

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Friday, April 23, 1993**

10:00 a.m.

Date: 93/04/23

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head:

Prayers

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

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

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

Amen.

head:

Introduction of Bills

Bill 62

Members of the Legislative Assembly Pension Plan Amendment Act, 1993

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 62, the Members of the Legislative Assembly Pension Plan Amendment Act, 1993. This being a money Bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of the Bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation will see the number identified for eligibility become 65 rather than 55. Benefits will be as identified in the Peat Marwick report and will see a 35 percent reduction. This plan will now become the least generous of all such plans in the other nine provinces, the two territories of Canada, and the federal government itself. This legislation reaffirms that the contribution level is 10 percent of salary. This is a 35 percent increase over the contribution level of a year ago. An individual will no longer be able to receive a pension from the MLA pension plan while they continue to hold any office, whether that office be that of minister, MLA, Speaker, et cetera. As well, a former member who is elected at a future election would have his or her pension payments from the MLA plan suspended while in office.

Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to move first reading.

[Leave granted; Bill 62 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Kingsway, followed by Calgary-Buffalo.

Bill 350

Alberta Economic Council Act

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce a Bill being the Alberta Economic Council Act, Bill 350.

This Bill sets up a 30-member economic council of Alberta whose duty it will be to advise and recommend to the minister strategies and policies by which Alberta can achieve high levels of employment.

[Leave granted; Bill 350 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Buffalo.

Bill 354

Members of the Legislative Assembly Pension Reform Act

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 354, being the Members of the Legislative Assembly Pension Reform Act.

This Bill, sir, will provide for important reforms to the existing MLA pension plan, including retroactive changes to benefits for all members who have sat in this Chamber since 1989 and a conversion, sir, of the plan to a defined contribution model to eliminate all unfunded liabilities and annual deficits.

Mr. Speaker, this is the Bill that the Premier is afraid to introduce, but this is the Bill that Albertans . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, hon. member. Would the hon. member care to stand and retract?

MR. DICKSON: Certainly, sir. This is the Bill, I should say, that Albertans are demanding and expecting from this body.

[Leave granted; Bill 354 read a first time]

head:

Tabling Returns and Reports

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table today the annual report of the Alberta Public Utilities Board for 1992.

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table in the Legislative Assembly today four copies of the annual report of the Alberta Opportunity Company for the year '91-92.

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the annual report of Alberta Agriculture for the year 1991-92.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table with the Assembly four copies of nine policy papers put out by the Official Opposition that have very specific proposals to deal with Alberta's future, unlike what we saw last night.

MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the Legislative Assembly Act, I table with the Assembly Members' Services Order 2/93, being the Executive Council's salaries amendment order of 1993.

Pursuant to the Legislative Assembly Act, I table with the Assembly the Peat Marwick Stevenson & Kellogg MLA Total Compensation Study, which was commissioned by the Members' Services Committee of the Legislature.

head:

Introduction of Special Guests

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, in the members' gallery today are a group of grade 10 special education students from Austin O'Brien high school here in the city of Edmonton. We really want to welcome this group of young people. We also want to welcome back to this Assembly former Member of the Legislative Assembly Mr. Walter Szwender, who is their teacher. They're all in the members' gallery. We'd ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, two very special guests visiting today from Calgary, in particular the constituency of Calgary-Shaw, are seated in your gallery. They are the family members of one of our pages serving in the Legislature. Mr. Rodney Al is a new young page whom I'm proud to have as a constituent, also serving in this Assembly. He is visited today by his mother, Mrs. Sharon Al, and his brother Mr. Todd Al. I would ask them to rise and receive a special warm welcome from all members.

