

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, February 11, 1993**  
Date: 93/02/11

2:30 p.m.

[Leave granted; Bill 314 read a first time]

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Let us pray.

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

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

Amen.

head: **Notices of Motions**

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

Be it resolved that the debate on third reading of Bill 55, Electoral Divisions Statutes Amendment Act, 1993, shall not be further adjourned.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House.

### Bill 349

#### Emblems of Alberta Amendment Act, 1993

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce Bill 349, the Emblems of Alberta Amendment Act, 1993.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill would recognize the bull trout, which is near extinction, as the fish emblem of Alberta, thereby promoting awareness of the value of our trout resources as well as the importance of preserving our Eastern Slopes watershed.

[Leave granted; Bill 349 read a first time]

### Bill 295

#### Auditor General Amendment Act

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 295, the Auditor General Amendment Act.

[Leave granted; Bill 295 read a first time]

### Bill 265

#### Interprovincial Lottery Amendment Act

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 265, a Bill entitled Interprovincial Lottery Amendment Act.

This Bill would have the effect of ensuring and allowing the Legislature to review all expenditures and revenue that deal with lotteries.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Leave granted; Bill 265 read a first time]

### Bill 314

#### Income Tax Amendment Act

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 314, the Income Tax Amendment Act, to allow for provision to assist in those situations where the cities in the province are suddenly faced with a very, very tight rental squeeze.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table with the Assembly today four reports. The first is the eighth annual report of the Wild Rose Foundation to March 31, 1992. The second is the 29th annual report of the Alberta Racing Commission to March 31, 1992. The third is the annual review 1990 of licensed gaming in Alberta. The fourth is Compulsive Gambling: General Issues, Treatments, and Policy Considerations, dated February, 1992.

MR. WICKMAN: Finally. Finally.

MR. KOWALSKI: And Flipper's at it again, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TANNAS: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table today the annual report for 1992 of the Alberta Dental Assistants Association. I'd remind hon. members that as there are limited numbers of copies, they may receive one by request.

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

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table four copies of the annual report for the year 1991-92 for the University of Calgary. Also, I'd like to table four copies of the annual report for the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology for the year 1991-92 and might mention that this is their 75th anniversary report.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Environmental Protection.

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to table with the Assembly the 1992 annual report of the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation.

While I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to file with the Assembly responses to Written Question 379 as well as motions for returns 273, 380, 381, and 382.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

DR. WEST: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly one of the more aggressive and progressive reeves in the province of Alberta: from the county of Minburn, Reeve Sid Hinton. He's in the members' gallery. Would you please stand, Sid, and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly five students from the New Sarepta community high school in the Camrose constituency: Tasha Blumenthal, Kristine Swenson, Julie Kostick, Terri-Anne Sanders, and Sharla Bowler. They're seated in the members' gallery. I'd ask that they stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Smoky River, followed by Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure and honour today to have the opportunity of introducing a very

special person, Mr. Tom Thompson. He's president and organizer of the very exciting 1995 Winter Games, which will be held in Grande Prairie. This is going to be a very exciting time for the province of Alberta, and we as Albertans are very fortunate to have a responsible person such as Tom Thompson as its organizer. On behalf of my colleague Bob Elliott and myself I would ask that the . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, I'd remind you that we do not call members by their names. We call them by their constituencies' names.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: I apologize. On behalf of the hon. Member for Grande Prairie I'm very pleased and honoured to ask Mr. Tom Thompson to rise – he's seated in the members' gallery – and receive the usual response of the House.

I have a further guest whom I'm very pleased to introduce. He's a councillor from the village of Girouxville. He's the chairman of the Smoky River Regional Economic Development Board, very active in the community, and certainly a very, very fine person, whom I'm honoured to introduce here today. I'd ask Leonard Limoges to rise and receive the usual fine response of the House.

2:40

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

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly some officers and members of the Society for the Retired and Semi-Retired: Dora McCulloch, Hazel Christenson, Bill Borley, and Ken McKie. They're seated in the public gallery, and I'd ask them to rise and be welcomed by the Assembly.

MR. MAIN: Mr. Speaker, while people are noticing constituents in the gallery, I noticed one of mine, a gentleman who at previous times in his career has been the chairman of the Alberta Gaming Commission, one of the founders of the Heritage Days Festival, a gentleman who is active in political, cultural, and social matters across Edmonton and our province, who's a resident of Edmonton-Parkallen: Mr. Krishan Joshee. I wonder if he would stand and receive a warm welcome today.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce a resident of the county of Lethbridge, a tireless crusader for fairer power pricing throughout the province of Alberta: Mr. Bill Arsene.

head:

### Ministerial Statements

#### Consumer Assistance and Registry Services

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, Albertans want and deserve timely, efficient, and accessible service from their government. That is why as minister responsible for the Government Reorganization Secretariat I'm pleased today to be able to announce the formation of a new government agency which we hope will act as a model for revision of other government services.

A new one-window agency tentatively called Alberta consumer assistance and registry services is being formed under the leadership of our colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The agency will consolidate a number of registry and consumer functions. In doing so, it will bring these services closer to the people of Alberta. This reorganization will also mean more efficient service delivery thereby assisting us in dealing with the

physical situation of our Alberta government. Mr. Speaker, the Premier has made a commitment to finding innovative and creative solutions to our problems, and the formation of Alberta consumer assistance and registry services is part of that vision.

Included in the new agency will be the consumer service functions of the corporate registry from the old consumer and corporate affairs department, the motor vehicles division from the old solicitor general's department, the land titles and personal properties registry from the old Attorney General's department, the vital statistics registry from the Department of Health, and the land related information system from the old forestry, lands and wildlife department.

Mr. Speaker, all Albertans are regular consumers of these types of services primarily because of legislative requirements for engaging in certain individual or business activities or through consumer concerns about maintaining a fair balance in the marketplace. Through this new agency as hundreds of existing storefront locations across the province, Albertans will be able to improve their access to these services. The taxpayers will save money through the consolidation of these services, which will be available via one-stop shopping, including vehicle licences, property title searches, society registrations, birth certificates, and consumer education materials, to name but a few.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion the establishment of Alberta consumer assistance and registry services under the capable direction of the Minister of Municipal Affairs is a demonstrable indication of the new directions this government is setting through providing a more customer-focused, taxpayer-sensitive service.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I didn't have an opportunity to peruse this before, as is the custom in the House. I got it as the minister was talking about it, probably a mix-up, I'm sure.

Just listening to the minister and glancing at it, it seems that they're advocating one-stop shopping. Now, I certainly have been advocating much more efficiency in terms of government services, Mr. Speaker, and at first blush – and I'll say at first blush because it really is that – I think there are probably some good ideas here. I say to the minister of government reorganization, though, that if the government is serious about saving taxpayers' money and becoming more efficient, I want to give him some other ideas. We spend almost \$700 million a year on various boards and commissions in this province, and I want to say that I believe some of them are redundant. The Gaming Commission, the Racing Commission, and the Grain Commission I'm sure we could live without. That could be a big chunk of change, and we have to move on that.

Also, then, Mr. Speaker, after we go through and save the money, if he wants to become more efficient, let's take it away from patronage, and let's take it away from people, whether it be the Premier or anybody else putting people on these boards, and open it up to open competition and have an all-party committee look into that. We'd get the best people there. That will really increase a lot of efficiency. So I'm just giving him some other important ideas.

On first blush I accept what they're doing here. We'll obviously want to look at it in a little more detail.

Thank you.

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, let me take this opportunity to apologize to the hon. Leader of the Opposition. My staff erred. I was under the impression that he was going to have it an hour ago, and I extend my deepest apologies for not extending this courtesy to the hon. member.

head: **Oral Question Period**  
**Provincial Fiscal Policies**

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I noticed a nice little order in council where the cabinet has agreed to borrow another half a billion dollars. What's half a billion dollars to a government like this? It's almost as much as the NovAtel fiasco. Let's put this in perspective: that brings the total borrowing since last April to \$4.3 billion. Now, we used to have Magic Johnston as the Treasurer, or Deficit Dick, whichever one you wanted; now we have Jim Dithering. He says, "Don't worry; we're going to have a plan to deal with it somewhere down the line." Meanwhile, while he dithers, we keep going deeper and deeper in debt, making it much more difficult to deal with the province's finances. That's the reality. My question to the Treasurer is simply this: how can the Treasurer justify borrowing more and more money without even laying out any sort of economic plan? I remind him that they're into their fourth year.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, when the Provincial Treasurer spelled out the budget in April of 1992, he spelled out very clearly that there would be borrowings required in this fiscal year to finance the then estimated \$2.3 billion debt, and now today it's an estimated \$2.75 billion debt. There's no joy in any provincial government, especially this provincial government, having to borrow funds to pay for education, to pay for health care, to pay for social services and the operation of our parks, but our deficit situation requires that we do so. Having done so, we go to the market very carefully and very deliberately.

I'm pleased to inform the members of the House once again that when we went to the European market two weeks ago, borrowing U.S. dollars, we were able to borrow at an almost half of 1 percent spread over what the U.S. Treasury would have borrowed at that day, whereas just a few days before, the province of Ontario, led by an NDP government, had to go and borrow at about one full percentage point, half a percentage point more than Albertans had to pay. Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, that kind of debt, that kind of deficit and the financial requirements in Ontario? Ontario residents will be paying more and more for years and years to come because of the financial predicament the NDP government has got the province of Ontario into.

MR. MARTIN: He may talk quietly and blame Ontario, Mr. Speaker, but if he wants to look at the only AA1 rating in the country, it's in B.C. under an NDP government, not in Alberta. He's very selective in what he wants to say, but it's irrelevant. We're talking about Alberta. That's what we're concerned about. Now, Mr. Speaker, he didn't answer. They still don't have a plan four years into the mandate. We just keep borrowing and borrowing.

Now, I noticed that the Minister of Community Development is doing such a good job with her department that she decided to be Treasurer the other night. She talked about liquidating the heritage trust fund. The Premier said in his leadership that they weren't going to liquidate it. She's doing such a good job, though, that she wants to take over. Now we want to know what the Treasurer thinks about it. Maybe we'll get three different answers. To the Treasurer then: does he plan to sell off the heritage trust fund assets to bring down Alberta's deficit? We're trying to find out what the plan is.

2:50

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, the answer is no. The answer clearly is no. The Minister of Community Development did not say that.

May I just correct the hon. Leader of the Opposition in reminding him that when Alberta went to the Euromarket two weeks ago, we borrowed at a rate 20 points, two-tenths of 1 percent, better than the NDP government of British Columbia.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, so you got \$10 million more than B.C. Isn't that wonderful? You have borrowed \$4.3 billion.

Now, I want you to answer the question for once and stop talking about B.C. and Ontario. Where is the economic plan that we were promised? You're in the fourth year of your mandate. You're borrowing money, and you're not telling us how you're going to deal with the finances of the province.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, two answers in fact. One is that the government is going through, with Albertans, a lengthy, extensive, exhaustive process in Toward 2000 Together that's going to bring forward to this Legislature over the next two or three months an economic plan that isn't just out of the government front benches or out of the government caucus; it's designed by, it's built for, and it's built by Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, on the fiscal side, what Premier Klein has promised is that there will be a balanced budget by 1996-97. We are going through a process now through our standing policy committees of having departments spell out their priorities, having them spell out their programs so that all Albertans can see through a public, open process what programs this government delivers and what taxpayers fund. We're going through the Financial Review Commission. We're going through a budget round table that will involve Albertans in a public process in helping us to establish our assumptions on our revenue forecasts and also enable those wealth generators to talk with Albertans, who spend money in education, in health care and social services. So Albertans will help us build that plan to balance the budget between now and the years '96-97.

MR. MARTIN: There they are four years in the mandate, running around to everybody: "Please help us; we don't know what to do. We've screwed it up; you help us." It's absolutely ludicrous. It's unbelievable. We'll see who's going to pay the price for their mismanagement.

