expressed community needs. I have been working on the assembly of a complete list, which is nearly 3,000, and I'm quite prepared to do that. I would put forward the amendment if the hon. member would like to deal with it in that way. I could then relate to it and have the information available as quickly as possible.

Sir, I'm in your hands in terms of whether or not I would put forward the amendment or the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud would put forward the amendment. Then we could deal with it. If it's appropriate, then I would say that if we could amend

Motion for a Return 250 to read "the amount of money allocated from October 1988 to June 30, 1992, by the community facility enhancement program by a listing of individual projects," I would be happy to deal with it.

Speaker's Ruling Amendments

MR. SPEAKER: Well, the Chair will be very happy to see a printed copy of the amendment.

Hon. members, it's a most unusual circumstance because the Chair usually requires that there be copies printed for the sake of all members. While this matter is being prepared, the House stands adjourned until quarter to 4 so we can get it in place. [interjections] I'm sorry, hon. members. That's the procedure of this House. [interjections] No; I'm sorry. Quarter to 4.

[The Assembly adjourned from 3:37 p.m. to 3:45 p.m.]

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. members. I believe copies have now been distributed to all members. The amendment is the matter before the House. The amendment, as the Chair interprets it, as moved by the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services, is that Motion for a Return 250 be amended by deleting "March 1, 1992," and the following date inserted, "June 30, 1992," and the words "by group and by constituency" deleted and the following words substituted, "by a listing of individual projects."

Additional comments, minister?

Debate Continued

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, that's the appropriate wording.

MR. SPEAKER: On the amendment, Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: On the amendment, Mr. Speaker. The amendment is acceptable. I'll accept the amendment. I won't speak to the amendment at this time. I do wish for the opportunity to speak to the main motion as amended, but I want to make it clear that I'm not speaking to the amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: Call for the question on the amendment?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

[Motion on amendment carried]

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Whitemud in conclusion of debate.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To conclude debate on Motion for a Return 250, there are a few comments I want to make. I'm delighted that the minister has gone this far to provide us with a listing of individual projects for the period of time from the beginning of the community facility enhancement program to June 30, 1992. As a matter of fact, those additional months of March, April, May, and June will complete that total listing of projects that we want. Now, it would have been more desirable if we actually had them broken down by constituency, because we do intend to break them down by constituency and we'll have to do it the hard way. We'll do it the hard way by identifying the address where the project has been approved, and we will do our detailed analysis like we did some time ago that clearly showed that all constituencies weren't being treated in what we considered an equal fashion. But this certainly does help us.

The last question that I would have, if the minister can just indicate by note, whatever: when can I expect this material now?

Will I get it like tomorrow, the day after? Will it be a number of days or when?

MR. SPEAKER: The matter before the House is Motion for a Return 250 as amended.

[Motion as amended carried]

Government Vehicles

268. Mr. Wickman moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the number of government fleet vehicles currently in use; how many government fleet vehicles currently use natural gas as fuel; how many of these have been converted to natural gas use since March 31, 1991, until March 18, 1992; and how many kilometres and/or years government fleet vehicles are driven before being traded in.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, Motion for a Return 268 asks for some information with respect to "the number of government fleet vehicles currently in use." Essentially, Alberta Public Works, Supply and Services has under its authority some 4,400 vehicles; the Department of Transportation and Utilities has a further 2,500 vehicles; other departments in the public service in the province of Alberta, approximately 300 vehicles. That's really the running fleet that would be associated with the entity known as the government of Alberta and all of its various organizations and components.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

The second aspect, essentially, of this motion deals with "how many government fleet vehicles currently use natural gas as fuel." Approximately 20 vehicles, Mr. Speaker, basically have been converted to the use of natural gas. Of that component, the Department of Public Works, Supply and Services has nine and the Department of Transportation and Utilities, 11.

"How many of these have been converted to natural gas use since March 31, 1991, until March 18, 1992?" During that time frame, Mr. Speaker, 18 vehicles were converted to natural gas use: seven in the Department of Public Works, Supply and Services and 11 in the Department of Transportation and Utilities. Those conversions were made in conjunction with pilot projects in both departments.

3:50

One other aspect of the motion basically requests how many kilometres and how many years a government vehicle is driven before being traded in. Essentially, vehicles in the overall Public Works, Supply and Services general fleet are replaced after some 140,000 kilometres or earlier if mechanical problems exist. Vehicles in the executive fleet are replaced after three years or 75,000 kilometres, whichever comes first. In terms of the Department of Transportation and Utilities and other departments, they establish their own replacement policies for the vehicles that they use. Those policies are consistent with the type and the use of the vehicle. For example, light-duty trucks associated with the Department of Transportation and Utilities are usually replaced after five years or 160,000 kilometres, and loaders, bigger vehicles are usually replaced after 18 years.

Mr. Speaker, the government would be pleased to accept Motion for a Return 268. We'd be very, very pleased to do that. In fact, I have provided the answer today, but we will do it in a

more formal way by duplicating a copy of *Hansard* and having it filed with the Assembly per se.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Further speakers?

[Motion carried]

Video Lottery Terminals

342. Mr. Wickman moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of any and all Alberta Liquor Control Board studies on the viability of video lottery terminals in bars in Alberta made prior to March 26, 1992.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services.

MR. KOWALSKI: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Motion for a Return 342 is one of those very interesting ones. They're asking for "copies of any and all Alberta Liquor Control Board [reports and] studies on the viability . . ." The government would be very pleased to accept this motion. The required information will show that the Alberta Liquor Control Board does not have any studies regarding the "viability of video lottery terminals in bars in Alberta made prior to March 26, 1992." We're very pleased to accept the question. The question has now been responded to in advance, but it will be responded to in a very formal way. We would be very pleased to provide this very essential information to the Assembly.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm somewhat puzzled, amazed by the comments of the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services. I gather from his comments that he is saying that prior to March 26, 1992 . . . [interjections] Possibly the Minister of Education has something he can enlighten this House with for a change.

Mr. Speaker, I get the impression, the understanding that the minister has responded by saying that prior to March 26, 1992, no studies were done on the viability of video lottery terminals in bars. That would not make sense to me. I'm sure there must be some misunderstanding of my question, or possibly I misheard the information that the minister did provide verbally. I can't comprehend how a decision would be made on the installation, the approval of video lottery terminals in bars in Alberta without any studies first being made.

It's become very, very apparent that this was not just a decision that was made since March 26, 1992. We know, for example, that there were video lottery terminals on an experimental basis in a number of licensed premises throughout the province for a period of time. We know now that these are going to become very, very widespread. We know now that we're going to see during Klondike Days, during the Stampede - as a matter of fact, as early as next week people in Calgary will be putting in money and receiving the coins dangling down as they experiment at the Stampede with the Vegas-type video machines that I've talked about before, Mr. Speaker. I've been alarmed about this whole subject from the point of view that it is escalating at such a rapid rate, and I haven't seen any initiatives taken to try and determine the social impact of this type of escalation.