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Members of the Legislative Assembly a group of grade 6 students from the Caledonia Park school in Leduc. These grade 6 students are accompanied by Mrs. Paula

Foley, Mr. Murugan, Mrs. Harden, Mrs. Bromley, Mr. Drury, and Mr. Glen Helmig. They are seated in the members' gallery. I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

10:10

MS M. LAING: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to introduce to you 41 students from St. James school, which is located in the constituency of Edmonton-Avonmore. They are accompanied by teachers Ms Cathy Dunn, Mr. Richard Bereznick, Mrs. Therese Kuefler, Mrs. Donna Edge and parent helpers Mrs. Jean Birn, Mrs. Ferdine Chan, and Mrs. Della Wispinski. I would ask that they now rise and accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce a constituent who's here visiting from Calgary. She's a member of the ATA executive and a very hard worker for the teachers of this province, Pat Sokolosky. If she'd stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head:

Oral Question Period

Provincial Fiscal Policies

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I have in front of me a document called Seizing Opportunity. I said last night that it should be called Stumbling Along rather than Seizing Opportunity. There is something good about it. There's a very nice picture of the Premier, one of his better pictures. After that it goes downhill. I want to allude to what the Premier said, and it's in this document. They have a magic wand. This Premier is going to balance the budget in four years. He's not going to have any tax hikes, he's not going to deal with the trust fund, and he's not going to involve himself in brutal cuts. This Premier is frankly misleading Albertans with a \$3 billion deficit. It can't be done, and he knows it. So what they're trying to do is bluff and talk their way through the next election with a cute little picture of the Premier. But Albertans want some substance. My question to the Premier: will he now come clean with Albertans and tell us specifically how in four years he plans to balance the budget without tax hikes, without massive cuts, and without dealing with the trust fund? How is he going to do it? Be specific.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, we've indicated in the Legislature before that there will be a budget tabled in due course. I would suggest the hon. member just stay tuned and pay attention, and he'll be reasonably pleased.

MR. MARTIN: "Stay tuned"? We have 140,000 unemployed people. We have slow strangulation of our people services. You're in the fourth year of your mandate, and you're handing us out this fuzzy talk. It's irresponsible, and they know it.

Let's look at where he might balance the books, Mr. Speaker. The Treasurer said when he was Minister of Education that 84 percent of provincial revenue goes to education, health care, and social services. They now have brutal cuts versus massive cuts. I want the Premier now to sit in this Legislature and tell us what's going on. Why is he not prepared to look at the revenue side? There are wealthy people who don't pay taxes. There are profitable corporations that don't pay taxes. Why is he not prepared to look at this side of it?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that there are wealthy people who do pay taxes, a lot of them, and there are a

lot of corporations that make profits that do pay taxes and employ hundreds and hundreds of people who also pay taxes.

As I said before, we plan to bring in a budget. The budget will have with it a program relative to deficit elimination. It will be spelled out. I can tell the hon. leader of the ND opposition this: we won't go about balancing our budget by taxing our way, by using those unimaginative, easy approaches that have been instituted in socialist provinces like British Columbia and Saskatchewan and Ontario. You know what, Mr. Speaker? It has been proven time and time again that you cannot tax yourself into prosperity, and they sure have learned that in Ontario, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia.

MR. MARTIN: This Premier is misleading Albertans when he doesn't want to look at the revenue side, Mr. Speaker. That's the reality. The question is not if there are going to be new taxes with an over \$3 billion structural deficit – and everybody's telling him that – it's who's going to be taxed. Where do they get all their corporate funds? No wonder they don't want to tax their own friends. They're going to come back and tax ordinary Albertans. That's what it comes down to. I ask the Premier again not to overly tax, to be competitive with other countries, and to be competitive with other provinces. Why is he not prepared to look at the corporate sector and the wealthy so that they pay their fair share, not overly tax them?

MR. KLEIN: Well, unlike the NDs and the Liberals we're not proposing a sales tax. We aren't proposing a tax regime that doesn't provide incentives for people to come here with new dollars . . .

MR. MITCHELL: Nobody believes you, Ralph.

MR. KLEIN: . . . to create new jobs, and contribute in a meaningful and an honest way to our economy. That's how you generate revenue. You get more people doing worthwhile things, constructively employed, paying their fair share of taxes to . . .

Speaker's Ruling Interrupting a Member

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, hon. Premier. [interjection] Order please. Twice yesterday, both in the afternoon and in the evening, directions were given to the benches in the House, in all parts. The standing order is still there with respect to the interruptions. If you're not prepared to follow the direction of the Chair, then the Chair is quite happy to stand here all day long and waste your time, because it's you wasting the time.

Second main question.

Provincial Fiscal Policies

(continued)

MR. MARTIN: Just to continue with the Premier, Mr. Speaker. Let's put it on the record that we're the only party that hasn't advocated a sales tax. This Premier has, and the Liberals have, and that's the truth.

