

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, January 27, 1993**

2:30 p.m.

Date: 93/01/27

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

As Canadians and as Albertans we give thanks for the precious gifts of freedom and peace which we enjoy.

As Members of this Legislative Assembly we rededicate ourselves to the valued traditions of parliamentary democracy as a means of serving our province and our country.

Amen.

head: **Notices of Motions**

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, after the question and answer period I would move that the ordinary proceedings of the House be adjourned so as to debate the following motion:

Be it resolved that this Assembly express its deep regret and sympathy on the untimely passing of the Rt. Hon. Mme Sauvé.

REV. ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, under the provisions of Standing Order 40 I, too, would like to give notice of motion to debate this motion at the end of question period:

That the Legislative Assembly congratulate Consort, Alberta's own K.D. Lang for being named the best new adult contemporary artist by the American Music Awards in Los Angeles, California, on Monday, January 25, 1993.

CLERK: Introduction of Bills.

MR. SPEAKER: Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I can't find the original here. It's of great moment, though. If you'd give me 24 hours, I'll have it for you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. We'll call again tomorrow.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table with the Legislative Assembly today the audited financial statements for the Alberta health care insurance fund for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1992.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Environmental Protection.

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 16 students from the environmental law class at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, NAIT. These students are accompanied by their instructors Dr. Forrest Tittle and Ms Joan Copp. They're seated in the members' gallery. I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

head: **Oral Question Period**

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition.

Sales Tax

MR. MARTIN: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday we heard a little news about the sales tax. It seems that the Ralph Klein fiscal plan tabled yesterday could have been written by the Decore Liberals. It talks about cuts and then broaches the possibility of a sales tax for Alberta. Now, the Premier says that he usually likes to muse aloud and talk aloud, but this time it's in black and white. I don't know if he muses in print also. My question to the Premier is this one: why is it that publicly the Premier rails against a sales tax, and then when he sends out letters to business groups, he talks about the possibility? How can he have it both ways?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I assume the hon. Leader of the Opposition is referring to the response to the Canadian Manufacturers' Association. Basically it says, and I quote: "If a sales tax should ever be implemented," – and God forbid; it would never be implemented by this government. If the NDP or the Liberals implement it, "it would only make sense to harmonize it with the GST to minimize the disruption and costs of collecting the tax."

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, this is the Premier's letter sent out to the business group, to the Manufacturers' Association. It's not the Liberals. It's not the NDP. It's him musing about the sales tax. He can't get around it. What it really means is that he says one thing to a business group and something else to ordinary Albertans. That's what this is all about. Again now he's changed his mind. He says he's never going to bring in a sales tax. Flip-flop. The Premier flip-flops more than Flipper the dolphin. My question is simply this: how can Albertans believe anything this Premier says?

MR. KLEIN: Because they like me, and they trust me.

MR. MARTIN: Well, I like you, but I don't trust you. I know you're a warm, cuddly guy, but people are going to start to actually look at what you say, Mr. Premier.

My question to the Premier is simply this: why doesn't the Premier admit the truth to Albertans, that user fees and a sales tax are on the agenda if they can just get through this election and get re-elected?

MR. KLEIN: I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, and tell this Assembly that virtually everything is on the table save for a sales tax. A sales tax is not on the table. A sales tax is not on the agenda of this government, and that's something that neither of the opposition parties can say.

MR. MARTIN: Now, we can't listen to what he says, and we can't believe what he writes either.

NovAtel Communications Ltd.

MR. MARTIN: I'd like to move back to the Premier. Yesterday the Premier released his response to the Auditor General's investigation into the NovAtel bamboozle, that has cost the taxpayers of Alberta at least \$600 million and probably growing. Now, the Premier says, "Heck, it's not my fault." They all sat around the cabinet table; they're all responsible, Mr. Speaker. I've never, frankly, seen a document so full of weasel words. You could drive a mack truck through them. It means nothing. I want to come back to NovAtel specifically. I want to ask the Premier simply this: will the Premier now do the right thing and call a public inquiry into the NovAtel mess so Albertans can find out what happened and if necessary lay charges?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I think that there has been a full and complete examination of this matter by the Auditor General. [interjections] Well, I beg to differ. I think that there has been a full and complete examination of this matter by the Auditor General. He has reported. We have responded to his report, and I think the opposition parties should be reasonably pleased that indeed we're going to accept his recommendations.

MR. MARTIN: It's not whether we're pleased. The taxpayers of Alberta are not pleased with this bamboozle.

The Premier knows full well that the Auditor General didn't have the proper authority to do the job that I'm talking about. Now, if that was the case and we have all the information from the Auditor General's report, why is it, then, that last November there was a blanket indemnity given for cabinet ministers and NovAtel executives? Here it is, Mr. Speaker. Why was that given? My question simply is this. We have all the information that we need from the Auditor General's report. Why, then, this document back in November where all the cabinet ministers and all NovAtel executives were taken off the hook? Why did you do that?

2:40

MR. KLEIN: I imagine that would extend to any elected official who in the proper performance of their duties would be indemnified. My gosh, we would hate to see the NDP opposition in the position of being sued for some of the things that they say and do from time to time. It's quite normal for legislators to be indemnified; it's not unusual at all.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, this is a very unusual document. We've checked into this. It's a very unusual document. It was done in November, when the Legislature wasn't on, slid through.

I come back to the Premier. If we know everything from the Auditor General's report, why was it necessary to do this? It takes away criminal charges, administrative, and any civil suits that would be possible from the NovAtel situation.

MR. KLEIN: It's my understanding that this is a general indemnification, but I'll have the Provincial Treasurer supplement.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, that's precisely right. This is an indemnification that covers all Members of the Legislative Assembly, especially members of Executive Council, in the responsible performance of their duties.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: Point of order at the end of question period.

Sales Tax (continued)

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, it's becoming difficult to keep up with the Premier and his statements. We've heard the government flip-flop on the issue of user fees. We've heard the government flip-flop on the issue of Human Rights Commission matters. Now the Premier admits to a flip-flop himself on the provincial sales tax. Yesterday the Premier told the media that he had changed his mind on the sales tax during the course of the leadership contest. Today he says that the sales tax is not on the table. My first question to the Premier is this. Mr. Premier, I have learned that someone who worked for the Treasury Department says that a

study has been done on the sales tax, that the study is in the possession of the government. I'm asking the Premier to stand and commit to tabling that study in this Assembly. Will he do so?

MR. KLEIN: Here's a situation, Mr. Speaker, where you have some unnamed person in Treasury with some unnamed study. Give us the title of the document, give us the name of the person.

MR. DECORE: Will you table it?

MR. KLEIN: Well, I don't even know what you're talking about. You're talking about an unnamed document authored by an unnamed person. The only thing that I know is that there's something somewhere in the Treasury Department.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier didn't even remember the answers that he signed when he talked about the sales tax.

My second question to the Premier is this. In the answers that the Premier gave to the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, it's clear that the government department that worked on those answers, the Premier's responses, have clearly analyzed the issue of a sales tax when they talk about harmonizing a provincial sales tax with the GST. Now, Mr. Premier, I'm asking you to table for Albertans the analysis that shows how harmonization could work with the GST. Will you agree to do that?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, if the hon. leader of the Liberal Party would help me out, help me find this document which is unnamed, maybe I can present something to this Legislature. We don't know the name of the author. We know that there's a piece of paper, maybe three or four pieces of paper, somewhere in the Treasury Department.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I wish I could help the Premier out, but when he can't even remember the answers that he gives to questions that were put to him, it's pretty hard to help him out.

My last question to the Premier is this. Albertans saw, Mr. Speaker, a Conservative Prime Minister say that there would be no GST, and after the general election in Canada he rammed the GST down the throats of Albertans. [interjections]

Speaker's Ruling **Interrupting a Member**

MR. SPEAKER: Forgive me, hon. member. I see your plea to the Chair to get some order in the House. I'm only happy to supply it, but I also invite members of your own caucus to be courteous enough to supply courtesy to yourself.

Sales Tax (continued)

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I'm grateful.

Mr. Speaker, now there's even more danger for Albertans, because not only are we getting musings from the Premier, but we're actually getting him putting something on paper talking about a provincial sales tax. My question to the Premier is this. Will the Premier commit that there will be no sales tax unless and until there is a referendum and the people of Alberta tell the government to impose a sales tax? Will he commit to that?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I don't have to commit to a referendum. I'm saying no, there will be no sales tax.

Health Units

MR. TANNAS: Mr. Speaker, some years ago the hospital districts and health unit in the Highwood and Little Bow constituencies determined that they might join together to explore more efficient and effective ways of delivering health care, and consequently they set upon a course of regionalizing their operations. The Minister of Health has assured health units and hospital boards around the province that they will not be forced to regionalize on any hurry-up timetable. Would the Minister of Health assure the Highwood/Little Bow Health Planning Council that their initiative will not in any way be curtailed? Will she assure my constituents of her support for their initiatives?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to assure the members of the Highwood constituency of the commitment to continuing the dialogue of health planning in their area, as I am pleased to support the health planning in this province that has begun. I've had an opportunity to communicate with all of the health deliverers that have been working on this review and to invite their input and advice to this minister and to this caucus as to how they would see we should best proceed with the review of our health care system, which we all consider so important. I look forward to that input from Highwood and from other areas of the province.

MR. TANNAS: Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for that answer, and I would ask: would the minister agree to meet with the council to assure them of her support for their important initiative in regionalizing health care in the Highwood and Little Bow areas?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Certainly, Mr. Speaker, I would commit to meet with Highwood and any other council on their initiatives as soon as I possibly can. However, I would say that in my communication to the groups there and across the province I have asked for their input back to us so that we can review it and decide the best steps. I would like the opportunity for that time to pass and that input to occur, but certainly upon request from that group, I will be pleased to meet with them.

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

Sexual Abuse

MR. CHIVERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Justice. The acquittal yesterday of a man charged with indecent assault strikes most people as somewhat bizarre, particularly in the circumstances that he had pled guilty previously to the same charge. On the basis of the case as reported, there are a number of troubling circumstances surrounding it, including the judge's refusal to accept the guilty plea despite the admission of guilt to indecent assault or of indecent intent, the emphasis placed on the lack of corroborating evidence and the emphasis placed on delay in making the complaint. Given the potential impact that this decision may have on discouraging legitimate complainants from coming forward, does the Minister of Justice intend to conduct a review of the matter to determine whether the case was properly prosecuted and properly adjudicated?

2:50

MR. FOWLER: Mr. Speaker, as a fairly prominent and successful defence counsel practising at the bar, the hon. member opposite is fully aware of the fact that a case in which a decision

has been handed down as recently as 24 hours ago is in fact fully open for appeal. It would be totally inappropriate for the Minister of Justice to be commenting on it at all during the course of the appeal period, which is open.

MR. CHIVERS: Mr. Speaker, my question was related to the evidentiary issues, and the minister has not addressed them.

In any event, the law and procedure regarding sexual assault cases with respect to children has changed recently, with respect particularly to delay in bringing charges forward and with respect to co-operative evidence. I understand that there are educational programs that are available with respect to these sorts of cases. I would like to ask the minister: given this fact and the fact that the case seems to indicate that there may be some flaws in the educational program at least in the area of sexual assault cases against children, will the minister commit to a thorough review of the delivery and effectiveness of these educational programs?

MR. FOWLER: Mr. Speaker, I should indicate to the House and do so now that I have been briefed on this matter to which specific reference has been made in today's question period. I have a very great, deep concern about sexual abuse, most particularly against children and youth of very tender age. Our program against family violence, of which this is a part, a very serious part, started some two or three years ago and continues unabated. I understand and accept the suggestion that education is the most important part of this, and we will continue that education process.

Ethics in Government

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, yesterday after several false starts the Premier apologized for misusing taxpayers' funds to support his personal leadership campaign. At the same time his Deputy Premier said, and I want to get this right, so I'm going to quote it, "There is totally nothing wrong" with this practice. My question is to the Deputy Premier. Will that Deputy Premier now stand in the House and apologize to the people of Alberta for saying that there is "totally nothing wrong" with misusing taxpayers' funds on the personal Klein leadership campaign?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted that the hon. member has put the question to me because it allows me to get into this debate, which the Liberals are persisting in. Forgive me; I can't indicate the word "dishonest", so I won't, but it's obviously that. The hon. member should be aware that I've received from the Member for Calgary-North West some 32 letters requesting information. We're not about to waste the taxpayers' dollars; we replied with one letter. We have from the leader of the Liberal Party in excess of some 200 letters asking for information from the government, which we're going to give to the hon. member at great taxpayers' expense, which obviously the leader of the Liberal Party is going to use for political purposes. Now, if he doesn't want us to respond to him, then we won't respond to him.

