

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, June 29, 1992**

2:30 p.m.

Date: 92/06/29

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Let us pray.

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

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

Amen.

head: **Reading and Receiving Petitions**

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask that the petition I presented some days ago on the upgrading of highway 794 to Highway 44, in which 400 and some Westlock and area residents asked the minister to get going and do something about it, be read.

CLERK:

We, the undersigned, residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to urge the Government to upgrade Secondary Road 794 to Highway 44, which would improve safety and access for local residents and commuters.

head: **Notices of Motions**

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 40 I'd like to serve notice that directly after question period I'd like to present the following motion:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta congratulate the Edson Kinsmen and the community of Edson as the slow-pitch capital of Canada for hosting this coming weekend over 250 slow-pitch teams from across Canada and the north.

I'd ask for unanimous consent.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

Bill 47 Public Sector Pension Plans Act

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 47, the Public Sector Pension Plans Act. 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 piece of legislation is a structural Bill which we will hold over to the fall session. This Bill is just as important as the first piece of pension plan legislation which I introduced a week ago today, wherein the framework is followed in terms of governance, in terms of responsibility of the new boards of these groups. It's an important piece of legislation which in fact reflects the agreement which we have reached with the five public-sector pension plans.

[Leave granted; Bill 47 read a first time]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Bill 53 Highway Traffic Act

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 53, the Highway Traffic Act.

The purpose of this Bill is to update the rules of the road to ensure that the legislation is effective given the advances in technology and the changing traffic patterns and needs. The Act responds to the request from municipalities and reflects Alberta's commitment to implement the National Safety Code.

[Leave granted; Bill 53 read a first time]

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 53, the Highway Traffic Act, introduced by the hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane, be placed on the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place.

Bill 335 Amusements Amendment Act, 1992

MR. McINNIS: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce for first reading Bill 335, the Amusements Amendment Act, 1992.

The purpose of this Bill is to restrict access to rental of X rated and R rated films to persons who are over the age of 18 in the province of Alberta.

[Leave granted; Bill 335 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. minister responsible for Seniors.

MR. BRASSARD: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I wish to file a response to Motion for a Return 221.

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Speaker, this morning His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta proclaimed the Residential Tenancies Act. I'm pleased to table the news release and the accompanying regulations which will go into effect August 1, 1992.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the following annual reports: the 1989-90 and 1990-91 annual reports of Grande Prairie Regional College and the 1990-91 annual report of Mount Royal College.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table a letter signed by some 150 Albertans asking the government of the province of Alberta to ensure that the province's logging policy protects ecosystems within provincial parks and other areas under provincial control.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

MS MJOLSNESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to file with this Assembly a petition signed by more than 1,000 concerned Albertans from across the province opposing the privatization of the Single Men's Hostel in Edmonton.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by 334 of my constituents requesting the Assembly to apply existing legislation prohibiting minors from viewing restricted adult films in theatres to video outlets selling and renting those same movies in video cassette form.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**

MR. MAIN: [remarks in Japanese] Mr. Speaker, today we've got some visitors all the way from Hokkaido prefecture, which is the twin prefecture in Japan to Alberta. A delegation is here as members of a child ambassador's program that Obihiro city in Hokkaido has had under way for some time. I'm going to call out the names of the members of the delegation. I would ask that they rise, and in just a minute we can give them a warm welcome. With us are three young child ambassadors from Obihiro city: Yuuya Hatakeyama, Hikaru Honda, and Midori Sakashita. They're accompanied by two adults from Obihiro city as well: Hiroyoshi Kobayashi, who is a teacher at a school there, and Shin Shibata, who is a reporter with the Tokachi Mainichi Newspaper Inc. and also the cable system there. They're also accompanied by representatives from the Edmonton Junior Chamber of Commerce: Joseph Leung and Carlee Hurl. I would ask that they stand. Also there are half a dozen youngsters here who are also taking part in this exchange and welcoming our visitors from Japan. I would ask that they stand as well as Mark Rasmussen from our department, who is here hosting them and showing them some dinosaurs and things. I would ask that the members of the Assembly say Konnichi wa in the usual fashion.

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

MR. KLEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, my colleague the Minister of Economic Development and Trade and I are ex officio members of the Alberta Round Table on Environment and Economy. Today it is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly three representatives from the round table who are in the members' gallery today. They are David Bromley, the founder and president of the Alberta-based environmental engineering firm David Bromley Engineering Ltd.; Doug Cattran, vice president, manufacturing, hydrocarbons and energy, Dow Chemical Canada Inc., and Donna Tingley, the executive director of the Environmental Law Centre here in Edmonton. This group of Albertans represents a wide range of interests, views, and sectors of society all working together to reflect a balanced approach to achieving economic, environmental, and social objectives. I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

2:40

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

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and to other members of the Assembly two people who, though born in different decades, are here celebrating their birthdays today. Would hon. members join in welcoming the Member for Edmonton-Calder and the Member for Bonnyville.

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

MR. CHIVERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly Dr. David Moores. I believe he's present in the public gallery this afternoon with a delegation of physicians from the Alberta chapter of the College of Family Physicians. Would he please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Oral Question Period**

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

NovAtel Communications Ltd.

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Friday the minister of telecommunications admitted publicly that NovAtel decisions involving millions and millions of taxpayers' dollars were not even reviewed by this government. When you think about it, it's really unbelievable. In the same breath, though, the minister said: well, shucks, it wasn't my fault. He blamed NovAtel management: what; me worry? Obviously this minister has a peculiar concept of ministerial accountability. In fact, he's obviously totally unaware of it. It was his responsibility to know. My question to the minister is simply this: how can this minister justify not reviewing decisions by NovAtel management that continue to cost the taxpayers millions and millions of dollars?

MR. STEWART: Well, Mr. Speaker, all that was said was – and it's a matter of fact – that the day-to-day operations of NovAtel Finance Inc., which was a subsidiary of NovAtel, which in turn was a subsidiary of AGT Commission, were handled by people who were involved in the systems finance business in the marketing area of NovAtel. Each one of those particular applications with respect to financing did not come across my desk, and I think that would have been anticipated.

MR. MARTIN: It's supposed to come across your desk. When you're losing millions of dollars, didn't that send any warning signals to the minister? It's unbelievable, Mr. Speaker.

They don't seem to have learned any lessons. The control is so lax that the treasurer of NovAtel, Peter Mitchell, has now moved over to work on the collection of the NovAtel loan portfolio for North West Trust, Mr. Speaker. Now, these are the same people who got us into trouble, the ones he's blaming. My question to the minister is simply this: how does he justify keeping senior employees on the government payroll to collect NovAtel debts when they couldn't do it when they were in charge of NovAtel?

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, the Provincial Treasurer has dealt with the matter of the management of the systems finance portfolio. He's described that to the members of the House. They will serve in that capacity. I won't go into that. The Provincial Treasurer may want to augment my response. North West Trust obviously felt that they wanted some people involved that knew the history of the particular accounts. They felt that that would be valuable. That was their decision.

MR. MARTIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, isn't this ironic: you hire the same people that the minister's blaming got creating the mess. That's brilliant, brilliant business acumen by this government.

Frankly, the minister has admitted that he was lax in his job. He can't hide behind the Auditor General and he can't hide behind NovAtel management because of these massive losses of taxpayers' money. My question to the minister. He's had time to think it over. I'm told that he's had some sleepless nights, and I can

understand that. Will he now do the honourable thing and resign and accept the responsibility that he should?

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, the answer is no. I've indicated that I would abide by the Auditor General's report. That's where the decision should be made after the review is looked into, and I'd be glad to receive that report and see what the Auditor General's conclusions are with respect to it.

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

MR. MARTIN: I'd like to designate my second question to the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place.

Forestry in Education Curriculum

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, the Canadian forest industry, in particular the pulp industry, is having some difficulty convincing the public that they're the correct agency to manage our forests in this country. This afternoon the assistant deputy minister in charge of the forest service, Dr. Ken Higginbotham, is holding a news conference together with a group called the Friends of Environmental Education Society, and they're announcing that 31 teachers will be taken on an all expense paid tour of several demonstration forestry projects in Kananaskis, Hinton, and Lac La Biche this summer, partly funded by the taxpayers and partly funded by the industry. I would like to ask the minister why this same tour doesn't also include the environmental damage in the Naylor Hills-Keg River area or the five-kilometre-wide clear cuts in Wood Buffalo park or perhaps the destruction of caribou habitat in the northwestern part of the province.

MR. FJORBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, I'm not surprised that the hon. member would take that kind of tactic in his question. I was surprised last Saturday to read in the paper that he's made comments with respect to the educational curriculum that is under review at the moment. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place was provided with a draft copy for his review and comments, but he didn't take it as a draft copy. He tried to present it as if it were a final copy. He took 770 pages of material and tried to pick out two negative comments, just like he's picking them out now.

Mr. Speaker, we take education seriously. We have nothing to hide in this province. We're taking teachers out to show them the forestry practices in this province. They're always under continuous review, but we don't approach things in the negative way that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place does.

MR. McINNIS: Well, Mr. Speaker, since the minister mentioned the forestry curriculum which has been in use in schools since January, I'll ask him about that. Can he tell me if in fact it is the position of the forest service, which wrote this material, that "profit, after all, is the most important reason for our forests." Is that the department's position?

MR. FJORBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, I'm so pleased that he asked, because I know that profit to the NDP is a dirty word. I mean, it's just an awful dirty word.

I'll go back, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place was presented with a complimentary copy of a draft educational curriculum, and he was to review that and provide his comments. Out of 770 pages he pulls out one negative comment. I have two things I'd like to raise. The first thing: he seems to

get all confused at what the Alberta Forestry Association really is. He thinks that it's some industry association. The draft material that is under review for the teachers is being reviewed by 30 teachers in Alberta Education, environmental groups, Edmonton public schools, the Bennett centre, the Muttart Conservatory, the University of Calgary, the Environmental Centre, and the University of Alberta forestry staff. All of those are reviewing and presenting their comments, just like his comments will be taken under review. That part of it may or may not be edited.

I must also say that what we want to have is a proper educational curriculum in the schools, and we're in the process of developing that. If he would take a realistic, honest approach and provide his comments, we'll take it under consideration.

MR. McINNIS: Every business must earn a profit if it's to survive. That's a fact. But that's not the same as saying that that's the purpose of the forest.

AN HON. MEMBER: All those people are wrong, eh?

MR. McINNIS: Listen, you silly man, only God knows why the forest was created, and God didn't create it for the purpose of profit in the forest industry. I'm reasonably sure of that.

The same document, which is now in use in schools – and I'd like the minister to know that I couldn't get a copy from the department; I had to go to the Forestry Association to get it – states:

Clear cutting is the most effective way of foresting. It is less expensive to harvest the trees, less expensive to reforest and other methods . . . leave [the poor] trees exposed to the wind and the cold.

So we have to kill them to put them out of their misery. My question is simply this: why is his department presenting these things to kids in schools as part of the curriculum in the province of Alberta as if they were truth?

2:50

MR. FJORBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, I look at the hon. member and tell him to read my lips. If he's got concerns about the educational curriculum, he has the responsibility to provide those comments, and they'll be looked at. Instead of playing some silly politics with something, try and do the right thing. [interjections]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. The hon. Minister of Education wishes to comment.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Education I think it's my responsibility to report to members of the Assembly about the curriculum that's taught in our schools, including the fact that this material that has been prepared under the auspices of the Alberta Forestry Association originates in the province of Ontario, where it is being used by 7,000 teachers, originally created by the Liberal government there and now under the auspices of the NDP government. I think it's fair to say that this material has been field-tested in 35 schools in this province. It is under review, as the minister of forestry has said, and as a result of that review and the revisions, we are going to have a better product for it. [interjections]

NovAtel Communications Ltd.

(continued)

MR. DECORE: A little more decorum here, a little more decorum.

Mr. Speaker, in documents filed in the United States under freedom of information legislation, a company known as Cellular

Information Systems, CIS, has stated to the Securities and Exchange Commission that substantial claims existed or exist against NovAtel. We now know from the minister that a \$60 million infusion by NovAtel into CIS was reduced down to \$30 million. It's clear that the substantial claims had something to do with it. My questions to the minister are these. The minister has had time to review the CIS file, and I'd like him to tell Albertans what those substantial claims were that allowed for a reduction from \$60 million down to \$30 million of Alberta taxpayers' moneys.

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to have the opportunity to talk about this particular account, particularly when it's just one of a number of instances where false information, misleading information has come from the opposite side of the House. There are allegations of a new loan; there was no new loan. Interest-free loans: there are no interest-free loans. The answer to the leader of the Liberal opposition: the company was in account about \$60 million, there was a sale of about seven properties, there was a credit towards the amount that was then owing, and there was a restructured amount of \$30 million, \$35 million, and that will proceed.

MR. DECORE: Well, Mr. Speaker it sounds pretty thin as the basis to write down a loan from \$60 million to \$30 million, incredibly thin. This is why we have the difficulty that we're seeing: no monitoring by the minister and no care by NovAtel.

My second question to the minister is this. The minister has now had an opportunity to examine all of the American corporation files that NovAtel dealt with. I'd like to have the minister tell Albertans how many more problems with substantial claims that these other corporations have against NovAtel will see the same thing: a reduction of moneys that we've given, reduced to half or less, and Albertans can't recover that money.

