

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, January 25, 1993**

2:30 p.m.

Date: 93/01/25

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray. Our prayer is the one as used at the Mother of Parliaments since the year 1659.

We, Thine unworthy servants here gathered together in Thy name, do humbly beseech Thee to send down Thy heavenly wisdom from above to direct and guide us in all our considerations.

Amen.

head: **Presentation to the Assembly of
Mr. Don MacDonald, Member for Three Hills**

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. members, we admit a new member to our Chamber. Would the leader of the Liberal Party and the Whip please go to the door of the Chamber.

Hon. members, a vacancy occurred in the constituency of Three Hills as a result of the resignation of the former member. So, hon. members, I have received from the Chief Electoral Officer of Alberta, pursuant to the Election Act, a report containing the results of the by-election conducted on October 26, 1992, which states that a by-election was indeed conducted in the constituency of Three Hills, and the said report further shows that Donald MacDonald was duly elected as the Member for Three Hills.

[Mr. Decore and Mrs. Hewes escorted Mr. MacDonald to the Mace]

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to introduce Donald MacDonald to you. Mr. MacDonald is the new Member for Three Hills. He has taken the oath of this Assembly, and he has inscribed the roll. He now claims his right to take his seat.

MR. SPEAKER: Let the hon. member take his seat. [applause]

head: **Introduction of Premier Klein**

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. members, it is the pleasure of the House to welcome a new Premier. [applause] In that regard, first the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to welcome our new Premier. I congratulate him on his election as the Conservative leader of the province of Alberta, which makes him our new Premier. I've been told from time to time that it may be condolences when you take over a job like this, because as we all know, the challenges are going to be immense for all of us that are elected here to the Legislature.

I would, Mr. Speaker, also like to congratulate, though, the other leadership candidates. Some of them are here in the Legislature; others aren't. In this day and age of – can I put it this way? – tough politics to put your name forward in a democratic society I think is very important, and I would like to take the opportunity to thank all of those who ran. I think all Albertans do owe them thanks.

Now, I think we would all recognize, all 83 of us in the Legislature, Mr. Speaker, that these are going to be difficult economic times. It won't be easy for any of us, whether it's the Premier in his new job or people sitting on the government side

or on the opposition side. I will say this to the new Premier: when you bring in policies that we agree with, we will tell the Premier that, and we will support them. Obviously, there are many things we'll probably find to disagree with, but it will be done in the spirit of building a better Alberta. I think the Premier understands and certainly we do that what goes on here is a clash of ideas and philosophies, but it has nothing to do with personal politics. I think the Premier is well aware of that, the same as we are.

So I just conclude by again congratulating him on a tough job. Let us all work together to build a better Alberta for the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The leader of the Liberal Party.

MR. DECORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, on behalf of the members of my caucus we would like to congratulate Premier Klein on his success and also to congratulate, as the Leader of the Opposition has noted, the Conservative Party for the initiative that it took in its direct vote. I think that Albertans were impressed with the process. Other parties can learn, I'm sure, from that process, and probably all parties will pursue that initiative.

Mr. Klein and I have been friends for a number of years. We have done some things that I wish we hadn't done, like the luge run, but I don't intend to extend any challenges like that one. The best that we can do, I think, for the people of Alberta is to debate each other in the spirit of ensuring that it's all the best for Albertans, that process.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that Albertans want a new style of politician and a new kind of politics. They want their politicians to solve their problems. They want their politicians, secondly, to solve those problems in a timely way. Thirdly, I believe that they want politicians to have enough time and energy and excitement to think about new directions and new visions for the future, particularly Alberta's economic future. If there are initiatives that the Premier will take in ensuring that that definition of politics and politicians is fulfilled, the Premier will have our complete support. We will debate with the kind of vigour that is intended of an opposition, but where he needs support to make things better for Albertans, he'll have that support.

Thank you, and congratulations.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Deputy Premier, the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, government members would like to add their best wishes and congratulations to the Member for Calgary-Elbow on his election as leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Alberta and on his election as the 12th Premier of Alberta.

The process followed in 1992 to have the people of Alberta directly elect their Premier was innovative, courageous, and historic. It follows in the tradition of creative Albertans who will blaze new directions and reforms in challenging the time-honoured methodology of British parliamentary government. Louise McKinney was not only the first woman to take her seat in the Alberta Legislature but was also the first woman elected to any provincial or federal parliament and the first elected woman in the British Empire. Stan Waters was the first Senator directly elected by the people. In 1992 Ralph Klein became the first Premier directly elected by the people. All Albertans were given the opportunity to participate, and no Albertan was denied an opportunity to participate. The process was unique, innovative, imaginative and constitutes a significant political reform of the

British parliamentary model. Ralph Klein sits in his new chair in this Assembly by the will of the people of Alberta and with a legitimacy that is unparalleled in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, we welcome the Member for Calgary-Elbow to this Assembly as the new Premier of Alberta, and we extend our best wishes to him for a most lengthy, effective, and productive stay. His will comes from the people, and his responsibility is to the people.

Thank you.

2:40

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Premier.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to thank the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition for his kind comments and the leader of the Liberal Party for his kind comments as well. Indeed I do remember all too well and all too painfully the luge run. I suffered some cracked ribs as a result of that challenge with the former mayor of Edmonton. I would like to point out that outside of Wayne Gretzky I also have probably the largest collection of Oilers sweaters. I thank you, Mr. Deputy Premier, for your kind comments.

I'm going to make my remarks very brief, Mr. Speaker. Basically I said that I would like to set for this party and this government a new tone and a new style, and I think that the events that have unfolded over the past six weeks have indeed demonstrated that this is a government that is about to set out on a course of change and renewal. In the short time left available to us, we will do our best to demonstrate to Albertans that we will provide them with effective, efficient, and good government. Indeed, Mr. Leader of the Opposition and Mr. Leader of the Liberal Opposition, we look forward to your very positive and constructive input.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: On a similar note of new beginnings, an era of sorts has passed which we will deal with tomorrow afternoon in the House at about 5:15 in terms of saying an appropriate farewell to our previous Sergeant-at-Arms, who just happens to be seated in the Speaker's gallery today to gain a whole new perspective on the Chamber.

I ask you all if you would join with me. On your desks in front of you is the very distinguished résumé of our new Sergeant-at-Arms. I would ask that he rise and be acknowledged by this House and welcomed, Brian Hodgson.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

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

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to present a petition from 25 Albertans urging the government to afford cleft palate children full access to proper dental care.

head: **Presenting Reports by
Standing and Special Committees**

MR. SPEAKER: In accordance with Motion 24 of Thursday, July 2, 1992, I table with the Assembly the report of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries including an updated copy of the proposed legal descriptions of the electoral divisions contained in the report as received by the office of the Speaker on January 21, 1993. Neither the content nor the boundaries of the

proposed electoral divisions have been altered by these updated legal descriptions.

head: **Notices of Motions**

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I have given the necessary notice to your office, but I wish to give notice to the Assembly that pursuant to Standing Order 30 I intend to move today that we adjourn the ordinary business of the Assembly to discuss the urgent matter of the selection and election of Alberta's new Senator under the Senatorial Selection Act.

Thank you, sir.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
The Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant also to Standing Order 30 at the appropriate time this afternoon I propose to move to adjourn the ordinary business of the Assembly to discuss the urgent matter of the need for the government of Alberta to bring to the Assembly an action plan for job creation and economic stability for the people of Alberta.

MR. SPEAKER: West Yellowhead.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that at the end of question period I will rise under Standing Order 40 to seek the unanimous consent of the Assembly to move that Bill 282, Members of the Legislative Assembly Pension Plan Amendment Act, be brought to the top of Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders on the Order Paper so it can be considered for second reading pursuant to Standing Order 8(3) on Thursday, January 28, 1993.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand on a question of privilege and await your direction as to when you wish that matter discussed in terms of whether a prima facie case can be made.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, I hope to get to it before 5:29 this afternoon, given the other kind of issues that are here. It's the intention of the Chair to hear the argument with respect to privilege after having heard the two requests under Standing Order 30, then the Standing Order 40. Then it will be time for your arguments to be heard.

The Minister of Justice.

MR. FOWLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to give oral notice that I will be moving first reading of Bill 55, the Electoral Divisions Statutes Amendment Act, 1993.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to give oral notice of the following government motion:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 73(2) the Electoral Divisions Statutes Amendment Act, 1993, may be advanced two or more stages in one day.

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

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I wish to give oral notice that I will move the following government motion pursuant to Standing Order 53(2).

Be it resolved that the following members be appointed to fill the current vacancies on the following standing and special committees of the Assembly:

- (1) Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act: chairman, Mr. Anderson; deputy chairman, Mr. Shrake; Mr. McFarland, Mr. Severtson, Mr. Orman;
- (2) Law and Regulations: Ms McCoy, Mr. Oldring, Mr. Stewart;
- (3) Legislative Offices: chairman, Mr. Lund; Ms Betkowski;
- (4) Members' Services: Mr. Moore, Mr. Cherry;
- (5) Private Bills: chairman, Mrs. B. Laing; Mr. Horsman, Mr. Stewart, Mr. Adair.
- (6) Public Accounts: Mr. Brassard, Mr. Weiss, and Mr. Gogo.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Additional notices of motion, Mr. Deputy Premier, Government House Leader.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I wish to give oral notice that I will move the following motion on Tuesday next.

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 55(2) the Assembly proceed with the election of a Deputy Chairman of Committees on January 26, 1993, that the said election be by secret ballot conducted by the Clerk of the Assembly, and furthermore that the successful candidate must receive 50 percent plus one of all votes cast. If that does not occur on the first ballot, the member receiving the least number of votes shall be removed from the ballot and a second vote conducted by the Clerk of the Assembly. If a candidate is not successful on the second ballot, the third and succeeding ballots, if needed, will be conducted in the same manner as the second ballot until such time as a Deputy Chairman of Committees is elected.

Mr. Speaker, I would as well add that we've had consultations with the House leaders of both the Official Opposition and the third party in the House with regard to this matter.

2:50

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I wish to give oral notice of the following government motion:

Be it resolved that the messages of His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, the supplementary estimates, and all matters connected therewith be referred to the Committee of Supply.

Mr. Speaker, I also wish to give oral notice of the following motion:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 58(6)(a) the number of days the Committee of Supply will be called to consider the supplementary estimates shall be no more than three days.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the 1990-91 annual report of the Department of Energy.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table with the Assembly today the annual report of the Alberta Dental Association for the year ended June 30, 1992. A copy will be distributed to each member of the Assembly.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, I'm tabling the annual report of Alberta Hospital Edmonton for the year ended March 31, 1992. Copies have previously been distributed to all MLAs.

Finally, I wish to table the financial statements for the Children's health centre of northern Alberta for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1992.

MR. ZARUSKY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table with the Assembly the annual report of the Alberta Multiculturalism Commission for the period ended March 31, 1991.

MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to section 4(3) of the Election Act I table with the Assembly the report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the Three Hills by-election held on Monday, October 26, 1992.

I also table with the Assembly the revised Members' Services Committee consolidation order of 1992.

I table with the Assembly also copies of correspondence received by the office of the Speaker since the submission of the report of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries to the Speaker on November 16, 1992, copies of which have been distributed to members as they have been received by our office.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, on this historic day in Alberta I'm pleased to welcome to the Legislative Assembly some 80 students from the Barrhead elementary school. These young people are located in both the members' gallery and the public gallery. They're accompanied by teachers Mrs. Margaret Cournoyer, Michael Loitz, and Mrs. Maureen Tansowny, and several helpers: Trudy Gammel, Del Sutherland, Debbie Bender, and Geneviève Émond. I would ask that our young visitors stand and receive the warm welcome of all my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly.

head: **Oral Question Period**

MR. MARTIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, back to the real world of the Legislature.

Electoral Boundaries

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, this session of the Legislature, frankly, has been called to legitimize a corrupt process. Gerrymandering was discredited in the 1800s, yet we have a provincial government here that in an offensive and undemocratic way, with four Conservative backbenchers, is trying to decide the electoral boundaries of this province. Maybe it's not gerrymandering; it may be 'Bogle-mandering.' Now, this Premier has talked about a new way of doing things. He talked about a new tone and a new style. The first thing they do is this. This is a corrupt process. My question to the Premier is simply this. How can this Premier, who says he represents a new way of doing things, justify this undemocratic, corrupt process of drawing up electoral boundaries?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the process is indeed a democratic process; it's not in any way, shape, or form a corrupt process. The boundaries will be decided hopefully over the course of the next 10 days or so by the Legislative Assembly, by all of us. You have an opportunity, hon. Leader of the Opposition, to move amendments, to provide positive input.