Let's get the record straight; let's deal with this issue honestly. We on a regular basis have worked with the Canadian Manufacturers' Association. I've responded to them on many occasions. They've asked many questions; we've responded in a very forthright way. To suggest, as the hon. Liberal Party has, that the Premier has endorsed a sales tax is again a fabrication of the truth. All one has to do - and I wish the leader of the NDP would do the same - is read the entire text, because in no way have we endorsed a sales tax. I'd just like to reiterate what the Premier has said.

MR. MITCHELL: Yet another flip-flop. The Premier apologizes and his Deputy Premier refuses to apologize. Just wait five minutes if you don't like the first position, and you'll get a second position.

My second question, Mr. Speaker, is to the Premier. Will the Premier support the Liberal request for the Ethics Commissioner to investigate further to determine how many other departments and how many other public resources were enlisted by the personal Klein leadership campaign?

MR. KLEIN: I have no problems at all as long as we can refer the 240 questions put by the hon. leader of the Liberal Party and the 34 letters that have been referred by the hon. Member for Calgary-North West to investigate whether in fact these replies are going to be used for political purposes. If the question of whether it will be proper for these people to use those replies for political purposes can be put, then I have no problems whatsoever. I said quite honestly that inadvertently something went through my department when I was a minister. [interjection] Right. It went through my department. It came back. I didn't catch that it had been prepared by the department of economic development and trade.

MR. DECORE: Would you have admitted it?

MR. KLEIN: I admitted it, sir. [interjections]

Speaker's Ruling Interrupting a Member

MR. SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order in the House. [interjections] Mr. Premier, leaders, down in the House. We talked about this yesterday. There's no need in parliamentary process for the type of hectoring that's going on. You've asked your question; wait for the answer. [interjection] Order please, Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: What are you saving his hide for?

MR. SPEAKER: It's quite obvious no one needs to protect the hide of that individual.

MR. DECORE: He needs lots of help.

MR. SPEAKER: I'm trying to protect the collective hides of this Chamber for its own decorum. Westlock-Sturgeon, I wish you would co-operate once in a while.

Mr. Premier.

Ethics in Government (continued)

MR. KLEIN: To finish my answer, if that is the sum total of the Liberals' contribution to the whole public policy debate, it's no wonder, Mr. Speaker, that they have lost six consecutive elections and are about to lose a seventh.

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

MR. SPEAKER: Little Bow. [interjection] Do we have the gracious permission of some members of the House to allow the other members of the House to proceed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Little Bow, followed by Edmonton-Calder.

Crop Insurance

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the minister of agriculture. I've received a number of calls in the last couple of days from producers concerning their 1991 final gross revenue insurance program payout. The durum producers in particular are now receiving bills for an apparent overpayment from the farmers' insurance program for their 1991 production. Will the minister of agriculture explain to the producers how this situation has occurred?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, the situation of overpayment in the durum accounts occurred because of a sharp upward swing in the price of durum in the marketplace from roughly \$2.31 a bushel, which was the forecast by the national Grains Council, to \$2.97 a bushel, which means that the GRIP payments estimated at 75 percent ended up too high. The producers ended up getting more than they expected out of the marketplace and more than they should have got from the gross revenue insurance program. Hence about four and a half million dollars had to be billed back because of a positive upswing in the marketplace.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Little Bow.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many producers have indicated that moneys paid out previously had been spent long ago on outstanding farm accounts, Mr. Minister. The Alberta Hail and Crop Insurance are now demanding immediate repayment at this time, which is putting them in a very precarious position. The 16 percent interest that's being charged on these overdue accounts is relatively high compared to competitive bank rates. Is there anything that can be done to revise these rates that are currently being charged on overdue accounts?

MR. ISLEY: I've had discussions, Mr. Speaker, with the president/managing director of the Alberta financial services corporation, which is a new merged entity. The board of directors will be reviewing the interest matter at their next meeting with a view to reducing the 16 percent to something closer to the marketplace. They will also be reviewing the possibility of introducing some type of flexibility in dealing with these overpayment accounts.

3:00 Social Assistance

MS MJOLSNESS: Mr. Speaker, the study just released by the National Anti-Poverty Organization reconfirms that poverty and hunger mean that children cannot get a proper education. On December 9, 1992, this government made a promise to families on social assistance that they could keep their new federal child tax benefit. We now hear reports that this minister and the Premier are going to break this promise and deduct the child tax benefit dollar for dollar from families who are living in poverty in Alberta. I'd like to ask the Minister of Family and Social Services: will the minister tell these families and their children today that these reports are not true and that he intends to honour the promise that was made six weeks ago by this government?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, these reports are not true. We as a government are very serious about providing a good service for the people that are needy. In fact since 1990 my government has increased food rates for children by 19 percent, and we will continue to work very hard to provide a high quality of service for the unfortunate.

Mr. Speaker, I also would like to indicate that our child welfare budget annually is over \$165 million. I know that it may not be

enough, but we'll continue working hard to provide for the people that are needy.

MS MJOLSNESS: Well, Mr. Speaker, to be perfectly clear, I would appreciate it if the minister would put on the record, then, that he does not intend to claw back the federal child tax benefit. Make that perfectly clear to these families.

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, I can put on the record that I will not be working on that.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Buffalo, followed by Calgary-Bow.

Access to Information

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have been made aware that when the Liberal caucus accesses publicly available information from the corporate registry, a memo is sent to the office of the minister responsible for consumer and corporate affairs informing full details of our request. I have a copy of the memo dated October 1, 1992; it's a memo which outlines the exact detail of an inquiry from an Alberta Liberal caucus researcher. My specific question is to the hon. Premier. Yesterday the Premier admitted he was wrong to use civil service resources for his personal use. Will he today admit that it is wrong for his ministers to use the civil service for the ministers' own purposes? I table the memorandum of October 1, 1992.

MR. KLEIN: I'd like to see the document before I respond, Mr. Speaker, if I could, please.

MR. SPEAKER: Page, could I have that, please?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, could I ask the indulgence of the Chair to have the hon. member re-ask his question, please?

MR. SPEAKER: If he can do it briefly.

MR. DICKSON: My question was simply this, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the hon. Premier admitted that he had been wrong to use civil service resources for his personal use. Will he today admit that it is wrong for his ministers to use the civil service for their own purposes?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, that is the most confusing question. I would have to allude again to the Liberal caucus, the 240 questions that have been put to various ministers and certainly to the Premier by the hon. leader of the Liberal Party, the 34 letters that have been sent by the hon. Member for Calgary-North West. All of these answers, I'm sure, are to be used in a very political sense, not only in this Assembly but throughout Alberta.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary question. The first was a reiteration. Just give us the supplementary.

MR. DICKSON: My supplementary, sir, is: given the fact that every Albertan has the right to seek this kind of information without civil servants reporting the fact all the way up the line to the minister's office – this isn't 1984 – will the Premier provide written confirmation that the monitoring of opposition search requests for publicly available information will be stopped immediately?

MR. KLEIN: No one, Mr. Speaker, is stopping anyone from getting information that can be easily obtained in the library or anywhere else. The normal and most courteous thing to do is really to have any member, be he or she a government member or a member of the opposition, go through the minister. We normally try and get the responses and the proper replies for these people to assist them. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order.
Calgary-Bow, followed by Edmonton-Belmont.

Senior Citizens Programs

MRS. B. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Community Development. Madam Minister, although my constituents are extremely happy with the downsizing of cabinet, there is some concern among seniors that with your many other responsibilities it will be difficult to address their concerns and needs adequately. Could you explain how you intend to address the seniors issues in your portfolio?

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, seniors are very important to this government. There is an array of responsibilities that the Community Development department has, and I'd like to thank the Premier for appointing four MLAs to help. I'd like to announce to the Assembly that the Member for Bow Valley will be chairing the seniors secretariat and advisory council for seniors, and the Member for St. Paul will also be on that committee and will be advising me on issues concerning seniors.

MRS. B. LAING: A supplemental for the minister, Mr. Speaker. There was extensive consultation with the seniors of the province under the seniors directorate. Would you please advise the Assembly of the current status of this consultation process and your plans for the implementation of the findings of this process?

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, the seniors directorate no longer exists. I've asked the Chair of the seniors advisory council to review that material – that consultation process is extremely important – to continue that consultation process, and to come back with some recommendations for approval.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Belmont.

Unemployment Insurance

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first question today is for the Minister of Family and Social Services. Last night on a television news show the Premier admitted that he didn't know of any changes to the unemployment insurance program. Given that these changes were announced during the leadership race, we can appreciate that the Premier may have been more interested in one job than in the needs of tens of thousands of Albertans who happen to be unemployed. However, the changes in the unemployment insurance program will have a serious impact on the lives of working Albertans as well as having a significant impact on our province's budget. Last December there were 140,000 unemployed Albertans, 12,000 of whom had either quit or left their jobs because of misconduct and the employer fired them. Given that the federal Conservative government has no plan to rescind the legislation that would change the unemployment insurance program proposals, what plans does the Minister of Family and Social Services or his department have to accommodate an increase of 12,000 welfare recipients?

3:10

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, the unemployment insurance program is under federal jurisdiction, but you know that Alberta is very generous in looking after people that are needy. I know the people that are eligible to be supported by my department will be supported.

MR. SIGURDSON: Mr. Speaker, we're talking about an increase of 10,000 to 12,000 Albertans going on welfare at a cost of \$100 million to \$120 million.

Perhaps I'll direct the next question to the Premier. I know that last night he undertook to get some information on this matter. Would he today undertake to pick up the telephone, call his friend the Prime Minister, and lobby the Prime Minister to make sure that these changes don't go through and that working Albertans are able to access the unemployment insurance fund that they have paid for?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. deputy minister has sent over a briefing note. I haven't had a chance to see it yet, and after I go through it, I'll take the hon. member's comments under consideration.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Forest Lawn, followed by Calgary-North West.

Advanced Education Access

MR. PASHAK: Mr. Speaker, while it's understandable that a period of time is necessary in order for new ministers to adjust to their responsibilities, it's still important that they at least endeavour to get their facts straight. Yesterday the minister of advanced education was quite unequivocal in stating that less than 1,000 students were left out of the postsecondary system. At NAIT, of the 1,500 qualified students who were turned away, only 20 percent of those students had applied at more than one institution. Similarly at Grant MacEwan 6,000 students were turned away. Only 1,500 had applied at more than one institution. So at these two institutions alone more than a thousand students were turned away. My question to the minister of advanced education is: what steps is he taking to ensure that his facts are accurate with respect to this crucial access problem?

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that members of the Assembly remember that when we're talking about students who are turned away, we have to bring into consideration the qualifications of the students; we have to take into consideration that they must reach a certain level of academic achievement in order to qualify. Secondly, we need to remember that many of the programs within our learning institutions have quotas. Now, many students apply for the program of their choice; they're not admitted because of quotas. That was not taken into consideration in the numbers that I gave. However, perhaps they went and applied somewhere else for some other program where they were not limited by quota. At least they had the opportunity to do that. Bear in mind that there are quotas on a number of programs in this province.

MR. PASHAK: That's exactly my point. A lot of qualified students were in fact turned away. There are no places for them.

Similarly, Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister of advanced education reported to the House that the secret committee set up in the fall to look at the future of postsecondary education was no longer secret, and I thank the minister for clarifying that. What

Albertans will not forget is that it was only after their work was done that these members were named, and the minister's office today when we phoned over told us that they do not know if the report will be made public. Well, given that the minister's committed to being, and I quote, "forthcoming about what their objective and goal were," will the minister be forthcoming and release the report itself?

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member doesn't understand the full initiative that was involved in this process that was initiated by the department of advanced education. Bear in mind that this was a request made by the minister of the department to go to private sources to develop information to give him direction on future direction for the department of advanced education. That is just part of the process.

That committee was struck with the understanding that they would be allowed to submit a report to the department. Other stakeholders have been called upon to submit similar reports. There is nothing particularly secretive about the report. Certainly we do owe it to those who compiled the report and submitted it on that basis to protect that information until we receive confirmation and permission from them to release it. At that point it was their report; they compiled it. We'll be prepared to release it to the public as soon as they are comfortable with it.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-North West.

NovAtel Communications Ltd.

(continued)

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government doesn't seem to understand that Albertans, not just the opposition members, are not satisfied with the government's response to the NovAtel disaster. The Liberal opposition has received numerous calls, numerous letters outraged over government inaction on this issue. My question today is to the chairman of the standing policy committee on community services, responsible for justice. My question is: will the standing committee responsible for justice commence a thorough investigation into all of the actions of the people involved with the NovAtel disaster?