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, the hon. leader misses the point. There was a sale of properties and proceeds applied to reduce the amount of the outstanding loan. The situation is, as I've indicated in the House, that there is absolutely no indication that the current provision with respect to potential losses on the entire system is inadequate in any way.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, this Assembly will soon be coming to an end, and to me and to Albertans the evidence is clear. The evidence is clear that the government was negligent, particularly the minister responsible for NovAtel. The minister is the one who went to the people of Alberta, took the money out of their pockets, and gave it to NovAtel. They acted like they were Robin Hood, giving money to everybody. The minister refuses to say that he's prepared to resign. I want the minister to tell Albertans why he continues in the position, why he continues on as minister. Give us the reasons why parliamentary responsibility doesn't mean anything to this government or to this minister.

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, if one were to judge the hon. leader on the basis of the information he has provided and made his categorical statements in this House and beyond, then with that degree of irresponsibility and that degree of politically motivated grandstanding, he should resign.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Smoky River.

School District Boundaries

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A number of my constituents as well as constituents of my colleague for Grande

Prairie, Bob Elliott, representing school boards, school jurisdictions in the county, as well as the public and the separate school systems have expressed interest in Bill 41's provisions that will enable school boards to decide voluntarily to merge their operations to deliver educational services more effectively and efficiently. Could the Minister of Education advise the Assembly just when he foresees the first group of school boards coming together?

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, the matter of boundaries and the large number of school jurisdictions in this province has been the subject of debate for quite some time. Rather than simply continuing to talk about it, the provincial government has taken the step that the hon. member has described: to put in place enabling legislation to allow school boards to voluntarily merge their operations for the purpose of delivering a more effective and, frankly, a more efficient educational service.

As for when, Mr. Speaker, I introduced legislation on behalf of the government, Bill 41, a little over a week and a half ago, and I said at that time that it was the government's intention to pass that legislation this year. I said that depending upon the reaction that we received, we could proceed quickly this spring or we would hold the matter over and pass the Bill in the fall. I want to advise members of the Assembly that because of the concerns raised about some parts of the Bill, the government will recommend approval at second reading stage today and propose that it be discussed with Albertans over the summer, with the full intention of the government to pass the Bill in the fall session.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This may indeed disappoint some of my constituents as well as some members of the Francophone community.

What assurances can the Minister of Education give that the government remains committed to the general principles of this Bill?

MR. DINNING: Very clearly, Mr. Speaker, the government has proposed a balanced and fair and equitable made-in-Alberta model for Francophone school governance in the province. It complies with the Supreme Court judgment, it fits within the Alberta context, and it's right for Alberta children. We will approve it in principle at second reading today, and then we will bring it back for final approval in the fall.

As for the other provisions of the Bill, Mr. Speaker, including regional divisions, school fees, home schooling, school board quorums, these are issues that have really been debated at length, and in some cases they have been debated ad nauseam. I want members to know that the approval in principle at second reading today should send a strong message from this government and hopefully from all members of this Assembly that Francophone Albertans will have their rights met under section 23 of the Charter as well as all Albertans, those who want to see a more effective and efficient school system. The Bill will accommodate those needs in the fall session.

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

Substance Abuse Programs

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sometime ago the Minister of Health announced changes in the program for

out-of-country substance abuse treatment programs. She said that the changes would help the Alberta government preserve and improve our health system in Alberta. No kidding. Alberta programs cost \$100 a day compared to \$700 a day for U.S. treatment programs. Unfortunately, some of these cost-effective, community-based programs aren't seeing much of the money from this change in policy. For example, the Riverside Villa treatment program in Calgary is closing its facilities in September, and that comes after the announcement of temporary closures at the George Spady Centre in Edmonton. I'd like to ask the minister what she's doing to ensure that cost-effective, Alberta-based programs aren't going to have to cut services, especially given that funding for out-of-country programs is being cut?

3:00

MS BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, the question is one that should be directed to the minister responsible for Seniors, who has responsibility for the community and residential portion of our treatment for substance abusers.

With respect to the acute care, inpatient responsibility of the Department of Health, I can advise the hon. member that we are looking at putting in place some acute capacity within the Foothills hospital in Calgary, but that would be just on an inpatient basis. With respect to community and residential, I would ask the hon. minister to respond further.

MR. BRASSARD: It's true, Mr. Speaker, that some of the programs are going through some transitional period for a variety of reasons. I can say that AADAC put 2 and a half percent more funding this year over last year into the budget of each of the agencies that have been referred to. I can tell the hon. member that in the case of Riverside, for instance, programs that are being initiated in the Northwest Territories are having a significant impact on Riverside programs themselves. Yes, they are being impacted, but I would remind the member that there is a finite amount of dollars, and we are doing the very best we can with what we have.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Well, out-of-province programs are being cut, so you'd think they'd at least make sure that the Alberta programs are being supported.

The Riverside Villa, as one example, is getting hit by this government from several directions. At the end of May they got word from the Solicitor General that as of July 1 funding would be terminated. I'd like to ask the Solicitor General: considering that alcohol and drug abuse play a big part in the lives of Albertans that come into contact with the judicial system and that his department recently raised funding for a comparable program for men, how does he justify this last minute, unfair cut to Riverside Villa in Calgary?

DR. WEST: I'm awfully glad that you asked the question so we could clarify a few of the facts. We fund a tremendous amount of agencies through the Solicitor General's department for various correctional direction and treatment facilities. I have a list here – and I won't go through them in detail – of some 65 agencies that we fund. The Riverside Villa was funded last year to the tune of \$9,168 by the Solicitor General's department. We used it 14 percent of the time; that was to contract one bed. We used it 14 percent of the time on a yearly basis, 365 days. You can figure out how many days we used it. Therefore, this year we offered them a contract at \$25.11 a day for the days we used it. They refused to sign that contract, so that's where it stands at the present time.

Now, the minister has said that AADAC does fund it. In '89-90 they funded it for \$409,500, and it has been increased 2 and

a half percent this year. There has been a component of treatment contract withdrawn from the Northwest Territories, but with the total budget I doubt that the reason for this operation saying that it will close is because of the Solicitor General's department. With the plethora of treatment contracts we have here with the cities of Edmonton, Calgary, and, as I say, upwards of a hundred contracts, we have to make decisions that are fiscally responsible on behalf of the province of Alberta and get the best bang for the buck we can, whether it's treatments or whether it's health care or whether it's in law and order.

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

NovAtel Communications Ltd.

(continued)

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Provincial Treasurer. Peter Mitchell, formerly of NovAtel Finance, involved with the disbursement of the \$300 million in loans that the government's already written off \$86 million of, has now been hired by North West Trust to attempt to collect these loans. Now, this has occurred despite the Treasurer's assurances to the contrary on June 25, 1992, in *Hansard*, where the Treasurer said, "What North West Trust has brought on [board] has been the collectors." So my question to the Provincial Treasurer is: why is Peter Mitchell now overseeing the collection of these loans when he was involved with the administering and disbursement of these loans in the first place?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, this is the same question the member asked on Friday. We hired four different people, so I'm sure that he can extend the question period for four different days on that very point.

Here are the facts, Mr. Speaker. North West Trust does not incur any liability. Its costs will be reimbursed by collection fees from the assets. The people who are collecting the fees are well familiar with the files, and therefore they are familiar with the people involved and familiar with the terms of the agreement, and they're the most suited for the collection process.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly the concern. We're afraid he's a little too familiar with the terms of the collection.

My supplementary question is: given Mr. Peter Mitchell's role in the NovAtel financing, how could the government allow this individual to be hired by North West Trust when in fact he and his activities are probably going to be part of the investigation into NovAtel's business activities? Why this fellow?

MR. JOHNSTON: Well, the member just doesn't understand what he's talking about. First of all, if he's making some inference about the character or the ability of the gentleman named, then I would invite him to step outside and make the same accusations. I offered the same opportunity to the Member for Edmonton-Norwood. I notice the silence outside the Legislative Assembly of the Member for Edmonton-Norwood when he made similar kinds of accusations.

MR. MARTIN: Nobody asked me.

MR. JOHNSTON: Well, I'll ask you outside the House what it is you speak of.

If he has the courage to make the same kind of accusation outside of the House, to stand up and be counted, then he should

do it. Other than that, this is the classic red herring, and I will not stand for slurs to people working for North West Trust or inferences on the character of people. He is now protected by the immunity of this Legislative Assembly against further litigation should he cause any kind of a condemnation of any individual. Let him step outside and make that accusation, Mr. Speaker, then we'll see whether or not he's got the courage of his convictions. [interjections]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills. [interjections] Order please. [interjection] Order, Westlock-Sturgeon.

Gas Pipeline to California

MRS. BLACK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the Energy Resources Conservation Board today released its report on the two competing pipeline projects, PGT and Altamont, which both propose to move additional volumes of Alberta natural gas to California consumers. I was wondering if the Minister of Energy could explain whether or not the ERCB's report contains any definitive conclusions as to whether either or both pipelines will proceed.

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, last fall the government directed the Energy Resources Conservation Board to conduct a call for information on the two competing pipelines to take more natural gas to California, and that was through an order in council, as I indicated. The intent of the call for information was not to make a decision, not to indulge in any subjective or objective views about the two competing projects. It was simply to enable the projects to cross-examine each other, assemble information, and assist the producers in their decision-making process. The report does not conclude that one or the other or both of these projects should continue. What has happened is that there has been assembled a very significant and comprehensive data package on the two competing projects that there is available on this continent. It will form one of the many tools that the producers will use to make their decisions as to which project should go ahead to California, if either.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MRS. BLACK: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Energy. I was wondering if he could report as to whether this report brings to a close the debate on the California pipeline issue. If not, what is the next step?

3:10

MR. ORMAN: To the contrary, Mr. Speaker, in many ways the debate will continue to rage as to which of the two projects competing to take gas to California is the most viable. This process was extremely useful to the producers and, for that matter, to the government. Both the government and the Energy Resources Conservation Board must ultimately make decisions on removal permits, so there is a role for government in the end, and this information will allow us to do that.

The next step will be for the producers to incorporate this information into other information that they will collect to allow them to make their decision. Those decisions include price projections for natural gas by competing sources in California, whether or not the market demand, the growth over the coming decade will be there to support increased natural gas, and most importantly an issue that is not based on an economic model but the issue as to whether or not there is additional risk to moving

more gas into a state such as California, where there is an uncertain regulatory environment.

So those issues will all be incorporated into their decision-making process and will enable them to make the right decision in the end. We are monitoring very closely the progress of these two projects. We'll work closely with the producers to make the decision; that is, what is the right decision in terms of the market and the environment to do business in the future?

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

MS M. LAING: Mr. Speaker, my questions are to the Minister of Health. Fetal alcohol syndrome is the leading cause of mental retardation in Canada, a cause which is totally preventable. Recently the House of Commons committee on health and welfare issued a report making numerous recommendations to prevent, diagnose, and treat fetal alcohol syndrome. The committee heard the testimony of one woman who indicated that after ending a working day, she would often consume one drink during meal preparation. This woman bore a child with fetal alcohol syndrome. My question: what steps is the minister prepared to take to ensure that women and their partners know that there is no safe level of alcohol consumption during pregnancy and that women should totally abstain while pregnant?

MS BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, we've received the report of the House of Commons and are certainly looking at it in the context of attempting to promote good health for all Albertans, not just pregnant women. I think the issue is one that warrants all of our understanding certainly in terms of ensuring that all people respect their health, and the choices they make in their own health is an important part of the health goals project which is under way with the support and collaboration of all the provincial associations and many Albertans generally as we evolve those health goals.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MS M. LAING: Thank you. The committee reported that they had received much testimony indicating that health care professionals, social welfare agencies, educators, and officers of the judicial system were often unaware of the existence of fetal alcohol syndrome and were therefore insensitive to the special needs of alcohol-damaged children and their parents. To the Minister of Health: what steps is the minister prepared to take to develop and implement education programs for health, social welfare, school, and judicial system personnel to ensure that there is recognition and treatment of fetal alcohol syndrome?

MS BETKOWSKI: Again, Mr. Speaker, I would repeat that we are looking at the steps that we might effectively take in Alberta with respect to this and many other illnesses which are preventable. The College of Physicians and Surgeons, the Alberta Medical Association, the Alberta Association of Registered Nurses, and many other professional groups will be reviewing the recommendations as well, and again I think that it points to the need for collaborative efforts as opposed to a single department of government effort in order to address the health needs and the health choices that Canadians can make.

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

Legal Aid

MR. CHIVERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Attorney General. For some time now there's been increasing

demand on the legal aid system due to recessionary circumstances and inadequate resources. Once again we find the legal aid system in a financial crunch. To the Attorney General: given the concerns recently raised by the Criminal Trial Lawyers Association about cutbacks in both preparation time and the fee limitations for representation of legal aid clients, what is the Attorney General going to do to ensure that those who can't afford a lawyer receive a proper legal defence?

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, I think the concerns that are being raised about the legal aid plan are probably at best trying to engender some support for added remuneration. Frankly, we have increased our legal aid budget over 42 percent in the last two years. I might mention that legal aid is delivered by an arm's-length organization called the Legal Aid Society of Alberta, the partners of which are the government and the Law Society.

MR. CHIVERS: Mr. Speaker, I thought this was all settled through tripartite negotiations last year, but obviously it's not. It's cost taxpayers millions of dollars to pay for the legal defence of the Cormies, and we don't have adequate funds to provide legal aid. Last year the Attorney General was forced to put through a special warrant of over \$4.3 million because he had underbudgeted for legal aid expenses. To the Attorney General: given the increased demand for legal services because of the recession, can the minister explain whether or not the current budgetary allocation will be sufficient to properly fund the system?