Certainly, if one reflects back on the statements that were made by members of the NDP and the Liberal Party relative to the boundaries commission, those statements clearly indicated that that report was not satisfactory. It created boundaries that were not satisfactory. It created these mixed urban/rural boundaries, and it was not a good report. We invited the NDP opposition and the Liberal opposition to participate with us in the redrafting of those boundaries. They refused to participate in that process. So we had no choice other than to bring the process to this most democratic body, the Legislature, to have it decided here by each and every member.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, that's blatant nonsense. Only in Alberta would they try to have MLAs determine the electoral boundaries. It went out in the 1800s in most other parts of the world. They'd be laughed out if they tried to do this in other parts of Canada. Now, the Member for Edmonton-Glenora understood

that, at least alluded to this at the leadership convention, and this Premier, who wants to set a new tone, is refusing to recognize it.

I want to look at the boundaries here, Mr. Speaker, and I want to look at Calgary-Elbow. Isn't it interesting that Calgary-Elbow extends all the way over to the west part of Calgary. I notice that the MLA for Taber-Warner's riding is looked after and that of the MLA for Athabasca-Lac La Biche. I want to ask the Premier this: is it just a coincidence that the boundary where he almost lost the election, lost it twice during the Conservative leadership convention, all of a sudden sticks over to the west end? Is that just a coincidence?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, yes, it is.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, if you believe that, you believe in the tooth fairy too. Now, the Premier may find it funny, but it's not. This is very undemocratic and offensive to the people of Alberta, and he'd better understand that.

So I want to give this Premier one last chance to set a new tone and style and to follow what the Member for Edmonton-Glenora was talking about. Will the Premier now do the right and principled thing – he said there wouldn't be an election till the fall – and call an independent body to redraw the electoral boundaries? Will he do the right thing even at this late date?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, with all seriousness I had absolutely nothing to do, absolutely nothing to do with my own boundaries in Calgary-Elbow, and I can say this with all honesty. Those were redrawn or redrafted without any input whatsoever from myself or anyone connected with my constituency. I say that with all honesty. So it was coincidence; that's right.

Mr. Speaker, this is not, I have to repeat, a corrupt process. This is probably the most honest and open process one could possibly conceive. What could be more open and more honest than the Legislature itself, not the Conservative Party, not the Conservative government but the Legislature, deciding the boundaries and then having those boundaries referred to the independent body that the hon. Leader of the Opposition refers to, the highest court in the province, to determine if in fact we will have achieved what is deemed to be proper under the Charter of Rights, and that is a 25 percent variance? But what better forum than the Legislature, where all members together – Conservatives, NDP, and Liberals – can decide what is appropriate in terms of an equal and effective boundary system heading into the next election?

3:00

MR. SPEAKER: Second main question.

MR. MARTIN: I had to put on my glasses, because I thought Don Getty was back over there. We've got a shorter version of Don Getty.

MR. SPEAKER: Question, please.

Health Care

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'll move on to the second set of questions. Our new Premier has been in office for I guess approximately a month and a half, and already he has put his stamp on this government. He's taken a government of waste and mismanagement and made it into a government of incompetence and indecision. Now, the Premier seems to have trouble making a decision. You know, he goes down the hall and he could

change his mind three times on the way down there. But let's look at a very serious matter. In the health care field alone the Premier has shown basically that he has no plan; he just wanted to be Premier. He has threatened Albertans with user fees, and he has thrown hospital budgeting into chaos by telling them that they would not get a 2.5 percent increase this year, as promised by the Minister of Health last year, which was the right thing to do at that time. But maybe today he's changed his mind again, so we'll ask the Premier: is the Premier going to promote and try to bring in the use of user fees? Yes or no?

MR. KLEIN: Well, I've heard from this corner over here that it's a sin to think out loud. Mr. Speaker, what we have is a leader who is about to set a new tone and a new style to the government, and basically everything is on the table. As a result of thinking out loud, I've received numerous suggestions from the public as to how we can address not only the issue of escalating costs in health but how we deal generally with the financial situation of this government. If the NDP have good suggestions, I would welcome them to think out loud, pass them along. They will never be in a position of implementing those suggestions because they will never be the government. So if they have some good thoughts or some good ideas, pass them along; think out loud. We don't muzzle our people on this side. You know, we're not afraid to think out loud and to stimulate public debate. So if you have any good ideas, just pass them along; we can use them. You'll never be in a position to implement them, so pass them along.

MR. MARTIN: Even the Premier found his own rhetoric funny that time, Mr. Speaker. The key word is "thinking" out loud. That's what he's not doing. He's talking out loud, not thinking.

Mr. Speaker, I want to come back again to the question that he refused to answer. It's a simple one. Is it today you're for user fees and not tomorrow, or what is it? Are you thinking about promoting and bringing in user fees? Are you trying to convince the federal government on that matter? That's what we want to know.

MR. KLEIN: I have to repeat, Mr. Speaker: everything is on the table. If they have some good ideas, some good thoughts as to how we can approach these very difficult situations and issues, pass them along.

MR. MARTIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, we'd be glad to send over the five policy papers where some thought did go into it.

Now, I take it by the answer that we have to take it that, yes, user fees are still being looked at; everything's on the table.

I want to ask one other question, Mr. Speaker. One of the things that the previous Minister of Health did right was look at a two-year plan so that the local governments – in this case it was local hospitals – could plan. Now all of a sudden in the musings or the thinking out loud or whatever it is, they're saying: no, that's not on the table anymore; they may get nothing. That's unfair and unacceptable for their planning. My question to the Premier is simply this: will the Premier now take this opportunity to clear it up and assure hospitals that they will receive the funding they were promised last year so that they can adequately plan for any changes they have to make?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I have to say again that everything is on the table. We're under new management. We've got to have the leeway and the Provincial Treasurer has to have the leeway and the opportunity to prepare for this Legislature a financial plan. He has given that undertaking, and he will do that. It will be

presented in a forthright manner, in a very open manner, and virtually everything . . . [interjection] Everything, Bob, is open for discussion.

I would be very, very happy to receive the documents the hon. Leader of the Opposition refers to. You'll never be able to use them, so pass them along to us. Thank you.

MR. GOGO: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: A point of order for the end of question period. Thank you.

Speaker's Ruling Referring to a Member by Name

MR. SPEAKER: Also, I'm sure, Mr. Premier, rather than go back to previous political existence, we have no member in this House known as Bob. We have a Member for Calgary-Mountain View I think.

The Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

Provincial Fiscal Policies

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, if you look at the financial books and listen to the statements of the government, the province now has a debt of about \$18.4 billion. We have had eight consecutive deficit budgets. In March of 1991 Alberta's new Premier talked in this Assembly about a financial plan. He said, "We have a fiscal plan in place, and it's a plan that will lead to a balanced budget." Now, members of the opposition for two years have been attempting to get details of that fiscal plan from the government but to no avail. Would the Premier recite the details of the fiscal plan that he talked about in March of 1991 when he addressed this Assembly?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, what I talked about through the leadership campaign was an approach to address the very serious situation of the debt and the deficit. My commitment then was to do everything possible to balance the budget in four years, and that commitment remains. Sometime in June or July hopefully the Provincial Treasurer will be bringing to the public a plan that purports to balance the budget by 1997. You have to have that time. You just can't wipe out \$2.6 billion or \$2.5 billion, or whatever the deficit is going to be, overnight without seriously affecting services. There will be a plan, a four-year plan, an orderly plan to pay down the debt and to eliminate the deficit. What I'm saying to the opposition parties is: stay tuned. Stay tuned, but in the meantime help us along. If you've got any good ideas, any good thoughts, pass them along. I'm sure we can use them.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, for the record I take it that the Premier didn't hear the question. The question was: give the details of the plan you were talking about in 1991.

I'll go to my second question. Mr. Speaker, would the Premier tell us this. Obviously with a new plan that's needed, some new change in detail needs to be put into effect. I'd like to know what detail of the old plan is going to be thrown away and what is going to be substituted in this new plan.

MR. KLEIN: Sir, the hon. leader of the Liberal Party doesn't understand. [interjections] Really. There is a new leader. There has been a dramatic change in the makeup of government. Basically I'd like to put up a sign that says: under new management. So allow us to make the changes; allow us to put our stamp

on this government. Let's not dwell on the issues of the past. Allow us to bring forward the plan I talked about. It will be presented to Albertans in a very open, a very honest way by the Provincial Treasurer, but we need the time, Mr. Speaker.

3:10

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, it's clear that the Premier isn't listening to the question. I'm going to repeat it again: will you tell the people of Alberta, Mr. Premier, what was wrong with the old plan that you talked about in this Assembly in March of 1991, and what has to be changed in that plan for the new plan? Surely you're able to tell the people of Alberta that. Let's not get fuzzy about this. Tell them what the facts are.

MR. KLEIN: I'm not fuzzy about this thing. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry is fuzzy about it. He doesn't seem to understand that everything is now on the table. We'll take whatever is available out of that old plan. I'm sure the Provincial Treasurer will go back. There are so many things, Mr. Speaker, that need to be addressed that we can't be specific relative to the March 1991 plan or any other plan. This is what I'm trying to say, and I would like to reiterate it: the Provincial Treasurer needs the time to prepare a financial plan that will address the debt and the deficit and present that plan to the people of Alberta as the plan of this government. Indeed, we're going to do it in a very orderly and a very responsible fashion, and we will take into account all the information that can be made available to us.

Senate Reform

MS BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Given the report presented to this Legislature by the all-party committee on constitutional reform and given the results of the referendum on October 26, 1992, could the Premier advise whether Senate reform remains a priority as a policy of this government?

MR. KLEIN: Senate reform has always been a priority of this government. As all members well know, it was this government that introduced the Senatorial Selection Act and really pursued quite vigorously the concept of a triple E Senate. Indeed today I've written the Prime Minister, and if I could have 35 seconds, Mr. Speaker, I would like to read the letter and table it with the House:

As the new Premier of Alberta I wanted to restate my commitment, and that of my government, to pursuing the principle of a democratically elected Senate. I acknowledge that with the failure of the Charlottetown Accord, comprehensive constitutional change may be difficult to achieve in the short term. Nevertheless, Albertans have certainly made it clear to me that their support for a reformed Senate has not diminished.

It is equally clear from our recent constitutional experience that the vast majority of Canadians do not see the Senate as currently constituted, as a legitimate institution of government. If the Senate is to be perceived by Canadians as a legitimate institution of government, it must be given a democratic foundation.

In closing, I would urge you to support changes to the current appointment process to provide a democratic foundation to the Senate. Thank you.

MS BETKOWSKI: Thank you for that.

Mr. Speaker, given the current vacancy that exists in Alberta in terms of our Senators, is it therefore the government's intention to trigger the provisions of the Senatorial Selection Act to allow Albertans a vote on this very important issue?

MR. KLEIN: I guess it's a matter of logistics. I suspect that that appointment will be made within days. Really we need assurances

from the Prime Minister that in fact there are going to be significant and fundamental changes so that we will be assured that if indeed we do elect a Senator, that individual will be appointed. We do not now have those assurances, so I really don't see any need or any purpose really for triggering the Senatorial Selection Act at this time.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Avonmore, followed by Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Human Rights Commission

MS M. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister responsible for human rights dismisses Alberta's human rights legislation and commission as catering to vocal lobby groups. Yet in 1992 more than 52 percent of the complaints to the commission were on the basis of unfair treatment regarding gender, including sexual harassment; 15 percent were on the basis of race, colour, and ethnicity; 20 to 30 percent were not related to issues of employment. To the minister responsible: given that legislation bestows equality, not special status, will the minister now abandon any action to weaken or dismantle the legislation and commission and immediately appoint a strong human rights advocate as chief commissioner?

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, it is indeed my intention to hire a chief commissioner once I have a feeling for the department, which is responsible for a number of issues and areas. The Individual's Rights Protection Act is certainly an Act that is specifically spelled out by legislation and lists those who are protected. It is an important issue, and the chief commissioner's job is an important job. This is why I think it's important to take time to review that position and very carefully choose that person.

MS M. LAING: Mr. Speaker, I would like a guarantee from this minister that she will choose as the chief commissioner a person with a strong record in terms of human rights advocacy work.

MRS. MIROSH: Well, Mr. Speaker, it is indeed important that that person have all kinds of qualifications for that job. That person has to be one who is very caring. I will take my time in considering the person for this position.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Ice Age Company Incorporated

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier will recall that in 1991 the department of the environment rejected an application by the Ice Age Company to mine ice cubes from the Cline Glacier. No relation. Within months after this decision the government paid \$400,000 of taxpayers' money to this company. My question is to the Premier. Can he justify why the government would give \$400,000 to the Ice Age Company in a behind-the-scenes, let's not tell anybody about it payoff?

MR. KLEIN: Well, obviously, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't behind the scenes, let's not tell anybody, because the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark knows about it. So it's obviously out there. There were some commitments that indeed were made to the Ice Age Company relative to permits. It was a ministerial decision at that particular time that this was not an appropriate decision, and that decision then was countermanded. Of course the company had already made some financial commitments. It was a negotiated settlement.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary by Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MR. MITCHELL: This must be what happens when he thinks out loud, Mr. Speaker: he makes commitments that we then have to pay \$400,000 to fulfill.