### Senior Citizens Programs

MR. MARTIN: The Minister of Municipal Affairs indicated yesterday in the House again that they are considering income testing for seniors renters assistance and property tax rebates. Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to remind people that when we presented a document a while ago dealing with a secret cabinet document, they indicated that they were looking at that along with a lot of other types of programs where they'd be cutting back on seniors. They were embarrassed politically, so then they said: well, we're going to consult with seniors. They set up a minister for seniors. Let's look at what's happened in the meantime: now trial balloons. I want to go back to that paper and say that it was clear that the intended cutoff income for the renters and property taxes was \$19,000 per year. That must be the wealthy seniors that he's talking about: \$19,000 per year. I want to ask the minister simply this. Is \$19,000, then, the cutoff point that the minister is considering for renters assistance and property tax rebate? Are they the wealthy seniors he's talking about?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, during the budgetary process, we had stated that everything comes up on the table. We will be consulting with Treasury and with all departments as we go through the process. My department, which has about \$250 million worth of

programs that go toward seniors, will be working with the seniors secretariat in discussion with the minister responsible for community services and with the Treasurer in working through the budgetary process with all programs, not just seniors programs.

If the hon. Leader of the Opposition had been paying attention, he would have known that these questions came up. They weren't trial balloons sent out by Municipal Affairs; they were questions that came up in an open, public process. When my department came up in front of the cabinet committee – and the media and the public were there; I see some of them in the galleries today – those questions were brought forward. We are not afraid to answer questions, but we do not like innuendos that a process has taken place without consultation when indeed it hasn't.

MR. MARTIN: Well, if you don't mind the questions, why don't you answer them? I asked about \$19,000.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to go back, then, to another minister. The minister responsible for seniors is an expert in everything. If we look back to this document from cabinet, we see that they've already moved on it. They've cut extended health benefits, eliminated the home heating program, and now they're talking about cutting help to homeowners and renters. Next in that plan, if you look at it, is income testing for Blue Cross and Alberta health care premiums. My question now to the minister responsible for seniors is simply this: will the minister confirm that income testing for Blue Cross and Alberta health care premiums is being considered for seniors?

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, that is actually a question for the Minister of Health, and since I'm the Acting Minister of Health, I'll take that question on advisement.

Through my own department – and perhaps the chairman for our seniors secretariat can supplement my answer – we are consulting with seniors. There has been an extensive consultation process already, and before we take any action we will make sure that seniors are with us in understanding what programs there are. We're under review for every program.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, this minister is supposed to be the minister responsible for seniors, and by her not answering that question, I have to take it as fact that they are considering these cuts in the seniors programs. [interjections] Okay; then we'll give the minister a chance to answer the question. What I'm suggesting is happening here is that we've had these boondoggles like NovAtel, Myrias, GSR. We've had provincial employees paying the price for this government's mismanagement, health care workers, and now seniors. This is what this is all about.

All right; to the minister then: will she give her unequivocal assurance that there will not be further cutbacks in seniors programs? Will she stand in the House and say that, if she can?

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, this minister has a very high priority for seniors. We are working together with the Department of Health, with the departments of social services and Municipal Affairs. We're working together in coming together with a budget. We're under budget review, and I cannot give any guarantee.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, a year ago the provincial . . . [interjections] Nice to be back. Nice to be welcomed back by the New Democrats.

MR. McINNIS: Bag lots of corporate cash?

MR. DECORE: We're ready to fight the election. I hope you are. [interjections]

### Speaker's Ruling Relevance

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order.

The time for question period is limited, hon. members, and the Chair has a big, long list. There was a forest of arms going up, people allegedly wanting to ask questions. Why don't you make time for it?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

### 3:00 Senior Citizens Programs (continued)

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, a year ago the provincial government unilaterally, without warning, without notice to the agencies that represent senior citizens in this province, cut back their benefits in the area of health care. The response by Albertans and those senior citizens was resounding. The government promised, they vowed, they undertook that this would never happen again, that they would go through a consultative process. Well, it has happened again. The minister appears before a committee and talks about cutbacks in rents for seniors and subsidized taxes. My first question is to the minister responsible for seniors. The minister a year ago stood in this Assembly and expressed concern about the plight, the fact that there had to be consultation with seniors. I'd like the minister to tell Albertans, particularly those 100,000 Albertans represented by these agencies, why there has been no consultation, why there has been no contact with these agencies that deal with seniors. That's your responsibility.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely incorrect. There has been open consultation ongoing through the seniors secretariat, through the Council on Aging. There has been consultation through the past minister throughout the province. There has been open consultation, and it's continuing.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, the government took seniors by surprise last year, and they got burned. They're taking seniors by surprise again this year. Just tell us, Madam Minister: what's the process going to be, and what's the plan? What are the cutbacks in benefits going to be? Tell us what the truth is.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, I've answered that question from the other member.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, the chairman of the Seniors Advisory Council was present when the minister stood up and talked about cutbacks on seniors' rents and subsidized taxes. I'd like to ask that same chairman to stand and tell Albertans the kind of advice he gave to the minister and to his colleagues, whether or not he warned them that the consultative process had to be a strong one, a good one and a proper one, and that this isn't going to be the same thing as last year where you ram something down the throats of seniors. Tell us that.

MR. MUSGROVE: First off, Mr. Speaker, I would like to correct the hon. member. There were no cutbacks last year; the year before last there were. Secondly, I didn't hear the minister say that there would necessarily be any reductions. I heard him say that everything was on the table and that there could be. Thirdly, our council is a very strong advocate for the consultation process, and of course we're going to be into that before anything is done.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Premier.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, just to supplement the supplement. I would like to refer the hon. leader of the Liberal Party to some statements he made just recently: brutal cuts a must, says Decore.

"I'm going to cut, brutally," the Liberal leader said yesterday during an editorial board meeting with *The Edmonton Sun* . . . Decore hasn't ruled out a provincial sales tax . . . The Grit boss says that it makes more economic sense to turn little-used and expensive rural active-treatment hospitals . . .

Brutal cuts. [interjections]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order.  
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Parkallen.

### Civil Service Downsizing

MR. MAIN: Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the deputy premiers. Recently the Deputy Premier, the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services, made a ministerial statement in this Chamber and described in some detail the plan the government has to encourage people who work for it to seek work elsewhere, a voluntary settlement agreement, VSA, as it's called. Well, that seemed like a good idea. I understand that some people may take the government up on that. However, today we see the federal government musing about changes in unemployment insurance regulations and provisions that may cause a problem here. I want to know from the Deputy Premier if we do have a problem.

MR. KOWALSKI: Well, Mr. Speaker, there is and there isn't a problem with respect to this. First of all, just to bring all members up to date in terms of what's happening with the voluntary separation agreement since the day we announced it, as of noon today we've had 2,884 calls from members of the public service in the province of Alberta. That's significant. That's about 12, 13 percent of the total manpower component that we have. Nearly 2,200 individuals have arranged to have a meeting with the vested interests within the various departments that we have.

This is an issue. This morning both the Premier and the Deputy Premier, the Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs, were in contact with the federal government. Perhaps my colleague the Deputy Premier, the Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs, might be able to add some additional information, the latest information that we have with respect to this.

MR. MAIN: Well, the Deputy Premier has anticipated my supplementary question. We hear the other Deputy Premier, who was with the Premier down east while this VSA discussion was going on, returning and talking about a new relationship of co-operation between the federal government and the Alberta government. I wonder if it's going to bear fruit in this instance.

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, as my colleague has indicated, we have had communication with the federal government. We've communicated both with the Deputy Prime Minister's office and with the office of Mr. Bernard Valcourt, who is the minister responsible at the federal level. It is important to make it very clear, as my colleague just did but I'd like to reinforce it, that there is a problem and there isn't a problem. It depends upon when one exercises the early retirement program itself. In the event that it is exercised prior to April 4, I understand, prior to the new legislation taking effect, there will not be a problem. I should share with hon. members that I have communicated with the Deputy Prime Minister's office both verbally and by way of letter indicating our concern.

Quite frankly, we think this is a very humanitarian way to deal with downsizing. We in government are involved in that, as are a number of private-sector organizations, and we want to make sure that every extra courtesy and humanitarian approach is exercised as we go through this process of downsizing. We are hopeful, recognizing the large volumes of people that have contacted the offices as it relates to the registration for information. Again, as my colleague has indicated, we want to make sure that we do have all the facts for them and would hope to have that very soon.

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

### Violence against Women

MR. CHIVERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Justice. Many Albertans have taken exception to the comments of a Court of Queen's Bench justice in delivering sentence yesterday on a man convicted of assaulting his common-law wife. The judge imposed a 90-day sentence for assault and reportedly went on to suggest that a longer sentence would have been appropriate if the victim had been a stranger rather than the common-law wife. This sends a message that assaulting one's wife is not as grave a matter as assaulting a stranger. Is the minister having his department review this case with an eye to appealing the sentence?

MR. FOWLER: Mr. Speaker, I just learned of the case this morning myself and have not had the opportunity to discuss it with the departmental people or the Crown attorneys who were involved in the matter. I think it would be inappropriate for me to discuss in a public, open forum what action I would be taking whilst we are in an appeal period.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. CHIVERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The circumstances of the case also suggest that perhaps some judges are not yet sensitive to the seriousness of wife assault and bring disrepute on the legal system by making such comments. I'm wondering what steps the minister is prepared to take to make sure that judges finally get the message that an assault is an assault is an assault.

MR. FOWLER: Mr. Speaker, I do not disagree for one second with the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona that an assault is an assault. However, at the same time, I'm not ready to bring down my own judgment that there has been in fact a miscarriage under this case. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona has likely read far more cases than I have read and is knowledgeable of the fact that the précis one gets in a daily newspaper may not be that on which we should be basing an opinion.

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

### 3:10 Canmore Alpine Development Company Ltd.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, last month the Minister of Municipal Affairs pushed MPI aside and intervened directly to cut a special deal over some MPI land in Canmore, a deal with none other than the president of the Premier's constituency association. A member of the MPI board resigned in the midst of this deal. To the Premier: what assurance can the Premier give us that he

himself or some of his staff did not personally direct the Minister of Municipal Affairs to intervene to fix this deal for this particularly well-connected Conservative friend?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I can give this Legislature every assurance that I had no involvement whatsoever with this particular transaction.

MR. MITCHELL: We found earlier this week that sometimes the Premier's staff does things that he doesn't know about.

To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: what rationale can the minister provide for why he or his department specifically relaxed the conditions on the sale of this land to the benefit of this friend of the Premier's?

DR. WEST: There was absolutely no relaxing of any part of the agreement that was made with the CADCO lands. The reasons for selling the property were to maximize the dollar return to the ratepayers of Alberta, some 6 and a half million dollars, to promote tourism, and to help the planning authority in the area, the town of Canmore, who was very supportive of it. To protect the environment, this deal had many carve-outs from the original agreement in that it took lands away. There were less lands in this agreement than when it started in 1990. This leaves the door open for future development in the Canmore area, and the authority, the town of Canmore, its council, and area, will make the decisions on future building and construction in the area.

#### Free Trade

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the minister of agriculture. Another major and positive ruling has come down in favour of Canada under the dispute resolution process under the free trade agreement between Canada and the United States relative to the subject of the Canadian Wheat Board's practices relative to the export of durum wheat into the United States of America. I wonder if the hon. minister of agriculture could advise the Assembly as to the impact that ruling will have on Canadian durum producers and Alberta producers in particular.

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member quite rightly points out that there has been another success for agriculture under the free trade agreement, and that adds to quite a list. Contrary to what the members opposite seem to feel, sales of durum wheat to the U.S. have gone up rather dramatically over the last two years. Although Alberta is not a big exporter of durum wheat, we did enjoy an increase from \$10 million to \$12 million while Canada as a whole went from \$48 million to approximately \$62 million. So it's certainly a positive from an agricultural perspective.

MR. HORSMAN: In view of the fact that reports are that the U.S. wheat producers are joining with the other neanderthals in opposing the North American free trade agreement, I wonder what steps the hon. minister of agriculture will take to ensure that this will continue to progress so that Canadians can have access to the full North American market for all our agricultural and other manufactured goods and products in the North American free trade agreements now under way?