MR. SCHUMACHER: Mr. Speaker, the standing committee on community services would do that and will do it if it is asked to do so through the processes established for work by the committee.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, Mr. Speaker, Albertans are asking; the Liberal opposition is asking. People want to know the answers. Since we have this new open government that the Premier has been crowing about, when will this investigation be commenced?

MR. SCHUMACHER: Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry; I'd have to ask for that question to be repeated. I couldn't get the gist of the question.

MR. BRUSEKER: The question was: when will the investigation commence?

MR. SCHUMACHER: Mr. Speaker, I explained to the hon. member the process that would be involved in establishing such an investigation, and his guess is as good as mine, quite frankly.

Lottery Funds

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, the context for my question today is the widespread concern over the deficit this year and the province's accumulated debt. This concern has led to the suggestion

by a number of my constituents that the hundreds of millions of dollars in lottery revenues should be redirected to the general revenue fund as one way to increase the province's revenues and thereby reduce the deficit. I'm wondering if the minister responsible for lotteries could share with the Assembly his perspective with respect to the policy implications of this suggestion.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, first of all, there are no hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars with respect to lottery revenue. The surpluses that were accumulated – and governments can accumulate surpluses – in the lottery fund in the last fiscal year of some \$225 million were taken out of the Alberta lottery fund and provided against the general revenue fund. In this fiscal year of 1992-93, \$25 million will go against the general revenue fund. The other approximately \$100 million is currently allocated to about 20 different foundations throughout the province of Alberta for redistribution for good works within the province, such as purchasing advanced medical equipment, setting up an environmental research trust fund. There are some 18 or 19 other examples, including some \$20 million that goes to the funding of the arts in the province of Alberta. We could cancel all those commitments, which in my view would create a very, very significant hardship among thousands and thousands of Albertans, and take that \$100 million and put it against the general revenue fund, but the \$100 million would be 10 days' service to the whole health care industry in the province of Alberta and just a few days more for the educational system.

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, in responses to other questions we've heard in the first three days of the sitting, we've heard from the Premier and other ministers that "everything is on the table." I'm wondering, in that context, would the minister of lotteries agree that this subject is also on the table, and if that's the case, would he be prepared to suggest a mechanism whereby those who hold this view could make effective representations?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, this certainly is on the table. It could be reviewed. The review could come by way of petitions individuals want to make to their individual MLAs. It could come by way of petitions. It could be provided to any one of the four standing committees. It could be by petition to the minister responsible for lotteries in any way, shape, or form. If it's the will of the people that the dollars that are currently provided for the hazardous waste cleanup in all of the schools should not be done, if it is the view of the people that we should not have an environmental trust fund funded by lotteries, so be it; we can cancel that program. If it's the view of the people that we should not be providing \$20 million a year in support to the arts throughout this province, then that could be addressed, and that can be evaluated as well.

3:20

MR. SPEAKER: The time for question period has expired, but the Chair has been informed that the Provincial Treasurer wishes to supplement information. I need to know who it was that asked the question.

Sales Tax (continued)

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, in response to a question from the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry, some question about research done by officials in the Treasury Department, I am advised by speedy delivery from the Terrace Building that no such studies

have been taken on such a sales tax, at least not during this administration. It certainly hasn't been done since 1968, when the Social Credit government was in office.

MR. WICKMAN: What year? [interjections]

Speaker's Ruling **Decorum**

MR. SPEAKER: Order. [interjection] Order please. Edmonton-Whitemud, you do not have the right to ask the supplementary question at this time. Edmonton-Glengarry does. [interjections] Order. Order.

Edmonton-Glengarry, if you wish to . . .

MR. McINNIS: Can I ask a question?

MR. SPEAKER: No. [interjections] Order. [interjections] Order. Take your place. There must be something about that corner of the room, I think.

Speaker's Ruling **Reference to a Nonmember**

MR. SPEAKER: Before we draw this exciting time known as question period to a close today, the Chair would like to point out that we've experienced a great deal of concern with the main question as posed by the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. Some of the details involved in the statement before the question were perhaps a little bit too specific given the nature of the case and the matter of individuals concerned. So perhaps before asking the questions, we'll be a little less specific about some of those issues.

Speaker's Ruling **Decorum**

MR. SPEAKER: The other matter that developed was that because of noise in the House, it was very difficult for the chairman of the standing committee, also known as the Deputy Speaker, to be able to hear what the question was. There's a very practical reason why we keep asking for better decorum in the House and less of the shouting. It isn't always practical to be able to hear each other in this place. Sometimes you may regard that as a relief, but nevertheless that occurs.

Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, I know that you need the hearing assist in this place, but sometimes your dulcet tones are at such a voluminous level that it's difficult for other people to hear what's really happening.

Now, in the course of question period there was a potential point of order from the Leader of the Opposition. No? All right. Thank you.

hand: Motions under Standing Order 40

MR. SPEAKER: We have two Standing Order 40 requests. The first is by the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry, the leader of the Liberal Party.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, this is an application under Standing Order 40 asking for unanimous consent of this Assembly to pass a motion, a copy of which has now been given to every member of this Assembly. The motion deals with the untimely death of a great Canadian, Mme Sauvé, who died yesterday.

Mme Sauvé was born in Saskatchewan and unlike most Francophones from Saskatchewan didn't come to Alberta but went to Quebec. She made a great career for herself in Quebec and in Ottawa. In 1948 she began a brilliant career as a freelance

journalist in print, radio, and television. Her areas of discussion while she was a journalist included a variety of political and social issues but particularly focused on the improvement of the status of women.

Mme Sauvé was elected a Member of Parliament for the Liberal Party in 1972. She was re-elected in 1974, 1979, and 1980. She was appointed as the first French-Canadian, female cabinet minister and held the portfolio of Minister of State for Science and Technology. She was also the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Communications.

She was appointed Speaker of the House of Commons in April of 1980, the first woman to hold that prestigious post. Mme Sauvé was responsible for implementing a number of reforms while she was Speaker. She established a day care centre for children of Members of Parliament, Senators, and more particularly and importantly employees of Parliament.

She was appointed the first female Governor General of Canada in May of 1984. As Governor General she proceeded to put in place a management system suitable to the modern needs of the Governor General's office. As the head of state Her Excellency was a major contributor to the preservation of Canadian unity. That's, I think, where most of us would know her best.

As a personal note, Mr. Speaker, when I was the mayor of Edmonton, she came to Edmonton as the Governor General. In the course of explaining the things that were going on in our city – she asked for that explanation – I indicated that we were in the process of setting up a protocol office but that we weren't quite sure how to do this and do that. She volunteered and in fact took the person that became the city's protocol officer to Rideau Hall for one week or two weeks to make sure that person was properly trained.

She had a most genuine way about her, was a most humble person. I think Canadians have suffered a great loss.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. Again, Standing Order 40 is a request for unanimous consent. Because of the nature of the issue, that the honourable person had died, I chose not to interrupt you.

The question to the House is: is there unanimous consent that the matter proceed? All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Thank you. The motion is carried.

Rt. Hon. Mme Jeanne Sauvé
April 26, 1922, to January 26, 1993

Moved by Mr. Decore:

Be it resolved that this Assembly express its deep regret and sympathy on the untimely passing of the Rt. Hon. Mme Jeanne Sauvé, former Governor General of Canada. Mme Sauvé's immense contributions to the preservation of Canadian unity will be sorely missed by all Albertans.

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of our Premier and the government of Alberta we join with the hon. leader of the Liberal Party in extending our deepest sympathy plus extending a deep and sincere tribute to this outstanding woman in the Canadian context. As the hon. leader has indicated, she has had many outstanding achievements.

Also on a very personal note, I had the pleasure of serving with her in the House of Commons for a number of years and serving under her when she was Speaker of the Parliament of Canada. As the hon. leader has indicated, she was the first woman Speaker of the House of Commons in Ottawa; she was the first woman Governor General. That was not because she was a woman but because of her outstanding qualities. It was gratifying to see a woman of such great excellence reach such heights.

We pay tribute to her and also extend our deepest sympathy on behalf of the Premier and the government of Alberta.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The contributions of Mme Sauvé to the people of Canada I think are extremely significant and will be recorded in history to be contemplated for hundreds of years to come. The hon. Deputy Premier just said that she served not because she was a woman but because of her talents. However, I think the point cannot be lost that she served as a woman in two positions for the first time ever in the history of Canada. Even though the message might have been subtle, it went out for over a 15-year period: that women can do the job, that women are competent, that women can be public servants at the highest levels.

For her humanity I make praise but also for the fact that she served her offices as Speaker and Governor General and Member of Parliament with dignity and conscience.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: All those members in favour of the motion, please say aye. Opposed, please say no. Let the record show unanimously. Thank you.

A Standing Order 40 request. Member for Edmonton-Centre, speaking to urgency.

Music Award

Rev. Roberts:

Be it resolved that the Assembly congratulate Consort, Alberta's own K.D. Lang for being named the best new adult contemporary artist by the American Music Awards in Los Angeles, California, on Monday, January 25, 1993.

REV. ROBERTS: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Members of the Assembly, speaking briefly to the urgency of this motion. Mr. Speaker, as we all know, K.D. Lang is a great Albertan who has risen from her rural Alberta roots to become an international musical star, and given the significant nature of the award she has received this week, I thought it was most appropriate and fitting and urgent for us on behalf of the province to congratulate and commend one of our own.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Standing Order 40, request for urgency. May the matter proceed? All those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

head: **Orders of the Day**
3:30

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I have received a certain message from His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, which I now transmit to you.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Order!

MR. SPEAKER: The Lieutenant Governor transmits supplementary estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province for the 12 months ending March 31, 1993, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly. Signed: Gordon Towers, Edmonton, January 26, 1993.

Please be seated.

head: **Government Motions**

34. Moved by Mr. Dinning:

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: Having heard the motion, is there a call for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

[Motion carried]

35. Moved by Mr. Dinning:

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.

MR. SPEAKER: Forgive me, hon. member. Under Standing Order 58(6)(a) the motion is not debatable.

[Motion carried]

Provincial Fiscal Policies

12. Moved by Mr. Johnston:

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

Moved by Mr. Sigurdson that the motion be amended by adding the words "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."

[Adjourned debate January 25: Mr. Day]

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak to Motion 12, including the amendment, because my remarks today focus on budget updates, on accountability, and a government strategy. The challenge that lies ahead for this government is to get our province's financial house in order, to keep the people of Alberta well informed about our financial situation, to work with Albertans to set clear priorities for government spending, and finally to stick with those priorities, make difficult but necessary choices, and balance the budget by 1996-97.

To meet the fiscal challenge, Mr. Speaker, this government will introduce a comprehensive plan. In the coming weeks we will begin to pull together the details of that plan as we prepare for the 1993-94 budget. Our plan will be based on a number of guidelines. Albertans, first of all, will know the facts about our fiscal situation. Government will become more efficient and effective in our programs and services, putting the needs of our customers, the people of Alberta, first. Any changes in our programs and services will deal with people in a fair and humane manner. Tax increases will not be our solution to the problem, especially a sales tax. Government must get its spending in line as a first priority. Our efforts must focus on getting Alberta in shape for the competitive future that lies ahead, creating the economic environment for Albertans to thrive and to prosper.

Leadership and direction in establishing a sound fiscal plan and sticking to it are the responsibility of this government. We are up to the task, Mr. Speaker. Finding effective ways of reducing government spending, taking more responsibility for ourselves, our family and our communities, seizing opportunities to build Alberta's economy, building confidence in our strong economic future: these are the responsibilities of all of us, and we as Albertans will get the job done.

Mr. Speaker, our first action is to remove any illusions about Alberta's fiscal position. Premier Klein has promised to keep the people of Alberta informed about our financial situation, and that promise will be kept. The process is already under way. Last month I released the 1991-92 financial statements. Last week an independent commission of respected and highly qualified Albertans was appointed to report on the province's financial situation by March 31. Today I am providing a detailed update of the 1992-93 fiscal picture. That process will continue with quarterly updates on the fiscal situation, much as the amendment calls for.

This open-books policy is only the first step. The next step and the more difficult one is to use that information to set a new course: a course that gets our financial house in order, a course that requires choices and difficult decisions, a course that means taking responsible financial action today so that tomorrow our people and our province are ready and able to succeed in a highly competitive world.

As Premier Klein has said, the 1990s are not the time for Cadillac government. Our challenge is to provide services Albertans need in a way that is fair, that is efficient, and that is affordable. Mr. Speaker, Albertans can expect to see our new course set out in our fiscal plan to be introduced this spring. In the meantime, our focus is on providing clear information to Albertans about the state of our fiscal affairs.