How could a payment of this magnitude be made without the authorization of an order in council, without prior budgetary approval, and without telling Albertans that this minister used \$400,000 of their money to settle an embarrassing issue two months before his leadership bid?

MR. KLEIN: Now, maybe my understanding of the timing is contrary to that of the hon. member's, but I recall this settlement being made sometime ago, and it had absolutely nothing to do with the leadership. Indeed, there were some commitments made; the company invested some money. I thought it was an inappropriate use of a resource, and therefore under the Water Resources Act I simply made a decision that this project could not go ahead.

MR. MITCHELL: But you gave them \$400,000.

MR. KLEIN: That was a Treasury Board decision, as I understand it.

Speaker's Ruling Interrupting a Member

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. Premier. [interjection] Hon. Premier, please. [interjection] Order please. Order. This House will not get into the habit of hon. members shouting across the floor further supplementaries and then expecting the person addressed to be responding. It's not the practice of this House, so cease and desist. That's the reason for the intervention at this time.

Speaker's Ruling Questions about a Previous Responsibility

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair also has great difficulty because of comments in *Beauchesne* about asking a minister about previous responsibilities in a previous portfolio. Today I've allowed latitude because that minister has now become the Premier and therefore can indeed be dealing, generally speaking, with issues related to the government, but it's obviously much more appropriate that questions of this nature should be directed to the new minister responsible for that department.

Cypress-Redcliff, followed by Edmonton-Jasper Place.

3:20 Ecological Reserves

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Environmental Protection, and it's to do with the ecological areas portion of his department. During the debate on a motion some time ago in this House, the minister, then a member, made comments relating to open spaces. This summer his predecessor signed an agreement for operation of the Milk River Canyon ecological area, and I wonder if the minister can outline that agreement briefly and how that agreement was arrived at.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Minister.

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to bring that kind of information to the House. I'm also, of course, very pleased to have authority and responsi-

bility for the Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves and Natural Areas Act.

As the hon. Member for Cypress-Redcliff has mentioned, last spring really in response to a meeting that was held in Calgary that was attended by his Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, our then minister of tourism, parks, and recreation made a commitment that we would move forward with our special places legislation, and certainly the Milk River Canyon ecological reserve is commitment to that initiative.

After a substantial input process that has included a planning team, public input to ensure that there is a commitment by the people who live in the area to the designation of the Milk River Canyon and in fact to designation of that area as an ecological reserve, I'm happy to report that there has been an agreement signed to operate. That was signed off, and we are now moving forward with that designation.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is again to the minister. I wonder if he can assure the Assembly that any other ecological areas that would be planned or are in the planning process could be assured of as much public input as that one received from all sectors of the public: interest groups, the general public, and people adjacent.

MR. EVANS: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to confirm my commitment to that kind of public input process, and I'd just like to give as an example another one of the ecological reserve candidates that's in the hon. member's constituency. That's known as the Prairie coulee ecological reserve candidate. It's about eight and a half square miles of area. We've already started moving in the direction of establishing a working committee made up of area residents, made up of people from government, certainly made up of folks from the local fish and game. They will be determining a management plan, and again we will be going through that public input process to ensure that the people who live in the area surrounding this candidate have as much public input, as much to do with the decision-making process as is possible.

Forest Management

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Premier. Many Albertans are concerned about the extent of logging recently undertaken in the white zone lands at the edge of the provincial forests. There's a loophole in the regulations which allows some unscrupulous forest companies to practise logging practices which are improper, to avoid any reforestation on those lands. Of course the Alberta forest service and the forest minister have been aware of this problem for quite a few months. The reason I'm coming to the Premier on this is that there's a new problem that's arisen. Some unscrupulous operators are also exporting these logs from Alberta to British Columbia mills where they're then milled, creating jobs in British Columbia but costing jobs in Alberta. I would like to ask the Premier now that he's aware of the situation, what action he's prepared to take to protect Alberta jobs in the logging and the sawmilling industry.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for bringing this to my attention. I wasn't aware of the situation. Perhaps some correspondence has come to my office. If it has, I haven't seen it. Certainly we'll look into it. I'll ask the hon. Minister of Environmental Protection to address this matter further, if he will.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
Supplementary.

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Premier's reference to our ministry. I have the responsibility for our forests. I know that our forests are a resource that have really a limitation on the extent of the development that can occur within those forests that is sustainable. We in our department have a philosophy of sustainable yield. We also have a philosophy of ensuring that Albertans are given the opportunity to make use of our forest resource. I will certainly work with the hon. member opposite to identify the issue that he's raised before this House and ensure that this is not taking away from Albertans that opportunity to utilize our forest resource.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, I don't know what other conclusion you can come to.

In British Columbia companies interested in exporting raw logs, even from private land, have to advertise them for sale and prove that they are surplus to the province's requirements. I would simply like to ask the government how it can sit there and allow logs to flow out of Alberta when we know that British Columbia doesn't allow that. How long are you going to wait before you act?

MR. EVANS: Well, Mr. Speaker, certainly as a term of our forest management agreements, our timber quotas, our permits we try to not only utilize our forest industry but to have value added in the province of Alberta. This is an industry which is very labour intensive, and I would mention to the hon. member opposite that of course there are Albertans and Alberta companies that are responsible for the logging of those particular areas that he may be referring to. What we are talking about is an Alberta industry, and if we can value add, that is the object of our department. If in a particular example there is no value added, then that's something we have to work on, and that will certainly be the focus of our department.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Buffalo, followed by Lesser Slave Lake.

Human Rights Commission

(continued)

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are troubled by the recent suggestion that public opinion polls may dictate which human rights we protect in this province. My question, sir, is to the Minister of Community Development. Will the minister agree with an earlier Liberal initiative to make the Alberta Human Rights Commission accountable to this Legislative Assembly and no longer subject to the prejudices of a single minister?

MRS. MIROSH: Well, Mr. Speaker, protection of individual rights is under this Legislative Assembly when it is debated. It has very specific lists. It's something that certainly could be considered at a later time.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, sir. Part of the mandate of the Alberta Human Rights Commission is to undertake both research and education in this province in the area of human rights. My question is: will the minister give an undertaking that resources will be made available to ensure that those important parts of the mandate are achieved? Thank you.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, that's a very good suggestion. Once the new chief commissioner is appointed, I would certainly take that advice, and I welcome the advice.

MR. SPEAKER: Lesser Slave Lake, followed by Edmonton-Highlands.

Social Assistance

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Family and Social Services. As many of the members in this House are aware as most of the members have gone into the constituency of Lesser Slave Lake, a high percentage of my constituents are caught up in the welfare cycle, which has been around for I would say up to three generations. My constituents are not happy with the existing system and want changes. Can the minister advise the House of proposed changes which will positively impact my area and other areas with the same concern?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to tell this House that our number one priority as a government and my number one priority as the minister of this department is to make sure that we provide a high quality of service for the elderly, the handicapped, the needy, and people that can't fend for themselves. That's the number one priority of this department. On the other hand, we have over 88,000 people presently on assistance. Over 50 percent of those people are single and employable, couples that don't have children, and those people want an alternative to the existing system. I think our government is ready to be innovative, make changes, do what the people want.

Now, as far as job creation in northern Alberta I'm glad we didn't follow the leader of the Liberal opposition's old plan. Going back to January 28, 1991, the Leader of the Official Opposition said that we're on the hook for \$1.3 billion for forestry projects. Some of those projects have created thousands of jobs up there. We have 3,000 people on site at Alberta-Pacific right now pumping \$1 million into the Alberta economy. Mr. Speaker, I'm glad we didn't listen to his plan.

3:30

MS CALAHASEN: Mr. Speaker, I think it's wonderful to be able to come up with some innovative ideas, but we've been doing this for years. My question now is: what time lines and what specifics are we going to be looking at to implement any reforms relative to welfare?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, I do have information on that. I do have a team in place within the department right now that will have a report to me in a very short while, and I intend to take this report through our government's process. When that process is finalized and if it is accepted and approved, I will move forward on it with the time lines and the phasing.

Culture Grants

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Labour minister has recently been musing about the funding to the arts in Alberta.

MR. MARTIN: Thinking aloud.

MS BARRETT: Thinking aloud, right.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps the new minister responsible doesn't know that the arts is a very important industry in Alberta, one of the few growth industries. In fact, in Canada the arts is the only industry

for which the following can be said: for every dollar given to it by government, it generates more than a dollar for government. So I'd like to ask the minister responsible for culture if she is making plans to cut the funding for arts in Alberta.

MRS. MIROSH: Well, Mr. Speaker, all of the departments are under review when it comes to budget time. I agree that arts are very important in Alberta, and it is my hope that they will be sustained. We are looking at arts in the economic development package and trying to market our talent in our community. I agree that arts are very important, but when we look at budgets, we look at all the departments together.

MS BARRETT: Well, Mr. Speaker, if the artistic industry, which pushes a billion dollars a year in Alberta, can't look forward to continued funding from the province, will the minister at least agree to doing something they've called for for years, and that is allowing the establishment of an independent, arms-length body to jury the funding by way of an Alberta arts council? Will she at least commit to this?

MRS. MIROSH: The arts foundation is already funded by lottery dollars, and so far it will remain that way.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Kingsway, followed by Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Canadian Airlines International

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Treasurer. While the provincial Liberals are prepared to see 3,000 jobs at Canadian Airlines go down the drain, the New Democrats support the efforts of Canadian Airlines employees to maintain their jobs and this important Alberta-based company. However, in supporting these efforts, it is important that the government be accountable to taxpayers. In keeping with this government's newfound commitment to ending government secrecy, will the Treasurer table the financing agreement covering the \$50 million loan guarantee in this Legislature or failing that at least outline the financial details now?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, yes and yes.

MR. McEACHERN: Well, let's hope it's very soon then.

I want to make it very clear that the New Democrats do not want Canadian Airlines to be swallowed up by American Airlines nor do we want them to go bankrupt. Can this minister indicate what this government is doing to assure that the federal government co-ordinates and develops a national airlines strategy so that there will continue to be a Canadian airline industry, period, in this country?

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, the two major reasons why the provincial government supported Canadian Airlines with a loan guarantee were: one is that Canadian Airlines is a vital part of our transportation infrastructure in western Canada, and its anchor in Alberta, especially in southern Alberta, is vital to the economic well-being of this province. Secondly, the reason why is because we came together as part of a package where employees put their salaries on the line and bought equity into the company. So there was substantial employee involvement. Other governments, Ottawa and the government in Victoria, were a vital part of it as well as creditors as well as the strategic alliance with American Airlines. We got into it as the last dollar in to make sure that the

package came together. We're supportive of the company. We support it being a vitally competitive company in this province and in this country. To go back to, as the hon. member is suggesting, fully regulating that industry and again take the socialist's approach of regulating and protecting companies would be terribly, terribly wrong. We believe in the company, we're supportive of it, and we want to support it in a fully deregulated environment.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary? We've had our supplementary. Moving on to Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Supports for Independence Program

MRS. HEWES: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Two years ago the Department of Family and Social Services put together an elaborate and very complex program called supports for independence which brought massive changes in how social allowance is managed. Now we have a new minister who's been musing with threats to clients and pending changes, such as work for welfare. My questions are to the Minister of Family and Social Services. Will the minister tell us if the supports for independence program is no longer valid? Has it been written off now as a lost cause?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, I just want to inform the public again that the top priority of our government and our department is to provide a high quality of service for people that are needy and people that can't fend, some elderly and children and handicapped. On the other hand, we have a high percentage of our clients which are represented under the supports for independence now that want an alternative to the system, and I think this government and this minister are brave enough and innovative enough to move forward with a new, innovative plan. But our number one priority will be real jobs in real industry.

I just mentioned that the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition on January 28, 1991, said that we got hooked for \$1.3 billion on forestry projects, which are creating thousands of real jobs now. If we'd have listened to that leader at the time, Mr. Speaker, we wouldn't have those 3,000 jobs. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

Hon. minister, when you rise for the supplementary, you might clarify which opposition you're speaking about.
Edmonton-Gold Bar, supplementary.

MRS. HEWES: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Well, we're no further ahead with that answer, are we? I've no idea whether we're on or off.

Mr. Speaker, unemployed Albertans are experiencing enough problems as it is without the uncertainty over this program. What is the minister's plan? He tells us that there's a group of people in place, but when are we going to see the plan, Mr. Minister? Is supports for independence on or off?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, you can see that the Liberals don't listen. I just recently, just a few moments ago in fact, outlined a plan including time lines. I do have an executive departmental team now in place developing a plan. When that plan is completed, I will take it through our government process. If the plan is acceptable to my colleagues and it's a plan that we'll move forward with, which also will identify the time lines and implementation dates, that will go forward.