Speaker's Ruling Relevance

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, hon. member. The Chair must question the manner in which debate is occurring here.

The motion for a return, as the Chair understands it, has been accepted by the minister, and he's given a verbal answer. I assume that would be confirmed later on. I do not think it is appropriate to go on now debating the whole issue of lottery terminals.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not trying to debate the whole issue of video lottery terminals. I'm trying to get a determination: were there or were there not any studies done whatsoever? I gather that the minister responded by saying that there were no studies done. I'm just flabbergasted that no studies have been done. I guess now I'll wait for the written response to see if as a matter of fact it does state that there have been no studies conducted prior to March 26, 1992.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. [interjection] Order please, hon. member.

[Motion carried]

Special Waste Management System

347. Mr. McInnis moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of the audited financial statements of the joint venture for the construction, ownership, and operation of a part of the Alberta special waste management system for the years 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, and 1991.

MR. McINNIS: The reason this motion is on the Order Paper is that the Special Waste Management Corporation does not presently make available results of the joint venture which is the entity which operates the Swan Hills special waste management facility. Financial statements are made available for the Crown corporation, which basically does little more than hold the provincial government's interest in the joint venture. Bovar, Bow Valley Resource Services, which is the private-sector partner, has financial statements which discuss their overall operations but which don't detail the operations of the Swan Hills centre. In fact, the financial operations of the special waste management facility at Swan Hills are something of a mystery at this point in time. Since I was informed by the Special Waste Management Corporation that it was not their policy to release that information, I decided to bring my case here to the highest court in the land, the Legislative Assembly, to seek the information via the government.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Further speakers?
The Minister of the Environment.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just as a bit of background, the Alberta special waste management facility at Swan Hills is one of the only fully integrated hazardous waste management facilities in North America with three processes to handle hazardous waste: incineration, deep well sinking, and landfilling.

4:00

Very basically, with respect to construction of the plant, it was done on a 60-40 agreement with Bovar, the private-sector partner, with Bovar paying 60 percent of capital costs and the Alberta government paying 40 percent of capital costs. That is the arrangement that is in place relative to the expansion for which tenders are now being called. The Alberta government, as the hon. member points out, maintains ownership of the plant and has an operating agreement with Bovar and its subsidiary Chem-Security. The Alberta Special Waste Management board of

directors of course sets policy relative to the overall operation of the plant, and currently that operating agreement between the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation and Bovar is under review.

Mr. Speaker, the information contained in the audited financial statements of the joint venture between the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation and Bovar is proprietary to the principals. The corporation's interest and contributions to the joint venture are exhibited in the annual reports of the corporation tabled with the Legislative Assembly, and that is the information that should be of importance to the public. Therefore, we're recommending that on the basis of this information being proprietary, the motion for a return be rejected.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are there further speakers?

The Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place, therefore, to close debate.

MR. McINNIS: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't have any wish to prolong the debate, but I would just like to make one point with the Minister of the Environment. We, the taxpayers of Alberta, are liable for all of the operating losses of the joint venture to the extent that we have to reimburse the private-sector participant for all operating expenses plus a return on investment, which I believe to be prime plus 4 percent. So there's a bill that comes at the end of every year, and that bill has been hovering in the vicinity of \$30 million to \$35 million. The projected vote this year is \$29 million and change.

Now, that's a pretty sizable sum of money, and I think it's not quite right to suggest that there can be a proprietary arrangement which prohibits Albertans from knowing how their money is being spent at that operation. I can see proprietary information if you're dealing with strictly a private company pursuing its own private business that does not have shareholders to report to, but in this case we're dealing with funds that are public funds through a Crown corporation, and in a sense every person who's a voter and a taxpayer in Alberta is a shareholder in this operation. I really think that the government should reconsider the practice of withholding information for that which we as taxpayers are financially liable on an annual basis. In this case the veil of secrecy I submit is sufficient to allow the company to do things that might not be in the interests of the people who are paying the bills at the end of the year. I appreciate that there's a review under way of this incredible cost-plus rate of return for the joint venture partner, but I think the veil of secrecy has to be pierced. For me the overwhelming argument is the fact that at the end of the year the taxpayers have to write a cheque to Bow Valley Resource Services to pay the losses. As long as we're liable to write that cheque, then we're entitled to know how the cheque is calculated.

[Motion lost]

Video Lottery Terminals

353. Mr. Wickman moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the list of all licensed drinking establishments classified as class A by the Alberta Liquor Control Board to whom applications for video lottery terminals will be sent by the government.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are there any speakers on the motion for a return?

MR. WICKMAN: I anticipated a response from the other side.

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member wants a response, the government is willing to accept that particular motion, and he'll receive the answer in due course.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: To conclude, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister of consumer affairs for his input on this particular motion for a return. I take that as an indication that in fact this listing of class A licensed drinking establishments will have received by now, I would anticipate, or are in the process of receiving – video lottery terminal applications will be coming in due course. I would hope due course is in the next short period of time.

The other interesting portion of this motion for a return – and possibly when the minister responsible for lotteries reads *Hansard*, can respond to it as well – is: when these various class A licensed drinking establishments receive their applications, what's the next step in terms of criteria to determine who's going to be accepted? Which of these facilities will be deemed to be appropriate to receive these lottery terminals? Mr. Speaker, I think we're all aware that there are some licensed premises that are patronized more by those of lower income, those that are probably the least likely to be able to afford to gamble away money: rent money, food money, and such. I would hope that the concentration is not to try and get these video terminals, these gambling devices, into these types of premises. That could have some very, very undesirable social impact.

[Motion carried]

head: Motions Other than Government Motions Government Appointments

221. Moved by Ms M. Laing:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly is of the opinion that all available positions on government designated administrative tribunals, boards, commissions, and advisory councils be filled in a nonpartisan manner ensuring representation proportionate to the population served by them in terms of gender, visible minorities, and disabled persons.

MS M. LAING: Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to bring this motion forward. It requests that the policy of this Assembly be that we hold that, at the group's need, the boards and the councils named be filled in such a way as to reflect the demographic makeup of the constituent group being served. In addition, we would hold that such appointments be nonpartisan.

The principle underlying the first part of this motion is that people can best speak for themselves and that constituent groups can speak from an experience and a depth of knowledge and understanding that may evade observers or other so-called experts. We also believe that tribunals, boards, commissions, and advisory councils are in place to represent the needs of constituent groups and to seek solutions that serve these people rather than partisan political agendas. Indeed, we believe a commitment to a particular philosophy or political ideology may limit the ability and/or the willingness to fairly assess alternatives and may limit the diversity of alternatives offered. By involving people from a variety of perspectives, including political perspectives, the dialogue and debate can only be enhanced and enriched. I have a friend who has said many times that we learn a great deal more

from those who disagree with us than we learn from those who agree. Indeed, the honest questioner can challenge us, through new questions, to new levels of understanding and meaning and, I would say, make us evaluate our assumptions which we have sometimes held unchallenged and unchecked for many years. Such questioning can make possible more creative solutions than simply talking to like-minded people could ever make possible or design.