MR. ISLEY: We will continue, Mr. Speaker, to work with the federal government and the many friends we have in agricultural organizations in the United States who are not protectionist to

ensure this leads to a freer market on the North American continent.

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

#### Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development. When labour organizations objected to the government announcement that Jake Thygesen would be appointed the Chair of the Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board, they had reason to be concerned. Lately when complaints have been made to the board about uncertified and unqualified workers doing jobs that for safety reasons are required to be performed by tradesmen, the response coming back from the board workers is that they've been told not to rock the boat. Now, to the minister: will the minister tell the Assembly if he condones employers breaking the law and risking the safety of the public by using unqualified workers for jobs that are required to be performed by certified tradespeople?

MR. ADY: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is, I suppose, casting some aspersion on the chairman of the apprenticeship board. Frankly, I would have to take issue with that. Mr. Thygesen has acted very responsibly, to the best of my knowledge, representing the chairmanship of that board. I would just have to take issue with that. I have no reason to believe otherwise.

MR. SIGURDSON: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Thygesen's company, Thygesen Holdings Ltd., has been contracted to provide plumbing and heating work at Banff's Rimrock inn. Today I'll file with the Assembly copies of a statutory declaration showing that Thygesen Holdings used unqualified workers and didn't follow the required apprentice to journeyman ratios. I also have another affidavit that shows that Mr. Thygesen knew this, as he received weekly reports from his jobsite superintendent on matters relating to the manpower qualifications. My supplementary to the minister: would the minister agree that it is outrageous that the Chair of the body governing certification standards is violating the very law that he is supposed to uphold, and further will the minister now tell the Assembly what he intends to do about it?

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, I'll certainly be interested in receiving the documents that he is tabling. Again, let me say that in my meetings with Mr. Thygesen I've found him to be a very strong advocate of the apprenticeship program, of the labour movement, of the protection of workers. I just find difficulty accepting the fact that there's some discrepancy there.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

#### Family Court Proceedings

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday we will be celebrating Family Day, but I note also that we've just passed the 40th anniversary of the creation of family court in this jurisdiction. Albertans with family problems, whether it's divorce, custody, child welfare, or young offenders, are faced with a confusing array of different courts. My question to the Minister of Justice: will the minister detail his plans to simplify and unify those courts which deal with family matters?

MR. FOWLER: Mr. Speaker, I wasn't aware that we had a plan in process to do what the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo is requesting. There are a number of levels of courts in Alberta, all of which can deal with family matters, dependent a great deal upon the applicant to those courts. I would be pleased to receive any recommendations or suggestions from the hon. member which would assist us in simplifying these matters where we can in accordance with all of the federal and provincial legislation which we must adhere to in respect of the courts of this province.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the invitation from the minister.

My question to the minister is: would he consider setting up a task force, as had been a number of years ago prior to the amalgamation of the trial division and district courts? That process was a very successful one, and my question would be whether the minister would consider setting up a similar task force to achieve this important purpose of unifying family court issues.

MR. FOWLER: Having received the suggestion from the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, most certainly we would give it consideration.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

#### Sales Tax

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've received a few calls in the last few days from irate constituents who are concerned that there are plans being put in place for a sales tax. I realize that the Premier has said: no sales tax.

#### Speaker's Ruling Repetition

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. This is the fourth day this week this question has been asked. [interjections] Well, we'll see what the question is.

3:20

#### Sales Tax (continued)

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad that you can give me a chance to be able to reiterate some of the questions that my constituents are asking.

I realize that the Premier has said: no sales tax. I'm pleased with that, but there just seems to be some real insidious little rumours going around in my constituency. Mr. Speaker, my constituents are really opposed to any sales tax, like I am, and I want the Treasurer to put an end to these horrible rumours of introducing a sales tax in Alberta and ask that he indicate once and for all . . . [interjections]

#### Speaker's Ruling Repetition

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. [interjections] Order please.

The Chair heard the Premier pledge specifically on three previous days this week that there would be no sales tax. [interjections] Order please. That question is out of order. We will move on to the next question.

Edmonton-Highlands. [interjections] Order please. [interjections] Order. [interjections] Order please.

The Chair has to advise the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake that her question is not in order today.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, I promise not to say the ST word; okay?

#### Child Prostitution

MS BARRETT: When the current Minister of Family and Social Services was a regular government member, he got up and railed on almost a daily basis about the incredible poverty in his riding. Well, I want to raise an issue of poverty today that might not have come to his attention before, and that's the issue of juvenile prostitution in my riding and in the riding of the Leader of the Official Opposition. During the warm weather a few days ago they were out in droves. I'm sure they're out anyway 24 hours a day but incredibly visible during the warm weather. There is an unbelievable problem with them in the residential communities, Mr. Speaker, committing small crimes. Of course the crime is caused by their pimps and the drug addiction problem that goes with the whole mess. My question to the minister is this: when will that minister conduct an aggressive campaign to get those young prostitutes, 75 percent of whom are estimated to be wards of the government, off the streets and into an alternative lifestyle program?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Family and Social Services.

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I have advised this House of my priorities as the Minister of Family and Social Services, and those are to make sure the handicapped, the seniors, and people who can't fend themselves are top priority in my department. You can be assured I will be doing that. In the past month and a half as the minister I have already visited 12 facilities surrounding Edmonton, facilities, for example, like the Crossroads program, which deals with those specific issues. As the minister I will continue doing that.

Our department is also participating with the city of Edmonton, doing a report. The interim report is filed with the city of Edmonton now, Mr. Speaker. I'm waiting for the final report on that and will continue working very closely with the city on this process.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplementary question.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think about 15 years ago the then social services minister, now I believe the Member for Taber-Warner, took a walk through the inner city at the request of the inner-city people to see about the health needs in the community, the result of which was eventually the establishment of the Boyle McCauley Health Centre, which has served the community very well. I'd like to ask the current Minister of Family and Social Services if he's prepared to take a walk or a drive with me through the area where these 10- and 11-years-olds are to see the problem firsthand and then start an aggressive campaign to get these kids off crack, to which they're instantly addicted, and get them into a better lifestyle program.

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, I am willing to travel with the hon. member anytime my time is available. It's not an area of Edmonton that I'm not familiar with.

Working in northern Alberta, living in northern Alberta, where we have faced a lot of poverty in the last 40 years, I've worked very hard to involve myself to make sure that I assist wherever possible to change the situation, Mr. Speaker. I work on economic activities, social reforms, in fact pushing very hard for major economic activity to stop the poverty in northern Alberta. The hon. NDP indicated that we put a freeze and moratorium on all forestry projects . . . [interjections]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. [interjections]

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

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Point of order after question period.

MR. FOWLER: Mr. Speaker, I wanted to supplement the last answer, please.

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

MR. FOWLER: To the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands. I speak about prostitution because I, too, in my Department of Justice have had it up to my teeth, as Albertans have, as the opposition have, most particularly in relation to child prostitution. All of our prosecutors know that they are to go for the most severe sentence possible where they obtain a conviction on child prostitution. There are to be more charges laid in respect specifically to child prostitution rather than merely prostitution or living off the avails. We have up to four and a half years on a sentence in Calgary, which I think is still somewhere under what they should go to jail for, these robbers of the childhood of these young people who will grow up without any chance at all.

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

#### **Municipal Taxation**

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Because this government pays less and less towards the total cost of education and cuts important programs for municipalities, property tax payers are forced to dig deeper and deeper into pockets that are already empty to make up the shortfall. This problem is made worse in some rural jurisdictions when they go through their new general assessments, with some people's taxes going up as much as 300 and 400 percent. Other problems exist with the separate assessment of the three-acre site, the \$40,000 exemption, and the definition of agriculture and processing as they affect vegetable growers, to name a few. I'd like the minister to tell us what he and his department are doing to monitor and evaluate these concerns to deal with unfairness in the system.

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, we're constantly reviewing the assessment process in the province of Alberta and will continue to do so. I'm well aware of some of the representations that have been made by some of the individuals that were just mentioned here in their businesses and in their various farming operations. We will continue to monitor that to see if there's some flexibility that we can find to fairly address assessment in the province on each and every basis.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are ratepayers' groups being formed in the counties of Two Hills and Barrhead, to name a few, to advocate for citizens on matters relating to assessment, spending, and education. I'm wondering what changes to legisla-

tion the minister has planned to help these groups work in a cooperative way with their councils and boards to facilitate the public input and decision-making processes.

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, we've had a lot of representation on the white paper on assessment, and we're just finishing that review at the present time. Of course, Bill 51, that is on the Order Paper and that will not be passed this session, addresses some concerns that were brought forth also that relate back to assessment.

In answer to your question, I will be glad to take any representation from Two Hills or any other jurisdiction in this province from the members and work to a better day in assessment in this province. We need to update the assessment books, we need to move to automation, and we need to bring the assessments up to a present-day consistency across this province. I'm looking forward in this area to better the assessment and taxation in the province of Alberta over the next couple of years.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

#### **Children's Advocate**

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The role and importance of the Children's Advocate cannot be understated. The previous Minister of Family and Social Services questioned the very authority of this office. We now await the very critical report on child welfare from the Children's Advocate. My questions are to the Minister of Family and Social Services. Will the minister assure this House that this report will be made public immediately and without editing?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, I can indicate to the hon. member that when the report is completed, it will be made available to the public.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I hope without any editing from the department.

Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question to the minister is: will the minister undertake to bring in legislation to make the Children's Advocate responsible to the Assembly so that total objectivity of the office can be maintained?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, of course I'd offer to sit down with the member to discuss this issue further before I'd make any comment on it.

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

#### **3:30 Consumer Assistance and Registry Services**

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today the Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs announced a new concept in one-window delivery of service as part of our overall plan to fundamentally change the way we do business in Alberta. The focus is on improving service to government's number one customer, Albertans. My question to the minister: is the government planning to privatize these services?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, in response to the hon. member, if you'll allow me, I just wish to share some additional information as it relates to the ministerial statement I gave earlier. It has been acknowledged by the leader of the New Democratic Party



that his office did receive the copy that we sent to him at 1:30, but in addition we will put one on his desk in future.

I should indicate to the hon. member also that, as he's indicated, yes, service to Albertans is our number one priority. It's natural that when we do work with delivering services to Albertans, we are going to work with the private sector. So it is a partnership whereby we are going to work with all citizens, we are going to involve the private sector, plus government is going to play a very full and meaningful role under the very capable leadership of the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: A supplemental question?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister again: will you be increasing user fees for services that were previously free to Albertans?

MR. ELZINGA: As the hon. member is aware, there presently are fees charged for a good many of the services that are delivered through these agencies, the agencies being motor vehicles registration, land titles registry, personal property registry, vital statistics, corporate registry, land resources information. The majority of these, if not all, do presently assess fees for these services. That is nothing unusual. If the hon. member or other hon. members have suggestions as to how we can inject greater efficiencies, we're always open to those suggestions. I'm sure the hon. member and the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs are looking forward to those suggestions.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs wishes to augment?

DR. WEST: Yes. I just would like to add that we will be going forthwith to work on a business plan and put the process in place and will be reporting back to the Assembly and to the people of Alberta exactly what the involvement will be with the private sector and where we'll set the fees and that in the future.

**Point of Order  
Clarification**

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Leader of the Opposition on a point of order.

MR. MARTIN: I usually don't bother with points of order, Mr. Speaker, but when I'm misquoted – back to the minister of social services. I'm not sure what inner-city juvenile prostitution has to do with pulp mill development, but the minister said a number of times that I called for a moratorium on pulp mill development. I don't have it here, but we did check that out, and what was said is, a moratorium on all pulp mill development without a proper environmental impact assessment, which clearly changes it.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Written Questions**

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I move that the written questions do stand and retain their places on the Order Paper.

[Motion carried]

head: **Motions for Returns**

MR. DAY: Again, Mr. Speaker, and also thanking the ministers for their good response over the last couple weeks for written

questions and motions for returns, today I do move that the motions for returns do stand and retain their places on the Order Paper.