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, indeed there were tripartite negotiations that went on between the Legal Aid Society, the Law Society, and the government. In fact, there was a contribution made by the Law Society through the Law Foundation. Twenty-five percent of the interest earned on trust accounts would be put into the plan; the government would pay the balance. We in fact did. That particular year we increased our budget from \$15 million-plus to \$22 million-plus. We have since, as the hon. member said, increased again by a special warrant of \$4 million last year. In this budget year, which we just started in April, we gave an additional 11 percent increase over last year's figures. We have said to the Legal Aid Society: "That's it. You organize your plan as to how you're going to deliver legal aid with those dollars, because it is not an open-ended fund."

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

Substance Abuse Programs (continued)

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Sunrise Residence in Calgary is a native, coed alcohol and drug treatment centre which has to close down its program for about two and a half months because of lack of funding and the Solicitor General's rather mindless method of saving funds on rehabilitation. It is the only native-run, off-reserve, coed native program of this type in the southern part of the province. I'd like to ask the Solicitor General whether he'd reconsider his move. I know he's attempting to save money, but this is one area where a dollar saved is going to cost us five down the road.

DR. WEST: Well, as we get into this area where the questions keep coming on the judgments that we have to make on behalf of the taxpayers and the deliverance of programs, once again we see a member outlining and trying to insinuate that we don't address

our responsibility as it relates to these types of programs. I have before me a list, and as I said, I've been holding it up here for several days while there have been questions asked. I could start down through this, Mr. Speaker, and you can stop me when you wish to.

DR. WEST: These are community-based supervision/training programs funded by the Solicitor General. City of Calgary probation . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. Perhaps the hon. Solicitor General could just say the number of projects that are involved instead of naming them all.

DR. WEST: Well, if they don't want to hear the answer, I'll sit down. [interjections]

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, the Charlie McCarthy over there of his back bench apparently is completely lost.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Order. Order.

MR. TAYLOR: Charlie McCarthy was one of my heroes. I hope he's not taking insult again. [interjections]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order in the Assembly so the hon. member can ask his supplemental question.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister, then, who is sulking in his chair there: could the minister, first of all, table the document that he's quoting from, the number of services he has, and give some possible explanation to the House why the only coed native program in southern Alberta for rehabilitation of alcohol problems has been cut off?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, it isn't the only program in southern Alberta. There are other avenues for treatment in southern Alberta. To address his first comment: will I table this in the House? I will, absolutely.

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

3:20 High-voltage Power Lines

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are to the Minister of Labour. One of my constituents has informed me that when the power goes down on a high-voltage electrical transmission line, the main power line may often be manually re-energized before the cause of the outage has been determined. This creates a hazardous condition for the public, the police, ambulance, firemen who may attend accidents involving power poles and mounted high-voltage equipment. Will the minister please have those responsible for electrical safety at Alberta Labour look into this potentially dangerous situation?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Labour.

MS McCOY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me say that the officials in the Department of Labour are very much aware of this situation, and indeed they and all of the stakeholders are constantly reviewing the regulations that govern. We have probably one of the widest stakeholder groups in existence in developing safety codes – in this particular case, the Electrical Protection Act – and it includes local utilities and unions as well as others from across

Canada and indeed North America. So we are constantly monitoring it. The utilities follow the regulations and the policies that are set up in that co-operative manner and then apply their own procedures within it.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My supplementary will be to the Minister of Labour. What about my constituent who happens to be an electrical systems operator? Would the minister tell us what sort of protection the regulations and policies that she refers to give him?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. minister.

MS McCOY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In situations when high-voltage power lines collapse – and there have been one or two, fortunately very few, examples of such – you can never predict what the cause is, and often indeed you don't know what the cause is when it occurs initially. So the policies and procedures are set up in a framework way to allow for decision-making on the site.

There are, however, competing interests when this occurs. There is obviously the systems operator, the member's constituent. There are police. There are also fire and other officials who attend at the scene. Then there are also other members of the public who can be affected because the power is out. The first example that comes to mind is a hospital, for example, which relies on the power. Another example is, frankly, people who are driving down the streets, because the power lines are feeding the stoplights, et cetera. So the policy allows for the most immediate response, which is to get the power back on, but also speaks to the danger inherent to the person who is dealing with the emergency. In the very end it always really comes down to the systems operator's discretion and his judgment as he responds to every particular case.

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

Livestock Auctions

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year in typical Conservative fashion the Minister of Agriculture canceled the auction market inspection program without adequate consultation with veterinarians, auction market operators, or livestock producers. Why did the Minister of Agriculture think it a good idea to cancel this important program and put livestock and the livestock industry in this province at risk?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, we're talking about a program that was canceled a little over a year ago on the suggestion of many auction mart operators in the province. Where inspection was deemed to be necessary to increase the comfort level of the buyers, various auction marts continued on their own to hire inspection services as was required. The change has now been in place for approximately a year and appears to be working very smoothly.

MR. FOX: Well, Mr. Speaker, the registrar of the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association indicates that inspections are not going on at a number of livestock auction markets around the province, and animals are not only being put at risk, but farmers who buy livestock of questionable health are being put at risk as well. Now, I'd like to point out to the minister that they saved under \$500,000 a year. They waste that much on a NovAtel coffee break, for pete's sake, yet they put the livestock industry

at risk. I'd like to ask the minister: given that that experiment's been a failure, will the minister agree to reinstate the auction market inspection program this year?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure in whose judgment this has been a failure. I've met at least twice in the last eight months with the Alberta Auction Mart Association. None of them are lobbying for the reinstatement of this. I think the hon. member should be aware that even when inspection was provided, that was no guarantee of healthy animals. It was simply a visual inspection of animals that was being carried out. Most of our auction mart operators and most of our cattle producers and buyers can normally very easily identify if there is a sick animal in the larger animals. Many of the auction marts that are handling dairy cattle and hogs have continued on their own to provide the inspection service. As far as I'm concerned, the industry has matured beyond the days when we had to have a veterinarian there at all times.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. Might we revert briefly to Introduction of Special Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**
(*reversion*)

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly students from St. Pat's junior high school in Camrose. They're escorted by two parents and their teacher. They're seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask that they rise and receive the cordial welcome of the Assembly.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, it's just been brought to my attention that we have with us, sir, in the public gallery a former Deputy Speaker of this Legislative Assembly who served some 17 years in the House. I'd ask the hon. Frank Appleby to stand and be recognized by members of the House.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. We'll deal with the Standing Order 40 request before the point of order.

head: **Motions under Standing Order 40**

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead gave notice prior to question period that he would be seeking unanimous consent for a motion. The hon. member may speak briefly to the question of urgency.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, it's urgent because the tournament is being held this weekend, and with the clock ticking, we're not too sure how many more days we'll be here, if any. It depends on the expediency of the Legislature perhaps this evening.

I wanted to ask unanimous consent of the Legislature. Last year we got unanimous consent because there were some 230 teams, but there's quite an increase this year. In fact, some members will be present and some visitors in the gallery are also playing in the tournament. Two Kinsmen I'd like to recognize, of course, right from the start: Jim Froggat and John Martini.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. The hon. member is moving into what he might be saying if there were a debate on this motion. I believe the hon. member has expressed the urgency

required, so the question before the Assembly is: is there unanimous consent to allow the member to move this motion?

HON MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed?

The hon. member may move the motion.

3:30 Slow-pitch Tournament

Moved by Mr. Doyle:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta congratulate the Edson Kinsmen and the community of Edson as the slow-pitch capital of Canada for hosting this coming weekend over 250 slow-pitch teams from across western Canada and the north.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to move my motion that I have previously read, and I would like to continue to, if I may, congratulate especially the Edson Kinsmen, led by Jim Froggat and John Martini, the town of Edson, the citizens of Edson and area. Volunteers from youths to seniors volunteered many dedicated hours and many dollars. I also want to just take this chance to thank the government for the appreciated dollars from the community facility enhancement program especially and from the community/tourism action plan. These dollars were well spent. I'd like to invite all members of the Legislature to attend between the 4th and 7th of July in Edson to see the biggest tournament ever held in Canada. As they bring tourism and help the economy, they'll travel the beautiful twinned Highway 16 west, the Yellowhead. Good sport, good fun, and good for the environment.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Career Development and Employment.

MR. WEISS: Mr. Speaker and hon. members of the Assembly, first I would like to thank the hon. member for the kind invitation to attend the event as it is proposed. I am not speaking against the hon. member's intent of the motion but would as well like to congratulate the Edson Kinsmen for undertaking this special event.

Having said that, I believe that the motion really is hypothetical and is in anticipation of an event that is yet to happen. If you were to read the motion as it is written, it certainly clearly undertakes and it does say, "for hosting this coming weekend over 250 slow-pitch teams from across western Canada and the north." Well, that certainly is in anticipation. How do we know that it might not be a rained-out event? It might be canceled. The other major fact is that there may be several teams unable to make it; they might not know where Edson is and not be able to find it on the map.

As well, I know there are many, many seniors in our province who support slow-pitch. They participate in the Seniors Games. I find that there'd be many other communities that would like to vie for the title and for the honour of being designated as the slow-pitch capital. It's for these reasons I must point out to hon. members that I would find it very disturbing that this would be awarded in anticipation, in advance, and that communities across Alberta would take exception to that designation.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Speaker, speaking briefly to the motion, I have no problem with congratulating the Kinsmen for hosting the tournament, but really slow-pitch started in southern Alberta. It started with the Southern Alberta Summer Games about 1971, I believe, in the Cardston or Raymond area. I agree with the motion with the exception of "slow-pitch capital of Canada," because the

town of Bow Island, where I happen to live, has held at least three or four national slow-pitch championships: male, female, and mixed. So I have a little problem with that part of the phrase.

Thank you.

MR. FOX: Mr. Speaker, if the Member for Cypress-Redcliff wishes to amend the motion, we have ways and means of doing that in this Legislature. I would just like to say that true to fashion with the Conservative government, they're slow to pitch their ideas on this one. For the Member for Fort McMurray to suggest that he might not support this important motion indicates to me that he has clearly struck out on this one.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is the Assembly ready for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

[Motion carried]

Point of Order Supplementary Responses

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place on a point of order.

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On a point of order. It's well known in this Assembly that in the rules the opposition has no right to insist on an answer to a question. If we did, I daresay things would be a lot better around here, but we don't, and we have to face up to that. By the same token, the government is not allowed to dream up answers to questions that were never asked in the first place.

I would like to refer Your Honour's attention specifically to *Beauchesne* 417, which states "answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate." Well, in question period the Minister of Education sat in his place, hiding in the weeds until I'd finished my third supplementary. Then and only then did he rise to his feet and introduce some totally extraneous debate about some program initiated by the Liberal government of Ontario dealing with trees and forestry. Now, I have no candle for the Liberal government of Ontario, but I certainly didn't ask anybody about the Liberal government in Ontario policy nor would I, because fortunately for us all that's a dead issue: Liberal government in Ontario.

I think the Chair should call the minister to order because he did sit there in the weeds and waited till the last supplementary was given before he stood up and introduced some material, which is quite disorderly under 417 of *Beauchesne*.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, on the point of order. You know, it's not surprising: it's June 29; the member is whining again.

I refer you to *Beauchesne* sections 410(10), 418, and 420, where it suggests - especially at 418 - that the

Members may not realize it but questions are actually put to the Government. The Government decides who will answer.

The Speaker has [also] stated, "Of course, the Chair will allow a question to be put to a certain Minister; but it cannot insist that that Minister rather than another should answer it."

Mr. Speaker, clearly the hon. member was putting questions forward in questions two and three with respect to school curriculum. The Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife was well briefed to be able to answer virtually all of the questions, but I felt it important, as the Minister of Education responsible for the curriculum in our schools, to supplement his answer and to

provide the hon. member with the full information, the full array of the facts.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

MR. WOLOSZYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I couldn't resist answering the Minister of Education's rather silly interpretation of 418. That's directed specifically when a minister does not want to answer or if somebody on the government side designates a different minister to answer. It certainly does not give the list of ministers to jump up in turn and use up all of question period, because if we took his interpretation of 418 to its logical conclusion, we'd get one question per question period. So I'd suggest to him that 418 doesn't apply.

Secondly, information given in an answer should be supplemental and relevant to the question, which his answer was not. It had something to do with Liberals in Ontario and trees heaven knows where. So he's totally out of order, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: As far as the Chair is concerned, as the Chair recollects the events as they happened, the matter of the curriculum came up in the first supplemental question. Therefore, I would assume that the hon. Minister of Education was giving the hon. Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife the opportunity to make reference to that curriculum matter, which he failed to do. Therefore, the Chair does feel that this matter is within the purview of the Minister of Education to comment on if he feels that the first minister didn't adequately answer the question, as has happened many, many times in this Assembly before. Therefore, I would say that at most this point is a disagreement between members.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Government Motions**

Summer Recess

25. Moved by Mr. Gogo on behalf of Mr. Stewart:
Be it resolved that when the Assembly adjourns for the summer recess, it shall stand adjourned until the time and date determined by the Speaker after consultation with the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make a couple of comments on this particular motion. First of all, I always have difficulty when the motion to adjourn is worded in such a way that it's "determined by the Speaker." I don't understand why the government can't simply state now that when the House reconvenes in the fall, it will do so October 16 or whatever the situation may be. There's no need for this fiddling around like we did last year. It was well into December by the time the House got under way.