4:10

The broader question that we must address, however, is an equity in the representation on these councils and boards and tribunals. I will speak most in depth about gender equity because gender is the most obvious and the most pervasive. We must have gender equity so that the interests of women are fairly represented. Women represent 51 percent of the population, and their perspectives must be fairly articulated and addressed. We would seek proportional representation of the population in terms of whose interests or needs are being addressed, the constituent group. We would see gender as cutting across all constituent groups, but it must be proportional to the population itself.

Thus the Advisory Council on Women's Issues would be all women because it addresses issues that have a particular impact on women, although the impact is more widespread. All groups of women should be represented by women on this council. These groups represented should be disabled women, professional women, mothers at home and mothers in the paid labour force, aboriginal women, native women, Metis women, lesbian women, immigrant or visible minority women. They have in common the fact that they are women, but they will bring forward, then, their own unique perspective in terms of the group that they are a part of. They then bring this uniqueness, the uniqueness in experience, to the issues that will have, for the most part, the most profound impact on women, although these issues are generally economic, social, political issues that affect men and, even more so, children, because the needs and well-being of children are inextricably connected to those of women. Certainly the needs and well-being of children must be of concern to all of society.

Thus, for example, the advisory council has analyzed the supports for independence for its impact on women and children because mainstream and traditional analyses have failed to look at the differential impact of government programs on women and thereby children because they have failed to address women's unique capacity to bear children, because of women's socially defined role as care givers and nurturers of children, and because of women's economic and politically imposed status of less importance or inferiority. Thus the Advisory Council on Women's Issues attempts to address the failure of traditional systems, including those of government policy and law, to assess the needs of women and children and to create laws and policies that speak to women's experience and needs. We look, of course, to a day when an Advisory Council on Women's Issues is unnecessary, a day when all policy and law reflects upon and responds to the differential reality of women's lives, as well as to the reality of men's lives, in all their variations and differences so that the policies and laws would incorporate women's voices and values too.

To this end, then, we must look to all tribunals, boards, and councils. Again we are reminded that women comprise 51 percent of the population and often speak with a different voice. Think here of boards just in the news, for instance, evaluating the feasibility of development and the impact on the environment. I'm reminded of a task force on economic development that I participated in. What I heard most of the time in presentations

was a focus on physical infrastructure – roads, sewers, telephone lines, power lines – and the bottom line was the profit motive. The impact that was studied was the impact on the physical or natural environment. Women, the few that did in fact address our task force, raised other issues, the issues of the social infrastructure – schools, hospitals, recreation facilities – because women are primarily responsible for taking care of these private needs. The bottom line for them was the quality of life, and the environmental considerations that had to be included were not only those on the natural and physical environment and the impact on it but on the human environment.

I think of the energy development that took place particularly in the '60s and '70s, where there was rapid growth in some centres. Men, women, and children lived in trailers. There were inadequate schools. The recreation facility was a huge beer hall. There wasn't adequate health care. There were very high rates of violence within the home, violence outside the home, a high suicide rate, high rates of alcoholism, and that was because no one had taken into account the need for a social, a human infrastructure. There were roads there. There were probably sewers. There were power and telephone, but there weren't enough schools or recreational facilities. There were no churches. So we had a one-sided kind of development that led to terrible human problems. Certainly the research shows over and over again high rates of violence in areas of rapid development where there is not attention paid to the human side of development. That's interpersonal violence as well as violence against self.

I heard yesterday on the radio about the hearings into the Three Sisters project near Canmore. The women's resource centre is planning to raise a number of concerns about this new development: the need for housing, schools, water, the social support system, health care, as well as a concern for the jobs being created. What we know is that this is going to be a tourist attraction, and most of the jobs created in the tourist sector are low paying service-sector jobs paying the minimum wage, not enough to support a family. Seventy-three percent of the recipients of these low wages will be women. Has anyone considered child care and what will happen to the children? Certainly when I visited that community, there were great concerns raised by the women about the impact on the human environment there. It is one kind of community that with the influx of development and tourists will be quite changed. Isn't that in fact what the residents want?

Too often we hear just one side, jobs, jobs, jobs, with no concern about what kinds of jobs, the economic base they will provide – in this case a pretty low one – and the support for women, the disabled, the aboriginal people, the minority group workers that may be in that area. Questions are not asked about training opportunities, and they need to be addressed if we're going to look at development in a holistic way in terms of the meeting of human needs. I would suggest that we set up economic systems to meet human needs, not vice versa, and that much of the breakdown we hear about in our society these days is that we have had an economic structure that has failed to address the human impact, the impact particularly on families of the economic system that we are so fully engaged in.

4:20

So we have to say, when we go to a community and look to development, that our development appeal boards and our planners better include groups from the community, better include women as well as men to have a more holistic approach to what will be developed. Unless all the stakeholder groups are involved in the decision-making process, decisions taken and acted upon

may reflect the interests of but a very few people and may in fact cause harm to a great number of people.

Other councils, boards, advisory bodies also must be cognizant of the need for balanced representation. I think of recently, a couple of years back, asking the minister responsible for the immigrant and settlement services board about the composition of the board: two women and 11 men. Such a board could not be expected to comprehend and address the needs of women and children. They could not see that immigrant women are isolated and often marginalized by their policies, by the lack of access to English as a Second Language training, the lack of access to job training, the lack of access to child care support, and what the lack of family support which they have often left behind in their country of origin means for them in their lives. Immigrant women particularly need help in dealing with the education, health care, and community systems which they have to use in order to meet the needs of their children and of their families.

These women, and this was addressed in the Advisory Council on Women's Issues report on supports for independence, often cannot access the services to which they are entitled either because of the barriers of language. They have not had an opportunity to learn the language, and that is a policy of a federal government and of a department that has failed to hear women's voices. There's a lack of information being made accessible to these women or a lack of advocates that can speak with these women in the language that they understand. Policies have failed to recognize the personhood of women, holding that when a woman comes to Canada with her husband, he is seen as the primary, the most important person, able to access job training, ESL. Women are simply an appendage, so they then are trapped in violent and abusive homes without support or avenues of escape. Our traditional immigrant and settlement services board did not address those issues. It was not until we got it to the community level that we started to address those issues that should rightfully have been addressed by government boards. These women often have had to live their lives unsupported, but they are expected to support other family members, including their husbands, who may suffer underemployment, unemployment, and discrimination.