MR. McEACHERN: Mr. Speaker, that's ridiculous.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. [interjections] Order please. Hon. member, the Speaker is standing.

MR. McEACHERN: Is it not a debatable motion?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: This is not a debatable motion.

MR. McEACHERN: It should be.

MS BARRETT: Did we vote on the question?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: All those in favour of the motion proposed by the Deputy Government House Leader will please say yes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Yes.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The motion carries.

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

**3:40**

[Eight minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Adair	Fowler	Nelson
Ady	Gesell	Orman
Black	Horsman	Paszkowski
Bogle	Hyland	Payne
Bradley	Johnston	Rostad
Brassard	Jonson	Severtson
Calahasen	Kowalski	Shrake
Cardinal	Laing, B.	Sparrow
Clegg	Lund	Stewart
Day	Main	Tannas
Dinning	McCoy	Thurber
Drobot	Mirosh	Weiss
Elliott	Moore	West
Elzinga	Musgrove	Zarusky
Evans		

Against the motion:

Barrett	Hawkesworth	Pashak
Bruseker	MacDonald	Roberts
Chivers	Martin	Sigurdson
Dickson	McEachern	Taylor
Ewasiuk	McInnis	Wickman
Gibeault	Mitchell	Woloshyn

Totals: For – 43 Against – 18

[Motion carried]

head: **Motions Other than Government Motions**

**Pollution**

230. Moved by Mr. Paszkowski:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta urge the government to pursue a policy of inducing companies, communities, individuals, or any other polluters to reduce the amount of pollution they emit by establishing pollution emission levels/limits for polluters, issuing permits to polluters before they would be allowed to emit pollution beyond the established levels/limits, charging a fee for any pollution emitted beyond those levels/limits, and allowing those who do not exceed the pollution limits to market and sell their permits to other polluters.

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

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over a decade ago the threat of nuclear annihilation held the world hostage as distressed individuals considered the terrible uncertainty of the future of mankind. Today with the cold war over – it's part of our history – our world has focused attention upon a different factor that apparently is threatening the existence of life as we know it on this planet. In some cases societal emotions have been stirred to the extent of hysteria with the issue of environment. So-called environmental experts claim that we are doomed to witness natural disasters such as global drought, coastal flooding, destructive storms, and other catastrophic events because of the deterioration of our natural ecosystem due to the influence of human activities.

Today it is not my goal to cast doubt on any of these claims. I'm glad that the environmental movement, if anything, has focused our attention on the environment and has shown to us that we have a responsibility to look after it. I am in full support of the efforts aimed at preserving and maintaining our natural environment as long as these efforts are balanced. So often, Mr. Speaker, governments are pressured into implementing policies and programs with the goal of saving our environment. In the end a large percentage of these policies end up costing taxpayers an enormous and often unnecessary amount of money. What frustrates me is that the goals of these programs could have been reached in a much more effective and cost-efficient way. Because of this, today I would like to propose to the Legislative Assembly a logical and sensible policy that addresses one of the most prominent environmental concerns, and that is emission pollution.

[Mr. Main in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker, my four-part plan is more commonly recognized by the title "emission trading." The ultimate goal behind the motion is to cut back on the emission of pollution into the natural environment through the incentive of tradable pollution permits. I'm a progressive person, and I belong to a progressive caucus. The idea of tradable permits is a progressive idea. Experience shows that if individual communities and companies are afforded the economic incentive, they can be directed to voluntarily achieve desired outcomes. The conceptual idea behind marketable pollution rights was first analyzed by a Canadian economic historian, John Dales, in 1968. Since that time this idea has been the centre of much debate, testing, and refinement in both the United States and Canada.

3:50

Emission trading is an economic alternative to the command and control system of the government regulations now being used to

control the levels of pollution being emitted into our natural environment. In this type of system individuals and corporations comply with the emission regulations established by government, and the way that this is achieved is through the fear of punishment. Under an emissions trading plan the incentive for compliance is saving money. Mr. Speaker, the opposition may argue until they are blue in the face, but I maintain that this would be a better, more efficient, more effective way of controlling pollution emissions. Since this is a relatively new proposal, experience with it is somewhat limited; however, upon examination of the projects that have tested this system in controlling pollution, there is great potential shown.

In order to provide a better understanding of how emission trading works, let me provide the Assembly with a detailed explanation of tradable permits. First of all, using a system of tradable pollution permits, the government would use existing emission regulations to establish overall pollution caps. These caps would represent the total quantity of pollution that would be allowed into the environment, both on the provincial scale as well as on a regional scale. If necessary, the government could periodically use updated data to adjust these pollution levels. These overall pollution caps help to increase the guarantee that there will be no increase in the total amount of pollution. Critics of tradable pollution permits remain ignorant of this fact. They seem to feel that tradable permits are a licence to pollute. This is absolutely not the case.

After all pollution caps are established, the government would issue an appropriate number of permits that represent shares of the total amount allowed. Each individual company or community that is a regular emissions participant in a particular environmental area receives a calculated portion of these permits. Any person or body possessing permits is then free to buy or sell these permits. If a company can lower the amount of pollution it emits into the environment, it would not require the entire number of permits it had originally needed. As a result, it would be free to trade its unused permits to a company that is having difficulty maintaining its pollution emission within the limits it has possessed.

As you can see, the company that is able to sell some of its pollution permits has been successful in reducing the amount of pollution that it emits. Even though the company that has had to purchase more permits may end up polluting more than was originally allowed, its increase in emissions will be offset by the decrease in emissions by the first company. In the end there will be no increase in the total amount of pollution allowed into the atmosphere because of the pollution caps that have been established by government. Furthermore, there is a great incentive for any company to voluntarily reduce its emissions because of the benefit it will receive by the selling of a portion of its permits.

To help guarantee that the rules of this system are being followed, the government would periodically require each pollution source to demonstrate that they have enough permits to cover the amount of pollution that they are emitting. Strict penalties can be instituted by the government for anyone found to be short of the necessary number of permits required for their particular level of pollution emissions.

Mr. Speaker, I'm excited about the potential of this progressive idea in the province of Alberta. Here is one more example of an environmental issue in which we can take the lead over all other Canadian provinces. Not only is this a progressive system, logical and sensible, there are many other benefits associated with its implementation. The first of these is: the policy would reduce pollution control costs by eliminating the need for increased government policing in pollution control and increasing the voluntary move on the part of individuals and companies to reduce

their pollution emissions. Tradable pollution permits have proven to be an effective and efficient way of reducing pollution emissions. Regional tests in both the United States and Canada have shown the program of tradable permits to be very, very favourable.

Companies improve their compliance to pollution emission standards by voluntarily reducing their emissions. Their benefit is the potential of selling some unnecessary pollution permits. Using a system of tradable pollution permits will create a better split of public and private environmental responsibilities. Under a command and control system the government will often disagree with the strategies and technologies implemented by businesses to reduce emissions. This, of course, can lead to an additional form of creativity, which today does not exist.

The information and statistics on pollution emissions sought by government are often considered confidential, and the government's actions to obtain the information is often looked at as being intrusive. However, emission trading allows firms the freedom of discovering their own methods of reducing pollution emissions. An overall goal is to reduce emissions. If business is allowed the freedom to apply whatever technologies or procedures that result in a cost-effective reduction of emissions, then both the government and business are satisfied, with a considerable reduction in tension between the two. Emission trading is a more cost-effective way of controlling and decreasing the amount of pollutants emitted into the natural environment. This argument has been highlighted throughout my presentation.

Rather than the government and ultimately the taxpayer paying to ensure that pollution emission is under control, why not place the burden of this task upon the shoulders of those who are actually doing the polluting? At the same time, if the polluters are given the freedom to voluntarily reduce emissions with the potential for an economic benefit, the overall results will mean less money spent in the policing of pollution control. There is no doubt that this is a more effective and efficient way of dealing with the issue. To cite one example, estimates suggest that the United States has saved \$10 billion to \$13 billion on pollution control through emission trading up until 1989. Studies of other scenarios where emission trading can be applied suggest as high as 22 times over the traditional command and control method of regulating emission pollution.

Emission trading accommodates economic growth without compromising environmental quality. A fear that I have about the environment is not that we may experience regional draught. Even this suggestion is highly speculative. Rather my fear is that in our efforts to manage or use the environment, we implement policies that would discourage the development and enhancement of economic growth.

Using a system of tradable pollution permits would allow the market system to act freely, which ultimately results in more jobs and a better life-style, but the great advantage of the idea of tradable permits is that obtaining a better life-style does not happen at the expense of environmental degradation.

What will it take to implement this type of program, and what will we need to ensure that we can see the benefits of this system? Let me suggest seven things. Mr. Speaker, these suggestions have been developed by the many different individuals and groups who have studied the idea of tradable pollution permits. I share them with the Assembly this afternoon in order to stimulate thinking on this very progressive idea.

In order to implement a system of tradable permits, we must take seven basic steps. First, establish clearly defined goals. You must not merely use emission trading in an effort to maintain the status quo, but the design of this policy should also set concrete

goals of reducing emissions. The success of this program should be judged against these set goals.

Number two, develop a good inventory of emission sources. In order to be effective, the government will have to discover and track all sources of pollution.

Number three, the permit system must be comprehensive. No source of target pollution can be exempt from this trading.

Number four, implement a credible enforcement threat. In other words, establish a severe penalty system of fines such that business will be deterred from exceeding their level of allowable pollution determined by the number of pollution permits that they possess.

Number five, the government must remain consistent with the goals of this program. If the rules and regulations regarding the tradable permits or the pollution cap levels change often and sporadically, businesses will be less likely to commit to this long-term type of a project. The less government involvement, the better the system will work.

Number six, develop a system of emission trading credits and a credit bank. The ERCs are credited when the pollution source reduces its emissions below the level required by law. In order to obtain ERCs, an emission reduction must be permanent, must be beyond their historical levels, and must be capable of being measured. Companies wishing to start up will obtain ERCs by showing a technique or technology that will significantly reduce emissions. Existing companies that earn ERCs may bank them for future use or sell them, as they wish.

#### 4:00

Number seven, any program must be developed with the cooperation and input of all those who are affected. Our government, Mr. Speaker, has shown great initiative when it comes to involving many other sources of input in its decision-making process. If a system of tradable pollution permits is to be successful, we must continue to solicit the opinions and views of as many individual Albertans, companies, and communities as is possible.

Mr. Speaker, I'm excited about the potential of tradable pollution permits. Although this concept may be new to many people in this Assembly, I believe that a close examination of the idea would result in the support of all. I am well aware that implementation of this system in Alberta would require some special adjustments and modifications in order to best suit our needs as a province. I realize this, and I'm not so naive as to believe that we could implement the system tomorrow or even next month. It will take time. Nonetheless, if we take steps now to begin to study this in greater detail, I believe we will discover that this is something that will greatly benefit our entire province. I would hope that the members of this Assembly will support this motion.

Thank you.

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

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise to debate the initiative brought forward by the member today. I thought he did a beautiful job of reading it, and I think whoever wrote it should be proud. I would also like to say that I don't intend to argue till I'm "blue in the face," as the member suggested the opposition might. In fact, I think the "blues" in this Assembly are the ones who are in the Progressive Conservative caucus. He had trouble getting that second word out. He talked about progressive, but in fact there is a conservative element at work here, and I think that's part of the problem that he faces.

I think the idea of tradable emission credits is a good idea to pursue. I think it's one that has enormous potential to solve environmental problems, and I think the member has articulated many of the benefits of it. Where I found his presentation lacking was in an understanding of the way the system works today. It seems to me that until you understand where we are today, you're going to have difficulty understanding how we get to the future. I suppose we have a long, long way to go before we can achieve the ideals to which the member espoused and which I believe I share in the main.