Economic Development Strategy

MR. MARTIN: Now, let's look at another part of it, Mr. Speaker. In this nice little document the Premier talks about "110,000 new jobs," but he doesn't say how or where they'd come from. I guess he's just going to look up above, and they're going to drop down on us, 110,000 jobs. Now that the Premier has a chance to

be a little more specific than he was last night, will he tell us where these 110,000 jobs are going to come from?

MR. KLEIN: Well, I would invite the hon. member, rather than me going through it . . .

MR. GIBEAULT: Be specific now. Be specific, Ralph.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Mill Woods, order please.
Premier.

MR. KLEIN: I assume the hon. leader of the ND opposition can read and understand very simple charts, and if he would look to the back page, it's all there.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd get more from a grade 6 colouring book than I would from this. There are no specific plans. I want to ask the Premier this. There are 110,000 new jobs. We want some specifics here. I ask the Premier: doesn't he think it's irresponsible to bandy around a figure of 110,000 jobs? Why not 120,000, 200,000? Make it a half a million, if you're not going to back it up. Isn't it irresponsible to come forward with this without a specific plan?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. leader of the ND opposition would know all about grade 6 colouring books because that's basically what they've been using to map out their political plan for years.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, it's well documented. All the questions that have been asked by the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition are contained in this document and perhaps in more detail in my speech, and I'd be glad to provide that to the hon. member in the hopes that he might distribute it to some of his friends and colleagues and present the NDs with a real good example of what an economic plan is all about.

10:20

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, the Premier is trying to be a comedian now, I'm sure. We showed it to a few people, and they couldn't believe it. After four years into a mandate we're getting this wishy-washy, vague talk in a paper, and it probably cost us thousands of dollars to put it out.

The reality is, to the Premier, that right now at this moment in Alberta there are 145,000 unemployed Albertans. Can the Premier tell us specifically what he plans to do about putting people back to work now? Where's the infrastructure announcement, needed public jobs? There's nothing in there about that. Why doesn't he announce something here to deal with those 145,000 people right now rather than giving us happy talk?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, certainly we're concerned about unemployment. You can't solve the problem overnight. That's why you need a reasonable and an honest blueprint, a plan for the future with targets, not promises but targets.

You know, Mr. Speaker, if you attack this economic development strategy the way the Leader of the Official Opposition is attacking it, I would suggest you are attacking what thousands of Albertans have told us about their vision for the future. You are telling all those people, including some of their own people, who participated in *Toward 2000* that they are wrong. You're telling those people who took part in *Tourism 2000* that they were wrong. You're telling the people from rural Alberta who participated in that tremendous process *Creating Tomorrow* that they are wrong, and on it goes. This plan is the result of all that

meaningful public input over the past year and a half throughout the province, and it contains what Albertans are telling us is right.

MR. FOX: Albertans will tell you to take a hike.

MR. SPEAKER: Excuse us, Vegreville. May we continue?

MR. FOX: Sure.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
Edmonton-Glengarry on behalf of the Liberal Party.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, Alberta has a \$25 billion debt. Part of the reason for that debt is the foolish giveaways to big business by the Conservative Party. The Premier talks about meaningful input. Chambers of commerce in Alberta and the *Toward 2000* conference said repeatedly: don't give money to businesses; stop that. But last night in the Premier's address he talks about reducing or eliminating financial assistance to business, "reduce or eliminate." Eney, meeney, miney, mo, Mr. Premier: which is it? Are you going to reduce, or are you going to eliminate?

MR. KLEIN: What we have said, Mr. Speaker, is that we will continue to assist business, but we will assist industrial sectors rather than getting into the business of picking winners and losers . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order.

MR. KLEIN: . . . to build on the strengths that we have already established . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

MR. TAYLOR: Yeah, I'd shut him up too.

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

MR. SPEAKER: Order, Westlock-Sturgeon.

Yesterday a comment was made from the Chair about lack of common courtesy and rudeness. I for one would not want to be here as a schoolteacher with my students.

Mr. Premier, if you'd like to conclude. [interjection] Thank you.

Then supplementary, Edmonton-Glengarry.