We also need to hear the voices of aboriginal and Metis women when we address the needs of their people. They have long been responsible for the transmitting of their culture and its values as well as the provision of service to their people, the caring for children. Yet far too often we see sitting around the table a bunch of men, who have no real understanding of the issues being addressed, have no experience, cannot speak for women, as if women want men to speak for them. So we must ensure that the gender issue crosses all groups, that constituent groups are represented so they can speak, and that men and women are both represented.

Commissions and boards such as those that deal with health care, seniors, and disabilities need a greater proportion of women. I look at the lists of boards and what do I see? Usually about a third women and two-thirds men, even though the primary providers of many of these services are women, and for the most part women are the majority of the recipients of the services. We need to talk to recipients so we can know what works and what doesn't work both in the delivering as well as in the receiving of services. We need to talk to the parents of the deaf child. We need to talk to the deaf adult and to the teacher of deaf children because they all have perspectives that cannot be ignored.

In the same way, all special-needs people and those who work to address their needs must be heard in the context of their families, especially in terms of the primary care givers, often mothers, and of their community. We need to look at the

differential impact of such things as disabilities on women, because we know that disabled women are far more vulnerable to abuse than men who are disabled and women who are not disabled. So we have to see that gender cuts across, that there is a difference in the lives that these people live.

Boards and commissions looking into social issues of the day such as violence and midwifery also must look to the issues of gender representation in keeping with the groups affected. I think of how important it is and was that women be heard in regard to health care – the quality of care they will receive, the care that they want – and that their voices be heard in regard to such issues as midwifery, reproductive and family planning alternatives. The needs and experiences of women and their health care needs must not be subsumed under the generic “man” or “people.”

Yesterday, in a women's magazine yet, I read an article on the effect of cholesterol levels on people. When I read the article, I saw that the research was all done on men, yet we know that there is a different impact on men and women. We also know that there is a lack of research on women's health issues, so we have to have women on the boards deciding what research is going to be done. For too long women's health care needs were written off as rooted in neurosis. We know that illness such as breast cancer has not had the attention it would have received if it had been an ailment suffered predominantly by men, that health care remedies for women have been incompletely assessed and tested prior to being used and that side effects have been discounted. I think side effects like gaining weight, fluid retention, depression, and mood swings have been dismissed as inconsequential. Well, I'll bet you that if a lot of men were going around gaining weight, retaining fluid, being more depressed than usual, and suffering from mood swings, somebody would be concerned about that. It would not be written off as just the way life is.

Women's social problems have been medicalized. I think here of the number of women who have been battered and how they were written off as depressed and given tranquilizers. Normal changes in their lives have been medicalized, too, because medicine has held that men and their development are normal and that any difference is a subject of concern in need of treatment.

In addition, I think initiatives to support deinstitutionalization must recognize that the primary care givers in the family and the support workers in the community are generally women. Decision-makers need to take into account the changing lives of women as they may embark on these initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, until we have a society in which all people are truly equal, we must make extraordinary efforts to ensure that all voices are heard. This motion is in keeping with the empowering of all citizens to ensure that all voices are heard. People do not want other people to speak for them. To exclude due representation from women on all aspects is to deny the reality of 50 percent of the population – more than 50: 51 or 52 percent. It is women who have put such issues as rape, incest, and battering on the public agenda. It is women who have put child care and pay and employment equity on the public agenda. It is women who have made up the majority of advocates for civil rights, children's rights, environmental protection, and peace and disarmament. They must be represented on the boards and tribunals and commissions and advisory councils as part of any constituent group whose needs are being addressed. To do otherwise is to miss one half of the human experience and limit our solutions.

Thank you.

4:30

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Cardston.

MR. ADY: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make a few comments on Motion 221 brought forward by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore. Certainly on the surface the aims of this motion seem worth consideration, and I'd like to go on record that probably like all members in this Assembly I am anxious that every Albertan have an equal opportunity to participate in whatever board or agency or tribunal or anything else that might go on. They should be allowed that opportunity. Participation forms the backbone of our society, and our province would be poorer and so would our country if we didn't have that as part of our system. It's especially important that the target groups, including women and visible minorities and disabled people, get their chance to participate and make their contribution. This government is committed to ensuring that everyone who wishes to get involved in the work force does so on an equal playing field. Now, I know the hon. member takes issue with that, but believe me, it's in the eye of the beholder, because there is a concerted effort made.

The member used something of a statistic indicating that less than half the positions on boards and agencies are occupied by the women of our province. I wonder if the member has a firm statistic as to just how far off the mark we are. I wonder if she has any appreciation for how much effort is put into trying to reach that equality by those who go about setting up these boards and agencies. She didn't mention any of that. I wonder if she has taken into consideration what segment of the so-called minority groups are anxious to participate. Are there as many women out there as men who want to participate? Certainly there are those who want to stay at home, who don't want to be involved in everything that is going on in society. Certainly if they want to, they should be allowed to.

I don't think we ought to be structuring society by saying: all you women who are at home are coming out of the home and into the work force and we're going to take all your children and put them into day care and take all the day care workers and structure them so they couldn't respond to an anomaly in the system if they wanted to, because we're going to structure this society so tightly to be sure everybody gets an equal shot that nobody will be able to move anywhere. Now, that's typical of the philosophy of the members across the way. I can't really subscribe to that. Let me reiterate what the ideal is. Those who want to participate, be a part of the system, and get involved in some of the things mentioned in the hon. member's motion should certainly have the opportunity and should be able to do it on a level playing field.

Our government refuses to make distinctions between people or to categorize them into sections. Organizations such as the Alberta Human Rights Commission and the Premier's council on persons with disabilities do a great deal of work to fight the discrimination that may develop along these lines, and they help to ensure that members of these target groups are able to take their rightful place in society. I think the hon. member across the way would have to agree that those organizations do some good work. They've accomplished some worthwhile things, and we look forward to them accomplishing more things in the future.

When we look at Motion 221, it seems like a good proposition at first: to give minority figures a place to participate in government boards, tribunals, and agencies. At the same time, I have to mention that there are more than a few problems with this motion's interpretation and how we might guarantee that participation.

To begin, it would marginalize and label people as being one thing or another. People don't want to be simply defined as handicapped or foreign or any other tag for that matter. They

want to be taken on their own terms and allowed to make their contribution on their own terms.

Mr. Speaker, when we traveled around the province with our constitutional task force, people often came before us and said: "We just want to be known as Albertans. We don't want to be known as foreign peoples; we don't want to be known as immigrants. We just want to be known as Albertans or Canadians, and we'll take our chances. We want to participate. Just give us a level playing field and we'll take it from there." Well, once we begin to tell these people that they're categorized, that's telling them: "This is how we see you. You can't make it without us helping you. You can't make it without us structuring society to put you into the slot we've now prepared for you in legislation." I don't think that's fair.