The problem with the state of regulation of emissions of pollutants today in Alberta is it's an open-ended system. The system has not changed fundamentally since it was introduced in the early part of the 1970s. Layers of rules, regulations, officials, programs, and so forth have been established, but fundamentally we have a system that allows the regulators to establish emission limits case by case, point by point. They can make a decision to regulate or not regulate on any given point-source emission, and they can set levels at any level they please. Now, obviously I think all members would understand you can't have a system of tradable emission credits unless you have an overall cap on emissions. How can you have an overall cap on emissions when you have a system which is as wide open as the one we have today?

Mr. Speaker, on February 8 I tabled in the Assembly a list of some 345 pollutants which are regulated in other jurisdictions across Canada. The chart that I tabled compared, just for the sake of argument, the regulatory regime in the province of Ontario with the one that's in place in Alberta. What the chart showed is that in the province of Ontario for all but nine of the 345 there were standards, thresholds, point of impingements, air quality criteria; in Alberta there are none. What that means is that many of these pollutants are unregulated in cases where the pollution permits don't specify emission standards. I'll give you, for example, the cement kiln industry. We have two major cement kilns in the province of Alberta which have Clean Air Act permits, and those don't regulate most of the exhaust gases which come out of the plume at all. In fact, recently Alberta Environment was on-site in the Inland Cement kiln in the city of Edmonton at a time I was there on tour inspecting the facility. I noticed that they were taking measurements of the exhaust gases from the plume. I later learned that what's going on here is that Alberta Environment is gathering data to determine what standards to write into the licence for that facility.

Now, there are objective standards which have been developed for different types of industries by the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment, but those aren't written into our regulations in Alberta. Some people have suggested that the standards which apply to incinerators should apply to those cement kilns. The industry says: "Well, no. We can't meet those standards, and they're not appropriate for us." So what's apparently happening in Alberta Environment today is that they are cogitating on what standards to apply to the cement industry based on the actual data which comes out of the burn. In other words, they're going to take the profile of the way the industry operates, and they're going to write the permit around that operating performance. Now, what that means, Mr. Speaker, is that the industry's operating standard becomes the standard of regulation, and Alberta Environment through that process could create new entitlements every day or, as I guess they believe they're doing in this case, regulate the way it's existed in the past simply by writing another permit. So we have no clear standards at the very outset. When the member says in his motion that he's interested in "establishing pollution emission levels" and "limits

for polluters," he better start with the acknowledgment that that doesn't exist today in Alberta. We don't have standards and limits at all.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: That was my first point.

MR. McINNIS: So the government can feel free to add a potentially infinite number of pulp mills, for example. I mean, in the time since the hon. Premier has been a member of this Legislature, there have been two new pulp mills licensed: one of them a bleached kraft mill at Athabasca, Al-Pac, which is under construction; the other the Alberta Energy Company mill at Slave Lake.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: We're talking about the same thing.

MR. McINNIS: There's yet another under contemplation at Grande Prairie.

Well, you know, the member protests that he did make that point.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: The first point.

MR. McINNIS: What I think he doesn't understand, though, is that it goes case by case in the province of Alberta, and there are hundreds and hundreds of them for which there are no limits whatsoever. One hopes, you know, that when you have change in the province of Alberta, and change is important in this area, that these problems will be addressed. Now, I find when I look at the draft regulations published under the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act that there is very little change in the system. I wouldn't say none; there are standards proposed for ozone-depleting substances such as CFCs, halon, that sort of thing, but very little really in the way of additional regulation. So it is the case that we have a long way to go before we can ever get to that type of system.

Now, I think one of the problems that needs to be addressed in this whole area is establishing who gets the initial capital value of tradable emission credits. I mean, it's one thing to say that you can reduce pollution by having these things bought and sold in the marketplace. In the United States, I understand, they're sold through exchanges in the way that stocks and commodities are traded. But who gets the initial capital value? I think that's a very important point of principle that should be established before you get into a system. If a given company has the right to, let's say, emit a hundred tonnes of sulphur dioxide in a day, that's an economic value that can be sold. That company can go out of business tomorrow and sell that right to whoever they please. I think we need a system to understand that when we set these limits, first of all, they have to be done in a way that protects the health and safety of the public, not the operating requirements of industry, because the way I describe what's being done at Inland Cement today, it's the health of the industry that's being looked after, not necessarily the health of the public. So you establish those overall levels on an air shed basis or a watershed basis with good scientific research as to what can safely be absorbed. Once you have that level, then you have to have a system of allocation.

#### 4:10

Now, I submit a market-driven system would be the fairest way to do it. In other words, I don't think it would be fair to simply say, "Well, we have industries that have established levels of pollution, and we're going to sanction those, and then we're going to give them the right to trade them," because that creates a capital

value in the hands of the holder. I think that the public which has to bear the cost of pollution, the cost of pollution control, cleanup, and the health effects should be the beneficiary of that initial capital value. I think that has to be built in the system.

The second point I'd like to make, and I've hinted at it already, is that the levels that are set have to be set based on a good understanding of the way human health and the health of the ecology is affected by pollution. We don't have that. In the environmental impact assessments I've seen, human health impact is a very small part of it. In the northern river studies, for example, where they're trying to figure out what the effect of all of this pulp mill pollution is in the Peace and Athabasca river systems, there are very little resources and money available to study the impact on human health. We don't know the human health impact of working in a pulp mill or even living in the vicinity of one. That applies to sour gas plants and all of the rest of it. So you have to have those established, based on a very good understanding of the way the ecosystem works and the way that harmful pollution gets within that system.

I think it's important that when we do that, as the member indicated, there have to be severe and predictable consequences of exceeding pollution control levels. Now, in his motion he said that he was interested in charging a fee for pollution emitted beyond those levels. I think "fee" is the wrong word. I think when we talk about penalties, we don't mean something we can sort of expect to buy your way through. What we mean is that we treat this as a serious legal infraction and that the type of enforcement that comes understands that what we're talking about is potentially a great deal of harm to a lot of people.

The other point I'd like to make is that we spend an enormous amount of money servicing the needs of polluters in government already, which is a deadweight cost to the taxpaying public of Alberta. The standards and approvals branch in Alberta Environment is budgeted this year to spend \$4.7 million. That's an enormous amount of money, and the revenue offsetting that is zero. Government does license and permit all kinds of things. We had an announcement today about how we're going to consolidate the issuance of licences and so forth in single agencies and help them be established in all kinds of rural areas. There are fees associated with all of those licences and permits. If you want to get a licence to drive a car or get married or incorporate a society or whatever you do, the government charges a fee to offset that. Why we don't charge any fee whatsoever for permits under the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, or what would become the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act I don't know. I think there should at least be cost recovery in terms of those permits quite aside from the capital value of them.

I think we need to exercise some care. I think the member's idea is a good one; it's worth pursuing. I hope it doesn't die after today's discussion, that we get some work done on the parameters that he has mentioned and some of the ones that I have. I think if we do that, we'll have something that's worth implementing for the sake of all of the people of this province and future generations to come.

Thank you.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, isn't it?

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to be able to participate in this debate. I would like to congratulate the member for presenting Motion 230. I believe that in fact it is quite progressive and it is quite enlightened. I would like to offer my support and the support of my caucus for

the concept that is outlined in this motion and discuss briefly what I think some of its strengths are and where I think some work remains to be done.

I would also like to say that a similar proposal was made by my caucus with the introduction in 1991 of the Air Quality Act, which made provision for tradable emission permits and, in addition, dealt with the idea of air pollution control regions. I offer for the members' consideration that idea in this context, because it lends itself very, very well to the tradable emission concept. The idea of air pollution control regions is really an idea of air pollution control sheds; that is, it recognizes that air pollution can have certain geographical delineations, and that recognition can lend itself to flexibility in the establishment of standards and flexibility in the development of tradable emission permits.

The member has argued well for the advantages of this kind of environmental program. I would like to add some of my observations as to its potential advantages. Clearly, tradable permits can encourage emission reductions at a lower cost to society than subsidies or regulations, and it is a much more positive way to do it rather than using the stick, rather than forcing, rather than being negative as so much of our environmental regulation has been and has been seen as necessary. If you will, it unleashes the competitive spirit in a very positive way that would in fact allow competition to support the reduction of pollution in our society rather than, as it now stands, allowing in some senses competition to drive companies to regard pollution and their polluting less rigorously than they otherwise might and in fact should.

Tradable permits would assist in ensuring that target levels for total emissions are attained, because regulations and standards only set limits for individual plants. The total emissions increase when the total number of plants increases. Instead, the tradable permits, particularly when coupled with this idea of air pollution control regions, can focus very clearly on total pollution and will focus governments and industry and regulators not so much on specific limits to a specific plant, although that would have to be considered, but more appropriately on the capacity of our environment, of our atmosphere to take, for example, air emissions.

It would allow the accommodation of growth in an industry without compromising the environment so that more production could occur in an industry with a very clear focus on not allowing the total pollution, for example, from that industry to increase. That would have to be considered carefully because it could also limit competition, but if properly structured, it could not only not limit competition but turn that competition within an industry to the advantage of environmental control and environmental improvement.

It would enable different caps to be put in place for different areas - that is, different regions geographically - but also different kinds of pollution. It would enable the total permitted emissions to be gradually reduced, thus improving total air quality and air control as competition generated greater and greater interest in research and development into emission control programs and emission control technology.

It would have another effect which I think is very important. It would begin to make us as a society more and more focused on a price, put a market price on environmental programs. In one sense that degrades the idea, the issue of the environment, but at the same time I think it's realistic that we have to begin to understand that we in industry and we as individuals in our society use environmental inputs as industry uses many other kinds of inputs. The other kinds of inputs are given a price. Environmental inputs simply are not given a price. The damage to the environment of that air emission from that plant or from that vehicle is not priced. If they were priced, we would begin to understand and react

differently to the environment, and the market could again assist in developing and emphasizing environmentally clean processes.

#### 4:20

There are some limitations to tradable permits which have to be contended with, but they are not insurmountable. First of all, there must be enough companies emitting a given pollutant to ensure that there is a competitive market in permits. I guess in a sense that's an unfortunate occurrence from the environmental point of view. Put another way: where there are not a lot of companies producing a lot of pollution, then it is less easy to apply this particular technique to the reduction of emissions. There wouldn't be a broad enough market; therefore, there would be less likelihood of creating competition for the tradable permits.

It is also necessary to consider – and this is embodying the motion – what infrastructure would be required to operate the system. It would not be an easy system to implement. At the same time, it might well replace what is quite an onerous bureaucratic infrastructure now that is involved in the kind of negative and limiting regulation where government, in fact, acts in a policing function. So there certainly would be an infrastructure required. That infrastructure could be relatively elaborate and somewhat costly, but at the same time it would of course be setting off what is already a very elaborate and costly bureaucracy.

There has been experience with tradable permits elsewhere, in North America in particular. There has been some success, and there have been areas where there has been less success. Other members have mentioned some of this experience, but I think on balance the experience demonstrates that in fact tradable permits can work in certain cases, and in many cases in Alberta, because they have worked elsewhere in similar circumstances.

I would like to make one other point about the problem of limitations to tradable permits, the third point. We would have to establish caps. We would have to establish overall geographical – that is, air, region – limits and, more broadly, provincial limits. This is not a task that can be taken lightly, but I should point out as well that there is experience in Alberta where we certainly have established limits. In fact, the Canadian experience now at the national level is that national limits have been placed on sulphur dioxide, for example. So some experience in establishing caps exists and would provide precedents for what would be required by the action contemplated by this motion. There are many areas of pollution in Alberta to which tradable emissions would apply and probably apply quite well. Sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and volatile organic compounds would be three that could be dealt with quite effectively in this way.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker, I know there is at least one other member who is interested in speaking to this. I will conclude by saying that, yes, we are pleased that this motion has been presented. I encourage the member to work with his caucus, with the new Minister of Environmental Protection to flesh out the ideas as quickly as possible, to address some of the shortcomings that I and others have identified so that they will not be an impediment to making this work. I wish him luck and offer him our support in pursuing this idea.