Economic Development Strategy (continued)

MR. DECORE: I take it then, Mr. Premier, that the word "eliminate" is wrong and should be taken out of your document and that you made a mistake when you talked about "eliminating" last night in your speech. Is that correct?

MR. KLEIN: We are talking about fulfilling our commitment to those commitments that have already been made, Mr. Speaker, and we are talking about getting out of direct assistance to companies, picking winners and losers. Yes, we are going to provide money to sustain infrastructure, to sustain small business, to sustain industrial sectors such as oil and gas. That involves revising royalty programs, and certainly that involves feeding in cash to sustain an industry. It involves farm programs, not specific to individual companies but to the agricultural industry to sustain that industry. It seems to me that the chambers of commerce in this

province can understand what we're saying. They were reasonably pleased with the program. Only the Liberals, naturally, can't understand it.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, the Premier talks about getting out of direct contributions to business. He gave \$50 million to Canadian Airlines, and he just gave \$9 million to Gainers. What are you talking about, Mr. Premier? Why don't you get it straight and tell Albertans what the real story is here?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, we have commitments to Gainers. We own that company. Someone else doesn't own that company. We own that company at this particular time, so we're giving money to our own operation.

With respect to Canadian Air – and I'm glad that you have taken the position because I would like to reiterate the Liberal position relative to Canadian, that you would rather see 4,000 people unemployed, out of work. Canadian Air is the backbone of the air industry in western Canada, and we see this as something more. [interjections]

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MR. TAYLOR: Give it away, Ralph. Somebody can run it.

MR. MITCHELL: Give it away. They all like you, Ralph.

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MR. KLEIN: They still do. They don't like you.

MR. MITCHELL: It only costs \$50 million to buy it.

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Thank you, Liberal caucus. The House stands adjourned until 10:35.

[The Assembly adjourned from 10:29 a.m. to 10:35 a.m.]

MR. SPEAKER: Order, hon. members. The time appointed has arrived.

The Chair recognizes Calgary-Fish Creek.

Energy Industry

MR. PAYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As all members in the Assembly of course realize, Alberta's economy is very much dependent on our oil and gas sector and how well it does. Recently in the House the Minister of Energy reported the encouraging news that our oil and gas operators are seeing increased levels of activity, due in part to the crude oil royalty holiday extension. One useful measure of the industry's strength, of course, is the number of rigs that are drilling in the province. I'm wondering if the minister could bring us up to date today on the number of rigs that are drilling, perhaps compared with a year ago.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek is quite right: when this industry is healthy, our province is healthy. In keeping with the thrust of economic development and renewal in our strategy plan, we've been working very closely with this industry for the last year and a half developing new methods. One of the programs has been the crude oil development

well program. In comparison, to give some examples, we're seeing that our drilling activity has more than doubled in the first quarter of this year compared to last year. In fact, on January 26 of 1993 we had 203 rigs drilling as compared to only 136 that were drilling last year; in February we had 238 rigs drilling as compared to 126; in March, March 9 in particular, 248 rigs drilling as compared to 103. This program has been very successful for us this year, and we're seeing an increase in activity. In fact, we've seen projections now that we will see approximately 6,000 wells drilled this year. In fact, what that . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. minister. Thank you.
Supplementary.

MR. PAYNE: Well, I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that both opposition and government members are heartened by the encouraging data the minister has shared. I would be concerned, however, if the minister were to assume that all is well and that the government has done all it can by extending the crude oil holiday period. I'm wondering: can the minister advise the Assembly what additional incentives are being developed to ensure the health and vitality of the industry over the longer term?

MR. TAYLOR: Oh, God. Tell her to stay out of it.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, Westlock-Sturgeon.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, I know that the opposition doesn't like to see initiatives that are taken by the government to get activity development in this province.

Mr. Speaker, our intent is to work closely with industry. In fact, last month we announced another program and another initiative to help the industry – it's called a low productivity gas pilot project – which will help in the streamlining of the administration costs within the industry. We've also looked at a streamlining of our regulations within this industry to cut down the cost, to cut down some of the cumbersome and burdensome tasks that the industry is going through. We're also working very closely with industry to look at market access, and that's something that we will have an ongoing process through. We've also announced that we are continuing on with the gas simplification program, which should save this industry approximately \$25 million a year.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by Calgary-North West.