Certainly the members in this caucus who are of native descent didn't ask for any favours. They got out there and scrambled around in an election campaign and got elected. They're here because they earned the right to be. I think we could go to many, many native people who would say: "Don't make it that easy for us. We're prepared to do the same as those members did." They don't want to be appointed. That's not what they're asking for, but that's what this motion calls for so often.

In those circumstances where we tag people, we render them ineffective. Once we begin to give people jobs and positions and opportunities based only upon the colour of their skin or the fact that they're handicapped or the fact that they're female, we're making the same mistake people make when they discriminate against them. We are defining them not as people but as categories. One only has to look at all the problems with affirmative action programs in the United States and all the inequities they've caused to know that that is not the approach we should be taking. Just give them an equal chance. Rather, we should be taking steps to ensure that everyone has the same access to training and education and any member of a minority or target group is not discriminated against in the work force. Those are the aims of this government rather than ghettoizing and marginalizing members of target groups by guaranteeing them positions on every board that comes along. By guaranteeing them a level playing field and opportunities for education and training, we can fully integrate everyone without skewing the entire hiring process.

I'm not sure the Member for Edmonton-Avonmore understands exactly what would be involved if the government began trying to implement such a rash change. To begin, the government would have to publicly post all positions and advertising for applicants. Currently there are approximately 1,500 positions in Canada on boards, agencies, tribunals, and advisory councils. Even if not all these positions were open to the public due to legislation governing them, one can see there is still a substantial number of positions to be posted. I'm not sure the opposition understands what would be involved in this. Posting each of these positions would take considerable time and expense. Consider for a moment the print media in Alberta. These ads would have to be placed in at least 60 papers around our province for every position that comes up. Now, they rotate on those tribunals and boards. There are some that come up every month or two. We would have to advertise each of those in those 60 newspapers, and that's just the beginning.

4:40

AN HON. MEMBER: It's good job creation.

MR. ADY: Oh, job creation. We'll talk about that in a minute, hon. member.

Under this system that would be prescribed by the motion, we'd want to guarantee complete participation. This would have to be done for every possible position. On top of this is the question of who would review this new flood of applications and résumés. Job creation, the hon. member says. At whose expense? The public's expense. That never matters to the Official Opposition. They talk about deficit reduction and at the same time talk about job creation at the expense of the public purse.

To ensure that all these new applicants have the required skills and knowledge for the job, exams may be necessary, because now we don't have anyone that knows these people. They come in from an application. Under the present system, someone knows what a good job someone did in a circumstance and says, "That person would fill this position so admirably I'm going to nominate them." Consequently, there are nominations from a variety of areas. A person can nominate themselves in the present system. There's a process in place where they can nominate themselves. They can make application to perform on any board, agency, or tribunal in this province. Well, we have to go on and ensure that all these new applicants have the required skills and knowledge for the job.

Lastly, more interviews than under the present system would have to be arranged and conducted. Who would be responsible for organizing and arranging this huge process we've now put into place? Would it be up to the individual departments to organize these or the agencies, boards, and commissions which fall under them, or would the whole obligation fall on the shoulders of the personnel administration office and increase their workload? Or would it be a combination of these things? Or, much to the delight of the opposition, we'd set up a new bureaucracy to handle the whole thing. Now we've really got some job creation going here.

However it was decided to administer this greater public input, the result assuredly would be another level of bureaucracy for Albertans to have to work through. When I speak to my constituents, they tell me they do not want more bureaucracy. Intelligence tells us to keep everything as simple as possible. I challenge the hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore to do a survey in her constituency and list six things she would suggest for people to choose from that they would want us to reduce. The first one, I guarantee her, will be to reduce the size of government. I guarantee you that would be the answer: reduce the size of government. Here she is coming in with a motion that's going to dramatically increase the size of government, and then she talks about listening to Albertans. What are they saying? We don't hear women's voices; we don't hear the voices out there that are telling us what direction we should go. Well, the last thing Albertans want is more government spending. These are times of belt-tightening, restraint. This government has undertaken to not raise personal income taxes and ensure that Alberta remains the only province in Canada without a provincial sales tax. This means that all government spending must be looked at closely to ensure it remains reasonable. But here we go with something that's going to take off in a new direction.

I won't spend a great deal of time talking about the fiscal management of this government. We know we have the lowest program expenditure growth in Canada, proven statistically. [interjections] The hon. members don't like to hear that very well. We know that in the last year program expenditure was nearly flat, it hardly grew at all, but opposition members would like to change that to some extent.

I think we have to talk about when the time comes to deal with all these applications that have come in. We have to know what we're going to do with them and who's going to take care of

them. There's the administering of those applications, the cost of mailing out the notifications and other related costs. Costs to the taxpayers become mind-boggling. Let me give you an example. Last year we set about to hire an Ethics Commissioner. Mr. Speaker, to the hon. member: do you have any idea of what the advertising cost was for that one job that was advertised within just the parameters of Alberta? Twenty-three thousand dollars for just the advertising, one advertisement in the newspapers of this province. Now, what are we going to do with all the boards and agencies? Granted that's a high-profile job and probably there would be a bit more cost in advertising for that than for just someone on a board or agency, but that gives us some idea of what's going to take place.

Let's talk about what the committee had to do in order to get that person hired. There were at least 10 meetings of the committee to go through all the job applicants, short list them, do the interviews. It's a big process, and this is what the hon. member is suggesting we create. Certainly we have to remember that many Albertans this purports to help are not qualified to serve on some of these very specialized boards. On boards which deal exclusively with issues related to immigration or the needs of the disabled or women, of course input from members of these groups would be worth while. Their input would in fact be essential. That's fair ball.

Let's take another circumstance. Suppose we want to set up a board or agency that requires an ophthalmologist to serve on it. There are only 70 ophthalmologists in the whole province. We could advertise till the cows come home and no one would answer the ad. What do you do now? You need an ophthalmologist and nobody wants to play. They're busy practising their profession. There are certain circumstances where we even have to persuade people to come and serve on boards and agencies and tribunals because of the contribution they can make. You're not going to solve everything with this motion, hon. member. It's just not going to happen.

We certainly require that stakeholders and people involved in the industry be a part of these tribunals and boards and agencies. There has to be some know-how there. Each board must have its membership tailored for its own special needs. Not all Albertans are qualified to serve in every position. [interjections] Yeah, you're just not going to be able to make this structured society quite as structured as you'd like to have it. What is more, although the Member for Edmonton-Avonmore may not want to admit it, not all boards and agencies require a melting pot composed of representatives from a series of target groups to be effective. You know, in some cases we've got boards and agencies with only four or five members on them. How are we going to get this broad spectrum? If you start counting, by the time we get representation from every group we can think of, we'd have about 50 people on a board or agency. Hon. member, it's just not going to wash very well.