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

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to rise to support Motion 230. First of all, I would like to congratulate my colleague the hon. Member for Smoky River. I was encouraged

by the debate, first of all by the comments of the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place, who indicated that in his opinion the motion has merit. I was even more encouraged by the comments of the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, incisive sorts of comments and suggestions, and I would agree with him that this system, while not the total solution, is a useful process to be used where appropriate.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague from the constituency of Smoky River then has commented on the experience of testing this system of tradable pollution permits in other jurisdictions. Time does not permit me to add very much to that, but I think the experience of other jurisdictions, in the United States and, limited though they be, in Canada, and the observed results show a definite potential for Alberta.

This system, as the Member for Smoky River has suggested, will take time to implement. I think the potential benefits are worth studying, and we take from it the encouragement from our colleagues from the other two caucuses. There will be other aspects to this system, Mr. Speaker, that have to be considered, but weighing the advantages against the disadvantages, I of course must support the ideas of the motion, and I would hope that all members of the Assembly would see the advantage of this motion and decide to accept its contents.

This this afternoon is not a debate about our goal for less pollution for Alberta and in our environment but a debate on how to reach that goal with some kind of cost efficiency and co-operation among all of the players in the system that would be of benefit to the people of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, owing to the lateness of the hour, I would move that we adjourn debate.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Having heard the motion of the hon. Member for Highwood, does the Assembly agree?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

head: **Public Bills and Orders Other than  
Government Bills and Orders  
Second Reading**

#### **Bill 217 Annual Election of the Speaker Act**

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

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the pleasure of presenting and arguing for this Bill on behalf of the leader of the Liberal Party and the Liberal caucus, the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry, and more generally on behalf of my caucus colleagues. I would like to begin by stating that this topic is somewhat sensitive given that we have a Speaker who is in place at this time. I would like to say that our comments are quite divorced from experience here and are not meant in any way, shape, or form to be a criticism of the current Speaker and his various assistants.

I would also like to say that we in our caucus are very encouraged by the recent effort on the part of this Legislature to elect a Deputy Chairman of Committees. While we had certain concerns with the details of the process, we were happy to see that this initial step had been taken to reform at least one important process in this Legislature. I think we would all agree that what in fact happened when this process began to evolve in the Legislature

was quite interesting. I think there were those who had anticipated that there would be a block of votes on the government's side and that somehow it was a foregone conclusion, but as we began to nominate and later to vote, we found that by no means was it a foregone conclusion. In fact, the expression of a democratic initiative, as is always the case in our democracy, took on a very healthy life of its own. I think this Legislature was strengthened because of it. I believe that the Member for Edmonton-Parkallen, who won in that vote, can gain some comfort from the strength and the support that he received from this Legislature in the performance of his duties. I'm sure that after realizing his particular role sees him working only nights, he might want to encourage a process of electing other members to take the Chair so that he might get some day work as well and see that his job would be somewhat more flexible and perhaps give him a little more time with his family from time to time.

4:30

Mr. Speaker, there is, I know – we all know – tremendous cynicism about the political process. Some of that cynicism is founded upon substance. Some of it is based on extremely valid reasoning. Some of that cynicism is no more than a superficial cynicism, no less corrosive – in fact perhaps more – because of its lack of analysis and lack of understanding of what in fact is at stake in this political process and what in fact goes on amongst MLAs within the Legislature and the policy development process in this province. But to the extent that it is widespread and to the extent that this cynicism has profound implications for the ability of government to properly reflect and represent the people of this province, for government to act to provide leadership where leadership is required, it is extremely important that political leaders take concrete action to address the cynicism in this political process. Politics, the democratic process, governments can only operate effectively if they have the confidence of the people in their society. While it is easy to say and in fact must be said that politicians must earn that confidence, must earn that credibility, it is also true that events take hold which are beyond the power of politicians to control, events which ultimately affect and diminish the effectiveness of all politicians.

Mr. Speaker, there are perhaps too few opportunities that we have as politicians, members of this Legislature, to reverse that cynicism. A number of things must be done; a number of things can be done. Certainly the way that we conduct ourselves as politicians – the manner in which we relate to people, the doors we knock on, the time we spend listening to constituents – is one general approach that I think many of us subscribe to and understand as being an important feature of breaking down this cynicism. But there are structural and institutional changes which we as members of this Legislature have a responsibility to consider and a responsibility to implement. Each of these potential structural changes, once well considered and once well thought out, provides a tremendous opportunity to create changes in the legislative processes which will not only open up those processes, not only make those processes more democratic and more fair, but in fact in doing so will send a very strong message to Albertans that their political process is more responsive, more democratic, and that they can expect and will receive greater fairness, greater responsiveness, greater accountability from their government institutions.

I always say, and I think many of us say, Mr. Speaker, that we should start with ourselves first in providing this kind of leadership and institutional change. That's what this Bill does. This Bill addresses one of the most important institutions in the democratic process, in the parliamentary process, and that is the position of

Speaker. What we are proposing in this Bill is to elect the Speaker. We believe that the election of a Speaker by the Legislature in an open although secret ballot process will provide a number of important advantages and a number of important changes to the functioning of this institution, the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

First of all, if we elect a Speaker, we will find that the process becomes that much freer from party discipline and that much freer from the direction of the Executive Council, from the direction of the leadership of the governing party. If there is a cry from Albertans today that is consistent and upon which they share a consensus, it is that they feel that our political process is far too partisan. Every day when they see this Legislature, I think they get a taste of the partisanship. It's not to say that a nonelected Speaker or a Speaker chosen through the process that we use today, which can be construed as an election, is or has been or must be more partisan by any means, but we all know that the process utilized today can lead to a greater partisanship in that selection and can certainly lead to the appearance of greater partisanship in that selection process. So the election of a Speaker will reduce partisanship, will send a message that that partisanship has a less important premium in this process, and I believe that will be an important step in reducing cynicism.

It will also, I believe, free up the Speaker from suggestions of lack of objectivity, Mr. Speaker. It will reduce, therefore, some of the tension that sometimes occurs in this Legislature. It will strengthen the Speaker intrinsically in his or her ability to deal with debate in this House, and it will of necessity inevitably raise the stature of the Speaker in this House and his or her standing amongst the members of this Legislature.

Now, I should say that there could be an additional advantage, Mr. Speaker, if this Bill were accepted and the government of Alberta was successful in convincing the federal government and other governments to change the Constitution to allow for the election of a Speaker from outside the Legislature. When I first heard that proposal, it caught me by surprise. I thought: well, perhaps that wouldn't work, and perhaps that would mean that each of us debating here would be evaluated, assessed, and controlled by somebody who wasn't, strictly speaking, a peer. But on reflection I am more convinced that the advantage to the election of a Speaker from outside would be that it would free up all MLAs to deal with their constituents. At this time there is one MLA, the Speaker, who undoubtedly would have obstacles that some of us don't have in dealing with the concerns of constituents, if for no other reason than it is very difficult and obviously impossible for the Speaker to take an issue to the public level in a way that others of us can. While Speakers have toiled under that restriction for years and years in this Legislature and have overcome it I am sure with their diligence, it is a potential disadvantage for the Speaker and, therefore, for the residents of this province whom the Speaker would represent. It would allow all MLAs to act as MLAs rather than at least one of them having to act as a referee.

In a general sense, Mr. Speaker, I believe that this initiative would also provide more power to individual private members of this Legislature at a time when the people of Alberta are demanding that their MLAs be allowed more freedom to represent them and be allowed more freedom to act and take initiative.

There are some important features of the election process that our Bill outlines, Mr. Speaker. First of all, we would demand and expect in this Bill a secret ballot. I believe that is a noncontroversial proposal. It's been embraced by the government in its decision to have the Deputy Chairman of Committees elected. It was a secret ballot, and I think it proved its worth in

that process given, as I said earlier, that it wasn't a bloc vote, that the government didn't overwhelm that vote. In fact, we saw that we had a second ballot because of that. Where we differ from the government, where we differ from the New Democrats in an earlier proposal of theirs, and where we differ, we feel, in a very important way is in the process of nomination.

#### 4:40

We would have what we would call a passive process of nomination. That process would work this way. Prior to the commencement of an election, cabinet ministers in particular and any member who chose not to be considered could have their name excluded from the list of potential candidates for the Speaker's chair. Then the ballots would begin. Each member voting in this Legislature would simply write on the ballot the name of the person they think would be the best Speaker. Over ballot after ballot the lowest recipients of votes would drop off, and eventually we would work our way to a point where the Speaker would be the first MLA in this process to receive a simple majority of the Legislature's votes.

What this avoids, Mr. Speaker, is a process of nomination which can have two kinds of effects, both of which limit the objectivity or could potentially limit the objectivity of the Speaker. First of all, if a Speaker needs to be nominated by a given member, there could be the potential for that Speaker to be beholden to that member. On the other hand, if other members were to rise and nominate other candidates who were unsuccessful, they could be in jeopardy of feeling the chill of a bias from the Speaker who won and realized that they had nominated somebody else and therefore perhaps weren't particularly supportive of that Speaker. I believe that this kind of passive nomination process would therefore contribute to a much fairer electoral process for the Speaker. It would provide more openness. It would allow each member to be considered without having to pursue some kind of a nomination process and would simply be much, much fairer.

We call for annual votes so that there is a greater degree of accountability, so that the Speaker would be answerable each year for his or her activities and conduct as Speaker in the preceding year. I would expect that there would be tremendous pressure on the MLAs – and I mean it in a positive sense – to leave the Speaker in place or give the Speaker the benefit of the doubt, as that Speaker would have gained in expertise and so on. It is a very complicated job. So it wouldn't be our belief or understanding that annual votes would result in continual change in the Speaker. Quite the contrary. What it would do would be to reaffirm the confidence of members in that Speaker, strengthening the ability of that Speaker to run this House and to oversee the debate in this House effectively.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I reiterate our interest that we pursue with federal authorities the change in the Constitution to have a Speaker elected from outside the House. This would mean that we could find a completely nonpartisan Speaker, a Speaker who is only focused and only needs to be focused on the job of Speaker, who need not be distracted by other responsibilities and at the same time would not be hampered in the pursuit of other responsibilities by being Speaker. This is, of course, a more difficult thing to achieve due to our recent experience with constitutional changes, but given its limited and specific nature and given that it is directed at reducing partisanship and opening up the process and making it fairer, I expect that most Canadians would embrace this idea.

The idea of electing a Speaker in the way that we have outlined it in our Bill is not the only thing that needs to be done, Mr. Speaker. Liberals have developed and presented a wide range of

parliamentary reform/Legislature reform proposals. They include, among other things, free votes for MLAs so that greater representation of constituents and greater accountability to constituents can be achieved.

Our proposals for reform include as well a recall provision to put power back into the hands of the electorate, so that if they are not being led or not being represented in the way that they feel they should, they don't have that helpless feeling; they simply don't have to wait for four or five years to redress that. I think that the existence of recall would have a subtle but profound effect on the manner in which MLAs conducted themselves in their role as representatives of the electorate.

In addition, we would like to see a greater role and greater consideration for private members' Bills, which would empower backbenchers and opposition members to have greater input into this process. That would not erode the principle of ministerial responsibility, Mr. Speaker, but the recognition that this system gives to ideas would enhance the authority and the influence of back-bench MLAs. [interjection] I think the Member for Red Deer-North won't find that particularly lacking in relevance after the next election when he, of course, will be a back-bench MLA.

We also favour provision for private members' statements, Mr. Speaker, so that there is more flexibility given than is allowed, for example, to . . .

#### Point of Order Relevance

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

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Labour is rising on a point of order.