MLA Pensions

MR. CHIVERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Premier filed with the Legislative Assembly an opinion of Parliamentary Counsel. We don't know what the question asked of Parliamentary Counsel was, but we do know that Parliamentary Counsel concluded "that the courts will not uphold *any* legislation" which deprives MLAs of pension benefits "without fair compensation," unless there is an overwhelming public policy issue greater than the rights affected. My question is: would the Premier not agree that since taxpayers provide the funds that pay the pension benefits, the issue of fairness to taxpayers might be greater than the claims of MLAs to excessive pensions?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I don't know if the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona was paying attention or not, but we introduced legislation to address the whole business of pension reform, the Liberal opposition introduced a Bill to address pension reform,

and there will be ample opportunity to debate these issues when they reach the floor of the House.

10:40

MR. CHIVERS: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the former minister of consumer and corporate affairs said that one of the reasons that he ran for office in the last election was the generosity of the MLA pension plan. It must be remembered that the MLA pension plan at the time of the last election was not nearly so generous. My question is to the Premier. Given that the large number of MLAs who will shortly be leaving office ran for office at a time when pension benefits were 40 percent less than they are now, how can the Premier accept that these MLAs are fairly entitled to these excessive pension benefit payments?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, what we're talking about here is some legislation to fix a problem that has been identified. I would point out that over the course of time ND opposition members entered into the contractual relationship. There were amendments made throughout the last four years relative to the pension plan. I didn't see any of these members standing up and objecting to the pension situation. As a matter of fact, they were there voting in favour of all enhancements to pensions and benefits and everything else. It seems to me that they smell an election. There's an election in the air. Now, what they're practising is what is commonly known as hypocrisy.

International Offices

MR. BRUSEKER: Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the economic development strategy paper the Premier told us that the priorities of our international trade offices will now be refocused to promote trade, investment, tourism, and immigration. Now, since these were supposed to be the jobs of these foreign offices all along, I guess it simply confirms that they're just halfway houses for retiring Tories. Apparently what the Premier says is that they haven't been doing the job they were supposed to be doing. Can the Premier tell us why Albertans would want to spend \$11 million a year for entertainment expenses for recycled Tories?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, that question was put in such a stupid way. I mean, how do you provide an intelligent answer to such a stupid question?

MR. BRUSEKER: I guess it shows once again that the Premier doesn't have any answers, which is what we knew all along.

Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question, and in the question is even a suggestion to the Premier, is: rather than providing free vacations for retiring MLAs from Calgary-Currie and Red Deer-South, why doesn't the government hire an independent auditing firm to conduct a comprehensive review of those foreign offices and then table that review here in this Legislature? Tell us what they're doing.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, everything that we do and certainly the focus relative to foreign offices and foreign representatives abroad is to do something that obviously the Liberals don't understand, and that is to create jobs, to create new opportunities for export and international trade. That's what it's all about.

MR. SPEAKER: Wainwright.

Ethanol

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister of agriculture. During the Creating Tomorrow confer-

ences held across rural Alberta last year, it became very loud and clear from the aggie industry that policies be developed that would further encourage the value adding to Alberta raw products. Secondary processing is vital to rural Alberta regarding the much needed jobs and the economic spin-off. The Premier mentioned last night in his address on Alberta's economic strategy that there would be tax incentives for the production of ethanol. Could the minister clarify the changes that have been made to kick-start this industry?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, we have enhanced our ethanol policy basically in two ways. As everyone in here is aware, we've always had the 9 cents per litre of ethanol incentive where they don't pay the tax on oxygenated fuel. We went one step further with that one in response to requests from various proponents who have said, "Hey, we can't really take that to the bank, because it might disappear in the next budget." So our policy now says that between now and the year 2000 we will enter a five-year contractual arrangement to guarantee to a proponent that that will be in place for at least the first five years of their project. In addition to that, we have made the grain coming to an ethanol plant eligible for the Crow benefit offset program, the same as the grain coming to feedlots or hog barns is eligible. That will add approximately another 3 cents incentive per litre of ethanol, and that incentive will be in place as long as the program is in place. If we succeed in changing the method of payment, I would submit that the additional incentive by paying the producer to the ethanol plant would probably be 4 and a half cents, and we would immediately terminate the Crow benefit program.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. minister. We need some for a supplementary.
Wainwright.