3:40

MR. PASZKOWSKI: We didn't come in last year. Wake up, Percy.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, then the year before. It was well into December, and then there was a rush to get out for Christmas. Last year there was no fall sitting, period. So I would prefer to see a motion structured in such a way that we know, the public knows, everyone knows that the House will be meeting again on a certain date.

Secondly, a motion like this scares me when it comes at this stage of the spring session because there are still a lot of Bills to be completed and once this motion is passed, then the government can, really at any time they want, adjourn and just lay everything over till sometime in the fall, whether it be two weeks before Christmas, whatever. We've got Bills like Bill 25. I'm now getting some vibes that that may not be dealt with. There are dozens and dozens and dozens of people phoning saying, "Make sure that Bill 25 is done in the spring session." The same with Bill 31. The same with Bill 37. There are a whole number of Bills.

So I have some real reluctance to pass this, to approve this, to vote in favour of this at this time. I would prefer to see it a few days down the road when we have a better idea as to when all our stuff's going to be wrapped up.

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

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to get some comments on the record as well. I know that the hon. Deputy Government House Leader is chairing a committee whose mandate is to review legislative procedures with an eye to trying to make this place function in a more open, democratic, and responsible way. I would like to suggest that one of the things that's going to be on the agenda, as far as the New Democrat caucus is concerned, is regularly scheduled sessions of the Alberta Legislature. I don't think that's too much to ask. It's done in other jurisdictions where the beginning and end of spring and fall sessions are something that's clearly understood by everybody, not only the legislators but by interest groups and citizens at large in the province.

If I might just review the record of this government since the hon. Member for Stettler took charge in the fall of 1985, we've had only two fall sessions. Now, fall sessions used to be a matter of standard practice, where the Legislature would reconvene to consider whatever items of concern were before the public. The current Premier in his tenure has suggested every fall when we've lobbied the government to come forward with additional budget information to deal with the important issues of the day that there are no concerns, that there are no issues, that the Conservative government caucus is taking care of everything, and that the Legislature need not convene. I think that's a spurious contention. No fall session in '85. No fall session in '86. A brief session in '87 to consider the free trade agreement and the Meech Lake accord. No fall session in '88. No fall session in '89. A fall session briefly in 1990 to put in place the Electoral Boundaries Commission, and we know what's happened with that. No fall session in 1991, and now alluding to a fall session in the fall of 1992.

I know the government sees this as a procedural motion, but I for one would argue strongly for the government making a commitment to the Legislative Assembly and the people of Alberta that the Legislature will be convened from this date to that date on an ongoing basis every spring and fall so that the people who send us here to do their business can do so with confidence, knowing that the MLAs will be here debating the issues of urgent public concern and that they, if they so wish, can raise issues of concern and know that they will be discussed in an open, public forum that is the Legislative Assembly of the province of Alberta.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, wanted to put in a word or two on this and conclude with an amendment.

Unfortunately, I can't type it out because the thing just appeared on the agenda today.

Since the present Member for Stettler took over, as the hon. Member for Vegreville pointed out, we've only met twice, more of an accident. I think the Legislature has progressed to the stage where something more regular than having the Premier take off for duck hunting season every fall is one of the reasons why we don't meet. We've got to be a little bit more sophisticated than that. There's no question that the public out there sees a heck of a lot of money being sent to MLAs for expenses and salaries. The idea of meeting a few months in spring and then taking off with the promise that we might meet in the fall but knowing darn well that if the duck season is good, we won't – and the duck season's always good, Mr. Speaker. Therefore, we never meet in the fall. We go right through to next spring again.

It's almost obscene taking the taxpayers' money for that type of service, Mr. Speaker. Consequently, I will move – and I hope that the Clerk can accept it, because I'm not able to type one out here as is usually done – a very simple amendment. After the words “stand adjourned until,” we insert “sometime in November 1992 at a.” That means we've adjourned until sometime in November '92 at a time and date determined by the Speaker after consultation with the Lieutenant Governor. That gives a 30-day target that certainly even this government should be able to shoot at. Well, maybe not 30 if you take in the weekends; I'm sorry. Cut it down by eight days: a 22-day target that they can work at. The idea that duck hunting season should be inviolate has to stop, and what we'd like to do is be hunting Tories instead of ducks this fall.

Thanks.

MR. McEACHERN: Mr. Speaker, I assume there is no amendment on the floor since you didn't accept that amendment. I can't understand why we'd say: for the month of November. Obviously, if we bring this House back on November 30, it's a little late. It seems to me that this government always delays the opening of the spring session until we end up backed into the summer recess period for the rest of society. Then the government members all want to get out of here and start shouting, “Question, question” and wanting to hurry all legislation through, don't want any debate, bring in more and more Bills at the end of the session like they've done this time. It's a scandalous way to run the Legislature of this province. Every year we get backed into this same kind of a corner. Fortunately, we on this side of the House think that we were elected to have a say about what legislation is passed, and we darn well intend to do that if we have here all summer.

Now the Government House Leader suggests that we should pass a motion allowing the government to set any date they please in the fall. Surely if we were going to have a time frame set, it should be sometime in October. If we end up with a session starting in late November, with all these Bills that you've put on the Order Paper, we're going to be backed up against Christmas. We'll run into that same kind of thing at Christmastime of you saying to the opposition, “Well, if you want to get out for Christmas, you're going to have to pass these Bills without debate.” That is sheer nonsense and unfair to the taxpayers of this province who pay for this Assembly. There is no reason in the world you shouldn't have put a starting date on that. October 15 or some such date like that would have given us a six-week spell before December. That's what this government should have done.

I find it scandalous that the minister has the gall to bring forward a Bill like this year after year. He's the chairman of a good government committee that's going to help to supposedly

decide to make this a more democratic process in this province, yet obviously he can't even make the first little gesture and say, “Well, yes, here's something we can do, and here's something we will do.” I don't see why we should vote for this motion, quite frankly.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Speaker, interesting comments. The Member for Westlock-Sturgeon made mention that this motion appeared today on the Order Paper. We see we may be able to save a little money and not make as many Votes and Proceedings, because obviously he doesn't read his. I have in front of me my Votes and Proceedings. Thursday, June 25, page 9: Motion 25. So he had Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and today till 2:30 to have something typed up. Maybe he was sitting off in the bushes getting ready for duck hunting; I don't know.

Mr. Speaker, I've sat in this Legislature a number of years now, 17 or 18, as an ordinary member, and I remember when we had fall sessions every year. The spring sessions were probably a month to two months shorter than what they are now. Since we haven't had regular fall sessions, it seems like every year the spring sessions at least equal or get a little longer than the last session. I'm not saying there's anything wrong with that. We're still sitting the same number of days, with the exception of maybe this year. If we have a fall session, it will be longer. We're not having fewer days in session. We're not having fewer days passing Bills. We're making longer speeches. We're making half hour speeches instead of 15- or 20-minute speeches, on every-thing. So that extends the limits for longer. [interjections]

3:50

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Kingsway says: Treasury debates. Normally people in the Legislature say what they have to say in their time period and then finish it. They don't talk till they hear a little buzzer go beep, beep, beep and then sit down. You'd think they'd have the stuff timed better and prioritized better so they can get it in. [interjections] Mr. Speaker, I guess the hon. member didn't get everything in that he wanted to. He seems to be good at that. He forgets when he's talking, so then when somebody else gets up to debate, he gets the things in that he forgot about.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's how I see this motion and the possibilities of a fall session. I think if we went back and added up the days over the years, we would find that the number of days we're in session isn't any longer but that the time that individuals are speaking is longer. If everybody wants to speak half an hour, I guess we have to stay longer. That's what causes the sessions.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Well said.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. Before recognizing the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, the Chair wants to say for the record that it's not accepting an oral amendment. Amendments do not have to be typed if they come up on the spur of the moment, but they at least have to be in writing, hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess the hon. Member for Cypress-Redcliff provoked a little bit of debate here by harkening back to the good old days when the Legislature was basically the preserve of the government with a huge and vast majority. I'd just point out to the hon. member that the good old days that he longs for are long since past because now Alberta has more than one party represented in this Assembly. The sessions

have simply gotten longer since the opposition got bigger because there's now more work and people to do the work in keeping the government accountable. Now, I'm just sorry if the member is leaving the impression that democracy is a burden he has to bear. That's too bad. I'm sure that the vast majority of Albertans much appreciate the situation as it exists today compared to what it used to be.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, in closing debate on Motion 25, I'd simply like to emphasize the following points. The Member for Cypress-Redcliff I think made it abundantly clear to the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon that this has been in Votes for some time, so it's certainly no surprise for those hon. members who care to read not only the minutes of previous meetings of this Assembly but the agenda for coming meetings, and that's exactly what Votes are.

Mr. Speaker, I've listened with great interest during the past three months. The government has introduced various Bills, is very interested in hearing what the public has to say. That's why they're not proceeding, and that's the whole basis of a fall sitting of the Legislature. How one could adopt the system in Helena, Montana, that you pick a specific date sometime in the future – I think he's shortchanging the organizations in this province who wish to respond to a specific Bill. Whether Bill 25 proceeds, it's a government Bill and that will be at the discretion of the government.

I would point out, because I know all hon. members here are familiar with the British parliamentary system, that only members of Executive Council are authorized by Her Majesty to spend money. That's why the Executive Council is listed. Some of those Bills are money Bills. I don't see anything unusual at all with regard to Motion 25. At least it states the government's intention of having a fall sitting. There is no requirement at all constitutionally to have one. The government's indicating in this motion that indeed there will be one by calling it a "summer recess."

So having listened to all the arguments, it seems to me that Motion 25 is perfectly in order, in recognition of the wishes of the members of the House, and I would encourage people to adopt it.

[Motion carried]

Point of Order Amendments

MR. WICKMAN: Point of order.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has a point of order.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, *Beauchesne* 567 on to 579, that talks in terms of amendments, does not stipulate that an amendment has to be in writing. It doesn't state that a verbal amendment is not to be accepted. I would say that the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon's amendment should have been accepted and properly debated.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, on the point of order. The Chair has already ruled on that matter, and the comments from Edmonton-Whitemud should not be entertained.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Irrespective of what the Deputy Government House Leader says, I believe it should be pointed out to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud that everything that

governs the proceedings in this House isn't contained in *Beauchesne*. A lot of it is but not everything. We certainly have a lot of practice and conventions that have been accepted in this House, and that is what the Chair is relying on here. It is the practice of this Chamber to have amendments in writing. Whether they're typed or handwritten, there has to be something on paper which the Chair can read and other hon. members can refer to when making their remarks. Otherwise, if we go to the system of oral amendments, we're going to get a very loose debate. So that matter is now closed.

Adjournment from June 29 to July 2

26. Moved by Mr. Gogo:

Be it resolved that when the Assembly adjourns Monday evening, June 29, 1992, it shall stand adjourned to Thursday, July 2, 1992, at 2:30 p.m.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I take pleasure in moving Government Motion 26, which has some very specific dates and some very specific times in it.

[Motion carried]

Sustainable Development

22. Moved by Mr. Klein:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly endorse the concept of sustainable development including the vision and principles outlined by the Alberta Round Table on Environment and Economy in its report, *Alberta: Working for a Sustainable Future*.

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

MR. KLEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, the Alberta Round Table on Environment and Economy was formed in May 1990. I had the pleasure of tabling its first report in this House at the end of March this year. That report included the round table's vision for Alberta, which described what Alberta will look like when sustainable development is achieved. The vision is of a province which is a member of the global community and a leader in sustainable development. The vision is of a province which ensures both a healthy environment and a healthy economy. In other words, it would include an environment where the quality of air, water, and land is assured and where our biological diversity is preserved. It would include an economy which is diversified, resilient, globally competitive, and environmentally responsible, in which employment and other roles are meaningful, productive, creative, and rewarding. The vision encompasses a society in which market forces and regulatory systems work for sustainable development. The Alberta envisioned by members of the round table is an Alberta whose urban and rural communities offer a healthy environment for living. It's a place where Albertans are responsible global citizens who are educated and informed about the economy and the environment. It includes citizens who are stewards of the environment and the economy.

Mr. Speaker, I suggest that we aren't too far from the future envisioned by the Alberta Round Table on Environment and Economy. I have reached this conclusion as the result of several recent positive developments, and I would like to take a moment to quickly review those developments. Given the discussion of sustainable development at the Premier's Conference on Alberta's Economic Future and woven through the rest of the *Toward 2000 Together* process, given the initiatives undertaken by individuals

and communities throughout our province during the recent Environment Week, and given the passing just Friday of the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act before this House, it is clear that we aren't too far from a future where sustainable development is indeed achieved. It's time we officially adopt the round table's vision. It's time we make a commitment to its vision and principles. It's time we become involved in moving our province toward a sustainable future by passing this motion with a unanimous vote. Mr. Speaker, I would appreciate all hon. members' support for this very significant motion.

Thank you.

4:00

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Official Opposition spokesperson on the environment, it's a great pleasure for me to in effect second the motion of the hon. minister. We value the work of the members of the round table. Fortunately, several members of our caucus had an opportunity to meet with three of the members of the round table recently, together with a couple of staff members. We received a thorough and quite useful briefing on the work of the round table to date and an indication of their desire to continue the process as outlined in the report.

I think the major contribution to date of the members of the round table has been to work out a practical definition of the phrase "sustainable development" which has some relevance to the province of Alberta. The phrase "sustainable development" comes from the report of the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Economic Development, chaired by the Hon. Gro Brundtland, who was Prime Minister of Norway. The phrase gained a lot of attention because it appeared to suggest a way out of the old debate between environment versus development, the debate that kind of centred around the Club of Rome documents a couple of decades earlier. It's not a phrase that's without problems, but then I suppose you couldn't find a concept in this delicate area that doesn't have some controversy or some imprecision associated with it. It certainly makes a great deal of difference approaching this concept whether your eye is more on the development side or on the sustainability side.