Some of these boards and agencies simply require professional credentials and experience and do not require the perspective of minority groups. Sometimes they don't have a function to play. When they do, they should be there. These boards are not shutting out members of target groups. Rather, they are simply trying to do their appointed tasks as well as possible without swelling their ranks to take account for every view under the sun.

Now, let's get back to what we're really trying to do with a board or agency. They have a job to do. They have a mandate. They should be able to have people on that board or agency that can get the job done. This motion would cause them to lose sight of that and get that mix on there that would distort it so badly I'm not sure they would ever accomplish what they set out to do.

People from target groups are welcome to apply and I encourage them to make themselves available to apply because they bring a wide range of talents and experience that should be tapped, but to enforce their participation is ludicrous and expensive.

4:50

Once again, our job is to help them fulfill their potential while offering them that level playing field. We should not and must not regulate their involvement in the system through some sort of reverse discrimination. Someone wants on a board or agency: "No, you can't get on. You're a man. Out with you." The hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore would never let a man participate if it was within her scope to prohibit it. That's not part of it.

I'd like to point out here that all Albertans have equal access to information on positions on government boards, agencies, commissions, and tribunals. The Alberta government publishes a document, an inventory of agencies, boards, and commissions. Now, I've taken the time to look at some of those boards, agencies, and tribunals. I can look at them and I don't have anyone in my whole constituency that fits. I don't have an ophthalmologist in my constituency. I don't have a heart surgeon in my constituency. There are a lot of things I don't have, but I can stand up and say: "I want some representation on that board and agency. My people down in Cardston are entitled to it. What's wrong with this whole system? It's got holes in it." Well, the document I spoke of that's published, that people can access now, contains a listing of all the different agencies, commissions, and boards, complete with information about the purpose of the particular board or commission, the membership, the vacancies, the appointment procedure, the term of office, remuneration, frequency of meetings, and on it goes. It tells it all. If someone wants to get on or if you want to get someone on, get the list, hon. member, and get them on.

Also included is the name of a contact person and their phone number if more information is needed. Now, talk about an open process, there it is. Why do we want to make life difficult for the people we represent? This inventory is distributed to all Alberta ministers, deputy ministers, the Legislative Assembly Office, agencies, boards, commissions, foreign offices, government libraries, and educational institution libraries. That's a pretty wide distribution. It is apparent that this information is readily available to all Albertans and is denied to none.

One might argue that only some people will take the time to go and get it, but aren't they the people we want? They're the people that are interested in participating, the people who are motivated to get this information and act on it. This system is more than adequate for providing all Albertans with the opportunity to become involved in the government. Albertans can access the information they want about various committees and boards, and after studying the information, they can contact the minister responsible to submit their name. They can also contact their MLA. Perhaps the hon. member has had that happen, when someone in her constituency has said, "I'd like to serve on the ABC committee." The hon. member has the right to submit that name, assist that person, lobby the minister, or whatever to try and get the merit and the qualifications of that person before the minister so they'll have an opportunity to be appointed. Nothing stands in their way, and this is a much more simple, less costly, and less regulated system than that proposed by the efforts in Motion 221.

I'd like to conclude by saying that this motion was probably brought forward as an attempt to make this government look as though it is denying all minorities the recognition they deserve in the political face of this province. That's just not the case. I've

pointed out to the hon. member that we do have a process in place; people can access the boards and tribunals.

To sum up, Motion 221 seems to zero in on ghettoizing and marginalizing members of target groups by seeing them only as minorities and not as people with valuable contributions to make in their own right. This motion displays a complete lack of understanding of the process involved in implementing competitions for public positions on boards, agencies, commissions, tribunals, and advisory councils. It would result in yet another unwanted, unnecessary level of government bureaucracy, and it is prohibitive in its costs. It is certain that Motion 221 would do nothing to further the cause of the people it purports to help. I put forward that it is counterproductive to their actual aims. For these reasons, I'd encourage everyone in the Assembly to reject Motion 221.

Thank you.

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

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thought I heard the member opposite describe this as rash change. Well, let me tell you, the world has changed and perhaps the members opposite have not noticed. The world is different, the world has changed, and what I hear being expressed here is not of the reality I know. It's an antiquated belief, and that's what's standing in the way of people and their full participation. It expresses regressive thinking, tragic thinking I feel, because now we find ourselves in Alberta in a kind of catch-up position that really doesn't reflect what's happening out there.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak to this motion from both the substance of the motion – that is, the merits of the principle – and the process of the motion. I understand the intent is an initiative our caucus has pushed for in the past, and I agree and we do offer it our qualified support. We recognize that participation on boards and commissions needs to be more proportionate to the population. The motion, however, is uncertain as to how that could effectively be legislated and applied. I believe without equivocation in this principle and we need to accept it that way, but we need to understand that our decisions would be better, our discussions and our dialogue and our debates could be improved and would be better, whether we're talking about this House or tribunals, boards, and commissions, if they were more balanced in their representation, and we need to develop a means collectively here to achieve that goal.

Mr. Speaker, it's important to have advice and input from . . .

MR. DAY: A point of order.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North is rising on a point of order.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, in keeping with principles laid out in *Beauchesne*, I wonder if the member opposite would entertain a brief question.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: It's up to the hon. member.

MRS. HEWES: Certainly, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DAY: It's been my observance, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. member opposite served with distinction in a number of areas in her young years and for a few years on this planet. I wonder if she could indicate to the House if she got those positions because

of how she worked and because of her abilities, or was it some paternalistic piece of legislation that allowed her to get there?

MRS. HEWES: I take the question as being sincere, Mr. Speaker. I believe I got them because of my experience, because of my hard work, because of my commitment, and I believe in that principle. I think we need to apply it a lot more conclusively in the work we do in this House. There's no question about that. [interjections]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. Order.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, I also worked very hard in my work on boards and tribunals and commissions to ensure that representation was changed. I worked very hard to make sure that women and minorities understand they have a part to play and a role to play and to help them put forward names of people who can serve and should be serving on these various commissions.

Mr. Speaker, just to finish that other thought, we need advice on our tribunals and boards from an experiential standpoint that gives meaning to the many decisions they must make. The problem here is that it isn't happening, so we have to find ways and means to put this into effect. What is it that we are going to do collectively to make this change? Our position in the Liberal caucus is that we have a history of pressuring the government to ensure that both women and minorities get fair consideration in appointment to boards, agencies, commissions and so on: any board in fact to which the government makes appointments or has influence through significant share holding.

5:00

I think we have to accept the fact that there is a shocking absence of women and minorities on most of these boards and therefore we're all deprived, because women's interests are not given the kind of prominence they need in the discussion. Mr. Speaker, this isn't a criticism of men. It's simply an acknowledgement that there is a major component in the decision-making process that's missing.