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree with you.

I know that there hasn't been much time gone by since this announcement was made, but have you had any communication with potential investors regarding our contractual agreements and the time lines?

MR. ISLEY: Not since the announcement last night, but I suspect we will early next week.

I apologize, Mr. Speaker, for the length of my earlier answer, but as was revealed earlier in the House, I was trying to explain it to people who deal with grade 6 colouring books.

Let me just say that I realize that the new enhanced ethanol policy will not work if the NDs or the Liberals ever form a government in this province. Who would judge a contractual arrangement for two parties that have been advocating breaking contracts for two days? Now we see a Bill in the House saying that we'll break contracts retroactively.

MR. SPEAKER: Vegreville.

Barley Marketing

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Dr. Carter report in support of the proposed continental barley market is a pathetic piece of work filled with inaccuracies, false assumptions, and wishful thinking.

AN HON. MEMBER: What do you think of it?

MR. FOX: I don't think it's very good, minister.

Even though this proposal to help tear down the Canadian Wheat Board has been discredited by industry analysts and farm groups like the Alberta Wheat Pool, the Conservative government has accepted it hook, line, and sinker. The minister of agriculture broke faith with the farm community yesterday by abandoning his support for a producer plebiscite on this important issue. I'd like to ask him: why are you afraid to let farmers decide how this important issue will affect their futures?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. Member for Vegreville has any problems with Dr. Carter's report, he should take them up with Dr. Carter. I notice that he did not appear at the announcement in Nisku where people had the opportunity to challenge the content of the report, he didn't show up in Regina or in Winnipeg, and now he's condemning the report.

As I indicated in this House on an earlier occasion, this minister was the first minister to ask the Canadian Wheat Board for a plebiscite – that was over two years ago – on the area that they control and to follow whatever the farmers in that area said on a province-by-province basis. They declined to do it. There was no point in us doing a plebiscite in the province of Alberta unless we had a commitment from the Wheat Board and the federal government that they would honour the plebiscite. The decision that has to be made now is a decision by the federal government, and it in no way prevents the Canadian Wheat Board from buying and selling barley.

10:50

MR. FOX: Mr. Speaker, Albertans are demanding and certainly deserve to be involved in the decision-making process. I know the government has a poor record in that regard, but things were supposed to be changing around here. I'd like to ask the Premier how he can stand idly by and allow his minister of agriculture to say that politicians rather than producers should make decisions on this important issue. Fire him.

MR. KLEIN: No. I think that the hon. minister is doing a commendable job. Basically, what the hon. minister is doing is listening to what a lot of the members of the farm community have told him through that wonderful process called Creating Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Jasper Place, followed by Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Edmonton Oilers

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Peter Pocklington is again attempting to extort concessions from his landlord by threatening to move the Oilers to another city. This time Hamilton is the target. It amazes a lot of people that a so-called free enterpriser has no intention of living up to his landlord/tenant agreement. My concern is some agreements signed between Mr. Pocklington, the Oilers, the provincial government and its various emanations: the \$55 million he owes in respect to the meat packing industry, a \$6 million direct loan, and a \$42 million loan through the Alberta Treasury Branch. The owner shows all the signs of an absconding debtor wanting to take his assets out of the province. I would like the Treasurer to tell the Assembly what steps he has prepared to prevent Mr. Pocklington from removing his assets from Alberta, given the hundred million dollars or so that he owes to the taxpayers.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, the provincial government is seriously in the courts with Mr. Pocklington and a number of his companies. We intend to get back what belongs to taxpayers.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, I don't think there's a sports entrepreneur that owes as much money to a government anywhere in the world. This government has invested in excess of a hundred million dollars, and now that the deals have gone sour, I don't think you can walk away. I'm asking him what action he's prepared to take now to prevent the owner of the Oilers from moving them out of the province while he owes us a hundred million dollars. That's the question.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I say again that the provincial government is in the courts with Mr. Pocklington and a number of his companies on a number of law suits, and we will get back what belongs to taxpayers.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Economic Development Strategy

(continued)

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Economic plans should have some basis in reality. To the Premier: how does the Premier come up with the figure of 110,000 jobs over the next four years when forecasting agencies such as the Conference Board, the CIBC, the Royal Bank, the TD Bank, the Scotia Bank, and the like are predicting unemployment rates for next year alone of 9 percent?