I think there are a number of very important concepts in this report that should be addressed. For example, part of the vision is that we live within Alberta's natural carrying capacity. Now, Mr. Speaker, I think it's a very important concept for Albertans to reflect on, and the round table is asking that we reflect upon what is the true carrying capacity of the province of Alberta. There was some discussion at the meeting we had about perhaps working towards making a more concrete definition of that, because somewhere in our thinking we have to realize that our province is able to carry a certain population, a certain level of activity, and we need to have some better idea of what that level might be. I think that's part of making this statement operational, making it so that you can measure whether it's achieved or not achieved, and progress can be recorded accordingly.

There's also the question of building these concepts into the decision-making process. If the statement is to have more than archival reference, it needs to become a part of the way we do business in the province of Alberta at many, many different levels. I think the strength of the round table is that it is broadly reflective of our society. I happened to get to know the chairman, Ken McCready, a little bit at the Toward 2000 conference in Calgary, and it occurred to me that Mr. McCready represents perhaps the leading edge of a new generation of business leadership which is going to lead the business community in the direction of more

environmental ways of doing things, more sustainable ways of doing things. Similarly, the members of the round table are or are becoming leaders in their own sphere, and they're carrying forward the message about how things are done by individuals and groups in many different sectors in society.

Of course, the point needs to be made that these concepts have to find their way into the heart of decision-making in government, and I think that report has made it very well. The motion before us recognizes the progress that's been made and invites us to make further progress, and with that in mind, I'll indicate the support of the Official Opposition.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to give a qualified commendation, if there is such a thing, to the minister for bringing it forward and assure him that the Liberal caucus also supports the motion, particularly from the point of view that it's a declaration of good intentions. But coming from this government, you've got to be a bit suspicious. The recidivism rate of this government is not good. They have committed crime after crime after crime against nature and the whole issue here. To now come forward saying *mea culpa, mea culpa* – I guess from good principles we have to accept their motion at face value and hope that they indeed are reformed and are going to do something about it.

When you see this government still subverting numbers 1 and 2 farmland right, left, and centre in the name of development with no rules to try to preserve the land, when you see this government also refusing to overhaul the municipal Act so that people can, if planning is done that hurts the environment, have a petition against a municipal government to force elections or force an issue onto a petition, when you see this government refusing to allow that to happen and when you see this government with a natural gas export policy that would literally reduce our reserves for Alberta residents to zero – in other words, zero protection base – you have to wonder.

When you mention sustainability, well, sustainability should also involve the development of our resources to the extent that they've not all been exported out so that our children will not have any access. This government took over from a government that realized that in the future there should be a certain amount of resources left in the ground or on the surface of the ground for our grandchildren and great-grandchildren. But this government follows a policy that if somebody offers you some yen, dollars, or guilders for it, it's for sale. It's shipped out in the next possible way around.

Also, when you see what the government is doing to our countryside, our livestock industry, our farming industry by the continual belching forth of effluent from our different hydrocarbon plants out there, with very little disciplining or very little analysis or monitoring of what is going on, you have to be worried that it's mere lip service.

For the lack of anything else, I think our caucus is supporting it much as a congratulations to this government for joining the last half of the 20th century as well as in a fond hope that they are indeed going to try to do something. As a tribute to this minister, at least he is not, if you'll pardon the expression, tarred with too much of a long-service record with this government. So whether he is indeed articulating a clever, diplomatic, political announcement to lull us into a sense of false security or whether he indeed really thinks he can change that cageful of dinosaurs into some-

thing progressive, I don't know, Mr. Speaker, but I'm willing to sit back and give him a chance.

Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of the Environment to conclude debate.

MR. KLEIN: Debate is closed, and I thank the members opposite for their support of this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried]

Electoral Boundaries Committee

24. Moved by Mr. Anderson:

Be it resolved that

- (1) a Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries be established consisting of seven members of the Assembly, four members appointed by the government caucus, one of which shall be the chairman and another shall be vice-chairman, two members appointed by the caucus of the Official Opposition, and one member appointed by the caucus of the Liberal opposition.
- (2) If either opposition caucus does not appoint its members to the select special committee before its first meeting, such members may be appointed by the other opposition caucus.
- (3) The select special committee is charged with making recommendations to the Assembly for the establishment of new electoral boundaries in the province, taking into consideration
 - (a) the May 1992 final report, including the individual reports of each member of the Electoral Boundaries Commission,
 - (b) any legislation, legal decisions, and historic and current practices of Alberta or other Canadian jurisdictions relating to the distribution of constituencies and their boundaries, including the Charter of Rights and Freedoms,
 - (c) any geographic, demographic, community interests, and other factors that should be considered in the distribution of constituencies and the determination of their boundaries using 1991 census data,
 - (d) the impact of the determination of constituency boundaries on the ability of Members of the Legislative Assembly to fully discharge their duties to their constituents, and
 - (e) any information or evidence obtained within the province relevant to any other factors that the select special committee reasonably considers essential to the discharge of its duties.
- (4) The select special committee may make long-term recommendations with respect to the process of determining electoral boundaries, including the establishment of commissions, committees, or other bodies and the mandates of those commissions, committees, or other bodies.
- (5) Reasonable disbursements by the select special committee for staff assistance, equipment and supplies, public information needs, rent, travel, and other expenditures necessary for the effective conduct of its

responsibilities shall be paid, subject to the approval of the chairman.

- (6) In carrying out its responsibilities, the select special committee may, with the approval of the Speaker of the Assembly, utilize staff employed by the Legislative Assembly.
- (7) The chairman and members of the select special committee shall be paid in accordance with the schedule of category A committees provided in Members' Services Committee Order 10/89.
- (8) The select special committee shall report by November 15, 1992, to the Assembly if it is then sitting, or if the Assembly is not then sitting, shall deposit a copy of its report with the Clerk of the Assembly and forward a copy of its report to each member.

MR. ANDERSON: This motion establishes a select special committee to deal with electoral boundaries. This is an unusual circumstance inasmuch as this House has previously established a committee to establish the basis for an independent commission. We all know that from August 18, 1989, on, committee members in this House worked very hard to establish that basis, and then this House put in place a commission of five individuals who worked hearing Albertans across the province and collecting the data that's required to establish boundaries for the forthcoming election.

4:10

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, that commission was unable to conclude any majority report to this Assembly. Despite their hard work and their long hours, they gave us five different reports. Nonetheless, among that detail in those reports we have the basis for what is required to make sure that the next election is run on a fair and equitable basis and that members of the Assembly, along with all of those who may choose to be candidates in the next election, can do so on a new set of boundaries.

We have, Mr. Speaker, received very many representations with regards to how changes should take place. They're not easy, haven't been easy in other provinces. It's not easy in this province, in our modern system of government, to both balance the requirements that are there to give everybody as close to an equal vote as is possible but at the same time ensure that all of our people are represented and can be represented properly and fully in this constituency or to take in mind the various special dimensions that are there in each of our ridings; that we know from the service we on both sides of the Assembly have given to the people of our respective areas.

The motion that's before you today does take into account the major aspects of the independent commission which were there. First of all, of course, it establishes a committee with four government members, two from the Official Opposition caucus, and one from the other opposition caucus. This composition represents the approximate breakdown of members in this Assembly and would give us enough members to make sure that we know intimately the various parts of our province as we draw the boundaries and move into a new set of rules to run the next election on.

Mr. Speaker, the motion also requires that the committee to be established take into account all of the decisions and the findings of the report of the boundaries commission and that they use that as part of the basis for decisions to be made along with all other best data that can be available, ranging from the Charter of Rights and Freedoms on through to the requirements that there are to look at the varying needs and the distances in this province.

One item that the five members of the commission were unanimous on – I believe it's the only item that there was unanimity reached on – is the need for us to determine the boundaries on the basis of 1991 statistics. That is something that we have included in this motion in order to ensure that Albertans have the boundaries that they're going to vote on based on the most current data. I know it's a challenge for those committee members because not all of that information is at this moment compiled in such a way as to allow the various constituency boundaries to know how many voters they would have in them. Nonetheless, it is the intent to have that information before the mandate of this committee is up and therefore allow them that basis for operation.

In section 4 of this motion we suggest that the committee may have long-term suggestions, and we know we need such long-term suggestions in this time when populations move quickly and change rapidly, when distribution of populations changes from time to time, and where external forces or external decisions – say, judgments with respect to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms – change the way in which we have to take a look at the manner in which we have historically established boundaries.

Mr. Speaker, the motion allows the committee to use the staff of the Legislative Assembly and, by extrapolation, any other staff, be it the Chief Electoral Officer's staff or others, that may be of assistance to this committee.

It is asked that this committee report by November 15. We feel that that's a reasonable date for this Assembly to be able to then debate the findings of the committee and to put in place the Bill required to establish those boundaries and prepare for the next provincial election.

This is an important topic. It's not an easy topic. It is one which certainly I and I believe members on all sides would have rather had dealt with fully by the independent commission which we put in place, which worked for so many days, and which reported to us with no conclusions. In the end, however, legislations says and requires that members of this Assembly make that final decision. It is a responsibility that we cannot run from. It's a responsibility that we cannot give away. In the end the decision is made in this Legislature and for the people that we represent collectively throughout the province. So the committee will be fortunate to have as a base all of the work that's been previously done but must move ahead and take into account the fact that we have that duty.

Mr. Speaker, the government is aware that there is a question in some people's minds as to whether or not members of the Assembly should draw their own boundaries. That's a legitimate question. However, the duty is clear, the duty is underlined, and the duty is ours. As with other difficult decisions, whether it be establishing a remuneration for members or whether it be deciding who gets money in this province for the welfare of the people of the province, we have the responsibility, and we're elected to make that determination.

In order that we might ensure, however, that there's no question that the boundaries the committee suggests are fair and are just, it would be the intent of the government to take the Bill that results from the committee's findings when this Legislature deals with it and submit it to a court, an independent court, so that that court may make sure we have operated in accordance with the rules we've established, the rules that are there, and the implications from such parts of our Canadian way of life as the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and decisions that have been made in that regard. In that way we believe we will doubly underline the fairness and equal treatment that would be given to people of the province as we deal with this committee.

Mr. Speaker, those are a few basic comments with regards to the committee. I do say sincerely, although I've received information that the opposite will be the case, that I hope the opposition parties will choose to participate. This is part of a process of democracy. It's part of a necessary process that needs all points of view: points of view from different political parties, points of view from different parts of the province, points of view from the citizens, as represented in the public hearings, that have been raised. So I would say to members of the opposition that although I know they've had concerns and there may be a desire to not make this difficult step, to not take this judgment that we have been elected to take, I would very much invite them to participate, and say that the committee, Alberta, and democracy would be better served if that were to be the case.

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

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to participate in debate on Motion 24 on behalf of the New Democrat caucus. I would just like to say to the Deputy Government House Leader that this process envisioned by Motion 24 is not a legitimate political process at all in our view. It's a sham, and it's been clearly identified as a sham by both opposition parties in this Legislature, working together. The leader of the New Democratic Party, the Member for Edmonton-Norwood, and the leader of the Liberal Party, the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry, need to be commended and recognized for their attempts to work together to remove this issue from the partisan forum, to make a case to the people of the province of Alberta – through their meeting with the Premier of the province, through their letters to the Premier, and through discussions with government House leaders on their behalf undertaken by members of both opposition caucuses – that we want this process to be productive, to be above reproach and beyond the reaches of partisan politics.

4:20

The government, unfortunately, did not agree with the representations made by the two hon. leaders to the Premier. To inform members of the Assembly, at 4 o'clock this afternoon leaders of both opposition parties released a letter that was sent to the hon. Premier regretting that he was unable to get past some of the information that had been supplied to him, regretting that he could not see beyond the partisan process envisioned by the government caucus with respect to resolution of the boundaries issue in the province of Alberta. I think it's a sham, and the opposition parties have made it clear on the record that we'll have no part of it.

I think we need to review this process, Mr. Speaker, to put it in context. Certainly members of both opposition parties, indeed Members of this Legislative Assembly, all of us, I assume, are interested in seeing the boundaries of the province redrawn. We recognize that the law requires that after every second election in the province of Alberta, the electoral boundaries be reviewed and redrawn. This process has been frustrated at every juncture, I submit, by a government made up of several people who don't really want to see the boundaries redrawn in a significant way because they think it will do them political harm.

The process has been, you know, very simple in the past, Mr. Speaker. A commission would be formed by virtue of a vote in the Legislature after the second election was held. This commission would be made up of independent people, with perhaps some involvement of members of the Legislature. This commission would be charged with the task of redrawing boundaries and reporting to the Legislature, whereupon a Bill would be introduced, new boundaries put in place, and we've got a new electoral

map for the people of the province of Alberta to work with at the next election.

Well, what happened in the Alberta Legislature? In 1989 the government came forward with this motion to establish a committee, an all-party committee of MLAs to study the process by which electoral boundaries might be reviewed and redrawn. The excuse used by the then Government House Leader was that there had been reviews undertaken in other jurisdictions, I guess most notably in British Columbia, where Justice McLachlin came down with some guidelines that were to be followed in the province of British Columbia. I think the government recognized that their usual procedure of carving up the electoral map as it best suited them politically would not withstand the Charter challenge through the Supreme Court process, so they introduced this extra step: let's have an all-party committee go out, travel the province, and come back to the Assembly with recommendations about how we might do the job that we're required to do.