I will pull no punches, Mr. Speaker. The financial picture for 1992-93 is not good. Alberta's economic growth has been weaker than we expected last April. Expenditures by government are continuing to exceed our revenues, and the deficit now is projected to be over \$2.7 billion. Those are the key facts.

Let me now turn to the details of the '92-93 fiscal plan. On the economic side the performance of the Canadian economy has fallen far short of what was expected last spring. This has had a major impact on the fiscal position of all governments across the country. Economic growth in Canada was about 1 percent in 1992, much worse than the federal government forecast last February. One hundred thousand jobs were lost in Canada. I estimate that the Alberta economy grew at double the national average, about 2 percent. Even though our economic performance was better than most other provinces', employment declined in the province of Alberta. I say sadly and with regret that a net of 5,700 jobs were lost last year.

On the revenue side fewer Canadians and Albertans are employed and fewer are paying taxes. This means lower personal income tax receipts for the province of Alberta. In November the federal government advised the provinces that it had significantly overestimated national tax revenue for the '91, '92, and '93 calendar years. All provinces except Quebec are part of the national personal income tax collection system. Under this system the federal government estimates national tax collections and then pays each province its share of the estimated national total. The lower federal estimates mean that personal income tax payments to Alberta for 1992 and '93 will be lower than budgeted. Alberta will also have to repay the federal government over \$100 million for excess advances received last year on 1991 taxes. In total, Mr. Speaker, this year's personal income tax revenue is estimated to be about \$475 million less than was estimated, nearly half a billion dollars. Alberta is not alone in experiencing a significant reduction in personal income tax revenue. Other provinces are expecting serious shortfalls as well.

The loss in tax revenue will be partly offset by an increase in federal cash payments under established programs financing. This program has tax and cash components. While the total program entitlement per capita is frozen, the federal cash payment will increase this year because the tax part is down. This will add about \$135 million to Alberta's budgetary revenue and \$28 million to the revenue of the health care insurance fund.

On the corporate income tax side, Mr. Speaker, the weaker economy is also expected to reduce revenue. I expect Alberta will collect about \$630 million this year, down \$65 million from the budget estimate.

3:40

There is some positive news, Mr. Speaker. Oil and natural gas prices have been stronger than assumed in the '92 budget. Over the 12 months ending March 31, 1993, world oil prices are expected to average \$20.50 per barrel in U.S. funds despite the weakness in recent weeks. This is \$1.50 higher than the budget estimate. Natural gas prices are expected to average \$1.39 per 1,000 cubic feet in Canadian funds, up almost 20 cents from the budget estimate. The Canadian dollar has averaged 81.8 cents U.S. from April to mid-January. Assuming it stays at the recent level of 78 cents U.S. to the end of March, the fiscal year average will be 81 cents. This is 1 cent lower than the original budget estimate and will increase oil and gas revenue by \$36 million. I have included a table in the tablings today that details the changes in the resource revenue assumptions since the '92 budget.

The new royalty regime announced last October will reduce '92-93 royalties by \$43 million. These royalty changes have sparked exploration activity and land sales, Mr. Speaker. Higher natural gas demand and the federal initiative on flow-through shares have also been positive factors. However, because of very low sales early in the fiscal year, land sales revenue is likely to be down about \$65 million. Overall, I expect resource revenue to be 2 and a quarter billion dollars, exceeding the budget estimate by about \$200 million.

On the expenditure side, Mr. Speaker, departments have identified additional program spending requirements totaling \$192 million. A \$26 million special warrant has already been approved for forest fire costs. I am tabling supplementary estimates seeking the Legislature's authority for the additional spending. The largest increase, some \$85 million, is for social assistance caseloads, which have climbed to about 89,000. None of the increase will be covered by federal cost sharing. The federal government has put a discriminatory ceiling on its support for social assistance in Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario. The other significant

increase is \$26 million for higher than expected school enrolments and teachers' pension costs.

We have undertaken governmentwide initiatives to offset most, if not all, of these spending increases with savings in other areas. Premier Klein has directed all ministers and their deputies to review every program to find savings, Mr. Speaker. We have put a lid on spending on equipment, travel, hosting, and other discretionary goods and services. The only exceptions are where health or safety could be affected. Departments have worked hard to find \$129 million in savings so far. This means that program spending will increase by \$63 million from the budget estimate to \$1,834,000,000. This is 2.8 percent higher than the '91-92 program spending and 0.3 percentage points above the limit set in the Spending Control Act. Ministers will be vigilant in seeking further reductions.

For annual financial statement purposes, Mr. Speaker, our United States dollar debt is reported in Canadian dollars based on the exchange rate on the last day of each fiscal year. The March 31, 1993, rate is assumed to be 78 cents U.S., so the lower exchange rate means potentially higher debt repayments in Canadian dollars when the debt matures in the years ahead. Provisions of \$117 million have been made for these valuation adjustments. This contrasts with positive valuations of \$54 million over the previous two years. There will also be losses of about \$50 million on asset disposals by Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Since no provision was made for this in the 1992 budget, a supplementary appropriation will be submitted to approve these costs.

Mr. Speaker, based on these updated details, my estimate is that the 1992-93 deficit will be \$2.76 billion. This is about \$470 million higher than originally estimated in the '92 budget. Revenue is down about \$225 million due to lower personal and corporate income tax revenue, while expenditure is up \$245 million mostly due to higher valuation adjustments.

Even this late in the fiscal year uncertainties exist about some of our major revenue sources. Just this week we received new information from Ottawa that caused another downward revision of our personal income tax forecast. Corporate income tax depends heavily on receipts in the last month of the fiscal year. Final resource revenue numbers will not be known until July. Our government will keep Albertans informed if there are major changes to this forecast.

Looking ahead to the next fiscal year, Mr. Speaker, Alberta faces a very difficult fiscal situation. We have a large structural deficit in this province. Our spending, even excluding debt servicing costs, has exceeded our revenue in each year since 1984-85. The result is that the province's debt will exceed \$15 billion by the end of the fiscal year. We have \$12 billion in income earning assets in the heritage fund, so our net debt is currently, and I repeat currently, not as critical a problem as it is for other governments in the Dominion, but we are headed for dangerous territory. Alberta's deficit this year will be over \$1,000 for each Albertan. This isn't much better than the federal deficit of about \$1,250 per Canadian.

We cannot continue to spend more than we get in revenue. Despite keeping program spending below inflation and population growth, expenditure has grown almost twice as fast as our revenue over the last five years. Resource revenue has been essentially flat since 1987-88. Nearly 90 percent of our revenues go to four areas: health, education, social services, and debt servicing. If those four areas were to grow at the current rate, with flat revenue they would consume 100 percent of our revenue by 1995-96.

Improving economy alone will not balance the budget, nor, based on past experience, can we count on rising resource revenue

to bail us out of our problems. Governments across North America are struggling to deal with persistent deficits. Success will depend upon our resolve to make the tough choices. This government will, Mr. Speaker. As I said at the outset, Premier Klein and his government are committed to a balanced budget in the 1996-97 fiscal year. We have taken the first step by following through on our commitment to provide Albertans with clear and complete information. In the weeks ahead the new standing policy committees will publicly review the programs and services of each department. That assessment will be vitally important in setting government priorities.

In the first quarter of 1993 Premier Klein and I will convene a budget round table to give us a better fix on revenue forecasts and spending options. This activity combined with the report of the Financial Review Commission, ideas from Albertans, and the ongoing work of ministers, departments, and the standing policy committees, all of these, will give us the solid base we need to develop a sound fiscal plan for the province. Mr. Speaker, the task will not be an easy one, but it can and must be done. Albertans have a tradition of facing tough challenges, caring for our families and communities, using resourcefulness and courage to build new solutions. Those same skills are exactly what we need as we face the challenging task ahead. The government is up to the task. Albertans are up to the task. We will work, and we will work together until our work is done.

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to adjourn debate.

Point of Order Opportunity for Debate

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, a point of order.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I find that this is not a very appropriate way to bring through a major address like this. This is a budget update. By the minister bringing this forward and then adjourning debate, it does not give us an option to debate it because he's going back on a previous motion and a lot of us have spoken on it. For something this major surely there should be another avenue for the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the Liberal Party to respond as we would a budget. I find that this is very annoying because we can't even come back and have this discussion. It would just be the Treasurer giving his perspective, a budget update, and no avenue in this Legislature to talk about it.

3:50

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

MR. MITCHELL: I would like to support the comments of the Leader of the Official Opposition, Mr. Speaker. We, too, in our caucus find it unorthodox that the new Treasurer should be able to present a document of this magnitude, and in doing so, under the rules that he's used to present it, exclude comment from, among other members of this Legislature, the Leader of the Opposition as well as the leader of the Liberal Party.

MR. SPEAKER: On the point of order from the government bench.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the point of order by the hon. members, but I would suggest to them that the opportunities for debate on this motion will occur in the days and evenings ahead, just as we will have an opportunity to debate the supplementary estimates.

I would suggest that it is time to adjourn the debate. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: No, hon. Leader of the Opposition, I cannot have you rise for a second time on the point of order.

Usually we only have one member from each caucus, hon. Member for Edmonton-Kingsway.

The Chair perforce, by Standing Order 18(2) says, "... including adjournment motions, shall be decided without debate or amendment." The Chair has allowed the point of order to be discussed.

Debate Continued

MR. SPEAKER: Those in favour of the adjournment of the debate, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung]

4:00

[Eight minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

| | | |
|-----------|-------------|------------|
| Ady | Fischer | Moore |
| Betkowski | Fjordbotten | Musgrove |
| Black | Fowler | Oldring |
| Bogle | Gesell | Paszkowski |
| Bradley | Gogo | Payne |
| Brassard | Hyland | Rostad |
| Calahasen | Isley | Schumacher |
| Cardinal | Johnston | Severtson |
| Cherry | Klein | Shrake |
| Clegg | Laing, B. | Tannas |
| Day | Lund | Thurber |
| Dinning | Main | Trynchy |
| Drobot | McClellan | Weiss |
| Elliott | McFarland | West |
| Evans | Mirosh | Zarusky |

Against the motion:

| | | |
|----------|-------------|-----------|
| Barrett | Gibeault | McInnis |
| Bruseker | Hawkesworth | Mjolsness |
| Chivers | Hewes | Roberts |
| Dickson | Laing, M. | Sigurdson |
| Ewasiuk | Martin | Taylor |
| Fox | McEachern | Wickman |

Totals: For - 45 Against - 18

[Motion carried]

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
head: **Second Reading**

Bill 55

Electoral Divisions Statutes Amendment Act, 1993

Moved by Mr. Martin that the motion for second reading be amended to read that Bill 55, the Electoral Divisions Statutes Amendment Act, 1993, be not now read a second time because

the Assembly finds the process leading to the development of this Bill inappropriate insofar as it was drafted by members of this Assembly and not by an arm's-length body such as an independent Electoral Boundaries Commission.

Moved by Mr. Taylor that the amendment to the motion for second reading be further amended by adding the words "and contrary to the principles of democracy and fairness to the electors" at the end of it.

[Adjourned debate January 27: Mr. Fowler]

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Justice on the subamendment where the House left off earlier this morning.

MR. FOWLER: I have concluded my debate with respect to the subamendment, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
The Member for Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been so long since the Assembly sat that I almost feel like a rookie making my maiden speech. It's a pleasure, though, to rise and speak on the subamendment to the amendment that the New Democrats proposed. I think I didn't get to make the speech last night because at 12 o'clock at night they couldn't take in all of the points that my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View made in his half-hour speech. They decided they didn't want another half-hour speech to follow it, so we adjourned.

It's with pleasure that I rise today to make some important points about Bill 55, the Electoral Divisions Statutes Amendment Act, 1993. The New Democrats feel that this Bill should not be now read a second time because the Assembly finds the process leading to the development of this Bill inappropriate insofar as it was drafted by members of this Assembly, in fact four Conservative members of this Assembly, and not by an arm's-length body such as an independent Electoral Boundaries Commission.

Our colleagues in the Liberal opposition added a subamendment, which I wish to speak to today, saying: "and contrary to the principles of democracy and fairness to the electors." I certainly concur with this subamendment and intend to address that at some length.