Speaker's Ruling Repetition

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, the Chair will allow it to proceed, but it's exactly the same question that was asked by another member earlier in question period. [interjections] I'm sorry, hon. members; I guess your sound system is still not working, although public works assures me that it is. If you check the preamble, it's exactly the same question that was asked by the Leader of the Opposition. [interjections] Order, hon. members. [interjection] Order, hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

You also seem to have forgotten the point that the Chair said he would allow it to proceed, but it's exactly the same question that went before. Please be a little more creative.

Supplementary, Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MR. MITCHELL: You know, I wish you would be a little less editorial.

MR. TAYLOR: You've had double time this period. What do you think the TV cameras are for, you or us? The Arsenio Hall of Alberta.

MR. SPEAKER: I really apologize for taking away your TV time.

Olds-Didsbury.

Community Development Bonds

MR. BRASSARD: Yes, Mr. Speaker. A number of years ago the chamber of commerce in the town of Didsbury met with Ray Speaker, who was the Minister of Municipal Affairs at the time, and presented a proposal to promote local development by raising funds locally for community projects. They called it the community bond proposal. Since then, we've met with other ministers, the town of Olds as well, and we've tried to develop this concept further through this local development initiative program. I was very encouraged, therefore, when I listened to the Premier last night refer to the community bonds. To the minister of agricul-

ture and rural development: could he outline the direction and timing that he expects this community bond issue to take?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, in the economic development strategy last night the Premier revealed that we would be doing three pilot projects under a community development bond concept. I would say that by the time the budget comes down, we will have the details for people and communities to use to access that program if they're interested in the pilot projects. Until those projects are under way and a new assessment is taken, that's as far as we'll be moving on the program. No pilot project can have a bond in excess of a million dollars.

MR. BRASSARD: Mr. Speaker, in that these two communities have been waiting for some time now with their proposals and they do indeed have them in place, would the minister be prepared to meet with representatives from these two communities to discuss their proposal?

MR. ISLEY: Certainly, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Beverly.

Social Assistance Policy

MR. EWASIUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since 1987 the Mennonite Central Committee of Alberta has operated four housing renovation programs and has trained 25 social assistance recipients to complete housing construction and renovations both in Edmonton and in Jasper. The direct benefit to society as a result of these programs has been almost a quarter of a million dollars, and more than 70 percent of the participants have not, and I repeat have not, returned to welfare. This is an effective grass-roots program that deserves the attention and support of this government. My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Why is the minister not willing to initiate badly needed housing projects based on this model?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, I have met with various groups recently on low-cost housing projects, and I encouraged them to get involved by self-initiative and individual resolve and by taking their resources and working with municipalities to develop such projects. I stress self-initiative. We have certain limited resources, and I'm very encouraged by the Mennonite organization that creates these types of projects and works consistently with the municipalities. By that I say, someone came to me recently and said: could the province look at some of the land that they have in putting it up to kick-start some of these projects? I said: better to go to the base that will get the taxes from these productive people once they go into the stream; go to the municipalities and see what they can put up to help facilitate these projects.

MR. EWASIUK: Mr. Speaker, last week the minister of social services unveiled an ill-defined proposal to get people off welfare. It has no specifics whatsoever, and here is a successful, specific program that warrants serious attention and support. My question is to the Minister of Family and Social Services. Will the minister commit today to implementing this tried and successful program in areas throughout Alberta that could benefit greatly to all?

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that question because the design of the welfare reform program is in fact exactly what the hon. member has mentioned to target on. In fact, the two members that are in charge of the

Mennonite Central Committee, who does the projects in Edmonton, are long-term friends of mine, going back to 1957. In fact, part of the innovative concept of the design of the major reforms involved the Mennonite Central Committee in Edmonton. We met about three months ago and sat down and asked how we could design the program to assist that group. The program was definitely designed with their assistance and will accommodate their needs.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-McKnight.

11:00

Students Finance

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier's so-called economic plan fails to speak to average Albertans. Jobs, jobs, and more jobs are promised, yet the document only pays superficial attention to education and job skills training. Just last week the Minister of Family and Social Services announced that he was reducing his welfare rolls by shifting clients onto student loans. My question is to the Premier. How does the government intend to deal with what is going to be a tremendous increase in students applying for loans?