Well, I believe in the main the committee process worked fairly well. I believe that members from all three parties participated in a sincere and earnest way and tried to come up with some recommendations. They had public hearings, traveled the province, found out that in certain areas of the province there was a demand for more public hearings, so they started up the motor and traveled around the province some more to have some more public hearings. Meanwhile, the process was frustrated, I would say, in terms of getting to the eventual goal of newly drawn boundaries in the province of Alberta.

Then the government, I believe in the spring of 1990, came back with a request to have an extension on this process, more public hearings through the summer, more agonizing, some amending legislation, perhaps that year; I can't recall. Anyway, in December of 1990 we finally had a motion to discuss in the Assembly that established the Electoral Boundaries Commission, this five-person commission alluded to by the Deputy Government House Leader. That commission was to take the law that was introduced and passed by the Conservative majority in this Assembly, go out and redraw the boundaries of the province of Alberta, submit an interim report - I forget the exact timing; I believe it was within 10 months or something like that - then there would be a final report, and eventually boundaries were supposed to be in place.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

Well, lo and behold, the commission process got bogged down, for a number of reasons. If you look carefully, I think at every step you can see the influence of political interference in that whole process. The original justice who was chairing that committee, Justice Charles Virtue, apparently sent a letter to the Premier resigning his post from that commission last spring - I believe the date could be confirmed by another member - sometime in June, because he was not happy with the lack of tools provided him and other members of the commission to do their job, the lack of money provided the commission to use up-to-date data with respect to drawing the electoral boundaries. They were, I suspect, frustrated with the dictates of the legislation that were perceived as being too narrow and politically influenced to allow the commission to do a proper and independent job of drawing the electoral boundaries.

Now, when the Chair of an important commission like the Electoral Boundaries Commission sends a letter to the Premier of the province resigning his position from this commission, and knowing that the people of the province of Alberta are waiting with bated breath to see what work this commission was doing with respect to electoral boundaries, you would think that that

resignation would become a matter of public record. But it was not, until sometime in August when an intrepid reporter contacted the hon. gentleman to find out how the commission was going and he said: "Oh, well, gee; I resigned weeks ago. Didn't anybody tell you?" Well, as a matter of fact, the Premier hadn't told anybody. If the reporter hadn't uncovered that shady little bit of record, the people might not have known for several months after, Mr. Speaker. It was a very unfortunate process that served only to further delay the eventual drawing of electoral boundaries in the province of Alberta.

Then the government appointed another hon. gentleman to chair the commission. He, along with the four people on the commission, did the very best they could, given the limitations of the legislation provided by the government and bearing in mind the recent ruling of the Supreme Court with respect to the electoral boundaries in the province of Saskatchewan, plus the reference to the court in Alberta about the fairness of the legislation on the face. So we finally had introduced by the end of the month of December of 1991 in the province of Alberta an interim report that proposed new boundaries for 83 electoral divisions in the province. This was, Mr. Speaker, two and a half years after the election, and we still did not have boundaries drawn in the province of Alberta. All we had was a proposal for interim boundaries.

Then we found that the government was not happy with the interim report. Indeed, some people in the province of Alberta weren't happy with the interim report because of what the commission felt it had to do to live up to the dictates of the Supreme Court decision and the narrowness of the Conservative legislation. They created these 'rurban' ridings in an effort to bring some measure of electoral fairness to the people of the province of Alberta and yet live within the guidelines of the legislation provided by the Conservatives. Well, people did not like it. They threw it back into the laps of the commission. The commission finally came up with a report about a month and a half ago, and as the hon. Deputy Government House Leader stated, it was a hung jury. The commission had no consensus to present to the people of Alberta other than that the conclusion ought to have been crystal clear: that the task given the commission by the government was an impossible task; that when the government drafts guidelines with respect to the process of the Electoral Boundaries Commission so narrowly, so tightly, the commission can't possibly do a decent job and live up to the general principles of electoral fairness and the rulings of the Supreme Court of the land.

I think there was a fundamental misunderstanding on the part of government members in this Assembly. When they passed into law this Bill - it said we want 83 electoral divisions in Alberta, a certain number in Edmonton, a certain number in Calgary; they can vary 25 percent above or below the average; we want some of them to be single municipalities and some of them to be multimunicipality; and we want provision for up to 5 percent of the ridings, which also could be interpreted as four of the 83 electoral divisions, to be permitted up to 50 percent variance from the average - the government members thought that what the commission would do is dash out there and draft the boundaries for all of the single municipality constituencies, in other words the urban constituencies, to have 25 percent more people than the average and all of the multimunicipality ridings, also known in most circles as rural ridings, to have 25 percent less. That's what the government had in mind, Mr. Speaker. That clearly would have lived up to the dictates of the legislation the government proposed but would have offended in a very basic way the ruling of the Supreme Court on the Saskatchewan boundaries, because even though they used the 25 percent margins as guidelines in

Saskatchewan, the margins were only used if required and with justification. In fact, if you look at the electoral boundaries in the province of Saskatchewan – and I hope some members on the government side did – you'll see that some of the ridings in the cities of Saskatoon and Regina had populations that were greater than the average and some had populations less than the average. The same held true for rural ridings in that province as well: some had populations that were greater than the average and some had populations that were lower. So they tried to come pretty close to an average sort of reasonable population but used the margins if and when required with justification.

4:30

That process evidently offends government members because that's not what they wanted to see happen here. They wanted an electoral map that clearly did not vary in a substantial way from the existing electoral map because they felt – and I think this is a specious argument given political events of the last few months – that the existing electoral map guaranteed them re-election on the current boundaries for the 83 constituencies in Alberta. Well, we're here to tell government members that they're not guaranteed re-election on any boundaries that anyone can envision in the province of Alberta. Even if you had all the constituencies centred in areas where Conservatives at least at one time had support, Mr. Speaker, the times they are a-changing in the province of Alberta and we cannot use narrow, political, partisan considerations to do something as crucial as drawing electoral boundaries in the province. That needs to be an independent process, because we need to be able to assure the people of the province of Alberta that their participation is going to be encouraged in the electoral process.

What do I mean by that, Mr. Speaker? I mean that we have to be able to assure them that when they vote, their vote is going to count, and we don't do that by telling them we've got a built-in endemic process here that's going to assure people in some part of the province that their votes are going to count three or four times as much as the votes of people in other parts of the province. People recognize that we can't have a situation of one person, one vote. I haven't heard anybody recommend that as a model. But people do recognize the principle of electoral fairness and that we need to work toward electoral fairness. If there are examples that can be brought forward about a need to have some constituencies smaller than others in terms of population yet larger in terms of geography because of sparsity of population, geography, history, communities of interest, trading patterns, then we can make those arguments and I'm sure a reasonable electoral boundaries commission properly empowered would make those decisions.

When you've got a process that envisions and in fact requires that the boundaries be unfair before they're even drawn, that does not encourage Albertans to take part in the electoral process, and that should be the basis of our objective here. We should want to encourage Albertans to respect and participate in the democratic process, Mr. Speaker, because I can assure members of this Assembly that if people lose any more faith than they've already lost in our democratic institutions, our democratic processes, and in the women and men elected to serve, then the whole thing is going to go down the drain and we won't have a democracy anymore. This has got to be above partisan politics. We've got to empower the people. Let them know that when they go out on election day and cast their ballot, their vote is going to count, their participation is going to be respected, and it's not to be prejudged ahead of time by a government trying to calculate which MLAs are going to get elected where and how many seats we are going to have and how many they are going to have. That's garbage. That's not the way we should be doing it.

The other thing that needs to be mentioned, Mr. Speaker: I recognize that MLAs have some legitimate input into the drawing of electoral boundaries, but clearly, as the two hon. leaders of opposition parties have stated, MLAs should not participate directly in the drawing of electoral boundaries for reasons related to real and perceived conflicts of interest. People of Alberta don't want a committee of MLAs sitting around a table and carving up the electoral map of the province of Alberta any more than they want a committee of MLAs sitting around a table and drawing up our pay and benefits packages. People want the process to be scrupulously independent, and that's what the two leaders argued for and what the opposition caucuses failed to convince the government and the Premier to do.

That being said, I think MLAs do have some input that could be considered, and under the proposals by the hon. leaders, it could be considered by the Associate Chief Justice of the Court of Queen's Bench. He or she can seek input from anyone whose input would be considered relevant. I want to tell members of the Assembly that when the Electoral Boundaries Commission was soliciting input from Albertans with respect to electoral boundaries, I thought very carefully about whether or not I should make a representation to them, and I did. I sent a letter to Justice Charles Virtue and said in that letter: I recognize that my input may be suspect at the outset because I'm an MLA and because it may be perceived that I have an axe to grind or an interest to serve, but I'm going to take that risk in making this representation to you because I think MLAs in some ways have a very unique regional perspective it is difficult for others in this province to develop. It's difficult for a reeve of a county or a mayor of a town to have a regional perspective because he or she represents a particular municipality. They do it well, they understand their area, but MLAs representing broad regions of the province develop a regional perspective, and that input is valuable and needs to be facilitated. I think the process outlined by the hon. leaders of opposition parties envisions that kind of helpful input, but certainly not the kind of process the government envisions where MLAs sit around and draw electoral boundaries in the province.

Mr. Speaker, the point has to be made as well that people in Alberta need to understand – and I believe they do, and government needs to reinforce this understanding – that when they go out and vote at election time, they're not just choosing who their MLA is going to be. That's the important first decision, but it's part of a much broader decision. Government members harp and carp about how “My riding can't get any bigger because I represent five school boards and 10 towns, and I've got 15 tennis courts,” as one of them says. “My riding can't get any bigger. How could I possibly do all the work?” Well, it's not our workload that ought to be the concern of Albertans; it's their right to effective representation in the Legislature that ought to be the concern of Albertans.

It's a matter of fact that the ridings in many regions of the province have to get bigger. It's a matter of fact that if we want to pay attention to the dictates of electoral fairness, some ridings in the province of Alberta have to get larger in terms of geographic area. As a rural member who currently represents the constituency that in terms of numbers of electors is the 11th smallest in the province, the 15th smallest in terms of numbers of people, to get that straight on the record, I don't look forward, if the voters favour me with support again, to traveling more, to working more hours, because frankly there aren't more hours in a day and there aren't more miles that I can travel. But as rural MLAs we'll have to find new and innovative ways of providing people with effective representation within the best means possible. The ridings have to get bigger, Mr. Speaker, because

when people go to vote on election day, they're not just choosing their MLA; they're helping to take part in a decision about who is going to be the government in the province of Alberta. There are 83 mini-elections held concurrently in the province of Alberta to determine who's going to be the government, and that decision is very important to everybody in the province regardless of which constituency they live in.

Can you imagine a situation in the province of Saskatchewan where they had gerrymandered electoral boundaries in an election held in 1986 that enabled the Conservative government to elect an overwhelming majority of MLAs with an underwhelming majority of votes? More people voted for the New Democrat opposition – for one party, the New Democrat opposition – in Saskatchewan in 1986 than the Conservative government. What did the people get in exchange? Well, they got their MLA who meets with three school boards and 15 tennis courts all right, but in addition to that, they got five more years of program-cutting, deficit-building, irresponsible, citizen-punishing government in the province of Saskatchewan, and that didn't help anybody. Then we've got to come in and clean up the mess, Mr. Speaker. That's exactly what we're going to have to do in this province again. I want to say to the farmers of the province of Alberta: heaven help all of you if we end up electing another Conservative government in this province that seeks to cut the programs you depend on and undermines any ability you've developed through your organizations over the years to help you be paid fairly for what you produce in the marketplace. It's a bogus argument. People need to be assured that their vote is going to count and that when they elect someone to represent them in the Alberta Legislature, that person is going to have reasonable input into the newly formed government of the province of Alberta in a fair and equitable way.

So this motion is unacceptable; it's a bogus motion. Even if the government manages to come back with some purported boundaries on a piece of paper by October in the fall of 1992, that's still no assurance they're not going to call an election before new boundaries are in place, Mr. Speaker, because the only thing that determines when this government calls an election is when they think they can win it. They're going to keep analyzing every little opportunity to see if they can trump up some phony fight with Ottawa to call an election and save their political backsides. I really doubt their intention is to call an election on new boundaries. It's been a sham from the outset. Here we sit more than three years since the last election and we still don't have new boundaries in the province of Alberta. With these people running things, no wonder we're \$15 billion in debt.

4:40

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to oppose Government Motion 24. The hon. Member for Vegreville quoted from the letter dated June 29, 1992, which the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the Liberal Party sent to the hon. Premier. I think for the record I'd like to file four copies of the letter. The letter has been made available to the hon. Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and was made available to the Premier early this afternoon. I understand it was faxed to him.

It's important for the record, I think, to read in the contents of the letter dated June 29.

AN HON. MEMBER: All of it?

MR. DECORE: All of it.

Mr. Speaker, the letter states as follows.

Dear Mr. Premier,

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you, your aide Bob Giffin, and Dennis Anderson, Minister of Consumer & Corporate Affairs last Thursday, June 25, 1992.

We have considered your response at that meeting to our letter of 23 June, 1992, regarding our proposal to deal with the re-drawing of electoral boundaries.

We appreciate . . .

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, hon. member. Order please. The Chair, not being in possession of that particular letter, would like to inquire as to how long a letter it is that possibly we are going to hear.