3:40

MR. SPEAKER: Question period has ended.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

MR. SPEAKER: A point of order raised by Lethbridge-West.

MR. GOGO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise under Standing Order 23(i), where the Leader of the Official Opposition earlier today in question period imputed a false motive to a fellow member of this House. I would point out that by resolution of this Assembly the hon. Member for Taber-Warner was appointed to chair a committee dealing with redistribution in Alberta, and when the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition was putting a question to the hon. Premier, he used the term 'Bogle-mandering.' I believe that's contrary to Standing Order 23(i).

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I was just trying to make the hon. Member for Taber-Warner famous, as famous as Gerry, but I guess he'll have to do it on his own. So I will withdraw that term.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Another reference for those who are students of parliamentary procedure is *Beauchesne* 484 as well. Thank you.

The first one into the lists is a Standing Order 30 request. The Member for Edmonton-Glengarry, leader of the Liberal Party.

head: Request for Emergency Debate Senate Vacancy

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Premier, after listening to this, might agree to some action in this Assembly. I'm confused by the letter that the Premier read out today. He talked about the election of a Senator being a priority for Albertans. It certainly is that. Every poll I've ever seen shows overwhelmingly that Albertans want their Senators elected. When the matter was dealt with by the select special committee of this Legislature, it clearly got that message from the public, but the position of the Premier – and I hope he speaks to this – could be clarified very quickly.

According to the Senatorial Selection Act, the call for an election can "be commenced at any time by the passing of an order of the Lieutenant Governor in Council." The Premier agrees that this matter is imminent. This is serious now. The timing on this is serious. Instead of sending a letter to the Prime Minister saying, "Yeah, we believe in the democratic system," will the Premier agree to setting out a resolution of this Assembly today saying: "We're going to get the Senatorial Selection Act going, and we're going to elect them, and it doesn't matter what you think, Mr. Prime Minister"? That's the way Albertans want to go. Will you agree to that, Mr. Premier?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

I call the attention of all hon. members to the exact wording of Standing Order 30. One member from each of the political parties represented in the House will be able to speak to the matter of the urgency of the issue.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, a point of order. The matter could be settled by the Premier simply indicating that he would be prepared to do that.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. There is no point of order, and I failed to hear the citation. Perhaps my loudspeaker system is out of whack.

MR. ELZINGA: In speaking to the urgency of this matter, I would share with the Chamber and you, Mr. Speaker, that we do not believe there is an urgency to the matter. The hon. member even in his own statements did not indicate the urgency of the issue. We as the government have indicated our support consistently, as was illustrated today when the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora put a question to the Premier. We've indicated our support for constitutional reform as it relates to the entire senatorial body.

The Liberals again are attempting to use this strictly for political purposes. I would suggest to the Alberta population that they look to page 1466 of August 15, 1989, in how the Liberal Party voted on this legislation. They voted against the Senatorial Selection Act, Bill 11. Mr. Speaker, again they're switching positions as rapidly as they possibly can when they sense a public mood. We're consistent with our position. We're going to continue to pursue this issue, unlike the Liberal members opposite, but we do not agree with the issue of urgency as the hon. member has suggested it. [interjections]

Speaker's Ruling Interrupting a Member

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. members, during question period it's one thing to have banter back and forth, but we're in the process of dealing with the business of the House or important issues. I again draw your attention back to one that you've heard many times, 13(4)(b): "When a member is speaking, no person shall interrupt that member, except to raise a point of order."

Debate Continued

MR. SPEAKER: Is there anyone from the Official Opposition caucus who wishes to speak? No indication.

Under Standing Order 30, first, the provision was in order that the Chair did indeed have notice of this Standing Order 30 request and appreciates the advance notice to the Chair which was given on January 22 at 4:14 in the afternoon.

The matter of urgency is the real focus on which the Chair has to decide whether or not to go further with regard to Standing Order 30. The various points were made during question period today. This created some measure of unease for the Chair, that since appropriate notice had been given with respect to Standing Order 30 that then this issue came up in question period and from the government bench. Nevertheless, at that time the Premier did file with the House the letter stating the current position of the government with respect to this issue, and as has been pointed out, not only in that letter but by anyone ruminating about the issue, the decision of the people of Canada let alone the people of Alberta with respect to the Charlottetown accord certainly did make comment upon the urgency of the matter and ruled that this really appears not to be of sufficient urgency for this nation let alone for this House. The Chair therefore rules against the matter of urgency and does not allow this matter to proceed under Standing Order 30.

The next request for Standing Order 30, also given with due notice, the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Job Creation and Economic Stability

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to refer members to Standing Order 30, the urgency, I proposed at the time to move to adjourn the ordinary business of the Assembly to discuss the urgent matter of the need for the government of Alberta to bring to the Assembly an action plan for job creation and economic stability for the people of Alberta. If I may say so, this is much

more of an emergency than worrying about electing a Senator. This is what people are talking about. I have never seen, and I say this to the Premier – this is why it's urgent – the malaise and the despair out there. People are looking for some security in their lives when you talk to them. Of course it ties into job creation; it ties into economic stability.

Part of the message I got from the referendum, all these times spent talking about the Constitution, was that people were saying, "That doesn't affect my life; let's get on to the real issues." This is what they want: leadership from this government. That's the urgency. I honestly say, with all due respect, that it is urgent because of that malaise and that despair and people looking for some hope. They want some direction from this Legislature that we are talking about the real issues that count. I can't think of anything more urgent than the economy, which ties into the deficit and job creation. I can't think of anything more urgent to debate and send that message back to the people of Alberta that we are dealing with their bread-and-butter issues.

Now, the Premier said: well, give us some ideas. We've been doing that for the last number of months. We've put out five position papers. This is the last one we put out: Putting Albertans First. There are five of them. Now, we may disagree or not, but the point is that we are trying to do our job as the Official Opposition.

We'd like to stress upon you, Mr. Speaker, and the Assembly the urgency of this if we're going to be relevant to the people of Alberta, and what better way on the first day back in the Legislature than to have a debate about the bread-and-butter issues that affect Albertans and where we're going as a province.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The Deputy Premier, Government House Leader.

3:50

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, under Standing Order 30 the emphasis deals with the urgency of the matter. In fact, the initiative taken by the Leader of the Opposition is a very, very valid one. If all members, though, would pay attention and refer to the Order Paper, which is our agenda for this afternoon, they would see that there is a motion on the Order Paper. It's number 12.

Be it resolved that the Assembly approve in general the fiscal policies of the government.

It provides an opportunity for all members to in fact participate in exactly the type of discussion that the Leader of the Opposition wants to put forward.

So, Mr. Speaker, it would appear to me a bit rather redundant and perhaps overzealous. It probably has taken five or six or seven minutes of our time dealing with this urgency, whereas the government is quite anxious to deal with this resolution and bring this resolution forward and in fact allow at least one member of the government to set forth the policies with respect to the economic renewal that the government is looking forward to initiate under the leadership of Premier Klein.

Mr. Speaker, it's strange to me how this is urgent when it's already there, and it seems almost a contradiction in terms. The government wants to get on with the matter, and if we could just wrap up the other items on the Order Paper that we want to get out of the way, we would soon be into a discussion with respect to the fiscal realities in the province of Alberta and hear an overview with respect to the vision of the future.

MR. SPEAKER: Is there any comment from the third caucus? Thank you.

Well, again under Standing Order 30 the appropriate notice was given to the Speaker, and the Chair is appreciative of that. The Chair is very much aware of the fact of other discussions which have taken place between the House leaders of all three parties on this day as to what might indeed be the future progress of the business of this House. The Chair is led to believe that if indeed certain actions are taking place by individual caucuses, it is indeed quite probable that later this afternoon Motion 12 will indeed be called with the possibility that discussion might follow on that, not only this afternoon but perhaps later in the evening.

Again, while the issue is indeed important, the Chair with reluctance feels constrained to deny the request for the matter to go forward at this time.

head: **Motions under Standing Order 40**

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for West-Yellowhead.

**Members of the Legislative Assembly
Pension Plan Amendment Act**

Mr. Doyle:

Be it resolved that Bill 282, Members of the Legislative Assembly Pension Plan Amendment Act, be brought to the top of Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders on the Order Paper so it can be considered in second reading, pursuant to Standing Order 8(3) on Thursday, January 28, 1993.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 40, I request unanimous consent to propose the motion to the Assembly. The importance of this Bill to come forward is the fact that some changes were made in the regulations, that after the next election pensions will be cut off from ex-cabinet ministers who sit as members in the Alberta Legislature. The public at large has a great concern with regards to someone drawing a pension from public funds when, in fact, people who are in the private sector or in other public sectors cannot draw their pensions while they're working for the same organization.

It's been brought to my attention many times over the last three years that I've introduced this Bill that this issue should be addressed, and they should stop now, not sometime in the future. I appreciate the support of the Association of Alberta Taxpayers, which has a great ear to this cause, along with the school teachers in Alberta, the ATA, the hospital workers, the coal miners, mills, and other people throughout this province who must wait until they're totally retired before they can collect their pensions or have left that position.

I ask, Mr. Speaker, that we have unanimous consent to bring this Bill forward.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. members, just a brief refresher, of course, that under Standing Order 40 we have an entirely different procedure than under Standing Order 30. In this case it is only the mover that may make the case, and then the Chair must put the question to the House.

All those in favour of granting unanimous consent to the request of the Member for West Yellowhead, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: The matter fails. [interjections] Order please. [interjection] Order please, Westlock-Sturgeon. The Chair looks forward to hearing from your colleague for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Privilege
Caucus Policy Committees**

MR. DICKSON: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege and invoke Standing Order 15. The conduct in question is that of the hon. Premier. I submit, sir, that I have met the procedural prerequisites. Firstly, I have complied with prior written notice both to your office and that of the hon. Premier more than two hours prior to the commencement of this sitting. Furthermore, this moment is indeed the earliest possible opportunity for me to stand and raise this matter.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as to the particulars – and I'll be as brief as possible – there is authority that actions which diminish the prestige of the Legislative Assembly and therefore its authority should be viewed as a breach. Sir, the hon. Premier has announced the creation of four standing policy committees. There is no instrument I am aware of by which these committees are supposed to have been created, and I acknowledge that it is not your function as Speaker to determine the legality of whether the Premier has in fact done something that had no authority and is unlawful.

It is my belief the four standing committees in fact do not exist in law, but if we move past that issue, sir, it is clear that the Premier has appointed to those four committees only Conservative members. He then committed significant public funds to those committees, and these public funds are over and above the generous Conservative caucus budget. The Chair of each committee will get an extra \$24,000 per annum and the use of a car. My research tells me that this type of partisanship is unprecedented.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this body, this Legislative Assembly, is where all Albertans are represented. It is the only forum where all Albertans have a voice. The Conservative caucus cannot replace nor should it attempt to replace this body. There are a great number of Albertans, sir, who are represented by one of the 25 opposition members in this Chamber. If the hon. Premier genuinely wishes to – and I quote him – “bring Albertans back into the process, both directly and through their MLAs,” then surely the way to do so is meaningful, substantive reform of the process of this Assembly and its all-party committees.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Premier has attempted to create an expensive and elaborate parallel process but one which excludes 25 opposition MLAs. By doing so, he has taken a step which devalues the work all of us do in this Chamber. The Premier has taken a step which will tend in my view and my submission to undermine the integrity and the legitimacy of this Assembly. I urge you, sir, to find that a prima facie case has been made out, that this is sufficiently important it warrants a full debate of the Legislative Assembly.

Thank you.

4:00

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm a bit astounded that this would come up in this particular manner. Certainly there's been no public comment on the part of the Liberal opposition. It was certainly mentioned and talked about through the leadership campaign as part of my effort to open up government, to have more meaningful involvement by the MLAs, and to allow a process to evolve whereby the public could have input. This has been in place now for about six weeks and not one mention, not a peep. It astounds me how they could be opposed to an open, honest process. If there ever was an example of nitpicking, of

pettiness, this is it. Absolute political pettiness. This is so typical of the Liberals. [interjections]

Speaker's Ruling Interrupting a Member

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Sweet, gentle admonition was given to the House earlier, but I still expect that to be followed. There will be no interruptions. There will be none at all. In case any of you were out of the House when the admonition was given to the House, it still relates.

Privilege Caucus Policy Committees

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. Premier, speaking to the important matter of purported privilege.

MR. KLEIN: All the nitpicking and pettiness aside, the government is of the opinion that there has been no breach of privilege in that sections 42 and 43 of the Legislative Assembly Act allow the Lieutenant Governor in Council to pay such fees and services to committee members as it is deemed proper. So while we feel there has been no breach, you may wish to take some time, Mr. Speaker, to consider the matter and have it debated further.