I've been impressed, Mr. Speaker, and I think most members have, by the involvement of farm women in the decisions of boards and tribunals that relate to agriculture in our province. I think they have made a profound difference in the kinds of decisions that are made and the kinds of legislation that are created in this House. I pay tribute to the farm women and the women of rural communities for the kind of work they do. I want to see that same kind of representation on all boards and tribunals, because I believe we would be far more effective.

We've called on the government of Alberta to set a very positive example for the private sector by rectifying the disproportionate male-dominated boards. The private sector continues to falter, as well, in employing women and visible minorities in top positions. An example is the recent stats from the University of Calgary, Mr. Speaker. The '90-91 annual report on employment equity shows that the percentage of women professors has actually slipped to 19 percent in '91 from 20 percent in '90. Ninety-one percent of full professors at the University of Calgary are male. I suggest that when you consider the student body and the activities of the University of Calgary, that simply does not reflect the circumstances in our population.

Mr. Speaker, while the government needs to take initiatives to set a positive example for hiring women and minorities, we still all believe strongly that qualifications and merit are the paramount criteria in appointments. The question then has to be asked: where are the women and minorities? Because I believe women

are just as skilled, just as motivated, just as intelligent, just as ready and willing and capable as men to undertake these kinds of responsibilities. So are new Canadians. So are the visible minorities. So are the disabled in our communities. So we have to find ways to involve them, to bring them in. We haven't been very creative about doing that, partly because some backward-thinking individuals don't believe it's necessary, don't believe we'd be any better off. But even if you do believe we'd be better off, which I do, we haven't been as creative as we should be in finding processes to involve them, to draw them into the system.

I'm reminded of some years back when I was on the Edmonton Police Commission. A great many of the problems that occurred in the city had to do with cultural differences and the difficulties minorities had. In those years we were seeing quite a massive immigration adjusting to our culture, and because they did not understand our legislation and our culture, they were finding themselves in conflict with the law. Now, the police commission had no visible minorities on it, no one who could explain in very easy experiential terms those cultural difficulties that then were expressed in conflict. Likewise, the membership of the police force had no visible minorities whatsoever on it, and it was very difficult to acquire them. The police chief at the time was a very active person and saw the difficulties and set up a community section. This community section had on it a native person, a black person, a person of oriental descent, and so on. Those people were not members of the police force but were there, were retained in order to advise the actual on the beat, on the street member so they could have some understanding of the problems and the conflict that occurred when there were cultural differences. Now, we reached out in that case. Subsequently, the police commission has always developed an opportunity to have visible minorities represented on it, so at least we know that those ideas are being expressed, those questions are being asked when decisions are made.

Mr. Speaker, similarly I had an experience some years back when I was on the senate of the University of Alberta where we were having difficulty attracting aboriginal students and keeping them in university. There were no aboriginal people, no native people on the board of the senate. They simply weren't there to advise us and help us. The university was doing great work in attracting and keeping foreign students from offshore, but our own people from northern Alberta simply couldn't get the kind of cultural support they needed. This is where we fall down very badly, I believe, in our society, and this is where we can and must reach out to bring in those kinds of ideas, to make sure those people and their thinking and their background and their life experience are reflected in the decision-making, because we're fooling around with the lives of people on these boards and commissions, and we need to have all kinds of societal values reflected in order that the decisions in fact more closely reflect what people need and desire.

Mr. Speaker, in order to attract qualified individuals of both genders and from all visible minorities, available positions, I believe, should be extensively advertised. The member opposite has spoken about the cost. Well, I believe that if we have good balance in our boards and tribunals, there will be cost savings. I think women in fact are very prudent and very thrifty. I think women have an excellent sense of the kinds of problems we have in our province right now and could inject into some of those decisions some very good ideas that would make economic sense. So I think we can in fact save money if we diversify in the commissions instead of having them all homogeneous.

We need to seek good applicants in the sense of advertising, in the sense of casting a wide net through those other groups that we

have intact. I'm thinking about the Multiculturalism Commission, Mr. Speaker. We have a commission. We've got a Department of Culture and Multiculturalism. Who better than that council to help and to encourage ethnic groups, minorities to put their names forward? I'm sure the hon. member knows of many most capable people who would be happy and willing to sit on boards and tribunals if they were encouraged to put their names forward, and that's exactly what I expect that council to be doing.

Mr. Speaker, city boards and commissions are widely advertised for an ample period. There's a whole list that appears in the paper. These positions are open. These positions are there and need to be filled this year. I think that's exactly what needs to happen with government designated boards. It's not acceptable to me for the government to make partisan appointments without advertising and encouraging competition. The systemic barriers prevent qualified minorities from gaining access to influential positions and to positions where we desperately need their advice.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Competition prevents the best qualified individuals from contributing to these kinds of boards, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure how the appointments get made. I've seen a number of appointments, and I'm not sure how those decisions are made. Other members have reflected that it seems to be by the kind of card you carry, by where you live and who you know. I like to think that other things are also taken into consideration. I believe we need to have an open method, a method that is understood by the public, that is routine, that is nonpartisan, that people can feel confident in and can believe in, that it needs to be not restricted, not done in secrecy, not done underground but right out in the open.

5:10

Mr. Speaker, too often the appointments aren't based on the individual's knowledge in the area. For example, there have been appointments to the day care appeal board that have absolutely no experience or concern in day care. I don't know how those kinds of individuals were appointed, and we see how dangerous those kinds of appointments are. We illustrated one not too many months ago in Calgary where the board committed some serious infractions, in my view, against day care regulations. I think that puts at risk board members. It puts them in an awkward position if they do not have the skills and knowledge and the desire and the balance in order to make good decisions. Very recently there was an appeal board in social services where a member's behaviour and condition during a hearing were totally inappropriate. It was such that complaints led to that person being removed from the board. It was a most unfortunate circumstance which led, I believe, to the appeal board making an inappropriate decision, and yet it left a young person, an individual with no choice.

We must be sure that steps are taken to ensure that equal application and consideration is utilized to fill all vacancies, Mr. Speaker. I don't think this is a difficult kind of undertaking – I think this is something that can be figured out relatively easily – and I don't believe it's an expensive one.

Disabled persons have almost always been declined or haven't had an opportunity to serve on many of these boards. I'm aware that much of our planning in our communities would be quite different had they been present. We are now having to go backwards and change a lot of our planning, change a lot of our structures in public building in order to make them accessible. Had we had disabled people on our boards and commissions, these things would never have happened in the first place. Disabled

people and all minority groups, whether we're talking about seniors or ethnic visible minorities, Mr. Speaker, have made a magnificent difference in the kinds of decisions that are made that enrich not only their own group but the rest of us as well.

Mr. Speaker, this is a paramount concern to us. Achievements of women and minorities give us valuable resources of skill and knowledge, but they have to be valued because of the important and constructive example they set for all Albertans.