MR. DECORE: Two pages long.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Chair would request that the hon. member speak in summary to the contents of the letter, it being quite a lengthy document and perhaps beyond the bounds of what needs to be read here.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I understand I have a certain length of time to make my presentation. I didn't intend to go over that time but to use the reading of this letter. But I'll take your direction and indicate that the letter follows up a meeting the Leader of the Opposition and I had with the Premier. We expressed our unhappiness with the course of action the Premier was contemplating; that is, the course of action of having MLAs of this Assembly and, more particularly, a select committee draw the boundary lines for constituencies for Alberta. I indicated to the Premier that there has to be something wrong democratically when MLAs are drawing their own lines on a map, feathering their nests, looking after their best interests.

Mr. Speaker, we are servants of the public. We are not sovereign to the public; the public is sovereign to us. I think it's important to take a moment to read a definition of democracy in the Oxford dictionary. It states that democracy means government by the people; that form of government in which the sovereign power resides in the people, and is exercised either directly by them or by officers elected by them . . . A state or community in which the government is vested in the people as a whole.

We sit here in a very wonderful position in that we are selected by Albertans, selected by the public of Alberta to serve them. We have a heavy duty and onus to those people, a position of trust to those people. We are stewards to the people of Alberta to ensure that the philosophy of democracy is properly upheld and issues that affect the province are properly looked after. It is the people that are sovereign, the people that determine who they send, and it should be the people that determine the boundaries of the representatives sent to this Legislature, not the other way.

I repeat: for this Assembly to take the course of action of determining its own boundaries changes that position. It puts this Assembly in the sovereign position rather than the sovereign position being that of the people of Alberta. It's wrong. It's a process that can easily be manipulated, and there's much history in this country and in other countries that use the English democratic system that shows there can be manipulation. Politicians in Alberta have enough trouble with NovAtels and perks and allowances in dealing with the public, and they don't need this added difficulty by usurping power from the sovereign people, the sovereign state of our democratic system, taking that power away from the people and assuming it ourselves.

Mr. Speaker, the process we used in the past, having a select committee, clearly was a process where the majority had its way. When the majority, the Conservative Party, wanted to put something through, it was put through, and the process continued through the Legislature in terms of boundary drawing. That's wrong. It's dead wrong.

The people of Alberta have to know that our party, the Liberal Party, will not be part of a hollow sham process that will manipulate, that has the power or ability to manipulate. It will not be part of a process that usurps power from the people, and whatever it costs in walking away from this process, we take that cost and take that risk. Mr. Speaker, when this sovereign power is usurped by the Getty government and the government comes back with these new lines, I think it's a great peril in terms of the relationship of trust the Conservative Party has with the whole of the population, the whole of the electorate of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I think the process of seeing two leaders object and have a joint press conference as we just had moments ago is extraordinary. It is unique. It doesn't happen. In the three and a half years I've been in this Assembly, I've never had the opportunity of dealing with the Leader of the Opposition and meeting on a single issue with the Premier to discuss a particular position on that issue. I'm sad that the Premier discounted the concerns the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the Liberal Party had on this issue. I'm concerned and dismayed and unhappy with the sort of position the Premier has taken, that it's this way and you either participate or, fine, we'll go it alone. That's not democracy. That's not what we should be doing. That's not living up to the heavy onus on us as stewards and trustees for the public.

Mr. Speaker, I won't take any more time. We oppose this. We will not be part of it. It's wrong, it's prone to manipulation, it's prone to taking advantage of the democratic process, and there's no way that we'll be part of it.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche.

4:50

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to briefly stand and support the government motion. After listening to the Member for Vegreville, I'd just like to mention in *Hansard* some of the comments he made in regards to the involvement of municipal councillors, reeves, and mayors. He indicated that reeves and mayors don't have a regional perspective, and I'm offended by that as a former municipal councillor. Municipal councillors play a great role across our country. I think mayors and reeves have as much of a regional perspective as any other politician in this country, and I stand to support them. Maybe the NDP thinks different, but I don't, and I hope our party doesn't.

As a former member of the select committee which toured this province, I think we held over 40 meetings during the summer of 1991. We went out there and listened to Albertans very carefully, and what we heard Albertans saying, both urban and rural, was to have fair and equitable representation. No one ever said it has to be one person, one vote. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms does not say that. If someone can stand up today and point out to me where the Charter of Rights and Freedoms says one person, one vote, I'll change my mind. It does not say that.

Now, we listened to Albertans. They want it to be fair. The urban members were reasonable. The rural members were reasonable. They said: design a system that will be fair to all Albertans at this time. When we moved forward with the legislation, we took that very seriously and took all their presentations into consideration.

The Member for Vegreville said the task given to the commission was impossible. I disagree with that fully. He felt that the legislation that was put in place bogged down the commission. That was wrong, because as a former member, I'm thoroughly knowledgeable of the processes that were put in place through the

legislation after listening to Albertans. When the report came back, I was very, very disappointed. In fact, you'll see an article here which says, "Electoral map committee collapse frustrates Cardinal." The reason I say that is that the members on the commission were instructed to follow the legislation where they could go 25 percent above or below the average, and 4 percent of the ridings could go as far as 50 percent. When we're talking about that percentage, Ontario has 15 constituencies that are above the 57 percent variance and the system works. What I disagreed with when the interim report came out was that the commission decided on their own to use a 10 percent variance for the multimunicipal ridings and decided to follow their own rules instead of following the legislation that was provided. That is why they could not come up with a report. As soon as you used a 10 percent variance, what you were forced to do when you drew your lines was draw them into the urban centres like Edmonton, far into Edmonton and Calgary also. They did not need to do that. All they had to do was use the 25 percent variance.

Now, I'm going to go back a bit to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms says that you should consider the standard of living and quality of services that are available to the residents of Alberta or this country. When you look at some of the disadvantages we have in our ridings, in Athabasca-Lac La Biche for an example, I have to serve 58,000 square kilometres, and unemployment in pockets of my constituency runs 80 to 90 percent, with the highest rate per capita on welfare in some parts of my constituency. It takes me over two hours to cross my constituency. That is why Ontario today has 15 constituencies that go to 57 percent variance, because they have the same problems we have. That is why our legislation recommended 50 percent variance for a certain amount of ridings, four ridings. That is why.

Now, one additional item I would like to bring to this House is: if that is the case and it stands in court to have up to 50 percent or 57 percent variance in ridings that are sparsely populated and where the standard of living is lower, why can't we go to the extreme opposite for some of the urban ridings where the standard of living is really high, the constituencies are small. Why can't we go 57 percent variance the opposite way, above. Why not? Someone tell me why not in this Assembly, why we cannot do that? I believe at this time that the commission that was set up did not follow the legislation that was laid out because they themselves chose not to follow it. That is why they could not . . . [interjections] The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud says it was impossible. Nonsense. He'd better study that. The only reason they couldn't come up with a map that would equally represent all Albertans is they decided to use 10 percent variance below or above instead of the allowable 25 percent. That is why. That is the reason why they could not come up with a report that would service all Albertans equally, and I still maintain at this time that we have no choice but to move forward with the legislation we've introduced today.

Thank you.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, it's with very mixed emotions that I rise to participate in this debate. This is probably the third or the fourth time I've entered a debate on electoral boundaries, and almost everything I've said has been ignored by the government so far. But as long as we're here, as long as there's life, there's hope. As long as we're here, we've got to keep fighting for the things we believe in whatever they do to us in the process. I have to say I'm very disappointed the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs should be selected as the one to bring this particular canard before the Assembly - I don't mean a duck

either – because generally speaking, he is a reasonable person to deal with.

This, Mr. Speaker, is not a reasonable motion. It's not a reasonable proposition to put forward with this committee. The government stands condemned not only by the public but by the words of the member who just spoke. He stated in this Assembly words to the effect that there would have been no problem with the commission if they went plus or minus 25 percent. In so doing, he revealed what has been the agenda of this government throughout: to produce an electoral map on which on average the rural ridings, the nonurban ridings are 25 percent smaller than average and on average the urban ridings are 25 percent above average. That's always been their agenda whether they choose to acknowledge it or not, and the member comes forward today and says as much.

There would be no problem if the commission went 25 percent plus or minus. Well, that is a systematic form of discrimination against people in the province of Alberta, but no, they had to dress it up. They had to dress it up, so they spent \$800,000 of taxpayers' money on an all-party committee in which this caucus and others participated in good faith. They sat and listened to Albertans and worked at a report and found that the government came forward with a complex and intricate set of rules which intended to push a commission in the direction of saying on average 25 percent smaller in the nonurban centres, on average 25 percent above in the urban areas. They dressed it up in words that appeared to their oh-so-clever minds that they could sneak past the courts, and they even took the somewhat unusual step of referring their legislation to the courts before it became law. Do you know what the courts said? They said what most people would say: we're not going to buy a pig in a poke; we can't tell you if this legislation produces a valid map or not. They said: show us the map first; then we'll tell you if it's fair or not. The key words to me in the judgment of the Court of Appeal of Alberta were that you can't accommodate the special needs of areas at the expense of somebody else; you can't rob urban residents of their right to equality for the sake of dealing with other problems.

5:00

Now, the commission to their credit took the government at its word. They used fairness as a concept, and that's where they came up with the interim map. Who came out to oppose that? Conservative Party members and supporters in every corner of the province. They came and said – an identical brief, undoubtedly written by caucus research – one after the other: no, this is all wrong; we can't have plus/minus 10 percent; it has to be 25 percent, because this, because that, because the other thing. They didn't get their way from the commission. The commission acted independently. If they were honest and they were honourable, they would have done what members of this Assembly suggested they do in the first place. They would have said to the commission: "Here's the Charter of Rights. Here's the number of seats. Here's the concept of fairness. You do your job." Did they do that? No way. They drew all kinds of inferences and conclusions about this, that, and the other thing.

The Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche stands condemned out of his own mouth and the government with him. They wanted 25 percent below average in the nonurban areas; they wanted 25 percent above average. Now, you do the math, Mr. Speaker, and figure it out. They're saying that an Albertan who lives in a urban centre is worth less than a person who lives in a nonurban centre of the province. It's impossible to accept that as a proposition. Of course they couldn't get their way from the commission. The commission came back and said: fairness dictates that we don't

stick arbitrarily to minus/plus 25 percent; in fairness we should be looking at something more like 10 percent. They availed themselves of the opportunity that was presented in the legislation to do just that. This government and its supporters throughout the province could not accept that, so they visited upon the commission a great number of identical submissions at the hearings. That caused the commission to fall apart, because the majority would not accept that direction from the government even though it was unavowed at the time the legislation was passed. They refused; they said no. Now the government pleads today that it has no options save this one. It has all kinds of options save this one: they can certainly say no to this resolution.

If one clause is more odious than any other, it's clause 2, the divide and conquer clause. It says that

if either opposition caucus does not appoint its members to the select special committee before its first meeting, such members may be appointed by the other opposition caucus,

hoping they could embarrass one of the two into participating for fear that they would then be represented by the others.

Members of this government caucus have threatened for some time members of our caucus. They refer to this thing as a boat that's going to leave the station, warning us that we'll be left on the sideline watching them take off on this cruise as if this were some kind of summer adventure we're launching on.

I believe that when the Leader of the Liberal Party uses the term "manipulation" to describe this process, he's right on the money. This is a manipulative process. Members of the opposition were manipulated on the first committee to go around. An attempt was made to manipulate the commission. Both attempts failed. We have a botched gerrymander on our hands. Now what they're doing is trying to do the same thing with people they can control politically on the committee. Well, I say to them it's not going to wash in any part of the province. You can't take a process which has tumbled in its own ashes as a result of their incompetent manipulation – they're not even good at manipulating the process – and turn it around and put on elected members of their caucus and have them do the same thing and expect that will have any degree of legitimacy whatsoever. It has none. It will be treated by Albertans with the contempt it deserves.

The one thing they should have done in fairness if they wanted to get us to this position: they should have gone to it right away. Why waste darned near \$2 million? It's about \$1.8 million tax dollars on a process to date which has produced the square root of nothing. That's what it's produced in terms of a new electoral map for the province of Alberta. If they were bent on doing it in a partisan way in the first place, why didn't they just do it? Well, I'll tell you why they didn't. Because they thought they could finesse their way through the process. They thought that if they dreamt up a clause here, if they used multimunicipality and single municipality instead of urban and rural, that would fool somebody; if they suggested certain things and then pushed the commission that way, maybe the commission would come across with what they wanted in the first place. Well, they didn't. They were too clever by half, and now they're caught in a dilemma. And what do they come up with when they're caught in a dilemma? They come up with this, a resolution which suggests members of this Assembly can go off by themselves, and if the opposition members don't come, they'll try and divide and conquer them along board. Well, that part hasn't worked either. So it's just part of a process of successive amounts of failure.

In the end what we have to say to a commission is that there are really only three concepts that matter here. One is the fact that we have laws in this country, some of which are in our Constitution – that matters – the fact that we may have an idea of

what the size of this Assembly should be, and the concept of fair and equitable representation: that's what matters. Why the government refused to restrict its direction to the commission to those three points is the great mystery of this debate, and I think the mystery has been solved and unraveled out of the very mouth of the Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche when he says: if the commission would have gone plus 25 percent in the urban centres, minus 25 for the rural members, there wouldn't be a problem.