MR. SPEAKER: Proper notice was indeed given with respect to the purported point of privilege by the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, and indeed the Chair appreciates various aspects of documentation. It's quite obvious that the Chair has to call certain papers and to reflect upon the issue and hopefully will report back to the House if not tomorrow then Wednesday.

Thank you.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Government Motions**

MR. KOWALSKI: I request the unanimous consent of the Assembly to waive Standing Order 38 to allow consideration of government business without the required notice having been given.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: The question has not been put, thank you.
The Member for Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a very difficult motion that the Deputy Premier has put to us. As he well knows, it's the intention of the Official Opposition New Democrats not to give unanimous consent to Government Motion 7. That necessitates us not being able to give unanimous consent to deal with Motion 8, which is a very minor matter which could go through in a moment. Unfortunately, the motion by the Government House Leader covers both. He is asking the ability to do government business without notice, and included in that it may be interpreted to do Motion 7. If in his summation he will indicate that it is to do government business aside from Government Motion 7, we can support the motion. If the intention is that it would have the effect of passing Motion 7, he should say so clearly, which will give us an indication of how to vote on this unusual request.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, our caucus does not agree with the motion of speeding up the process. There is a saying in law that

you must come to court with clean hands, and I think that principle applies here. It has been this government that has been fiddling around with this process of electoral boundary review and redistribution for months, years. It started way back with a committee that traveled extensively and reported. It saw numerous amendments put by the opposition parties always being pushed down and defeated, all amendments which the opposition thought were positive and would make for better legislation.

It works both ways, Mr. Premier. You expect positive suggestions. There was a beautiful example in that whole debate on boundaries where positive suggestions were put forward and never once listened to by the government. If the government had listened, a million dollars in taxpayers' moneys wouldn't have been squandered. So that saying is important: you come to court with clean hands. You come to this Assembly after messing it all up, not taking the advice that was given by opposition members through various amendments that were given, and now you want to hurry up the process. Well, there's a principle, and the principle is that the opposition needs time to look at Acts that are put in front of them. This was put in front of us just moments ago. It is to allow for the opportunity to take that legislation and to show it to people in their constituencies and to seek advice from various supporters and detractors and so on so that we can better debate the issues that face this Assembly on electoral boundaries. So our party clearly does not support this request.

MR. SPEAKER: In summation, the Government House Leader.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, there was a direct request made by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands. Very clearly it is the intent of the government to maximize the opportunities available to all Members of the Legislative Assembly to do their business. The request for the waiver and the consent is basically to allow us to consider government business and have us sit this evening. The whole purpose of the motion is for us to basically deal with the Electoral Divisions Statutes Amendment Act, 1993. This matter has been available for some period of time in terms of dealing with a lot of other things. MLAs have gathered from around the province of Alberta, and rather than just sit in a vacant scenario on Monday evening of the first day of this session, the government wants to have the business of the Assembly done. The whole purpose of this particular matter is to deal with it.

MR. FOX: Bring your estimates forward.

MR. KOWALSKI: If there was a way of bringing the estimates in tonight, we'd be happy to do that, but the hon. members know that that is impossible. Those messages have to be received tomorrow.

So the gist of the whole motion – only one reason for it – is to have us sit tonight: on the first day of this minisession of this Legislative Assembly have all members working on a Monday evening.

Now, the hon. opposition members don't want to come back here tonight. Let it be known that all government members are happy and prepared to work tonight starting at 8 o'clock. That's the purpose of the motion. I would ask them to consider their responsibility to all of the citizens of Alberta and for all of us to earn our pay rather than take Monday evening off in Edmonton. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: I'm sorry, hon. Member for Vegreville. I gave you notice that that was summation of the debate.

It is the Chair's understanding that some discussions had taken place among the House leaders of all three parties. It is in light of that that the Chair makes the following comment for clarification. My understanding is that the motion as proposed before the House is a request that the Assembly give unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 38, especially with regard to subsection (d), for the introduction of one Bill only, the Chair understanding that to be Bill 55, to allow consideration for government business without the required notice having been given, the effect of which would be to allow this particular Bill to appear on the Order Paper. That is the understanding that the Chair has for this request for this particular item of business in our procedure to take place. It is not the matter of going to any further discussion; it is simply a unanimous consent request to allow Bill 55 to appear on the Order Paper. Subsequent motions would then take place.

Now I'm willing to listen to points of order on this.

Point of Order Clarification

MS BARRETT: Point of order then, Mr. Speaker. It's a point of clarification really. See, the Deputy Premier, in explaining what he wanted to do, went on to say that the implication would mean dealing with the Bill tonight. The House leaders did agree last Thursday that we would waive this particular standing order to allow the introduction of the Bill today. We are willing to accept that. What we are not willing to accept is that it would be advanced more than one stage on that day. I was expecting this motion, but when he said that this means we're going to go on and we're going to do government business, including this Bill, tonight, the message got mixed. So that's the point that needs clarification. Otherwise, I believe the House leaders' agreement of last Thursday would stand.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
On this point of order.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, the government would be very, very pleased, now having heard the additional argument from the Member for Edmonton-Highlands, to request unanimous consent. We would proceed with the introduction of the Bill and would not be calling the Legislature back this evening.

MS BARRETT: Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: From the Liberal caucus, is that an agreed position?

MRS. HEWES: That's the understanding, sir.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Edmonton-Gold Bar.

4:10 Debate Continued

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Could we have the motion read, please?

MR. SPEAKER: The motion read as the Chair has interpreted it: there's a request by the Government House Leader that the Assembly give unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 38(d) to allow the introduction of Bill 55 without the required notice. That is the request.

All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Introduction of Bills

Bill 55

Electoral Divisions Statutes Amendment Act, 1993

MR. FOWLER: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce a Bill, being Electoral Divisions Statutes Amendment Act, 1993.

[Leave granted; Bill 55 read a first time]

Government Motions (continued)

Committee Vacancies

32. Moved by Mr. Kowalski:
Be it resolved that the following members be appointed to fill the current vacancies on the following standing and special committees of this Assembly:
- (1) Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act: chairman, Mr. Anderson; deputy chairman, Mr. Shrake; Mr. McFarland, Mr. Severtson, Mr. Orman;
 - (2) Law and Regulations: Ms McCoy, Mr. Oldring, Mr. Stewart;
 - (3) Legislative Offices: chairman, Mr. Lund; Ms Betkowski;
 - (4) Members' Services: Mr. Moore, Mr. Cherry;
 - (5) Private Bills: chairman, Mrs. B. Laing; Mr. Horsman, Mr. Stewart, Mr. Adair;
 - (6) Public Accounts: Mr. Brassard, Mr. Weiss, Mr. Gogo.

MR. SPEAKER: A question: has that printed form been distributed to all members or their caucus?

HON. MEMBERS: Yes.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The Chair now recognizes Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by Calgary-Mountain View.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, is it possible to amend this to include a change of membership on Public Accounts from the Liberal caucus?

MR. SPEAKER: On the question to the Chair, yes, the motion is capable of amendment, but as always the Chair would like to have written copies of what the amendments are.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, with apologies, I was not aware that this motion was coming forward today. Otherwise, such an amendment would have been prepared for you. It is the intent that Mr. Donald MacDonald replace Mr. Frank Bruseker on Public Accounts.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: It's nice of the House to call its own business, but the Chair . . . [interjections] Order please.

There is an amendment before the House. Are there further members wishing to speak to that particular amendment?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, the mover of the motion would be glad to accept the amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: Is there a call for the question on the amendment?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: And a written copy of it will be received by the Chair in about 30 seconds.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

[Motion on amendment carried]

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes Calgary-Mountain View, followed by Edmonton-Mill Woods.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just noticed, and I guess it's obvious by the fact that it's not on the list – that has to do with the Select Special Committee on Parliamentary Reform. I don't know whether this indicates that there are no vacancies, there are no changes, there are no resignations. I can certainly say that there have not been a lot of meetings of this committee since it was set up last summer by the Legislature. To the best of my knowledge there were only three meetings of the committee in that entire length of time. It seems to have been stalled. I don't know whether this has to do with the membership on the committee. I notice that a number of the members who served on that committee are now serving in cabinet. I don't know whether that has anything to do with the fact that the committee hasn't had meetings. I know one was scheduled for December. That was canceled. So I'd just like to know whether that means that we're still proceeding or whether this committee has just been deep-sixed or whether in fact there's another list coming forward later on that addresses membership on the Parliamentary Reform Committee or not. I would like some indication at some time from this government that there is in fact a commitment to parliamentary reform and to the work of this committee.

MR. SPEAKER: Additional with respect to the motion as a whole?

MR. GIBEAULT: I take it that the reason we're entertaining this motion now is because there is some expectation that these committees will meet. I think most of us recognize that most of those committees do meet with some degree of frequency to conduct and consider various elements of public business.

I draw members' attention to the Law and Regulations Committee, and I would ask members if they can remember when the last time this phantom committee ever met. Was it last year? No, Mr. Speaker. I tried to get the chairman of that committee to meet and was unsuccessful. I would like to believe there may be some business that this committee might be able to usefully pursue. I was hoping the chairman might call that committee, of which I'm a member, to meet so that we might consider the regulations pursuant to the Occupational Health and Safety Act. I was unsuccessful. In fact, that committee has never met since I've been a member of this Chamber, which is going on seven years now. In fact, if you'd like to know when that committee last met, you'd have to go back almost a decade.

Now, Mr. Speaker, with all due respect here, I think that by passing a motion like this appointing people to a committee, we are leaving the perception with the people of Alberta that this committee might meet and actually do something. Since that is clearly not the case with the Law and Regulations Committee, and

if this is changed now after almost a decade of negligence and neglect, I'm not prepared to support this motion unless the government comes forward with a motion indicating when the Law and Regulations Committee will meet and what the business of the committee will be or otherwise to delete that section regarding the Law and Regulations Committee.

MR. SPEAKER: Additional speakers?

The Government House Leader, summation on the motion.

MR. KOWALSKI: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What this motion today does is simply change the participation of various individual members of the government on these particular committees. We've had an amendment put forward by the Liberal opposition party basically saying that one of the hon. members of this Assembly would be replaced by another hon. member of this Assembly.

It's really quite unusual to have a member of the opposition party, the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, saying to the government: why don't you tell how a select standing committee of the Legislative Assembly should operate? This is most unusual that this kind of direction is being sought by a Member of the Legislative Assembly who is a participant in an all-party committee of the Legislative Assembly, getting up in the Assembly and saying to the Government House Leader: you tell us what we're supposed to be doing. I mean, it's a welcome thought, Mr. Speaker, and perhaps one that I'd take under great consideration if the agendas of these committees were given to members of the government and we would determine what it is, but, of course, such is not the case. These are select standing committees of the Legislative Assembly made up of participants and Members of the Legislative Assembly, all of whom have a chairman. It would seem to me that I would just ask the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods – because I know he's quite an aggressive character – perhaps to be a little more aggressive with his chairperson and perhaps go out and have a little walk in the park or something, and let's get this business going.

The motion today is simply to change some names of some various individuals.

[Motion as amended carried]

4:20 Provincial Fiscal Policies

12. Moved by Mr. Johnston:
Be it resolved that the Assembly approve in general the fiscal policies of the government.

[Adjourned debate April 15: Mr. Gesell]

MR. SPEAKER: The Hon. Premier.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to use this motion as an opportunity to deliver an address that indeed relates to the fiscal policy of this government.

Mr. Speaker, hon. members, it's an honour for me to rise in this House for the first time as the 12th Premier of Alberta. From Premier Rutherford through to Premier Getty, over the course of 88 years, Albertans have been well served by the individuals that have occupied this office. I can promise Albertans but one thing, and that is to do my best. The challenges ahead demand that we all do our best in order that our children have the same opportunities we've had.

Our first and foremost priority is to put our financial house in order. Our economic strength has been our natural resources, but

after seven years of depressed prices for our resources we are at a financial crossroads. A number of steps have been and will continue to be taken. First we started by downsizing cabinet, reducing the number of portfolios from 26 to 17.

MR. DECORE: Twenty-two.

MR. KLEIN: Seventeen.

There will be a commensurate right-sizing of government in general. We have put in place a transition management team to co-ordinate our streamlining efforts. We've met with Pat Wocknitz to involve the public service, and we have given her a commitment to treat all our employees with dignity and fairness. We have put in place the Financial Review Commission to open up our books and clearly identify assets and liabilities. A soon to be announced revenue round table will be established to assist in identifying all our revenues. We will also invite the spenders so that they will know how much money we have.

Mr. Speaker, we have thrown open the doors of government and brought in a new committee system. Whereas in the past the government has had some 24 committees that met entirely in private, we have brought in a system of four standing policy committees that will meet largely in public. That change combined with the reduction in the size of cabinet will save the government \$2.5 million right off the top.

Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize that this is an open, honest, and proven way to receive input from the public, input at the start of the public policy development phase. Far from criticizing this new system, I would think that the member of the Liberal opposition who introduced his point of privilege would recognize that it is perhaps the most tangible of the new government's actions that demonstrate our commitment to opening up government. All of this is to balance the budget, as promised, in four years, and that is by fiscal 1996-97.

Hand in hand with the new financial plan will be the development of a new economic development strategy for Alberta. I know that the Leader of the Official Opposition raised that point. In the '20s and '30s it was ranching and agriculture. From the '40s to the '70s it was the development of our oil and gas and coal reserves. In the 1980s the focus was on diversification. For the '90s we will have a new plan built on two current processes. This is an answer, really, to the hon. Leader of the Opposition's question relative to the economic plan. We have two current processes that are now coming together with recommendations. One was *Toward 2000 Together*. Indeed, members of the opposition participated in that process to receive public input, to hear from the public as to how they would like to see the province achieve economic growth and prosperity. The recommendations are now being prepared. There is a parallel process called *Creating Tomorrow* that presents a rural focus. Again, we'll bring together recommendations as to how we build on that tremendously strong rural economy to achieve diversification, value added, and to search out new markets. So these processes have to be brought together, and when they are brought together, we will be preparing and presenting an economic plan for Alberta. Together we will put a new economic development strategy before Albertans before this year is out. All of this is in keeping with our commitment to openness, to public participation, to honesty, and to fiscal responsibility.

There are many other challenges. I heard from thousands of Albertans during the recent campaign. A hospital and health care system that is accessible to all Albertans but one that says we have to live within our means; an education system that trains our children to be competitive in a competitive world yet remains true

to our basic educational principles; an energy industry that is given a fair shake when times are bad because they contribute their fair share when times are good – and that applies to agriculture as well – an environment that is as clean and pure as can be achieved in a modern world; social programs for those who cannot fend for themselves but with an emphasis on breaking the poverty cycle and encouraging individuals that self-reliance is still the best way to achieve dignity and pride; support for our farmers, our ranchers, and our entire agricultural base that has served this province for all of its 88 years of existence; a fair justice system; an honest labour code; an infrastructure that forms the foundation of a modern technological society: these are the things we want for Alberta. In all of this we must do it by finding new ways, new approaches to deliver services and programs that allow us as a people to live entirely within our means.

Mr. Speaker, that is my commitment, my pledge to Albertans. We have very little time left to us to accomplish these, but I repeat what I said during the leadership campaign and what I have said since: that I will do my best and I will do whatever is possible to demonstrate that I won't let you down.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Belmont.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In responding to the hon. Premier's statement, I want to point out that we in the Official Opposition unfortunately have some problems with the motion that is before us because this motion that is before us is:

Be it resolved that the Assembly approve in general the fiscal policies of the government.

What fiscal policies are we being asked to approve? It wasn't all that long ago in this Legislative Assembly that we were promised a balanced budget. The then Provincial Treasurer, the Member for Lethbridge-East, stood in this Legislative Assembly and told all of the members, all Albertans in the 1991-92 fiscal year that that budget was a balanced budget. I can recall the front benches of the Conservative government and the back benches of the Conservative government going wild because they believed that the fiscal policies of the then Provincial Treasurer were wonderful and correct in the direction they had to go in.

4:30

The skeptics, or the realists, I suppose, were sitting on this side of the Legislative Assembly, and when we said we had problems with the announcement of the then Provincial Treasurer, we were called naysayers, filled with doom and gloom. Mr. Speaker, it was amazing, because a year later when the then Provincial Treasurer came back to the Legislative Assembly and said, "Oh, well, we weren't able to have a balanced budget," who was proved correct? Government? No. It was us in the opposition. I can remember my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View standing up and trying to assist the Provincial Treasurer, trying to assist this provincial government with a number of amendments, a number of proposals that would have forced this government, if they were so positive about their fiscal plan, to put dollars back into the general revenue fund. Every single amendment, every single proposal that was made from this side of the House was defeated because this government said, "We don't need it; we don't need those checks and those balances."

What happened? A greater accumulation of the provincial debt. Every year we're asked to approve the fiscal policies of government and every year the debt gets larger. Motion 12 on the Order Paper this year is one of those bad hangover motions, a motion that's left over from the Getty administration and passed on to this

new administration. So whose plan are we supposed to be approving, Mr. Speaker? Is it the previous Provincial Treasurer and the previous Premier, or is it this new Provincial Treasurer who hasn't presented us with a plan and this new Premier who likes to muse one thing one day and something else the next?

Last year, Mr. Speaker, we were promised a job-creation program. We were told that we would be excited on this side of the House when we saw the Conservative government's policies that would create all kinds of jobs. I'm still waiting. I can hardly contain my excitement at this point almost 12 months later, still waiting for some kind of job-creation program. What's happened in those 12 months? Well, in December of 1991, the unemployed in Alberta numbered 124,000 individuals. In December of 1992, the last month we have statistics for, the unemployed numbered 129,000. Is that the kind of fiscal plan this government wants to present to the Legislative Assembly, where unemployment goes up and no plan is forthcoming? That seems to be what we're getting: no plan at all.

Where's the plan for those 88,000 families on welfare that the Minister of Family and Social Services spoke of earlier? I haven't seen any plan come from that department. If anything, I saw the Minister of Family and Social Services stand up in the Legislative Assembly today and say, "Oh, well, you know, we've got to put people off welfare." Sure. Of course. I'd much rather see us offer a hand up than a handout. But what are the policies of that individual from Athabasca-Lac La Biche, Mr. Speaker? Here's an individual that says: oh, we've got 2,000 people coming into our province every month and that's why our welfare rolls are going up. What nonsense. You know what's really frightening about these figures that come from Statistics Canada? The level of those folk leaving the job market is increasing. People are leaving the active job search because they know this government hasn't got any kind of job-creation program, any kind of fiscal structure that's going to kick-start this economy and put people back to work.

We've been promised all kinds of goods from this government. Again, going back to the budget debate of April 13 last year, the Member for Lethbridge-East stood up and said:

If a spending increase that would exceed the annual limit is required, the government would have two choices: reduce other spending authorizations to offset the increase, or recall the Legislative Assembly to approve a special supplementary appropriation.

Is that what we want? Is that what we're asking for? Is that contained in this motion? What about this commitment, Mr. Speaker?

Additional revenue will go directly to improving the bottom line. Periodic financial statements will be published to keep Albertans informed about the government's finances.

That was last April. Where are we now? It's the end of January and we're still waiting for one of those periodic financial statements to tell us how bad these characters are doing. If I were the Provincial Treasurer, I wouldn't want to publish anything right now either because of the mess that has been created by two administrations, both without plans.

Mr. Speaker, it's with some regret that I find myself rising to speak in opposition to Motion 12 and having to move an amendment. I would move, sir:

but regrets the government's failure to supply to the Assembly quarterly budget updates as an important measure of financial accountability to the people of Alberta and the absence of a government strategy for job creation and financial stability for Albertans.

This is what Albertans are looking for, Mr. Speaker: not some hope, not some pie in the sky, but some reality coming down from this administration.

Thank you very much.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

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

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thought the Premier might go on a little longer to tell us about his . . .

Point of Order Amendments

MR. GOGO: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. Leader of the Opposition is going to speak to the amendment, I wonder if members of the House may have a copy of the amendment.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, hon. member. Copies are being circulated at the moment.

Debate Continued

MR. MARTIN: As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, I did expect a little more comprehensive state of the province. I go back in history. When we had fall sessions, the Premier at that time, Mr. Lougheed, used to give us quite a major address about where he saw the province going, what the fiscal situation was in the province. I sort of expected we might be getting the same thing, so I was a little surprised that there were a few platitudes and that was it. As a result of that, I will make sure the leader of the Liberal Party has time to make a few remarks today also.

Let me say, though, and the Member for Edmonton-Belmont talked about it - "Be it resolved that the Assembly approve in general the fiscal policies of the government." Now you have the Premier getting up and saying that basically he doesn't agree with the fiscal policies of the government. He's saying: that's not my fault; I didn't sit around the cabinet table; you know, it's a whole new government here now; it was that evil Treasurer over there that was doing all this. Mr. Speaker, you can't have it both ways. I take it now that the government is going to vote against this. Now that they have a new Premier, they're going to vote against approving the fiscal policies of the government because they were all wrong. Well, it's not that simple, my friends. You were all around the cabinet table. You can't just walk away.

4:40

In saying that, though - and I alluded to this when I congratulated the new Premier - we face some very, very difficult times, Mr. Speaker. Under this government's great fiscal management that we're supposed to approve - and if I may use the term without blushing, this may be a "conservative estimate" - I will predict that at the end of this March when we take all the deficits together, the cumulative deficit, which we have to, as other provinces do, we will have run eight straight deficit budgets totaling at least \$17 billion. To put it a different way: eight years ago, before these fiscal policies that we're supposed to approve, on March 31, 1986, we were a province that had assets of roughly \$11.9 billion. Now I'm estimating, and again it may be a little more, that the accumulated deficit will be \$5.14 billion.

To put it another way: as we know, we've gone from a credit rating of double A-1 to double A-2. Now, Mr. Speaker, that's an important psychological message. They've also put us on alert that they may do it again. So we do have some very serious problems. I can understand the new Premier trying to run away

from his record in cabinet and the record of this government. It's not a very glorious record. I understand that, but I say they can't do it.

For those people who think that somehow it's going to change around, I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that we do have a structural deficit; there's no doubt about that. If we look back, in 1980-81 approximately 60 percent of our provincial revenues came from oil and gas. We know that's probably less than 20 percent now. If people are looking for the quick fix that somehow oil and gas are going to pull us back, that's not the case. Most people that are forecasting – and I admit it's very difficult to do – are saying the price of oil might gradually go up, not even at the inflationary level. Gas in the long run is probably more important, but that's going to be a gradual process, so it's not going to solve our problems in the short run.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what is the government's answer? Well, we created this problem; it's serious. So now they're talking about slash and burn: user fees. We're going to punish the people for our mismanagement. It's just like the '30s. You can listen in here and it's just like the '30s and how they tried to deal with the Depression then. It didn't work then, and it's not going to work now.

Now, the point I've tried to make a number of times is that there are two deficits we have to be concerned about, Mr. Speaker. Sure, we have to deal with the financial deficit they've created. You can't keep running that deficit, because all you'll do is end up paying for your debt. But any given year you have to deal with what I call the human deficit. For those people that have that simple-minded approach that slash, burn, slash, burn all of a sudden across the board is going to save our economy, it doesn't work that way. It has never worked. If you really want to get out of the deficit, the best way is to put people back to work, and I'll come to that. The thing that will save us in the long run is a good educational system, a good health care system. That's not to say that we shouldn't change the delivery system, and we've talked about that in our policy papers. There are things we can do more efficiently; there's no doubt about that. But the reality is – you ask yourself three questions. Does it make economic sense in the long run to have a healthy population? I would argue that it does. Does it make economic sense to have a well-educated population? I would argue that it does. Does it make economic sense to help the poor to help themselves? I would argue that it does.

But what I see coming from opposite sides of the House, Mr. Speaker, from both sides, is what I call slash and burn, who can be the most punitive. I would point out that the unemployment rate . . . Look at it this way: if we work towards full employment, that's how you will deal with your deficit over a long period of time. Our estimate is that with the unemployment rate we had last year, we probably lost \$2 billion from the Alberta economy. I'm talking about all the money, over a billion dollars, that we're probably going to have to pay in welfare this year, the fact that UIC – it's still the same taxpayers while it comes from the federal to the provincial because eventually they end up under welfare. Obviously unemployed people don't have the purchasing power, so they don't spend money and they don't pay taxes. So if we're serious about deficit reduction, surely this should be the lesson of history. It's a lesson of almost every modern country in the world outside of Canada and the United States. You put people back to work so they're paying taxes. That's how you deal with the deficit.

So the point I make is that slash and burn is very shortsighted. That's not to say there isn't money that can be saved. I guess it's going to be hard to take them off this, but they're going to have to stop giving money to the Pocklingtons of the world, the

MagCans, Myrias, GSR, and all the rest of it. They sat around the cabinet table – you watch and see, Mr. Speaker; over \$2 billion will be lost there. Wouldn't it be nice to have that \$2 billion now instead of wasted and gone? It'll probably grow even further than that.

Mr. Speaker, there are all sorts of things we can cut. We tried to show in our paper how I believe \$450 million could be cut. The average Albertan wouldn't even notice a difference, wouldn't know it was gone. We don't need international trade offices all over; we can't afford it. We don't need to spend almost \$700 million on various boards and commissions. We don't need a gaming commission and a racing commission, with every Tory around being put on these boards. We don't need MLAs sitting on these commissions, paying them extra salary for their work. There are all sorts of things we can cut if we're serious about it.