To repeat, Mr. Speaker, I believe women and minorities are just as skilled, just as motivated as men are, and we deprive ourselves unless we access them. It's a question here of fairness. I also happen to believe that the style of decision-making that women bring is quite different. Their technique is different and is useful and helpful. I think we see increasingly in business and industry that a feminine technique is more and more being sold and marketed as an appropriate and productive technique.

Mr. Speaker, one has to ask oneself: would decisions on boards and tribunals be different? I think you have to ask yourself: have women made a difference in this House? The answer is yes. There's no question in my mind that women have made a difference in how decisions are made in this House as long as we've been here. There are many decisions that are made in this House that have been influenced positively because of the input of the female members of the House. Would decisions more accurately reflect the realities of today of the whole population and not just a slice of it? The answer is yes, without equivocation. Do indigenous representatives on boards, tribunals, commissions make a difference? The answer is yes, they certainly do.

I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that this should be an objective of this government. To think otherwise I think is to show the government in a backward mode, in a regressive mode, and one that no longer fits the realities of today.

MR. SPEAKER: Little Bow.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to stand before you today to debate Motion 221. The issue of minority involvement and fair hiring on government boards and commissions should receive debate in this Assembly.

I'd like to state that I am in agreement with my hon. colleague from Cardston, that the process of legislating target group member involvement on government organizations is not one which should be adopted by this House. The process only would seek to further isolate minorities. The costs, both in terms of manpower and funds, would be prohibitive. Lastly, I'm not sure there are enough additional candidates that could be produced by changing the process to make it worth while.

I find it very strange, listening to the previous speaker and the Member for Edmonton-Avonmore, that there was a consistent mention of women. Yet, if I remember my notes correctly, the Member for Edmonton-Avonmore mentioned that women make up 51 percent of the population. Since when does 51 percent of the population constitute a minority?

I would like to spend some time discussing some serious assumptions which have been made by this motion. One is that this is based, when examined more closely, on political opportunism more than fact. The first assumption is that this government does not care about the involvement of minorities on boards or agencies, and nothing could be further from the truth, Mr. Speaker. We share with the Member for Edmonton-Avonmore her belief in the value of minority participation in government and its importance to the political process. It's unfortunate that our methods for implementing this involvement differ so widely.

It's also interesting to realize that there are no statistics available to help determine how these target groups are currently represented on these government agencies. There's a good reason for this, Mr. Speaker. When these people are being hired, their sex, their race, their physical condition are simply not taken into account. They are defined by other criteria: only on what they can do.

MRS. GAGNON: What about their party?

MR. McFARLAND: No, hon. member, I don't believe it's based on party. My colleague from Cardston indicated the Ethics Commissioner. I'm sure each and every one of you is aware of his political background and his former life as an MLA.

I believe the best way to get members of minority groups involved is to help them maximize their potential through education and training. An example of this positive approach is within the personnel administration office of the government of Alberta. They've been providing a program for women since 1977 which provides counseling, career development, supervisory training, and a means of balancing work and family life. Not only does this help them at work, Mr. Speaker, but I believe this helps them to become better employees and better family members.

I just can't agree with the Member for Edmonton-Avonmore in the sense that there appears to be no common sense in this area of legislated minority involvement. I know it may work in certain areas of larger urban centres where you have a large cross section, but with all due respect, it simply won't work in some of the areas where many of us do not have some of the minority groups the Member for Edmonton-Avonmore is so vociferous about enforcing legislated rights for. There's no common sense to legislate minority involvement when it impacts negligibly in certain areas of the province, and I think if anything it would only serve to aggravate a nonissue.

I would like to assure this Assembly that we are committed to ensuring minorities are not discriminated against in hiring. Rather, we are working to make these things which divide us into minorities become unimportant factors in employment on government boards and commissions.

5:20

As a side note to this, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to use an example from counties and MDs. If in fact you are proposing legislation which would see minority involvement legislated for boards and commissions, are you sure you would want to see that same regulation apply to municipal elections? Well, I would challenge you in this respect. I know of numerous MDs and county councils who even during general elections have had vacancies; in other words, nobody wanted to run. Now, are you going to legislate that you'll have a certain number of black persons, a certain number of women, a certain number of men when you don't have the people that are willing to serve in the first place?

Would the members who want to have this type of legislation want to see the situation – and this is based on equal employment opportunities – where you no longer would want to hire a female nurse, a female telephone operator, a female salesperson until you had your quota filled? Let's not even consider at this point the numbers of visible minorities you would work into your formula. Some areas just don't have that component in their population.

Currently, the personnel administration office of the Alberta government is also sponsoring a workers diversification task force which is gathering information on employment equity throughout the province. The goal of this task force is to try to implement a management strategy to involve target groups. It's important to note that this study does not, I believe, really cover boards and commissions but is mainly looking at government jobs per se.

This represents a real advance in equity for target group members, as opposed to Motion 221. It represents a realistic approach to getting people involved rather than an arbitrary one.

I would like to deal with another assumption Motion 221 makes, Mr. Speaker, and that is that positions should "be filled in a nonpartisan manner." It sounds as if the Member for Edmonton-Avonmore is implying that the government's current practice of appointing persons to boards and committee positions does not take into account the abilities and the experience of the potential candidates. [interjection] Hon. member, I've always been taught to practise what you preach. Really, if you had been sincere – maybe you have a policy that I don't know about. Unless my eyes are deceiving me, I don't see 50 percent of your caucus made up of women. I don't see too many visible minorities. I would challenge proponents of the motion that perhaps before trying to legislate it throughout Alberta, they institute and practise it as a policy of their own.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to state that I disagree with the assertion that board appointments are made based on who the person is rather than what they know. The ministers of this government have an excellent record when it comes to appointing people who will work on the commissions and the boards, and they represent all walks of life: people who are active, involved, and ready to serve as advisers to the government on these various issues. The process of hiring on merit works. I'm a strong proponent. I believe comments were made in the past by the member opposite in the Liberal caucus that she had, in fact, gained her positions and reached many of her heights in council chambers based on her ability. I heard of that long before I arrived on the scene. I don't believe for one minute that it was because it was a patronizing thing that people made her a lady alderman, and I congratulate her for getting there based on her own hard work.

I'd like to point out here as well that the selection and appointment of the most qualified candidates has to be paramount, Mr. Speaker.

I realize that it's getting late in the day. I would like at this point to move that we adjourn debate.

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the motion, those in favour of adjournment of debate please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion carries.
Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Speaker, it's intended that when we reconvene this evening we do so in Committee of the Whole to consider the estimates of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund capital projects . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Committee of Supply.

MR. ANDERSON: In Committee of Supply. Sorry, Mr. Speaker. If time permits after that, second readings and then committee study of Bills.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. minister. It's easy enough to get confused when we have different operations on the same day.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:27 p.m.]