Now, the chairman of that committee, the Member for Taber-Warner, stood up in the House last night and made some weak defence of points about the commission and the work it had done, and I want to start out by taking on some of the points he raised. The first point to be made: clearly four Conservative MLAs deciding the electoral boundaries of the province is an unfair process. There isn't anybody in Canada that has any sense of fair play that would believe that's a fair process – and it doesn't matter how much you try to justify: well, the commission didn't do the job, and you didn't get what you wanted and so on – that excuses the fact that we're now on the verge of an election and the old boundaries are so unfair because the populations have shifted and changed and moved so much that this government really thinks they can snow Albertans into believing that these boundaries are okay no matter what the process because at least the boundaries are a little better than the last boundaries. Even that I doubt, and we'll certainly be looking at that in more detail as we get into particularly Committee of the Whole.

I wanted to make it clear that the reason we ended up in this pickle, in this problem of having four Conservative MLAs sit down and do these boundaries is not an accident. It's maybe not exactly the scene that the Tories in their minds had wanted to play

out when they started this process about three years ago, but it's one that they were obviously willing to at least do when the opportunity seemed to present itself.

Let me explain that. I think that when the government embarked on this Electoral Boundaries Commission process, they intended that the process not succeed unless it brought back exactly what they wanted, which was sort of a maximum range of as many city ridings near to 25 percent above as they could get and as many rural ridings at 25 percent below as they could possibly get. If they couldn't get that from the commission, then they were prepared to see the process delayed and stalled and delayed and stalled so that in the final analysis they could appoint a committee of MLAs. They did ask us to take part, I understand. But you can also see why we wouldn't: because the committee would be dominated by four Conservatives who would sit down and gerrymander the ridings in any old way they wanted to get what they wanted, and that is to have too many people in most of the urban ridings and not enough people in some of the rural ridings, so that they could keep control, hopefully, of the government because they think they can win rural Alberta. It was as clear and blatant as that. It's totally undemocratic and totally unfair to the people of this province.

Now, I said that they messed around with that commission, and at this stage I intend to back that up with a couple of points at least. The chairman of the commission asked for a few dollars to do an enumeration because he knew he would be working with statistics that were totally out of date if he didn't. The government refused to give him those few dollars – I think it was a couple of hundred thousand dollars or something – that he needed to do an enumeration in Alberta so that he'd have up-to-date statistics. The government refused. He resigned. The government never even told anybody that he resigned. Some sharp reporter a couple of months later finally tracked down this judge to say, "What's going on with the commission?" He was on holiday in B.C. somewhere. The judge said, "Oh, I resigned long ago." The government hadn't even bothered to tell anybody – a couple more months' delay with nothing being done.

They then held far more hearings than were necessary all over rural Alberta and were supposed to report back to this Assembly. Instead of bringing back the report, they said: "Oh, no. We've got to hold some more hearings in the fall." The sole purpose of those hearings around rural Alberta was to try to paint the Liberals and the New Democrats as being anti rural Alberta. Now, Mr. Speaker, that is totally silly. I mean, one of the things that rural MLAs in this House try to portray is that those of us that live in urban Alberta don't know anything about rural Alberta. It's patently not true. I was born and raised on a farm. I follow farm issues closely. Besides, does anybody in this Assembly ever remember a vote that was split on rural/urban lines? Never. Always split on partisan lines. The support for rural Alberta is strong. Before the 1986 election when I first got elected, the issue that I talked about at the door the most, for a year and a half, was rural Alberta problems. The people in my riding are only half a generation or at most a generation off the farm and understand and sympathize with farm problems. So that is not a problem. For rural Albertans to think they have to be overrepresented somehow because they'll lose control of this Assembly is nonsense.

4:10

The fact is that shifts in the population growth in the province did demand a new redistribution. It should have been done fairly and by an independent commission with a fair set of rules. This government saddled that commission with some unfair rules. For instance, on page 3 of their interim report of the 1991-92 commis-

sion this government told them how many seats they could put in the city of Calgary, 19; told them 17 seats in the city of Edmonton; two in Lethbridge; one in Medicine Hat. Why would you have to tell a commission how many seats before they ever do the enumeration, before they ever know what the population shifts and changes are? I mean, that's a rather stupid thing to do to a commission. You get a judge and a number of intelligent and capable people, put them together on a commission, and then tell them what they've got to do. Their job was to redistribute the boundaries in the most reasonable manner.

Now, there were some parameters that do make some sense, and let me read a few of those, but it doesn't entail saying that there shall only be 19 seats in the city of Calgary or only 17 in the city of Edmonton. Some of the rules that do make sense are things like: it is

mandatory for the Commission to take into account the following six factors:

(a) the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Now, that makes some sense: the idea of one person, one vote or as close as you can get to it, that sort of thing.

(b) sparsity and density of population.

This makes some allowance for rural Alberta being more difficult and more sparsely populated, and we're willing to have some differences on those numbers.

Here's a good one that was totally ignored by the Member for Taber-Warner and his four-man crew:

(c) common community interests and community organizations, including those of Indian Reserves and Metis settlements.

The number of communities that got all split up by this committee, particularly in Edmonton, with no real regard for community of interest is quite amazing.

(d) the number of municipalities and other local authorities;

(e) geographical features [like] existing road systems;

and, I would assume, rivers and things like that, and

(f) the desirability of understandable and clear boundaries

so that there's no doubt about where the boundary is whenever it's drawn.

Now, those are reasonable parameters to give to a commission, but the other one of specifying only 19 seats in Calgary or only 17 in Edmonton was not.

The commission then went about doing their work as best they could. Considering that they wanted to conform to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and try to get most constituencies to move toward the norm rather than away from the norm toward the 25 percent tolerance that has come to be accepted as a reasonable sort of tolerance level under certain circumstances, the commission found themselves having to put some rural and some urban people together on the edges of the cities, and they became dubbed 'rurban' ridings. Mr. Speaker, if the members from rural Alberta are really concerned that those of us in the city don't really understand rural Alberta, then surely this should have been an idea that they would have liked and accepted, because what you would find is that some people that had some interest in the city and some in rural Alberta would have to find out about rural issues because they would have rural people, and they would begin to understand some of the problems of rural MLAs. So we would not have this silly little rural/urban game that this government has used in a most partisan and vicious sort of manner, for no reason whatsoever, as I've just pointed out, because those of us in urban Alberta are either straight off the farm or half a generation off the farm anyway and have a lot of sympathy for farm people and farm issues. So it seems to me that the government has merely been trying to desperately hang on to power by playing up a fight that doesn't really exist.

Now, the new Premier said the other day that he doesn't think this four-man committee was undemocratic and unfair to the electors. He thinks the decision is going to be made here in this Assembly, and, I mean, this is where democracy takes place. Yeah, sometimes. Actually, when a government has as big a majority as this government, our democracies tend to turn into four-year dictatorships, as anybody knows who's been watching Brian Mulroney for the last couple of terms or this government for the last 20 years.

MR. SPEAKER: Careful, hon. member. Careful.

MR. McEACHERN: The Premier has basically tried to say, well, this is democratic to decide this. That doesn't mean that the process of getting this Bill to the Assembly was democratic. Those are two different things. The drawing up of the boundaries and the parameters used and the reasons used for setting those boundaries: that work should have been done in a very democratic and fair and honest way without partisan interest in the outcome, and then that report should come to the Assembly and be accepted by this Assembly. That would be a democratic process. Our new leader says: oh, this is a new style of government; we're going to be more open and more democratic. Yet here we are being railroaded by the same kind of gerrymandering process: we'll railroad the legislation through because we've got an election coming. Of course the boundaries are the ones that just happen to fit not only his riding but the Member for – what do they call the new riding now? – Athabasca-Lac La Biche's and some others.

Mr. Speaker, it makes me think of something that occurred to me the other day when I was watching the new Premier. I'd just ask everybody to think for a minute of the difference between Peter Lougheed as a personality, Don Getty as a personality, and the new Premier as a personality. Very, very different people but are the policies any different? Are they any more fair? Are they any more concerned about the people that need help? No. We get the same kind of Tory policies from all of them, the same kind of closed thinking: hang on to power, gerrymander ridings, control everything, ram the legislation through. That's not open and honest government. We're not going to get anything different from the new Premier than we've had from the two previous Premiers. I know the circumstances are different, I know the personalities are different, but it doesn't amount to a hill of beans. The new Premier is not going to deliver anything different than the previous Premiers. Nothing I've heard from him or the Treasurer today indicates that they've got any handle on what's going on with the fiscal situation and the economy of this province any more than did the previous Premier. The one before that was rather lucky; he had a lot of oil money.

Mr. Speaker, the commission – I want to come back to that for a minute – that was appointed and tried to their job as best they could came back with a report that was the only logical answer to the restrictions given them. Although my riding was devastated in that report, and I wasn't particularly happy about that and thought that some adjustments could be made, nonetheless I have to say that overall they did a reasonable job with the province given the rules they had. Yet this government and the MLAs sitting in this building, the rural MLAs particularly, went to those commission hearings and beat up on that commission unmercifully. They were totally unfair to them, rude even. I know, because I was there when the then minister of culture – which he thought should never exist – came and just tore a strip off them publicly. Now, I think that was ridiculous. Those people were given parameters to work with. They did the best they could with those unfair parameters. They brought that report in, and then it was open for public

discussion. It didn't mean that they had to be treated in such a shabby manner by the very people that had appointed them. The least one could have done was had some respect for the integrity of the commission.

4:20

Point of Order

Allegations Against a Member

MR. GOGO: Point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: Point of order, Lethbridge-West.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I hate to interrupt the hon. member when he's on such a course, but understanding Orders, I raise with you, sir, Standing Order 23(h). There's no need to be making allegations about fellow members of this Assembly in terms of unsubstantiated behaviour: rudeness and so on to public meeting groups. [interjection]

MR. SPEAKER: No, hon. member. Take your place. The member who's involved will reply.

MR. SIGURDSON: Oh. The other member is here.

MR. SPEAKER: Sorry, hon. member.
Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: It's okay. I apologize if I've offended anybody. If you really want to look, I'll get you the quotes from *Hansard*, the record of the day.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. Take your place please, hon. member.

Speaker's Ruling Imputing Motives

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair was actually quite concerned about some earlier comments talking about "dictatorships" in referring to the House. The Chair really would like you to refer to and bear in mind *Beauchesne* 484.

A Member will not be permitted by the Speaker to indulge in any reflections on the House itself as a political institution; or to impute to any Member or Members unworthy motives for their actions in a particular case.

It goes on:

or to reflect upon, argue against or in any manner call in question the past acts and proceedings of the House.

In actual fact, hon. member, you were in violation of that earlier when you came into this business of criticizing a supposed action in a committee. Actions in committee are to be dealt with in the committee, not dealt with in the House.

I thank you for apologizing, I ask you to be much more circumspect in some of your conversation to the House, but I also would like to draw you back to the subamendment which is under discussion.

Thank you.

MR. McEACHERN: Mr. Speaker, we're talking here about fairness and democracy for the electors of this province, and I think we've been badly served by this process. If I got carried away with my comments, it's because I feel very strongly about it.

Debate Continued

MR. McEACHERN: Mr. Speaker, I don't really think the government expected or thought that that commission would give them exactly what they wanted; therefore, they had a fallback position which they then went to when the commission collapsed. The Member for Taber-Warner in his comments yesterday said that everybody was against that commission and their report, that they had no basis on which to make those kinds of boundary changes. I guess I just want to point out to him that in fact some of us thought that they did a pretty good job considering the parameters they were given. I think the government had a fail-safe position from their own point of view: if the commission didn't get them what they wanted, they would discredit the commission and have it fall apart or be dismissed so they could then either go on the present boundaries if they decided they wanted an election in a hurry or come up with gerrymandered ridings done by a committee of this Assembly.

Of course, they wanted to appear open and democratic and say: "Oh, well, you know the New Democrats can participate in this committee, and the Liberals can participate in this committee. Now, of course we'll have four government members and only two New Democrats and one Liberal to make sure that we've got control of the process and can gerrymander it the way we want." The New Democrats and the Liberals decided that didn't make any sense, that the redrawing of boundaries should be done by an independent commission, and we said, "No, we don't want to be any part of it." So here we are bringing forward this four-man committee.

One of the things that the Member for Taber-Warner did the other day was to read from the back of the report of the commission on how many people made submissions. I thought that was most interesting. Oh, there are thousands of people and letters and submissions and public hearings and everything. Did those people come to the hearings of the four-man committee? No. They came to the public Electoral Boundaries Commission that was set up, the independent commission. Because it had some kind of public approval, it was an appropriate commission to go and report to. How often did the four-man committee meet? Where did they sit? When did they hold open hearings? Who came? What's the report from the four-man committee that sat? Almost nil.

MR. SIGURDSON: Three men and one woman.

MR. McEACHERN: Three men and a woman. I'm sorry. Yes, there was a woman. The four-person committee.