We also have to look at the revenue side. Anybody that backs off that is not being honest. There are wealthy people in this province – and it's well documented – that do not pay a single penny. There's a corporate sector that doesn't pay, a profitable corporate sector. And I'm not talking about overtaxing. I'm talking about being relative to what other provinces are charging and our trading partners, Mr. Speaker. There's extra money there – not enough in any given year to solve our problems, but it's there.

We're going to have to be much more creative, if I may say so, Mr. Speaker, than the slash-and-burn people, because what they're going to do is drive us deeper into a recession just as the federal Conservatives have driven us deeper into a recession with slash and burn. It doesn't work there, and it's not going to work here. So with this new fiscal plan, this new government, whatever it is – obviously they're all going to vote against these particular fiscal policies of the government, Mr. Speaker. I would hope they would recognize what's going on.

I want to conclude . . .

MR. DAY: Good.

MR. MARTIN: Well, you may not like to hear the truth, hon. member from Red Deer, but it is the reality. I think a Minister of Labour should be much more cognizant of what's going on.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what is going on if you talk to people – and I haven't seen the malaise and despair out there as much as I've seen it in the last year or so. I was much too young to be involved in the '30s, but I'll tell you that the economics of today are worse than I've ever seen them. If we don't recognize that, our heads are in the sand. People are looking for some hope out there. They're angry, they're cranky, and they're looking for some hope and some leadership coming from here. They want to know there is a job creation policy. They want to know they can have some security in their lives. Even if they have a job, they're not sure how long they're going to have it. They want to know that there's some money there for education. They want to know all these things.

As a result of that, Mr. Speaker, I certainly would support the amendment, because we're just not dealing with real issues here. I would think that after the Premier's speech the government certainly cannot approve in general the fiscal policies of this government, because they're not working. The Premier more or less admitted it. So I take it that we'll all vote against this and get on with the real job of dealing with bread-and-butter issues for all Albertans. That's what we're elected to do.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, we're asked to approve in general the fiscal policies of the government. I suppose we have to look

to see what these so-called fiscal policies created. Well, I think the record is pretty clear. If you look at the analysis of the Dominion Bond Rating Service on the finances of Alberta as of March of last year, they noted the following: first, if the assets of the province were determined at the period of time 1985-86 when there was a transition in leadership in the Conservative Party, if you added all the assets at that moment and subtracted all the liabilities – and the assets would include the heritage savings trust fund – you would have assets in the vicinity of \$12 billion. The Dominion Bond Rating Service analysis shows there is a 340 percent per capita increase in the debt of Alberta from that moment, 1985-85, that transition period. Then they make the analysis as at March 31, 1992, and say that if you add all the liabilities and all the assets, again including the heritage savings trust fund, you have a net liability position of some \$2 billion.

4:50

Now, we know from admissions that have been given by the Treasurer that we're going to have a deficit around \$2.6 billion for this last fiscal year. So the total debt or net liability position for the province of Alberta is about \$5 billion. It went that fast. We now have a \$13 billion provincial budget that allocates \$1,250,000,000 toward the payment of interest charges on moneys we've borrowed here, there, and everywhere. If you look back to 1985-86, there was almost no borrowing for interest charges. Those are the policies we're being asked to approve. That's the plan. We're supposed to say: "My goodness, what a great plan the Conservative government has had in place. We've had all this terrific debt that's accumulated and eight consecutive deficit budgets. Hurrah for the Conservative government." Now, surely you've got to be out of your mind to put forward a resolution like this, because if you like debt and you like deficit, then no other province compares to the rise of per capita debt like our province from 1985 to '86. You've seen a province that has employed these so-called fiscal policies that have been anything but successful.

Mr. Speaker, if you go and look toward the specifics of the policy, nobody can tell you what the specifics are. The last Treasurer used to take us around the mulberry bush a few times when that question was put to him. I think the closest we ever got to a policy or a detail of a policy was something that related to a business cycle that was about to unfold. That was the clearest definition of a plan that I ever saw or ever heard. Even today, when the Premier of our province was asked to recite the specific details of the fiscal plan he talked about in this Assembly in March of 1991, he couldn't recite them. He couldn't recite them because none of the members on the government side could recite them. It was something about a general business cycle that was going to unfold. That's the clearest definition of a plan we ever had. Now, the sad part is that the Premier today couldn't tell us what the details of the fiscal plan were before he became Premier, and of course when the question was put to him, he couldn't even tell us what had to be changed in the old plan that would be set out in this new plan he's talking about for June or July. This really is a sad commentary on the whole process of democratic debate, when we're lauding a process that never existed and a process that never existed that created a net liability position of some \$5 billion for Albertans.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to address some of the issues the Premier spoke about and also comment on some of the commitments the government made. This amendment clearly shows one of those commitments, the commitment to provide quarterly reports. The opposition has been pressing for honesty in book-keeping for a long time, and part of that is to provide periodic

reports like any good corporation does to show the state of the finances. So we can't even laud that, because that hasn't happened. There is no policy, and whatever policy suggestion there was on periodic reporting appears to have been a hoax.

The Premier talks about the Premier's number one priority, that being to put the financial house in order. I don't think it works to carry a hoax further by suggesting to Albertans that the cabinet is 17 in number when we know that four caucus members, four members of the Conservative government, are getting moneys equal or equivalent to that of a minister without portfolio. I don't think you can hide – and the hoax continues – the fact that these four individuals get free cars, and there are still some 268 free cars given to pooh-bahs in Alberta that shouldn't be given to pooh-bahs in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, the Whip being an additional person sitting in on that cabinet gives us not 17 but 22 members of cabinet. So don't attempt to fool Albertans that there is something less than there is. Don't tell Albertans that there is a \$2.5 million saving and then the next day say the deficit next year will be exactly the same as this year's deficit, namely \$2.6 billion. So where's the saving? Where are you spending all the money? I guess on free cars and free rides for Conservative members.

I think the business of these committees has to be laid to rest now. The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has addressed this in his privileged comments, but to suggest that the system is more democratic, to suggest that the system is more open simply because government Tories, Conservative members can move around the country at the taxpayers' expense and listen to representations, excluding NDP and Liberal members, is a hoax. That is an abuse of the political process. That is an abuse of the legislative process. There's a system whereby legislative committees that need to travel are given budgets to travel, and those committees are made up of representation from three parties. To fool Albertans into believing that this is some new, open system and to exclude people – 55 percent of the popular vote of the last election who voted for the NDP and the Liberals – is, I think, a hoax on the people of Alberta.

We haven't yet seen the costs that are intended to be provided to these committees for travel. We haven't seen how much secretarial help is going to be given to them, or baggage carrier help or whatever. When the Premier spoke to the members of Unifarm, I did hear him saying: send me a letter on that and we'll take the committee and deal with that. The clear implication was that these committees were going to travel extensively, travel frequently, and hear the concerns of Albertans. If that's going to be part of a new process, then make all legislative members part of that process. Don't have Conservatives listening to a problem and reporting back to a Conservative structure and being paid for that from the tax dollar from the taxpayer.

Mr. Speaker, I regret to say that the main motion is truly unfortunate in terms of the government bringing it forward, because it fails on the basis of the fact that there are no policies and clearly fails because of the huge debt and deficit problems that have been created by the government. The amendment brings out the fact that the government hasn't done even the things it obligated itself to do just a few months ago.

It isn't that easy, I'm afraid, to simply lift up the rug and sweep some of the economic debris under that rug, that economic debris including NovAtel. We now see students who are complaining about increases in tuition, and it should be noted that if we took the moneys Alberta taxpayers are going to lose on NovAtel and put those moneys into a foundation and have interest accrue on that money, the interest alone would pay for half the tuition for all

the university students in Alberta. That's the sad reality of the fiscal policy of this government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

5:00

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. minister of advanced education.

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to make a few comments primarily centring around those that were made by the Member for Edmonton-Belmont. He dealt at length with job-creation programs and the fact that our government had not been involved in them. I'd like to get some information on the record as to some of the things that have been going on in our province. It would come across to us, if we listen to the members from across the way, that Alberta has to be in the deepest trouble of any province in Canada, and yet statistics for December tell us that we had the second-lowest unemployment rate in Canada next to Saskatchewan. We know the circumstance in Saskatchewan. It really is not a valid comparison, especially because everyone from Saskatchewan has moved to Alberta in an effort to get a job. Consequently, that pushes our unemployment rate up and theirs down because they have fewer people looking for jobs; they've all left.

It should be remembered that in December we had a drop of 1.1 percent in unemployment in this province down to 9.4 percent. Now, I don't want to paint a picture that we have a very vigorous economy in this province, because we don't. But let's remember that we're part of Canada, and Canada has gone into a recession. Alberta was dragged into it, not by anything they did themselves. Our economy was doing very well in this province, doing exceptionally well. Then here came the policies that were engendered from central Canada because of the overfueled economy in Ontario, because of the spending habits in that province that ranged from a 9 percent increase in program spending to 15 percent in a given year, causing high interest rates to be heaped on us. We were subject to the high interest rates, and it stayed right with us until it drove us into the circumstance of an economy that became less than buoyant in this province but, nevertheless, second best in Canada. I think we need to remember that.

Let's also remember that it's anticipated by Stats Canada that there will be 11,000 new jobs in this province. That's better than many. In addition to that, there will be 25,000 job turnovers which will give an opportunity for 36,000 new jobs in this province in the coming year, 1993.

Unemployment has always been a concern of this government. Let's look at what we've had to do to assist one of our great pillars in the economy, the oil industry. Not long ago we initiated the royalty tax reduction program to stimulate the oil patch, and today we have considerably more drilling rigs working in this province than there were one year ago, even though our economy is not as buoyant as it was a year ago. Just through that initiative by this government solely, not by the federal government, the royalty tax program initiated probably a 40 percent increase in drilling activity in this province. Now, that put a lot of people back to work in this province.

We've been able to attract investment into this province because of the investment climate that we have created. The Grande Alberta Paper company has seen fit to establish in Alberta as opposed to some other province. People from across Canada move here. They're moving here from provinces that have already initiated NDP policies, and they haven't worked so well. Here they come to Alberta looking for jobs, and we're doing our

best to accommodate them. Signs of economic recovery in Canada are beginning to show, and where do they show the most and first? In Alberta, with a 1.1 percent reduction of unemployment figures in December.

We have some programs in place to address individual people's needs as opposed to coming up with ad hoc programs that take taxpayers' money, throw it into the economy, and the day that the taxpayers' money stops, so does the employment. It's not a viable alternative, as opposed to trying to build the economy by helping small business, by assisting and making it a good environment for companies who look to come here to build their plants, to establish industries that will provide lasting jobs, something that our people can count on well into the future.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

For people who are out of work, we have some assistance for them. We have some skills upgrading programs and some training programs, some labour market info that tells them where they should be going to look for jobs. We have some counseling that will help them decide what kinds of jobs they're well suited for, some things that will help them to decide: "What should I be doing? Should I be taking some upgrading, and should I be looking in this particular industry for a job?" Those are the kinds of things that we've put in place to help people on an individual basis. Those are the people we want to help: the man who has a family to support and has to pay the rent and pay the groceries. We want to help him find a job, and there is considerable success with the programs that we have in place.

I'd like to say that we have some programs in place for those who are on social assistance. Last year we helped to get some 13,000 people who were on social assistance involved in the job market, to get them off social assistance. Sixty-one percent of those people who got involved in the programs that we have for them, in training and upgrading and programs like that, indicated that they felt they were far better qualified to go out and get a job after that initial training. A later survey was done of them, and 78 percent of those who were involved in that program were either employed or had gone back and were continuing additional training in an effort to prepare themselves to get into the job market.

Members of the Assembly, today the Premier made a commitment in this Assembly that he would be bringing forward a new plan for economic development in this province. I believe it warrants us all to give him the opportunity to do that and to be prepared to give support to the programs that may be put in place to allow us to help the people of Alberta and to get our economy moving again in a good, steady manner that will give us long-term jobs, not ad hoc programs that will be gone the day the taxpayers' support is gone.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the motion that the government interestingly enough brought forward for this debate this afternoon is to support "the fiscal policies of the government"; interesting that it's an old motion from an old government.

Earlier this afternoon the Premier went to great pains to tell us that we're under new management now. So I'd like to know: which are we supporting? The old management in the form of the motion in front of us, or the new management supposedly that the Premier talked about this afternoon? I was waiting to hear. I

listened carefully to the Premier to find out what were all these new fiscal policies that he was going to propose that he wanted us to support. I thought maybe he'd have a new plan. We certainly need it in this province given the failures of the last one to produce anything meaningful. But where is that plan, Mr. Speaker? Where are these policies that the Premier would have us support? Where are the new initiatives, the new management? What would show us that we have anything that's different from the past? Well, I listened very carefully, and there was not a single thing the Premier said this afternoon that would indicate to the people of Alberta that anything is different from what they've gotten over the past seven or eight years.