MR. DAY: Citing Standing Orders to do with relevance, I don't have a problem with the member trotting out all the Reform Party ideas; I embrace some of those ideas myself. I know the member opposite is bankrupt in that department himself, but we are to be relevant to election of a Speaker. Could we do that, because there are some people here who would like to address that fact and not the diatribe we're hearing.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Chair would like to remind the hon. member that we are dealing with the scope of this Bill, which is the election of a Speaker, and we should try to remain within the principle of the Bill before us.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, the reason that I mention other ideas is, one, to enlighten the Member for Red Deer-North who demonstrates that that is frequently necessary from time to time. Secondly, because I think it's very important that people in this Legislature – the government members, the Member for Red Deer-North – do not think that they could simply stop at the election of a Speaker and conclude that they had opened up the process. I want to demonstrate to members that in fact there are many other ideas. I only have one or two more to mention, Mr. Speaker, if you would bear with me.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, there is a rule. Ordinarily, if we had unlimited time, the Chair might be a little more relaxing, but we only have until 5:30 and then this matter will drop to the bottom of the list and will not come up again. There are other members who want to express their opinions. The hon. member certainly has the right to use 30 minutes to talk about the contents and the principle of this Bill, but it isn't 30



minutes to allow him to describe what the Liberal Party's policy is on parliamentary reform. This is for the election of a Speaker, and because of those other constraints the Chair really has to ask him to adhere to that principle of relevancy.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your concerns, and I will adhere to them. I would like to say that I'm a little bit concerned that you would presuppose that there won't be a vote on this. Clearly you would be usurping the authority of the House to make that decision, and maybe this underlines exactly what I'm talking about. One of the things that we feel we need is to have private members' Bills come to a vote and be treated like government Bills in that respect in this Legislature.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, the Chair really resents being accused of presupposing something like that. The Chair isn't blind. The Chair sees the clock. The Chair sees three parties represented in this House, and if there's going to be any type of ability for the three parties to be heard, the hon. member will have to remain relevant to the principle and scope of the Bill before us.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was just concerned that you said it would drop to the bottom of the Order Paper, but if we voted on it, of course it wouldn't.

4:50

#### Debate Continued

MR. MITCHELL: I will conclude, Mr. Speaker, by saying that yes, there is tremendous cynicism in this province about politicians and that we must do something about that if we are not to jeopardize the democratic process, if we are allowed to have governments that can provide leadership on very, very difficult issues and very tough questions. There are a number of things, many things that we as politicians, as political leaders can do to reduce that cynicism. Many of them relate to the way that we conduct ourselves. Many of them relate to the amount of time we spend with our constituents, listening and responding and allowing them to hold us accountable. But many of them relate to institutional reforms. We in the Liberal caucus place a tremendous priority in opening up the democratic process by, among other proposals, the proposal to elect the Speaker.

I would ask that the members of this Legislature support this Bill.

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

MR. DAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's encouraging and somewhat surprising to hear the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark talk about institutional reform, especially given the institution with which he was once associated as vice-president, which was in a state of considerable downhill demise – widows and seniors putting their money into it – and yet no suggestions for reform coming out in that process. So I'm pleased . . .

#### Speaker's Ruling Relevance

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. Really, hon. minister, after the Chair's admonition regarding relevance, the Chair would ask that the minister . . .

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, thank you for bringing me to task on that. I got momentarily carried away, and I apologize to the House.

#### Debate Continued

MR. DAY: I would like to say that in terms of an election of a Speaker, I am actually in favour of this approach. Things like the election of a Speaker and all the other reform-oriented items that the previous member was talking about: I happen to be in general a supporter of many of those.

Before going into any detail on this, I want to say something related to our present Speaker, and that is the fact that our present Speaker has my full and total and unqualified support and that speaking about the process of electing a Speaker is no reflection at all on him. As a matter of fact, if there were an election of a Speaker, I would be doing all I could to rally behind him to see about his re-election, and I say "re-election" because he was elected as the Speaker of this House. I want to reiterate that.

Unfortunately, when somebody is a referee, which is basically what a Speaker is, it's somewhat like a hockey game, if I can use that analogy. When the referee calls a penalty against the team that's not your team, of course all the fans applaud and say, "Good call, ref." When the referee calls one against your side, then of course it was a bad call. That's what a Speaker is stuck with. That's part of the price they pay, and that's something they have to consider when they're putting their names up for election. So in principle I would support looking at the possibilities of electing a Speaker.

I think in this particular Bill there are some things that we do have to look at and look at carefully. I say that speaking from the point of view of knowing what it is to be ruled out of order on quite a few occasions over several years here in the House. I don't take that personally, as some members do, and get irate and stomp around and things like that. It's just that the referee has to make a call. Sometimes I don't like the call, but that's what the referee calls, and without that happening, we would have no business done in the House.

A couple of suggestions in this particular Bill are not surprising considering the source, but they are shocking nonetheless. The one that really stands out glaringly is the suggestion that the government of Alberta could initiate an amendment to the Constitution of Canada to allow for legislation which would enable a person who's not an MLA to be the Speaker. This is an astounding suggestion. With all due respect, and I say that sincerely too, to have a civil servant sitting in that particular position which you now occupy, Mr. Speaker, to me is a total renunciation of the historical correctness of having an elected person sitting in that chair.

We are elected here by the people of this province. I'm sure the people of this province would shudder in disbelief to think that a nonelected person would be sitting in a position of judging the affairs of the elected persons as related to this particular Assembly. It's really an incredible suggestion, and coming from the Liberal Party, it does make one wonder about what other plans they've got for nonelected people to be overriding the wishes of the people of the province. I think it leaves us a little suspect, and it's frightening that they would suggest such a thing.

Another area of concern is related to the annual election of a Speaker. Having talked to our present Speaker, who assumed that role in 1986 I believe, I know the learning curve alone that a person is subject to to become familiar with not just that handy little black book the Standing Orders, but then *Beauchesne* and *Erskine May* and all the other notable figures who've had something to do with the precedent that goes into the operations of this House. It's a tremendous learning curve. I can remember clearly the words of our present Speaker back in 1986 when he asked for some understanding from us as members for a period of time for him to accustom and acquaint himself with the variety of rules and regulations, the nuances, the subtleties of the House. So every

year to have the possibility of somebody going through that process – what could be the angry whim of some members who are upset about some ruling against them – I'd be concerned about that and also the cost and the time that would be involved every year going through that particular process. I think we as members would know the individual members of this House well enough that we could with some degree of confidence elect them for a period of longer than one year. I just think we'd lose out on that particular process.

I will say to the member who has brought this forward: yes, on the general principle of an election. With some of the concerns that I've brought forward, I really don't have a problem with that. To conclude my remarks, I feel I've made the points clear in some of the major areas of concern, and I welcome hearing from all members in terms of how this process could be streamlined and made effective. I think it would be a very welcome reform in this Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've looked forward for some time to debating this Bill. As you may know, I personally draft a lot of my own legislation. As a result of having been a researcher here prior to getting elected, I got sort of used to it. I drafted the election of the Speaker Act that the Official Opposition New Democrats introduced a few years ago, so I feel I have some competence in dealing with this matter. In that Bill I proposed that the Speaker be elected at the commencement of the session of the Assembly following a general election. The reason I proposed that is because it seems to me sort of crazy that you want to elect a Speaker on an annual basis. For example, I note that there are some members of the Liberal caucus sponsoring this Bill today who, even after almost seven years in the Assembly, have yet to learn some of the techniques of parliamentary tradition. They have yet to learn it. Some members, like the sponsoring member, the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry – who's probably gone off to Toronto to bag money again from Bay Street for all I know – are still not competent with the ropes of parliamentary procedure.

I'd like to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that when my friend Ross Harvey and I were researchers, this is the stuff we loved the most: the stuff of Parliament. We used to have a gas. We would draft Bills and motions and amendments and questions for the late Grant Notley and for the current Leader of the Official Opposition, and we had a lot of fun. One of the things we did was always come up with ingenious bills, or I think we did. But do you know what happened over the years, at least since I got elected in 1986? I noticed that we would draft a Bill, let's say on the election of the Speaker for example, and then the third party would draft it and try to make a couple of changes and basically blow the whole concept. Now, in some cases their plagiarism didn't go quite that far. The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, I recall, totally imitated a Bill on the provisions for children's day care, which except for one word was identical to a Bill that I had drafted in 1985 for the Leader of the Official Opposition, and then my friend and colleague the Member for Edmonton-Calder sponsored it in 1986, 1987, and thereafter. I could give you a whole history of where the New Democrat Official Opposition has drafted really good legislation only to be imitated or plagiarized by the third-party caucus, but in this case, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to you that they've really blown it.

5:00

Let me tell you what it would be like. When you're Speaker, you've got to get to know the rules. Just a second; I need my visual aids here, Mr. Speaker. Okay, we've got our Standing Orders, this little black book. That's not that big. For actual content the number of pages are – well, there are 116 basic references in our Standing Orders. Standing Orders go to 116, plus there are a couple of schedules and then the index. Now, we know that those are just basic rules. We often go to a higher set of citations, that being *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms*, and the current one that we're using in this House is the sixth edition. I'm going to tell you exactly how many pages are in here aside from the index, because it takes a while to go through and get to know all the rules. For example, I remember that the third party didn't know what a reasoned amendment was the first time we introduced it in – I don't know – 1987 or '88. I had to take one of them aside to explain what a reasoned amendment was, a reasoned amendment being different from a hoist. They may still not know, for all I know, what a reasoned amendment is. I know the difference between a hoist and a reasoned amendment. There are 1,123 references in *Beauchesne*.

MR. SIGURDSON: Page 301 is the last page.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, page 301. Thank you.

So 301 pages there. And when we're in doubt, Mr. Speaker – and I know this because I have gone so far as to look up the *Journals* which are cited in the arguments in *Beauchesne* to make my case to the Speaker, which sometimes was successful and sometimes not – we go to a third book. This book is called *Erskine May's Parliamentary Practice*. We're currently using the 21st edition. It's also a green-covered book. I'm just going to look up how many pages are in here. It's 1,023 pages.

Now, I know how complicated the arguments can get about what is allowed and what isn't allowed and a lot of the give and take that goes on with the Speaker. I mean, sometimes I go to his office and I argue, "But look at this interpretation, and look at the context in which it happens." It takes a long time for the Speaker to learn the rules. I would argue that probably there's nobody in this room who could learn them in one year. That's my guess. I think if we asked Speaker Amerongen how long it took him, he'd probably acknowledge a couple of years, and remember that Amerongen was no dimwit. He's a pretty bright guy, a pretty senior-level lawyer. That's right. He's a very articulate man who bothered to study his decisions in depth before he made them. Now, I remember a few occasions when he didn't, when I was daily in the gallery watching my MLAs being ruled out of order, and I certainly helped draft letters to point out where I disagreed with him. However, for the most part he took his time. He really learned the rules. I would say to you that electing a Speaker on an annual basis is bound to turn an entire sitting and perhaps two sittings, if you have two in a year, into a real mess.

Let me tell you the other reason that you don't want to go for annual election of the Speaker. The Speaker's going to make a decision that's going to offend somebody every time. One person is usually going to win on the point of order or the matter of privilege or whatever, and one person is going to lose. They're usually going to be from differing caucuses because that's the nature of our parliamentary structure. So let's say that I'm the Official Opposition House leader. I give you absolute chapter and verse on why it is that when we open the Individual's Rights Protection Act on a government motion to amend it, I get told that I can't put an addition in even though the government's motion to amend it adds a classification of people. Well, the hon. Parliamentary Counsel will know this debate because I've had it with

him and I've had it with the Clerk and I've had with the Speaker. I've lost at all levels.

Now, let's just say, Mr. Speaker, that in this annual election I voted for you. You're a nice guy; I might do that. Anyway, let's just say that I did, and you overrule me on this particular case in point. I'll tell you what. This is still a point of contention where I live, at home. Okay; I still insist I'm right. The government opens up a Bill to add a classification. I say, "Show me in any of these august tomes where it says you can't further amend by an additional classification." Nobody could present that case to me, not even my husband. Now, I say, "I might have voted for you, but you turned me down on this amendment even though you can't give me proof anywhere in these books." So I say, "Well, if that's the case, I'm not going to vote for you next time, Speaker." You get the drift?

Now, every year are we all going to have cause? I saw the Speaker tell the Premier to sit down a couple of days ago. So what if he says, "Well, jeez, the Speaker told me to sit down a couple of times in question period. I'm not going to vote for this person anymore." You can practically guarantee a new Speaker with each and every new sitting of the Assembly. This makes sense, given all the rules that need to be understood, Mr. Speaker? I'm sorry; I just don't see how it makes sense.