Well, that's their agenda. That's what they wanted to do, pure and simple. They've wasted a heck of a lot of our time in this Assembly. They've wasted a heck of a lot of the taxpayers' money for a failure to come clean with their agenda, and now they're going to go with this partisan approach today. I say shame on the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs for putting his name on this resolution, because that is his name beside it. I think every member of this government who votes for this resolution deserves the consequences, because Albertans are not used to being manipulated in this way by a government. You know, if you've got an agenda and you want to push it, push it and bear the consequences, but don't try and finesse it through an all-party committee, don't waste \$2 million in doing the process, and then don't come back with this as if it's a matter of somehow sort of picking up some pieces and putting them back together.

This is a whole different approach toward the question of electoral boundaries than we've ever had before in the province of Alberta. I mean, some of the things that were said in the debate don't exist in the resolution. We're debating a resolution here which, as near as I can figure, has no role for the public whatsoever. There are no public hearings, no submission process. For all we know, they're going to get behind closed doors and start carving up poll by poll – Joe, you take some of this; Fred, you take some of that – and away we go. It's a process that I don't think has been accepted in any part of the democratic world I'm aware of outside of the southern United States a century ago. It sets the process of electoral reform and fairness back that far. That's what this government is laying on the table for us today, something that goes back that far, a secretive closed-door process that doesn't involve the public.

It's been absolutely clear. The leaders and caucuses of both opposition parties have said they will not participate in this process. So what they're putting in place is a one-party, closed-door process consisting of members chosen by the government Whip, accountable to the government Whip, accountable in all the ways that backbenchers are accountable within the parliamentary system to their political masters and leaders. Those are the people, one party behind closed doors, who are going to meet to draw the map. I don't think anybody can draw any other inference, because it's been made absolutely clear on the record by both opposition leaders in communication with the Premier, with the minister, with the public, and here in the Assembly that we're not taking part in this. We're not going to be any part. So if you think in your mind you can justify that this is anything other than a one-party effort to rig the electoral map in its favour, then you'd better think again, because that's what you've got. When you're voting on it, you'd better think about how that's going to play back home, because that's the truth of this situation.

You can bet that we're going to oppose this motion here, tomorrow, the next day, in the months and years to come.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for Calgary-Foothills.

5:10

MRS. BLACK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't going to get into the debate on the motion, but as the opposition members

spoke, I felt it was necessary because I think there were some statements made that are what I would call half-truths, if I'm allowed to use that terminology.

AN HON. MEMBER: Quarter maybe, not half.

MRS. BLACK: Quarter-truths.

As a former member of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries, along with my colleagues from Athabasca-Lac La Biche, Red Deer-North, and the chairman from Taber-Warner – the opposition also had three very good members on that committee, the members for Edmonton-Highlands, Edmonton-Belmont, and Calgary-North West. Mr. Speaker, we all worked very, very hard on that process to go through 39 public hearings and listen to the people, and it was a result of what the people said that developed the legislation that was brought forward to this Assembly. Through the process of almost 14 months there was an awful lot of consensus reached, a lot of deliberations that were taking place before that legislation was brought forward, and I found it rather disturbing, particularly when two of the members of that committee from the NDP caucus unfortunately weren't present to have this debate. I think they put in yeoman service, in all fairness to them.

The government thought the people on all sides had a tremendous amount of input into the resulting legislation that came out of the select committee. When I hear the word "sham," I think back to a debate that took place in this House when we were debating that legislation, and the thought and the development and the recall that we had from the people of Alberta, particularly the Member for Calgary-North West, when he stood with thoughts and amendments night after night and his own caucus couldn't even be bothered to be present to support his amendments.

You want to talk about a sham? Let's talk about a sham. I love the way the Member for Vegreville talked about "the government members thought . . ." I'd like to know how he knows what the government members thought. He has no idea. It's like everybody saying, "Quebec will never support this; Quebec will never support that." Let's hear it from Quebec. Let's not hear it from somebody else. Here we have someone standing there saying, "The government members thought . . ." How dare you. How dare you suggest what the government members thought. The government members came back to this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, with the voice of the people.

We then got to the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry, who talked about democracy, and I thought, boy, he's finally hit it. Democracy is of the people. The people spoke; the people came out in 39 public hearings and said what they thought to the Electoral Boundaries Committee. The people then went to 22 public hearings of the independent commission and said, "We don't like what you have prepared on your interim report; it's not satisfactory." That commission went back and toured throughout this province, and the people, not the politicians, said: "We don't like what you have drawn; it's not satisfactory. We are the people."

So what happened? I know that when the commission came to Calgary, we all went down to listen to the hearings of the commission on the interim report. Neither the Member for Calgary-North West nor myself, who had been on the select committee, were really going to make a statement, but because of the decimation of the city of Calgary, we felt we had to. We sat side by side, a Liberal and a Conservative, much to the shock of the commission, and said the same thing. The commissioners practically fell off their seats because here were a Liberal and a Conservative sitting side by side at the presentation table saying:

you have failed in interpreting the legislation; you did not represent in your interim map what was in the legislation. That's in *Hansard*. Thank goodness it's in *Hansard* and we have the *Hansard*. I would say that if there's anything that defines democracy, it's the process we have gone through, first with the select committee that developed legislation based on what the people said, then to the commission when the people said, "No, that is not satisfactory."

So what happened in the final report? The commission threw its hands up in horror. Did the commission think when it ran into trouble to pick up the phone and say to Calgary-North West or to Calgary-Foothills: "We've run into trouble in Calgary. Can you come over and share a cup of coffee and give us a hand?" No, not a word. They couldn't come to any conclusions. What a wonderful, independent committee. Why didn't they phone the Member for Edmonton-Belmont or the Member for Edmonton-Highlands? I know from the dedication they put on the select committee that those two members would have been down there and said, "Yes, we can give you a hand if you have questions; we can help you out with what the people meant at these hearings." They didn't spend 14 months of their time running around to have something that isn't going to develop into an end product. What happened? The commission failed. It's pure and simple: the commission failed.

I hear people say: Oh, well, now the government wants to go into a secretive, closed-door process. Well, excuse me. Thirty-nine public hearings, 22 held by the commission: all in *Hansard*.

If we would quit this nonsense of hiring another commission, another body to look at it and get on with doing what the people sent us here to do – make decisions, get on with the business of the Legislature, and get rid of the political grandstanding of the NDP and the Liberals – surely to goodness, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Calgary-North West can again sit down beside the Member for Calgary-Foothills and say: "This is what the people have done and have said to us. Let's draw the map." If we draw it with what the people – the people – if we draw it according to the people . . .

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Who are these people?

MRS. BLACK: The Member for Calgary-Mountain View just said, "Who are these people?" Do you know who they are? They're your voters. They're the people that live here. They came out in droves. If you don't know that, you should be ashamed, sir, because they came out and spoke clearly, as clear as can be, on what they wanted.

Why is it so difficult to take some time, get rid of the political grandstanding, and get this job over and done with without all of this nonsense that's coming out of both opposition parties' mouths? Here they are: let's put another judge in place and ask him to go around and use methodologies he chooses in conformity with revised legislation. Well, excuse me. The Court of Appeal approved the legislation. It went to the Supreme Court on the basis of the Saskatchewan model, and it was approved. How many more approvals do you need before you can accept that what is constitutionally sound is the legislation that was there? I'm sorry; all this is is grandstanding, Mr. Speaker. They don't want to put in the time on it because they might have to be responsible for something, and they can't take the task.

Thank you.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for Calgary-North West.

5:20

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I feel compelled to make some comments. The previous speaker I think did make some good points. Certainly I want to concur that the members of the first Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries did, I think in all cases, do yeoman service. I say it to all members of the House. It was a trying time, it was a difficult time, and there were lots of disagreements, but certainly we all did put in a lot of hours. I think all the members who were on that committee should be commended.

Mr. Speaker, the member in closing did talk about Bill 57 as being constitutionally sound. I think that when you review the comments written by Judge Liden and Jean McBean, who were two of the members of the commission, in their final report they allege that in fact it probably was not constitutionally sound and that the boundaries that would result from the legislation as written would probably not be acceptable. So we find ourselves at an impasse, and the end result, as we have seen now of course, is the five different reports that we did have in there.

The speaker from Calgary-Foothills did say there was a lot of consensus reached, Mr. Speaker, and yes, it's true there were a number of issues upon which there was consensus, but the question really we have to ask ourselves is: why are we now facing the situation of having to appoint another, a second Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries? I think the answer to that is because of difficulties that occurred within Bill 57. Now, the speakers before have said: well, you know, Bill 57 reflected the voice of the people. Mr. Speaker, when you review the creation of Bill 57, first we had the committee that produced the report, and in that report there were a number of recommendations that dealt with how the commission should be created; there was a recommendation as to the makeup of the commission, the principles that guide the commission in terms of their work. When you review the votes that occurred in the committee process, when you review the votes that occurred here in the Legislature once we had the report tabled and the legislation, Bill 57, was before the House, there were a number of amendments that proposed alternatives, that proposed changes, that proposed new suggestions, which were not accepted.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

When we review the committee of which I was a member, starting in August of 1989, through the spring of 1990, right through to the fall of 1990, Mr. Speaker, then you see that a number of the votes went 4-3. If you recall, and this is part of the reason why I'm voting against Motion 24 before us, the structure of this committee as proposed is exactly the same. Whether it will be the same members or not, of course, is extremely doubtful. On many of the votes that were taken in our first committee there were four Progressive Conservatives and three opposition members voting opposite to one another; depending upon the nature of the issue sometimes voting in favour, sometimes voting opposed. There were a great number of those that were split in such a fashion where ultimately the chairman, as is the role of the chairman, had to cast the deciding ballot.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the concern there is that the Member for Calgary-Foothills said: we were putting forward the voice of the people. Well, maybe they were putting forth the voice of the people as the Conservative members heard it, but certainly as the opposition members heard it, a good number of the votes we voted against, and the reason we voted against was because we heard issues in a different fashion. When you look through the

votes – and I don't want to list them all – a number of them went 4-3. A number of them went 5-1, where I stood alone. I make no apologies for that; I felt strongly about certain issues. There were times when the New Democrats went with the government, there were times when the New Democrats went with the Liberal caucus, but there were a number of issues. As I said, I don't want to go through all of them. That would be pointless. They're reflected in *Hansard*, and I think that what it really says is that the problem is not with the commission. The commission did fail, but they failed because of problems inherent in Bill 57, the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act.

Mr. Speaker, there were a number of comments that came about. One of them was the possibility of the creation of the 'rurban' constituency, this hybrid constituency that would take parts of the cities of Edmonton and Calgary amongst other cities in the province and put them in with rural areas. One of the things that came out in the final report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission was that clearly the province of Alberta should in a sense be divided into three different areas: Edmonton, Calgary, and the rest of the province. Those are not my words. Those are words that came in the commission report. Clearly, part of the problem, and I think part of the reason why there was such not quite totally but almost completely universal condemnation of the interim report, was the creation of those 'rurban' hybrid constituencies where pieces of my constituency were to be put in with rural Alberta. There were people opposed to that in both areas. In rural Alberta they were opposed to that, and in urban Alberta they were opposed to that. That possibility only came about as a result of Bill 57. That allowed for that to occur. So now we're faced with another committee that is supposed to solve those kinds of problems.

Now, if the rules that created Bill 57 had not hamstrung the commission, which is really what a number of commission members said in their final report, we would not have the need for Motion 24 that we are debating today. One of several problems is that it reconstitutes a stacked deck, a stacked deck meaning where the majority of the members on this as proposed would be government members and then we would have a token representation from the opposition parties. I say "token" because I go back once again to the original motions: to the main motion that created the principles, the makeup of the commission; a number of amendments that were made to how the commission should be structured; the definition of single- and multi-municipality constituencies; and so on. Those often went: four Conservative members from the government, and three members from the opposition voting in opposition to those motions. So the problem we have – and this doesn't define that; it leaves it wide open – is that this motion basically does not prevent 'rurban' or hybrid constituencies from being proposed once again. It leaves that

proposal wide open. So I can't support it. I didn't support it earlier in the committee when I was on the committee, I didn't support it when we debated it in the legislation, in Bill 57, in this Legislature, and I do not support the idea of 'rurban' constituencies now.

Mr. Speaker, there are some improvements in this motion that I think should be supported. That is one part that says we should use the 1991 census data. That certainly is an improvement from the past. There's no doubt that using the 1986 census data and then forcing the commission or subsequent commissions to continue to use that for another 10 years possibly after that certainly would be inappropriate. So we've made a bit of an improvement in moving to 1991 census data in section 3(c) in Motion 24.

One of the speakers, I believe from the New Democrats, did say that there was a real sticker in this one that I just object to philosophically, and that is section 2. It's the old divide and conquer principle. Mr. Speaker, I think that this clause is simply an abomination. Really what it hopes to do is provide someone else the opportunity and says: hey, maybe if the other guys don't get in there, you can get a leg up on them. It's an attempt to split I think what has been in very many cases very reasoned and reasonable opposition to Bill 57 and proposed new ideas and appropriate ideas that should be considered. I think that if for no other reason, section 2 by itself provides sufficient strength to cause this motion to be voted against by all members of this Legislature. There's no doubt that that kind of clause in there should be a serious embarrassment to the government.

Mr. Speaker, the question of course is: where do we go from here? We have proposed a number of motions. We have proposed a number of suggestions for the government to make improvements, but since we're coming up to 5:30, I would move that we adjourn debate.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. member has moved that debate be adjourned on this motion. All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Carried.
The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, by way of information this evening the House will sit and deal with Government Bills and Orders on the Order Paper beginning with second reading of Bill 41.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:30 p.m.]