5:10

I found it interesting in Calgary last week that the Provincial Treasurer said there'd be no more booga-booga when it came to information out of this government, no more booga-booga from this government. So I came today: oh, good, we're going to have a debate about the new fiscal policies of the government; I'm looking forward to finding out about a strategy for job creation. We've been waiting for that one for a long time, Mr. Speaker. I was waiting for an update on financial accountability, what new initiatives the government was going to take to keep from secretly hiding information from Albertans; that they were going to turn over a new leaf and give us updates and give us changes in the way the finances are accounted for; that they would open the doors to new information to Albertans about failed business ventures: all these kinds of initiatives that the opposition has been calling for for many years. All of a sudden I hoped that we would have in the fiscal policies of the government some announcements about things that would be done differently when they had the chance to do it, when it really counted.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I have to admit, I have to say to you that I was quite disappointed. All we have is a new face, a new Premier, with the same old rhetoric, the same old promises, the same old vague assurances that someday down the road things are going to be different: don't worry; we have a plan; we'll balance the budget by 1996-1997. We've heard this one before. In fact, this very same government introduced a balanced budget almost two years ago in the Assembly. What happened to it? It ended up being 2 and a half billion dollars in deficit that year as opposed to the balanced budget that we were promised by the Provincial Treasurer of the day.

So how is this Premier going to do things any differently? It's a promise we've heard before. How is this going to be a new fiscal policy that would differentiate this new management from the old management? What new policy would be different from the past to make us believe that these same old promises aren't the same old tired booga-booga we've been getting for so long from this government? Well, Mr. Speaker, we're told that we have to wait: we're working on it; you know, you can't do these things overnight; we're diligent; we're investigating; but don't worry about the details, don't ask about the details; we'll provide those later; just believe us when we say that now we're a new management and our promises we'll keep as opposed to the promises of the previous administration that they didn't keep.

Then we heard earlier this month from the Premier that we're going to have a status quo budget; we're going to stand pat with all the commitments that were made last year. Well, now today we hear from the Premier that everything's on the table, including cutting the commitments made from last year. So we don't know which it is, Mr. Speaker. What are the fiscal policies that we're being asked to support? Are they the ones that were made previously? Are they some vague new commitments, where

everything's on the table but we're not sure what's going to be cut? Maybe something will; maybe something won't. Will there be cuts? Well, we hope not, but, you know, it's a status quo budget: maybe we'll have some cuts, but it'll be done gently; then maybe we can do it by attrition; but then we have to cut brutally, we have to cut deeply if we're going to get us to where we want to be. We're getting all these different mixed messages.

So when the Premier calls for a debate on the fiscal policies of the government, what is it that we're debating? Which vague comment, which thinking-out-loud statement are we debating this afternoon? Is it the new management, the old management, the promises from the past, the promises today? Is it this year's booga-booga as opposed to last year's booga-booga? [interjection] Well, that seems to be all that we're getting here today.

I must admit that I'm deeply disappointed. At the time when the government had the opportunity to show some decision, to come into the Assembly after a long absence – a new Premier, a new cabinet, or at least some new faces along with the old faces from the old cabinet – here was the opportunity for the government to firmly place their stamp on what their agenda was going to be for the future. We've been six, eight, nine months since the last time we met. The economy is not getting better, contrary to the assurances of the minister of advanced education. More and more people are facing unemployment; more and more Albertans are finding themselves on social assistance. The Provincial Treasurer in the next day or two is going to bring in supplemental spending estimates so we can vote more money to pay for all those who are coming on the welfare rolls. The economy is not getting better, and Albertans are feeling more and more beleaguered out there.

So here is a new session of the Legislature. We're back in session after many months' absence. Now would be the time, if the government had any commitment to some fiscal policies, for them to put it on the table and tell us what it is, to give us some clear direction of where they're headed. But no, Mr. Speaker, it's just more of the same old vague and empty commitments, vague promises that we've gotten in years past from this same old vague and tired government, a government that every day seems more and more adrift, more and more indecisive, more and more unsure of where it wants to go or what it wants to do: it will make a commitment to this group, will make a totally diametrically opposed commitment someplace else, and hopes that nobody hears us talking about two different kinds of commitments at the same time; going one direction here today, another direction over there tomorrow; hopefully nobody will call us on it or figure out that we have no direction, that we have no policies, that we have no fiscal policies to support. We just have some vague assurances and some best wishes for the future from the Premier. That's all we have been offered this afternoon, nothing more than that. It just seems to me a wasted opportunity for the government to actually take decisive action to get Alberta moving again. It would have been a golden opportunity for the Premier to come forward with a plan for Alberta. That's what Albertans are looking for. That's where they have been failed by this government today.

Now, we heard lots of comment here from the minister of advanced education about how wonderful things are in Alberta compared to everywhere else. Saskatchewan's low unemployment has nothing to do with their fiscal policies. He alleges that the only reason they have low unemployment in Saskatchewan is because they've all moved to Alberta. I guess one could make the same argument: the only reason that unemployment has gone down in Alberta is that they have all moved to B.C. I mean, you can take those kinds of fallacious arguments and apply them elsewhere. They make no sense; they don't enlighten at all in

terms of what the real situation is. Because this government fails to deal with the real situation that Albertans are facing, they fail to come up with the plans required to get Albertans back to work and to get our budget back in order as well.

You know, if we had people working in this province instead of facing the future of unemployment and facing a future on welfare, those people would be paying taxes and a lot of the problems of our budget would be solved, Mr. Speaker. As well, the human problems facing Albertans would be alleviated as well. This is why New Democrats are saying to this government: the overriding issue, the overriding concern of Albertans is that we need to create jobs, get people back to work, create wealth in this province, and the problems of the province's budget would correspondingly be alleviated as well. The reason we have such a deficit in this province is because of the fact that the economy has gone into a tailspin, thanks to the Conservative policies in Ottawa and the Conservative policies here in Alberta working against ordinary Albertans, working against the economy. We've seen more and more people over the last several years falling into unemployment. Their unemployment runs out and their savings run out and they're forced to go on welfare, which we'll find in a few days is the reason why this government is coming to us with supplementary spending. So not only are their revenues down because the economy has gone into a tailspin, we find that the costs of unemployment, the costs of welfare, the costs of a poor economy are very high indeed as government comes to ask for higher expenditures at a time when their revenues have dropped.

5:20

So, Mr. Speaker, New Democrats are very clear about this. What's going to solve the economic difficulties we're in and what's going to solve a lot of the budget difficulties we're in would be a strategy for job creation. New Democrats have put forward some very positive suggestions about how we could take money that's currently being wasted by this government in areas that do nothing other than to support friends of the government in useless endeavours, how that money could be redirected into building the infrastructure that would position the economy for growth and put people back to work. It would not lead to higher budget deficits in this province but would lay the foundation for future economic growth, get people back to work, and in the end, over the long run, solve our deficit problems as well. Those are the kinds of measures the government could have come into this Assembly promoting this afternoon. They could have seized the initiative, provided assurance and hope for Albertans for the economic future of this province. Instead, all they've done is recycle the same old vague promises we've gotten before. They've failed to provide any kind of plan for the future, any kind of decisions for the future. Nothing has come this afternoon that would give me or Albertans assurances that this government knows the difficulties facing ordinary Albertans and, not only that, has the plans to respond to them.

Mr. Speaker, there may be a few new faces around the cabinet table, but by and large the old ones left over from the previous administration and their tired strategies for the future, their discredited policies from the past are all they have to offer Albertans, not a new strategy for the future, and for that Albertans are the poorer.

MR. SPEAKER: Red Deer-North.

MR. DAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to say that the last few minutes have been interesting, but it hasn't been; it's been kind of painful. If you talk about things being reused and

recycled, I appreciate your deference to the member opposite in not calling him because he wasn't speaking to the amendment. That was kind on your part, Mr. Speaker. I think it's interesting to note that the tired, used old phrases are coming from the member and members opposite. As a matter of fact, I'm sure if we checked *Hansard*, we would see that the so-called speech just iterated was in fact reiterated a number of times by the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway. I'm sure he tossed it forward to the front bench there so his colleague could be helped out.

You know, Mr. Speaker, a truck driver was overheard talking at a truck stop. He said: "You know, the food here is terrible. The mashed potatoes are watery, the green beans are tasteless, the roast beef is tough, the apple pie is limp and leathery, and the coffee tastes like dishwater. But worst of all, they serve such small portions." There's an analogy here. I think it's safe to say that the so-called policies that we never hear enunciated from across the floor as they talk about a strategy – and they talk here in this amendment about financial stability – are watery. I would say that any initiatives or incentives they have totally lack taste – there's nothing in there to give anybody any incentive whatsoever – and their thought processes are leathery because they're so overdone, overcooked. Basically, the only thing that's good about listening to them is that anything positive does come in such small portions that it can be easily assimilated.

So I think we need to reflect on the fact that the Premier of this province has enunciated a strategy – they talk here in the amendment about wanting a strategy – and has talked about financial stability. Part of the strategy in which the Premier said that there would be, first of all, a new openness in government has immediately gone into place. There needs to be that new openness. If you want to extract from Albertans their good thoughts on what a strategy should be in terms of financial stability, there has to be an openness. Nobody will argue that this Premier has demonstrated a new openness, a new approach not just inviting but exciting Albertans about the now present open-door policy, asking for those ideas which will lead to financial stability, a strategy the first part of which, as he promised, he has readily brought into play: a reduction in cabinet, something he said he was going to do. Where did he get that idea? He got it from being open and listening to Albertans. It happened; we see that reduction in the size of cabinet.

Then the members opposite say that without the new Premier listening or talking to Albertans, right away he's supposed to come out with a very minute and specific detailed plan: don't talk to Albertans about it; just put it on the table here. Don't wait to hear from Albertans; just put it on the table, is what he's saying. What plans do we hear opposite? The tired old ones of the socialist philosophy, which is what? Spend more money. I don't want them to say that they're not saying that, because that's exactly what they've been saying: we've got a deficit; we need to spend more money. You know, as I look back at the last 22 years of married life, looking at my own experience and my wife's as we've owned a small business or we've worked for small business, we've looked through the cycles that we all go through as people, and I think of the times when things were very tight financially, either in our own business or working for somebody else. If I had said to my wife: "Honey, times are really tight financially. Do you know what we're going to have to do? We're going to have to spend like crazy and get out of this tightness that we're in. We're just going to have to let the credit card fly, and we're going to have to spend like crazy." That's the basic plan that's being offered from across the way. That's the strategy. That's why it's tired: it's old; it's leathery.

But there's hope, Mr. Speaker. We can look to the Liberals. They've got a wonderful new idea. This is an exciting one, and we can see the excitement, judging by how people are grabbing those free memberships to their party. What do they say: let's tax the people; let's sock it to them; let's tax them; what a brilliant idea; let's give politicians more money for more programs for more spending; what a wonderful idea; and while we're taxing them, let's take the interest-bearing fund, the heritage savings trust fund, which last year brought in revenues of about \$1.3 billion, and let's axe that; let's get rid of that. [interjection] It's a good topic for a discussion. Those are the two items that they've suggested we do: axe what we've got and tax. Axe and tax: that's what we hear from them. I suggest that the members opposite do what we do as led by our Premier: listen to Albertans, ask Albertans, put a plan together in specific detail which you're going to see, and I think you'll see Albertans respond to that.

Given the hour, I would suggest we adjourn debate, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the motion to adjourn debate, all those in favour please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Carried.
Government House Leader.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, in view of the time, I would like to advise the Assembly that the Assembly will not be sitting this evening. When it does reconvene, it will be at 2:30 tomorrow afternoon.

I might add as well, Mr. Speaker, that as the Assembly has now agreed to move forward with this unique election of a Deputy Chairman of Committees tomorrow, I'd just advise all members of the House that the government will be nominating an individual for that position and will be placing a nomination of the Member

of the Legislative Assembly representing the constituency of Edmonton-Parkallen.

5:30

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Order!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Sergeant-at-Arms, but I still have to call a vote. I appreciate the enthusiasm of the new kid on the block.

AN HON. MEMBER: Off with his head.

MR. SPEAKER: The phrase "off with his head" is reserved for those who are lucky enough to run for election and get elected to be Speaker of a House.

Speaker's Ruling Procedural Irregularity

MR. SPEAKER: Before the Chair puts the question, the Chair must advise the House that an irregularity took place this afternoon. We should have put to the House a request for unanimous consent to proceed to the election of the members who were replacing members who have gone on to hopefully bigger and greater things. In the midst of our back and forth dealing as the whole House with the matters, we should have put that question to unanimous consent so we could proceed. We did not. However, the Chair has ruled that in effect we gave unanimous consent to what did take place when we passed as a whole the amendment unanimously and also the motion unanimously.

Now the Chair would like to put it to the House: does the House agree that that particular action was indeed in order?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Thank you, hon. members, for that piece of tidiness.

[At 5:32 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Tuesday at 2:30 p.m.]