I think we should return to the concept written in the Bill that I personally drafted a few years ago and which is now being sponsored, I believe, by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, and that is a secret ballot vote for the Speaker after the election just as the House begins to sit. As you'll know, there was a great brouhaha about – what? – five years ago in the House of Commons when they got fed up with the Speaker, and they went to this form of election of a Speaker. I think that's exactly the way it should be: you fill out a ballot, just like we did when we elected the hon. Member for Edmonton-Parkallen to be our Deputy Chairman of Committees a few weeks ago. The system worked well. It was a little showy for my liking, but the system worked well.

I'd like to commend the hon. member. I think he's been just fine in the Chair. It's not easy – the Member for Edmonton-Parkallen is nodding his head – to be Chairman, whether you're sitting here doing Committee of the Whole or Committee of Supply or if you are in the Chair as you are now, Mr. Speaker. You get a flurry of notes, especially during question period, because as everybody knows, or if everybody doesn't know, each caucus alerts the Speaker as to which people from that particular caucus they would like acknowledged in question period. Then there are all sorts of changes. Then you've got to keep your ears open to see if somebody is really violating our Standing Order 23(i) or if they're just on the edge of it. You've got to have a feel. It takes a while to have a feel for that sort of thing when you're also being barraged by notes.

In Committee of the Whole and Committee of Supply, as you know, Mr. Speaker, because you've chaired and the hon. Member for Lacombe has chaired, then you've got people walking up to you. So the whole time you've got to listen to the debate, you've got to call out the votes in order, especially in Committee of Supply, you've got to call out your speakers' list, and you've got people coming up to you saying, "But that member over there is out of order." You've got to try and listen to that while you make changes in your speakers' list and then decide whether or not the member that somebody else told you about was out of order, was being irrelevant, was insulting or imputing motives, or all the rest of the common charges that come up under points of order in the House. Well, I say that's a difficult job as it is, and I do believe that. Sometimes I think that when we form government, when the New Democrats form government, gee, it would be fun to be

Speaker. The reason I think that is because I really like the stuff of Parliament. In a way, it'd be more fun to be the Clerk because you can deal with the stuff of Parliament all the time. Then I think about the actual job and I say: Jeez, you know, I already know a lot of the rules; I've been studying them for 10 years.

I'll tell you what. I was talking to John Scrimshaw today, and I'll just give a little anecdote here. Everybody here knows John. Ten years next month is when I celebrate my first phone call with John Scrimshaw. Not a day has gone by when the House was sitting, unless he or I were sick, that we haven't talked to each other, first before I got elected and then after I got elected. And you know what? That Scrimmy, he still finds little tricks in the book. I say, "Well, this is what we want to do tonight when the House sits," and he says, "Ah, ah, ah. Pam, did you look at Standing Order 57 sub such and such?" Yeah. I call him Scrim, Scrimmy, John. He's a good guy. He's served this Assembly very well for a long time. And I'll tell you, if there's somebody in this building that knows these books off by heart, it is John Scrimshaw.

So that's what made me think today: 10 years I've been in this Assembly dealing with the stuff of Parliament, dealing with parliamentary procedure, trying to find parliamentary devices to get around the mean, bad government in whatever its attempts are. And you know what? Still John Scrimshaw knows more than anybody else about procedure. Now, are you telling me that we're going to hire a John Scrimshaw once every year? Not a chance. You'd be crazy.

### 5:10

That's just like asking for the election of the Speaker every year. You don't do it. You go for an election of the Speaker by secret ballot just after the election upon the commencement of your first sitting of that session, and you stick with that Speaker. That way you give that person the chance to know the rules and also not be subject to a sort of mean minded "I won't vote for you next year" retaliation that might come from a decision that's going to annoy one side of the House or the other. Virtually on a daily basis we are faced with the Speaker having to make a ruling. Sometimes the New Democrats are pleased with the ruling and sometimes we're not. That doesn't mean that we should say that we're going to vote or not vote for this Speaker on a yearly basis on that basis. That's my point, Mr. Speaker.

I would say that for every Bill that the third party has attempted to plagiarize from the Official Opposition New Democrats, they would be better to go back and plagiarize them properly, because we put the work and the thought into the Bill, which is why you would find that the Bill being sponsored by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods is vastly superior. Actually, ours is called Legislative Assembly Amendment Act; that's a good technical title. I have a feeling that if the Conservatives are returned to government after the next election, they would probably follow exactly what we drew in that particular Bill. Now, in the most unlikely event that the third party were elected to government, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to bet you right here, right now – I'll bet five bucks per member – that that caucus would not elect a Speaker on an annual basis. They'd be crazy to, for the reasons that I have given.

Now, in the most likely event that the New Democrats are going to form government after the next election, you can be sure, Mr. Speaker, that the private member's Bill being sponsored by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods will come forward as a government Bill, probably within the first few Bills introduced by the New Democrat government. That's the way we're going to elect a Speaker, just like it's done in other jurisdictions.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this Bill.

MR. HORSMAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is an interesting Bill brought by a member who came into the House a few years ago now and has occasionally graced the halls with his presence, by a member who came from a municipal government background, and that's an appropriate form of government for municipalities because the party system is not there and it is not a parliamentary system. It is a municipal government, and we understand and appreciate very much the role that is played by municipal councillors and other members of school boards and those types of bodies that are created by this parliament.

But, Mr. Speaker, this is a parliament, and unless one understands what a parliament is all about, one should be very careful before bringing forward half-baked ideas for consideration. I would suggest indeed that this Bill now before the Assembly, sponsored by the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry – and I have to be careful here. I understand the rules in *Beauchesne* about drawing attention to a member's absence. It is sponsored today by the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark as a surrogate spokesman.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I guess when one has been a mayor of a big city such as Edmonton – big, certainly, in terms of Medicine Hat in comparison but small by comparison to some throughout the world – when one has been in that capacity and has occupied this exalted position of mayor and by and large can control what happens in city council, to come into this Assembly and find himself put in the position of leader of the third party and thus unable to exert his rule over the affairs of this council is frustrating. So I understand the frustration which must be felt by the leader of the Liberal Party, cast as he is into the role he now has to play rather than God almighty sitting in city hall. So he looks around as to how he can exert his influence even more than he can do in that role. He's not prepared to accept his lowly status, and therefore he wants to bring forward an instrument which in my view will seriously undermine the nature of a parliament.

Now, parliaments have come to us from the traditions of the British parliamentary system after centuries of change and appropriate adjustment to the circumstances of the day. Certainly this is not a parliament that existed in the year 1200 in the parliament of the United Kingdom or at the time of the Magna Carta. Certainly it is appropriate that from time to time parliaments revise and amend and update their rules so that they are indeed relevant to the society that they are chosen to serve.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what has this parliament decided to do relative to the subject of legislative reform and parliamentary reform? Well, as is the case in most parliaments, we've decided to take a serious look at the issue. We have established, by a vote of this Legislature, a select special committee, and that has been charged with the responsibility of looking at these issues, including the subject of the role of the Speaker. That being the case, it is the role of that select committee to go out into the province of Alberta and to consult with the people of Alberta to see what their views are relative to the effectiveness of this parliament called the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. Now, that parliamentary committee, that legislative committee, is comprised of members from all the political parties in this Assembly. My view is clearly that this Bill now being brought before the Assembly today is an attempt to end run the work that that committee has been asked to do. Therefore, it is inappropriate to support it today on that ground alone. Let me just make that point with clarity.

Now, I for one am not yet persuaded that the election of a Speaker is a good idea, but I am prepared, as a member of this Assembly and as an Albertan, as I will be after the next election since I won't be here to share the decision-making in the future, and I want to say this. [interjections] Oh, they chatter away, don't they? We've finally got some of them over there in the

Liberal Party awake and alive and talking away, chattering away. In particular, the Liberal House leader, exercised and now risen to the front of her chair with vigorous arm movements, is encouraging me to continue on. Well, thank you.

MR. MAIN: There are not many of them there though.

MR. HORSMAN: There aren't very many there. There are four.

In any event, I'm not yet persuaded that the election of a Speaker is in the best interests of maintaining the role of parliament and its traditions, but I'm prepared to listen to what Albertans say on that subject. I'm prepared to have the forum that was chosen by this parliament go out into this province and hear what Albertans have to say, but the Liberals aren't. They know what's best for Albertans without listening to their views, so typical of the Liberal Party of Alberta and the Liberal Party of Canada. Thinking that they have the God-given right to govern, they know what's best. "Do it our way. Don't listen to Albertans. Don't listen to what they have to say on the subject." On that ground alone I say: defeat this Bill today.

5:20

Let's look at this notion. I think the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands made an extremely good case. If the Speaker is to be elected, let's not do it every year. Can you imagine what that would turn the Speaker into? The seeker of a popularity contest on an annual basis. A Speaker, as any judge, cannot be chosen on the basis of popularity because of the difficult decisions they have to make. Let's not forget that this is, in addition to being a legislative body, the highest court of Alberta. The presiding officer of that court must of necessity be seen to be an impartial judge and not somebody currying favour with either side of the Assembly for the sake of political expediency and the opportunity to be elevated on an annual basis to the throne.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think that aspect of the Bill is deplorable. That's already been stated by my colleague the Minister of Labour and by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands. The Member for Edmonton-Highlands and I don't always agree on every issue, but in this particular case, I think it's important to say how much I do agree with that particular point.

Now, this other notion, that this parliament should select as its presiding officer somebody who has not been elected by the people of Alberta, is the height of absurdity and an insult to the parliamentary tradition. It is also typical, I suggest, Mr. Speaker, of the lack of understanding in the Liberal benches about the nature of parliament itself. So they elect a leader who was a mayor, and he doesn't like it, and he comes in and says: "Well, we're going to change all that. We're going to elect a civil servant and put a civil servant on the Speaker's throne." Well, bad enough to have one of our own members currying favour in terms of his or her rulings with the members of the Assembly; think what it would be like to put a person in that Chair who has not gone out and faced the electors at the local level and said, "Here I am; elect me to the Assembly." Indeed, we elect instead . . .

MR. McINNIS: What about defeated Liberal candidates?

MR. HORSMAN: Yes, that's a very good point the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place has just interjected. Let us say this. It's such a hypothetical question. If the Liberal Party were to form the government, what is to stop them from bringing forward a defeated Liberal candidate and putting them in the Chair? What

about that? Shocking, but not past their past performance as they have formed the government of Canada, I can tell you.

MR. MAIN: Chairman of the CNR.

MR. HORSMAN: Chairman of Canadian National? Well, that's perhaps not a relevant point. If one can be appointed to such an illustrious body by the Liberal Party of Canada, surely those Liberals, with that fine tradition, would see nothing at all wrong with doing the same thing with the Speaker of this Assembly. Now, I don't know how much I've stretched the bounds of credulity by introducing that particular argument; I daresay by a fair amount. Nonetheless, I just have to say that I agree with the comments of my learned colleague the Minister of Labour, I agree with the Member for Edmonton-Highlands that this Bill as it stands today should not receive the support of the members of this Assembly. It is prejudging the work of a select committee which has been established to seek out the views of Albertans. That's the proper way to go, not jam the Liberals' ideas down the throats of Albertans before they even have a chance to give their views. Mr. Speaker, on that ground alone I return to that point.

MR. MITCHELL: Did they give their views on John's trip to Hong Kong? Did they give their views on Dennis's trip to Hong Kong? Did they give you their views on Bill 55?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. Order. [interjections] The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, order.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, having failed in the argument in terms of his logic in introducing the Bill on behalf of and in locus of his leader, is now reduced to some kind of ravings about foreign offices. Well, let's stick with the principle of the thing and say no to this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, in view of the hour, I would beg leave to adjourn the debate.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Medicine Hat has moved that debate be adjourned on Bill 217. All those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The motion carries.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:28 p.m.]