MR. SPEAKER: Through the Chair, hon. member, not through the caucus. I realize you have to give him direction.

MR. McEACHERN: I was just being corrected, Mr. Speaker, about the fact that one of the members was a female as opposed to a four-man committee, so I stand corrected on that.

In any case, the point I want to make is that the number of submissions brought to the independent commission was of course significant and important. The number of submissions and information brought to the committee - now, I suppose the committee could avail itself of all that previous information, but I don't see much evidence in the new boundaries that the four-person committee of the Conservative Party paid very much attention to the submissions and work that was done by the commission.

I want to turn to my riding for just a moment and talk a little bit about how adjustments should be made and then talk a little bit about how adjustments were made in this new redrawing. Edmonton-Kingsway has been around for some time. I decided to run there in 1977 and took a look at the boundaries and got to know the area and ran there over the next three elections before I finally won, as most of you know. During the course of that time there was a redistribution. After two elections, remember, there's supposed to be a new redistribution. So if you look at the 1985 revisions, what you find is that the revisions were made by shaving a little bit off the east side of the constituency and adding a little bit to the west side but keeping the bulk of the riding more or less intact and making the kind of changes that were needed due to growth in the west end of the city. It's a logical and sensible way to make adjustments to boundaries when populations grow and shift and you have to make some adjustments to boundaries, which you need to do after every couple of elections. That was the reasonable thing to do, and I didn't complain about the new area. I merely went out door knocking and got to know the people there and tried to win their vote for the next election. That's a logical and reasonable way to make boundary changes.

But would you believe the way this committee went about changing Edmonton-Kingsway? They merely carved it into pieces, and it disappeared for no good reason. I'm sure that if one had put a little bit of thought – well, the only problem with Edmonton-Kingsway was that there was a bit of growth over in the west end down by Meadowlark somewhere. I mean, nothing had changed in the Edmonton-Kingsway area. So it would have been logical and simple enough to make some adjustments unlike the ones you made. For instance, let me give you some examples of the adjustments made.

Speaker's Ruling Relevance

MR. SPEAKER: Excuse me, hon. member. I know there's ample opportunity to speak to this in detail when we come back to the main amendment. Also, when and if the Bill ever gets beyond second reading, there's plenty of other time to be dealing with the detail of the Bill, and that includes detail of one's particular constituency or someone else's. Indeed, the Chair is only too willing to recognize you at a future date as well as now, but as I mentioned to the House earlier today or certainly late last night, when the members of the House start coming from amendments to subamendments, the House itself is delineating and diminishing the whole matter of the range of debate. So I ask you again to craft your comments in that framework.

MR. McEACHERN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, what I was trying to do was not to talk about my own personal problems in Edmonton-Kingsway, which is only incidental to the process, and talk about the unfairness over the way the boundaries were shifted this time compared to last time when they were done in a logical and fair manner. For example, the area between 118th Avenue and Yellowhead, a couple of community leagues . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. Would you take your place. [interjections] Order please.

I have really tried to do it in a sweet and gentle manner, but you're out of order. Speak to the subamendment.

Debate Continued

MR. McEACHERN: I will move on quickly to the next point then. Another unfairness of the whole process that was done not only by the four-person Conservative committee but I think was perpetuated right even in the commission itself was sort of a

directive that the boundaries would be planned on a per person basis of population rather than on an electors or voters basis. I don't think it was accidental. It's fairly evident that rural areas, for example, tend to have larger families than urban areas. So if you work with the whole population instead of with just the voters, you will gain an even bigger advantage in terms of smaller ridings versus bigger ridings. If you think it is insignificant, consider a situation like in Edmonton-Centre, where most of the population is adult, many of them seniors living in high rises, and very few families. Now, in a constituency like that, that kind of difference or discrepancy will be exaggerated even more. So here's Edmonton-Centre with 35,861 people and they're 16.5 percent over the average or the norm for the province. If you shrank that down and talked about just electors, I'm sure they would be more than 16.5 percent over average of electors in the province because of the point I was just making. So the committee did not stick to fairness and democratic processes so that all electors of this province can have more or less equal status.

4:30

The reference to the court approval. I questioned the Member for Taber-Warner yesterday when he was talking about how the court had approved all these particular boundaries and so on. I was not complaining about the court saying that these changes were acceptable; I was suggesting that the Supreme Court of B.C., when the ruling was made that a 25 percent tolerance factor was generally acceptable, did not imply that a 25 percent difference was what should be done in a general way and overall as much as possible, which I think has been the agenda of the government. These boundaries go some way to meeting that. There's a significant difference between the size of the urban ridings and the rural ridings. Of course the court would approve these specific changes as fitting within that 25 percent parameter, but I don't think that by that it means you're being most democratic when you try to achieve a 25 percent increase or decrease in urban and rural Alberta respectively. You would achieve a more democratic process if you moved toward the norm where reasonable and possible and then made compensation as is necessary for sparsity of population and distances and those kinds of things, natural boundaries, of course, also having an important role to play in those boundary decisions.

So, Mr. Speaker, my feeling is that particularly in Edmonton, where the Tories have more or less given up on winning any seats, the members of that committee just drew some lines and looked at the sizes of the numbers and didn't really pay very much attention to what would be fair to the community leagues, to the various communities that are used to working together, and split them up, you know, right across the airport, in fact, in the case of some community leagues I know and right across rail lines and Yellowhead routes and those kinds of things.

Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no way that we in the opposition can approve these new boundaries. Unfortunately, they will be rammed through, I guess, and we will have to fight the next election on the new boundaries. It's certainly no indication that this government has any intention of operating any differently than they have in the past, and if these boundaries are unfair now, think how unfair they're going to be after two more elections. By that time perhaps we'll have a New Democrat government that will be prepared to draw up some fair boundaries. It certainly would be a great improvement for democracy and fairness in this province for the electors of the province.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Additional speakers? Edmonton-Belmont.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I sat in here last night and listened to the debate that was going on. I took a number of notes on speakers from all sides of the House, and I must confess that one of the more interesting presentations I heard came from the Member for Wainwright. I'd like to make a few comments about his remarks, because believe it or not, even though the member was standing up and speaking in opposition to the subamendment to the amendment, his rationale was so apropos it caused me to become even more entrenched in my position to speak in favour of the subamendment to the amendment.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

You see, when he stood up and said all the problems that are going on inside rural Alberta – people were leaving and there's depopulation in rural Alberta; people are coming to the cities – I recognized that and recognized it as a fact. He talked about how difficult it is in border communities along the Saskatchewan and Alberta border and how difficult it is to access those because the population declines. It's less likely that members of the Legislature are going to be able to afford the time to go out and see those members. So there's reason for members of the Legislature to have more time to spend visiting border communities. But where do those people go? Do they leave rural Alberta and suddenly magically appear somewhere else in Montana or Saskatchewan or Manitoba or British Columbia? Well, the truth of the matter is that they don't. They move inside Alberta for the most part. They move from the small communities to the larger communities of Lethbridge or Red Deer. They move to the very large communities of Calgary and Edmonton. Mr. Speaker, when those people come to the large communities, when they come into my constituency, they bring with them their concerns and their problems. They want those concerns and problems addressed by their new members of the Legislature.

It's interesting; not too long ago when I attended a senior citizens' home on this very topic, I asked the senior citizens that were assembled – and there were approximately 30 in the room – how many out of 30 senior citizens were from Edmonton, had lived here all their lives and were now retired in the community. One. Only one. The other 29 – as we went around, we talked about where they had come from, if they came from Europe, or where they had settled in Alberta – had settled in small farming communities. They'd left those small rural communities and had come to Edmonton because the services were here for some of them. [interjections] Yes, all the rural members recognize that they come to the city. Who do they contact when they have problems? Do they phone the Member for Chinook from Edmonton-Belmont to say, "Oh, I've got a problem"? Do they phone the Member for Lesser Slave Lake to say, "I moved from your community 15 years ago and now I have a problem"? Do they phone the Member for Wainwright or the Member for Drumheller and say, "I left your constituency 15 years ago and I have a problem"?

MS CALAHASEN: They call me.

MR. SIGURDSON: They don't. Mr. Speaker, they don't.

MS CALAHASEN: I'll give an example.

MR. SIGURDSON: The Member for Lesser Slave Lake says she's got examples. I welcome the Member for Lesser Slave Lake to stand up and provide us with that information, because I can tell you full well that when those people come to the centres

of Edmonton and Calgary, they contact their new member of the Legislature right there in the phone book . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: No, they don't. [interjections]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. Order.

MR. SIGURDSON: Mr. Speaker, if we want to start comparing telephone notes, I'll send over to my research staff and get all the folk that have phoned the New Democrats because they can't get any satisfaction from the Tory members. If we want to start playing that game, let's play that game.

I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, that for the most part the residents of the senior citizens' homes that are located in the large urban centres phone their members of the Legislature when they have problems. [interjection] Fair enough.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: How many calls do you get?

MR. SIGURDSON: Probably more than you.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to try and refrain from responding to the Member for Smoky River.

Anyway, they phone their member of the Legislature with their problems. Now, those are the folk that generate their concerns, whether it's a concern about the level of care they're getting, whether it's an increase in rent when they're living on a fixed pension, whether it's about the family back on the farm having a difficult time with commodity prices being what they are and with interest rates being what they are, whether it's about the AOC. They make comments to urban members of the Legislature. We're their members of the Legislature. We don't mind that. You see, the Member for Wainwright just sort of forgot that people move around and have to be represented by a member of the Legislature. When they come to large urban centres, the level of representation they get in terms of just strict population . . . The members of the Legislature for urban ridings represent more people than the rural members of the Legislature and sometimes that provides inequity.

4:40

What do you do? I know full well that in those large sparsely populated geographical areas of our province – and we've got quite a few – it takes hours to drive from one side of the constituency to the other to get to see a constituent, or it takes hours for a constituent to drive to get to see the member. I'm fully aware of that. But you know, Mr. Speaker, there's no real difference when you've got two or three or four people waiting to see a member of the Legislature who represents a Calgary or an Edmonton constituency. When those three or four constituents are waiting to see their member of the Legislature, they have to wait hours, sometimes days, in order to see their member in the same way that rural members have to travel to service their constituents. I know that to be a fact. When I served as an executive assistant to the late Grant Notley, I remember driving around his constituency as he would do his prelegislative tours and his postsessional accountability sessions. It would take days to get around to every community so that people would have the opportunity to access their member of the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, you know, when I go around to my community groups, even though quite frankly I can walk through a community within 15 minutes if I just walk from one end to the other, I couldn't possibly meet with every community group inside my constituency within a day. It would be virtually impossible. It takes me the same amount of time to meet with the community groups as a rural member has to spend meeting with municipal

boards, municipal councils. [interjection] No, I'm deadly serious. The Member for Dunvegan happens to believe that because he represents X number of municipal councils, X number of school boards, library boards, hospital boards, urban members have nothing to do and we just have some monolithic, homogeneous community and can somehow just go out and meet with one member of it and say, "Well, we've met with the community." It's not the case, Mr. Speaker. It's not the case.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Taber-Warner stood up last night and talked about how the courts had decided that the proposal or the piece of legislation that was referred to the courts for a decision was acceptable. Well, in the abstract the legislation was indeed acceptable. But what is it that the court said on pages 11 and 12? It's quite amazing that in this document the Member for Taber-Warner cited when he said that everything was acceptable inside the legislation – indeed it was. But the courts had some very serious concerns about how those folk that drafted the boundaries, how those people that were responsible for drawing the boundaries would respond to the legislation.

As the hon. Member for Taber-Warner pointed out, the court says:

We are bound also to say that a rule permitting a 25 per cent deviation does not offend the Charter as an "undue" intrusion upon voter parity.

Agreed.

That case does not, however, mandate the use of that or any deviation in a case where it is not needed.

It goes on to say:

We turn at last to the most difficult question arising under the statute. We refer to the requirement that only 43 divisions of the total of 83 be assigned to specified built-up areas. As we have observed, this split forces a significant upwards deviation in the 43, and a significant downwards deviation in all the others. The question is whether this pre-set scheme is justified.

Therein lies the problem. Is the preset scheme justified? I argued quite frankly, sir, that the preset scheme isn't morally justified. I would argue that it's politically rationalized to ensure that where the level of support is greatest for the ruling party, they're going to get that return – or at least they hope. The scheme is set up so as to ensure that certain results will happen during the next election. The court even goes on to say:

The split is troubling. It is one thing to permit deviation if needed. The boundary-writer would proceed to write an electoral map based upon the criteria chosen, and make deviations when these are needed because of specific problems.

Mr. Speaker, there's no rationale for the boundaries. That's part of the problem.

What's the difference between Cardston at minus 38.5 percent when Taber-Warner, just a hop, skip, and jump away, is only at minus 21.8 percent? The Member for Cardston or the proposed constituency of Cardston-Macleod is going to have to drive probably the same number of hours as the Member for Taber-Warner.

AN HON. MEMBER: Cardston-Mountain View.

MR. SIGURDSON: Cardston-Mountain View. Thank you very much. It's Pincher Creek-Macleod now.

AN HON. MEMBER: Chief Mountain.

MR. SIGURDSON: Chief Mountain. We'll get it yet.

The Member for Pincher Creek-Crowsnest has got a constituency at minus 20.3 percent. Now, those three members, living in a wonderful area of our province, a marvelous area of our

province, are going to have to drive pretty much the same distance, spend the same number of hours on the road. Why the difference in population? What's the rationale? Let's get it. I can hardly wait. What's the difference, Mr. Speaker, when, as the court pointed out, you've got a concern where we have, of the rural constituencies, 11 that deviate off the mean by greater than 15 percent, 22 by over 10 percent. Urban constituencies, the other side of the coin? In Calgary, 10 constituencies of a total of 17 are over 10 percent. In Edmonton, eight constituencies are over 15 percent; 10 in total are over 10 percent.

You know what's amazing in all of this, Mr. Speaker, as I add up the numbers? Sixty-three of the proposed 83 electoral divisions have a population deviation of more than 10 percent off the mean. Sixty-three out of 83. In Manitoba not one constituency is more than 10 percent off the mean. In Alberta, 63 of 83. Now, I would suggest that that's what the court was concerned about when they wrote this decision. They said that we shouldn't have to use the deviation in a case where it's not needed. Their problem was that 43 of the 83 constituencies have been specified to be assigned to built-up areas. That's why we have the kind of deviation off the mean that we have. Is it democratic? Is it fair? Those are questions that I think a lot of Albertans are asking right now. Is it democratic, and is it fair?

4:50

Last night the Member for Little Bow stood up and spoke, and I appreciated his comments, at least some of his comments. He spoke of how the New Democrats wanted to have equality. He was talking about absolute equality. I don't recall a single member of the New Democrat caucus, I don't recall a single member of the Liberal caucus – and we've debated this issue a lot of hours – standing up and saying that every single constituency has to be absolutely equal in terms of population. [interjection] Well, stand up and cite the case. I just can't recall that happening.

Mr. Speaker, we have talked about equity. We have indeed talked about equity. We still argue the case that constituencies ought to be equitable; the population ought to be equitable. The deviations we have right now quite frankly can't make a case for equity. How can you do that when every single constituency in the city of Calgary is over the average and only one constituency in the city of Edmonton is under the average? Do you know how much under the average they are? They're under the average by 1 percent. Of all the other constituencies that are listed as multimunicipal constituencies, there are seven with populations over and all the others are under. Five of those seven constituencies border the city of Edmonton.

Fair? I don't think so. Democratic? It depends on whose definition you're going to employ to define democracy. Equity? Not a chance. Absolute equality? Even the Member for Little Bow is shaking his head no. He knows full well that this has nothing at all to do with absolute equality, and he knows full well it has nothing at all to do with equity.

Last night I also heard the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek stand and talk about the process that was employed back in 1982-83 when the previous Electoral Boundaries Commission had been established. Well, I remember that period very well. I had the opportunity at that time to serve as Grant Notley's executive assistant, and I looked at much of the work that was going on during that commission's life. I did a lot of the work in supporting Grant Notley's position on the seven-member commission. Four of them were politicians, three from the government. The late Henry Kroeger, Tom Chambers, my friend from Calgary-Fish Creek, and the late Grant Notley were the four members of the

Legislature that served on the commission. The other members of the commission: it was chaired by Justice Russ Dixon; the then Chief Electoral Officer, Ken Wark; and originally the appointment on the commission was the Hon. Ralph Steinhauer, who unfortunately had to resign due to ill health and was replaced by Buck Olsen.

Now, what was different and most interesting in that commission was that in that order, that piece of legislation that struck the commission and provided it with its mandate, we moved from 79 members of the Legislature to 83. There wasn't the kind of problem going on that there is with this commission. We had one new rural constituency and three new urban constituencies. I believe that two of them went to Calgary and one came to Edmonton. So the ratio of seats started to change then, and it started to change, Mr. Speaker, because there was an addition to the number of seats in the Legislative Assembly. This time when we had boundary redistribution, a select special committee of the Legislature was struck to examine whether or not we should increase the number of seats, and when that committee went around the province and held its public hearings, I think virtually every individual and every group that made a presentation to the committee said: no, do not increase the number of MLAs in the province of Alberta. We agreed. We had no problem with that. Some people who made presentations actually said that we ought to decrease the number of MLAs in the province. Some members on the committee actually agreed with that as well.

But we still had a problem with the ratio. We knew that the population was shifting from rural Alberta to urban Alberta. What were we going to do about the ratio, given that it was 42-41, 42 urban and 41 rural? How would we try to make that ratio a little more fair and a little more equitable based on population?

MR. McINNIS: Democratic.

MR. SIGURDSON: A little more democratic, my friend from Edmonton-Jasper Place points out. Thank you very much for that.

How do we make it a little more democratic? Well, unfortunately what happens is that sometimes the ratio changes substantially. It was a quantum leap for the members of the committee to recommend that the number of urban seats go up by one – just go up by one – and the rural seats went down by one. That was the recommendation of the committee: change the ratio from 42-41 to 43-40. That took a lot of effort. It took a lot of effort on the part of the Conservatives on the committee, but they had to, Mr. Speaker.

Another thing that was interesting at all the public meetings the select special committee had throughout the province was that when we asked if politicians should be drawing the boundaries, I believe again virtually every individual or group that made a presentation said no politician should be sitting on the commission that ultimately draws the boundaries. Now, when we went back into the meetings of the committee, when we had to deal with the makeup of the commission, very quickly seven members of the Legislature came to the agreement, came to the understanding that there would not be a member of the Legislature serving on the commission that draws boundaries. We agreed to that. At that time we thought it just not appropriate for politicians to be drawing boundaries and perhaps being accused of having self-interest and even being accused of gerrymandering.

So we made up a commission of five members to examine the boundaries. We had a justice as the Chair; the Chief Electoral Officer; we had two members appointed by the Speaker after the nomination made by the government and one member appointed again by the Speaker after the nomination made by the Leader of

the Official Opposition: a five-person commission. They went out to examine what they could do given the legislation and, more importantly, given the Charter. Well, they didn't have an awful lot of success. They had some very real problems because the legislation really didn't fit, didn't match the desire of the Charter.

5:00

So they became rather creative. They actually took information that had been presented to the earlier committee when certain people would come forward and make proposals to the committee. It became obvious that the commission members read those reports, read those recommendations, and they created something called 'rurban' ridings, trying to accommodate or to merge, massage rural communities with urban communities. When that report was finally released, I can remember all kinds of people being up in arms over the recommendation that we have 'rurban' constituencies: goodbye to that recommendation.

So went the interim report, and the commission was sent away to again consider what they might possibly do. They came back – for the first time in my political life, which is rather short, I couldn't recall a commission coming back with no recommendation at all. They couldn't have a minority report because – well, I guess they had four minority reports out of a five-member commission, but no recommendation. That was the problem that was created by the legislation that this Legislative Assembly had passed. Commission members felt they couldn't satisfy both the legislation and the Charter.

How did we resolve that problem? We resolved that problem by creating a committee. Now, when the proposal of the government went on the Order Paper, I know that there were members that wanted to strike the previous Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries. The Liberal caucus decided not to participate; the New Democratic caucus decided not to participate. That left four of the original seven – the four government members, the four Progressive Conservative members – to draw the boundaries. They had quite a task, Mr. Speaker; they had a task that the commission couldn't respond to. They were going to try and attempt to draw some boundaries, and they most certainly did.

What did we get? Rather than come back and change the legislation or make a recommendation to change the legislation that would have provided greater equity, greater fairness, more democracy, we got a recommendation that came back that said: well, we will create a ratio of 43 urban constituencies – single-municipality constituencies – and 40 multimunicipality constituencies. The results are that we will have incredible deviation, not as is needed by the province but as is needed by the politicians who happen to govern the province at the moment.

[Mr. Sigurdson's speaking time expired]

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

MR. MAIN: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. [some applause] Two days in a row a gracious expression of affection for me is more than I can bear.

Mr. Speaker, I've been listening to this debate with some interest over the last day or two because I'm interested in this process. The rewriting and the redrawing of electoral boundaries is an enormous undertaking and one that I wouldn't wish on anyone, but it's one of those tasks that a government or a Legislature or any governing body must undertake from time to time, not because they're bringing forward their own legislative agenda or it's something they want to do, but it's something that's required

of governments in every jurisdiction from time to time. In this province it came up on the legislative clock like most things do and needed to be dealt with.

Well, I took an interest in this, being new to politics and having run in a riding that had had one previous election on its new boundaries. There was some confusion about whether people were in this riding or that constituency, but it wasn't a great deal. By and large I found that as the election process progressed, it didn't really matter too much whether the line went down this street or that street or went across that river or this creek. It was: who are the candidates; what do they stand for; who am I going to vote for; and let's get the guy or girl who's best suited for the job in there. I found that that was essentially what happens during an election process.

As this boundary issue came forward a couple of years ago, it was an interesting process to see how it would be resolved. Of course, the first thing you want to do in any governing body no matter what your political ideology is, whether you're building a budget or a school or new boundaries, is get some sense of what folks would like to do, and that process was undertaken by a committee of this Assembly. It traveled around the province, spent a great deal of time, talked to an awful lot of people, and got a good sense of what the general mood of the province was. As a result of that, some legislation was drafted to form the bones upon which the meat of boundary redistribution would be laid.

We all know history, and I don't need to go through it. I'm sure the members of the Official Opposition caucus will go through it several times before this process is completed, so I won't add my words to the history of this but just some observations about what has been said so far and what we as legislators face now in this current context of time.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, I want to make sure that I focus my remarks on the subamendment, which deals with the issues of fairness and democracy, because this goes to the whole essence of drawing boundaries. In a democracy someone is elected to make decisions for the others whom they represent, and that in essence is what we have here, a democracy. We've got 83 members who are engaged in representing the interests of their constituents collectively here. We reach decisions, we argue back and forth, we debate, we resolve, we decide. That's what a democracy is, and that's what a democracy does, and that's the issue that is before us today.

The question that we're asking, of course, is: how do we get to that point where we decide; what do we decide on; how do we get the input; how do we make a decision on what to decide on; how can it be fair; how can it be in the best possible interests of all Albertans?

Well, I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the Assembly that when we're dealing with lines on a map of a province as big as Alberta, with as many people as there are in Alberta, 2 and a half million, given some of the parameters that arithmetically need to be taken into account – the fact that there are 83 chairs in this Assembly; the fact that populations are moving, growing in different ways; there's migration within the borders and without our borders; a great variety of local interests, trading patterns, historical relationships, demography, economics, history, pure numbers – all of these things are thrown into the mix, and ultimately there's got to be some method by which a map is produced.

Maybe we don't want to do a map. It would be great to run on the current boundaries forever, some might think, but that's not possible. So you've got to move forward with this process, and it's got to be done fairly. Of course, ultimately it will be handled in a democratic fashion because we have 83 democratic represen-

tatives here. There will be a vote taken, and a decision will be made.

As we move to that point, how do you get the material before us that we can chew on and decide in some fashion? Well, we had a couple of whacks at it, Mr. Speaker, and the results of the first attempt produced outrage. I recall leading up to that attempt, conducting a series of public meetings in my own constituency and in some neighbouring constituencies in southwest Edmonton. We put ads in the paper, rented a space, and invited people to come in and let me know what they thought. I was in the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud's constituency a couple of times and in my own constituency of Edmonton-Parkallen. I had some representations from Edmonton-Strathcona residents as well, just to get a sense of what the southwest quadrant, if you like, of Edmonton would like to have included. I took those submissions, and I made a presentation to the commission in their hearing here in Edmonton at a downtown hotel. There were several others. I remember the Member for Edmonton-Belmont and several others were there the night I was there. We made our presentations. I agree with him that there was universal condemnation of this 'urban' idea that satisfied no one. It seemed fairly obvious that that was going to get the heave quite quickly.

5:10

Well, between the interim report and the final report, during that period of time when input was flowing in, the commission for a variety of reasons was unable to come to a satisfactory resolution of the issues. There are different opinions on why that took place, but I guess those opinions and those reasons are irrelevant to today's discussions, because it just happened. The question then moves: now what do we do; now what happens? This organization, this commission with these citizens could not resolve the issue for a variety of reasons. The opposition will suggest it's the government's fault. The government and other people might suggest it's somebody else's fault. Nevertheless, that's what happened.

So now what do we do? The clock of course is ticking, because it's not just a simple matter of drawing a map and putting it out there and that's it. There have to be deputy returning officers appointed. There have to be minute poll maps done, down to the few dozen individuals. There's a whole variety of things that have to take place before the next page in the democracy can take place, which is the next election. So the clock is ticking, the clock is ticking, the clock is ticking.

The government in its responsibility as the government took this issue upon itself to discuss: what should we do now? We had wide-ranging discussions in our caucus, because we have a caucus that represents the full range of interests in this province. From the south, the heavily populated cities of Edmonton and Calgary, to the very thinly populated north, the mountains, the plains, the prairies, the small towns, the major centres, the in-between towns: our caucus represents all these interests. All of this information, material, opinions, and thoughts were brought together, and we emerged with the notion that because of the time pressures it would be good to have MLAs take this on. We couldn't ask outside citizens. We had an enormous amount of input already. It would be unfair to try to draw together another outside commission and go through the whole exercise again. We had a commission; we had a group that went around. Why don't we put that before that commission? Granted they're MLAs, but who knows more and better about this process than the actual individuals who are responsible to the individuals who live within those lines, the MLAs?

It seemed like a good idea to me. I supported that because I was one of those in our caucus who felt strongly that we should get on with this, that it is the responsibility of the government and the Legislature to make decisions and get on with the process so we can put this behind us and deal with the important issues, some of which we've heard the Provincial Treasurer touch on today. We've got to get on with it. So the committee was struck. Our four members were appointed, and the request was placed to the opposition in a sense of fairness, in a sense of democracy, representing all the interests of the province – in a sense representing all the political ideologies and in proportion to the people's will in their election of individuals to this House – to put together a team to deal with this issue: get on with it, bring it to the House, deal with it, and get on with the question. Fair, democratic. But, Mr. Speaker, the two opposition caucuses declined to participate. Well, now what do we do? Well, let's forget it; let's run on the old boundaries? No, had we done that, I can assure you that members of the opposition caucus would have been before the Supreme Court in an instant saying that we were undemocratic and unfair. Now they're saying we're going through with the process and it's undemocratic and unfair. Mr. Speaker, what are we to do?

I submit to the House that the object of the exercise here is to get the job done. Mr. Speaker, that was the object of our committee. It is the object of Bill 55, but unfortunately is not the object of the amendment proposed by the Official Opposition, nor the subamendment, on which I am speaking today, presented by the third-party opposition. We hear terms like “gerrymandering” thrown around. The hon. member mentioned the word “dictatorship.” We hear “unfair,” “undemocratic,” all types of terms cast in the negative towards a government that is attempting to deal with a major issue before our province that has been dealt with, has to be done so we can turn the page and move on to the next order of business, the economy. The economy, the economy, the economy, the economy. Jobs, jobs, jobs. Fix it, fix it, fix it. Yet we were in here till 1 o'clock in the morning last night talking about the minutiae of whether this is fair or unfair, democratic or undemocratic when we should be after it, get it off the agenda, and move on with the next issue.

The term “gerrymandering” is mentioned most often by those who for some reason feel that their particular constituency has been destroyed or damaged. I would remind those members who use the term gerrymandering that they don't own their constituency – in fact it's the other way around; their constituency perhaps owns them – and until such time as they are re-elected in another constituency, which won't happen until after the next election, the current boundaries have not changed. The boundaries of Edmonton-Belmont are not any different today than they were last week, and when Bill 55 receives Royal Assent from His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, the boundaries of Edmonton-Belmont won't change. That doesn't happen until the election, and it's up to the Member for Edmonton-Belmont to contest that seat. Given the eloquence of his oratory today, I really hope he gets back in here. I think it would be good to have the Official Opposition there with one member in it; I think that would be fine.

Mr. Speaker, when we distill all the arguments pro and con and all the rhetoric and all the things that have gone on in the past, this issue is distilled finely and narrowly into doing the work that we have been assigned as legislators. That's why we're here. That's what the 35,000 or the 30,000 or the 29,000 – whatever the number of thousands of residents who put us in this place – put us here for individually and then corporately: to get on with the job of making decisions.

The legislative agenda in this session is quite short. Really we're dealing with two issues so far. We've got Bill 55, and we've got some supplementary estimates. There may be a few other things that emerge from the government's agenda over the course of the days, but right now I see two issues. We've been asked by the people of Alberta to decide two things: a new map for electoral discussions in the next provincial election and some money so we can meet the needs of the people of Alberta from a social, educational, and a variety of other standpoints. That's it. That's why we're here: to make these kinds of decisions. We make those decisions fairly, and we make them democratically. Despite what some people feel individually in their own local areas or because of divergent political ideologies, Mr. Speaker, that's what happens here.

It's fair, because on March 20, 1989, 200 or 300 of us went out to the people of Alberta and said, “If you pick me, I'll represent your interests.” As a result of that exercise, you've got 83 individuals here elected fairly, purely, through a secret vote just like we did yesterday, elected fairly and democratically in a secret vote.

MR. EVANS: And who was that?

MR. MAIN: I believe it was the Member for Edmonton-Parkallen, but thank you for raising it.

So it's a fair process. We got here fairly; we got here democratically. I ran against a couple of individuals from other political parties. I got more votes than they did, so I'm here. In the next constituency somebody from some other political party got more votes than the person who represented our party, and he's here. What could be more fair than that? What could be more democratic than that?

Having had that established on March 20, 1989, there then comes a series of responsibilities, and we all know from our study in civics and just from observation of day-to-day goings on that the folks who have the most in this, who are of one political persuasion, form the government. Issues are brought forward out of that government agenda. It's put to the rest of the assembled representatives, and decisions are made. In the purest form of democracy it is those elected individuals who present the ideas to the people and who then ask the other elected representatives to make a decision. Mr. Speaker, what we've got here is democracy at its purest. Despite the arguments of some members of the opposition, we're not where some outside agent comes in and views the whole situation from an electoral standpoint with their point of view and then imposes that undemocratically on this Assembly. That would be one way of doing it. Conversely, the actual elected individuals would present those choices to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, as I'm having this discussion here in the Assembly, it strikes me that in actual fact the subamendment we're dealing with is worded absolutely the wrong way. In fact what we've got here is absolutely pure democracy, where those elected individuals not only are responsible for making the decision but also for presenting the case for that decision before us.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not a big fan of Bill 55. I looked through this, and in my own area I have some difficulties. There are some questions that I have. I certainly was astonished with the maps produced by both the interim Liden commission and the subsequent four, five, six, or however many maps there were from the final report. I was astonished at that, but there was no recourse at all there: none, zero. There was no recourse to that map and no submissions, but here in this forum had the opposition chosen to participate in a fair, open, democratic fashion, they would have

meaningful input into making whatever changes they may feel. Now there are some of them in that caucus that are caught in a bit of a jam: oh, Bill 55 is an immoral, horrible, gerrymandering exercise in dictatorship, but we'd like to make some amendments if we could. Now it becomes a bit of a problem. How do we deal with this when the whole caucus and the party and the leader and all the rest of them oppose the process yet they'd like to amend it? Now we get trapped in the fairness and democracy issue.

5:20

I submit, Mr. Speaker, that in a fair, open democracy they should have the opportunity to make amendments and convince the House that in fact their amendments to this process do make sense for a variety of reasons. I'm sure there will be amendments coming forward in a variety of ways, and we'll look forward to a full, open discussion of those.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker, I go back to mention again that the responsibility placed on each and every member of this Assembly by virtue of his or her being elected democratically is to deal with tough issues and make decisions. As MLAs we are often criticized for making decisions, and oftentimes that criticism splits along partisan lines. We talk about MLA remuneration, as an example: put that in the hands of an independent commission. Well, granted that's not a bad idea, but ultimately that decision comes to this room where a decision yea or nay is made. It is the same with boundaries: put it to an independent commission. Fine, but ultimately it comes to this room for a decision.

Mr. Speaker, before us today is Bill 55 that lays out the boundaries and the populations of 83 constituencies. When the next election is called sometime between now and March 20, 1994, there will be an opportunity for the people of Alberta to select from among perhaps 200 or 300 candidates the representatives who will come to this Chamber, and once again the democratic process will be at play. Once again the purest of democracies will take place. From that point forward whichever political party or whichever group of individuals is most successful as a result of that exercise will be faced with the same situation we're faced with today, and that is: let's make a decision; let's not dish it off; let's not have another study; let's not have another report; let's not have any more input; let's not have another commission; let's not have another dog and pony show; let's not have another traveling road show; let's make the decision.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I am today urging members to reject the subamendment, and when we get past that, I'd urge we reject the amendment and then move on and move into the further study of this Bill. I believe we have an opportunity to act responsibly, to do the work that we've been elected to do and hired to do, which is to represent the interests of the people of Alberta. Those interests, my people tell me in Edmonton-Parkallen, are: get on with it, Doug; make the decision; quit diddling around; don't delay; don't fool around; stop studying; stop it, stop it, stop it; make the decision; draw the line in the sand to say done; and move on to that next agenda item of business, which is dealing with the important issues that this Legislature, our province, and our people face, the issues raised today by the hon. Provincial Treasurer dealing with economic matters. It's on our legislative agenda, but as long as we've got subamendments here, as long as we've got amendments, and as long as we've got delaying tactics, tactics designed to prolong the agony and delay decision-making, we're not serving our population, we're not serving our constituents, and we're not serving democracy.

For that reason, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that we defeat the subamendment, that we bring it to a vote right away and defeat the thing, and get on with the process of making decisions.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While I had some concern with the election of the Member for Edmonton-Parkallen yesterday, today I'm beginning to realize how nice it will be to have him sitting in that Chair and therefore relatively less available to speak. [interjections] I knew that once he takes that position he will rise above the give-and-take of daily political debate. Surely that's why his backbenchers voted for him.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to rise to support the subamendment and to emphasize that the course of action decided upon by the government is not fair and does not lend itself properly to the democratic principles that should be involved in establishing boundaries which are so fundamental to the manner in which our representative democracy will work. The proof can be found in two forms of argument. One is a logical argument, and the other is observation of the reality of the outcome. It is apparent to those of us who have viewed the ridings maps that there are some serious questions as to what criteria certain riding decisions were based upon. Of the two ridings in Calgary that were eliminated, both were opposition ridings. I wonder if that's a coincidence.

The new Calgary-Elbow riding, which of course is the riding which is substantially currently represented by the new Premier, has an astonishing width for an urban riding: nine kilometres. These nine kilometres are stretched, of course, because of a very interesting decision to draw a long spike out of that riding which I suppose coincidentally takes in the Premier's own home.

In Athabasca-Lac La Biche the largely Liberal polls of Lac La Biche have been excised and added to a new riding. One of the members of the committee, of course, is the Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche. In Taber-Warner, another riding of a committee member, the ridings have been left practically unchanged even though neighbouring ridings were substantially changed and in fact Fort Macleod was obliterated.

A second argument that could be used to question the fairness of this process is a logical argument. If this process now, as has been argued by the Member for Edmonton-ParkAllen and many of his colleagues, is so fair, then why was it that when the process was originally structured, an all-party committee of the Legislature wasn't proposed at that time? Why instead was it proposed to have a commission that was formed from representatives of varying expertise and varying perspectives from the public? Clearly, Mr. Speaker, to now argue that this new process is fair and democratic is to argue an argument of convenience, I would assume, or to admit that they were wrong in the first place. I would argue that they certainly weren't wrong in the first place and that they are now arguing from the very strong position of convenience. It's about as strong as many of their arguments get these days.

5:30

If we follow the process, Mr. Speaker, one of the great ironies is that the commission established by these government members themselves in the original instance could have come to exactly these conclusions if they had been given the same guidelines that the members gave their own political committee in the final analysis, but what the members did without understanding the process or attempting to analyze the process properly was give impossible guidelines to the original commission. They were limited by the fact that they had to meet the guidelines established

by the Supreme Court decision, and they were limited by the fact that they couldn't produce three more Calgary-Edmonton ridings as this government committee finally did. What they did was say: somehow we'll wend our way through this. The Member for Taber-Warner in his genius said: you know what; we're going to allow this commission to set up rural/urban ridings.

Now, I would say there's probably a political agenda behind that. If we take some of those rural votes that voted against us . . .

Mr. Speaker, it's 5:30.

[At 5:31 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Thursday at 2:30 p.m.]