MR. KLEIN: What we plan to do, Mr. Speaker, is precisely the right things that the Liberals plan to eliminate. If I recall the Liberal statements properly, they will eliminate all direct financial assistance in terms of loans to all corporations and human beings. I would think that would mean students as well. What we will do is maintain our commitment to student loans, unlike that party.

MRS. GAGNON: Mr. Speaker, it's obvious that the Premier has not read our education policy, which talks about reforming student loan programs, not deleting them whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker, my second question is to the Premier again. Social assistance clients will now be competing with other students for limited grant and student loan dollars as well as for spaces in postsecondary institutions. Will the government add more space, more dollars? Have there been negotiations between those institutions? Time is wasting, and people need to know.

MR. KLEIN: Well, we will maintain our commitment to students and student loan programs, unlike the Liberal Party. If I'm mistaken, I would like to read from the platform document of a Liberal candidate. It says: loans or guarantees will not be available to any individual or firm in the province. I would assume that would mean students as well. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order.

MR. TAYLOR: Table the document.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, Westlock-Sturgeon.
Cypress-Redcliff.

Economic Development Strategy

(continued)

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the Premier's economic statement last night comments were made using the phrase: industry-led economic development. My question this morning is to the Provincial Treasurer: what does that mean in policies relating to loan guarantees? If it's not loan guarantees, then how are we going to diversify the economy? What's meant by that phrase?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, clearly what the Premier announced last night was a reflection of what hundreds, if not thousands, of Albertans through dozens of consultation exercises said to their government. The government has said: we got your message, and we're listening. Albertans told us to build a climate that's conducive to investment, to facilitate economic development, to support industry-led economic development – not top-down, government-led economic development; it's led by the people of Alberta – and to move away from direct financial assistance and focus more on infrastructure and rates of taxation.

The leader of the Liberal Party asked the question: which way is it? Well, clearly in the Liberal policy statement they say: no more loans or loan guarantees to farmers; no more loans or loan guarantees to students; get out of the business. That's what the platform of that party says. That's what's in print in that party, Mr. Speaker, so we know it's on the record.

We have chosen, by taking this kind of approach spelled out in this document last night, to treat Albertans with the respect that they deserve.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question also is to the Provincial Treasurer. My constituents are concerned about taxes and the raising of taxes, and they well understand that Alberta has the lowest taxation level of any province. I would like the assurance of the Provincial Treasurer that tax reform isn't just a new word for higher taxes, that we're looking at our spending rather than relating to raising taxes for that sake.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is absolutely correct. Let's be perfectly clear. When the Premier talks about tax reform, we're not talking about raising taxes, we're not talking about more revenue. The hon. member can tell his constituents this weekend that what we are talking about is fair taxation in a tax regime that allows us, that enables businesses and enables individual Albertans to go head to head with competition no matter where it is in this country.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. members.

Point of Order Reflections on a Member

MR. SPEAKER: The point of order during question period, the Member for Calgary-Currie.

MR. ANDERSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would refer to Standing Order 23(h) and (i) which says:

A member will be called to order by Mr. Speaker if that member makes allegations against another member [or] imputes false or unavowed motives to another member.

During question period the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona indicated that I had stated that I had run in the last election because of the very lucrative pensions. At best, that is a complete distortion; at worst, it impugns the very motives for which I ran for the Alberta Legislature.

It is a fact that I and my family chose to serve four terms in this Assembly for the people of Calgary-Currie and to do the best one can possibly do in terms of making our society a better place to live. I did state to a media individual that part of our ability to do that for a fourth term after three others was the pension plan which allowed us to make that choice rather than to choose a very lucrative option at a juncture in one's life when you have to consider that.

I would hope that the hon. member would choose to retract or that Mr. Speaker could review the Blues and make some judgment on Monday.

MR. CHIVERS: Mr. Speaker, I regret if I've offended the hon. member with my comments. He is correct that I did say that one of the reasons that he ran was the generosity of the pension plan. I relied in making that comment on a publication in the *Calgary Sun*. It is clearly stated here that one of the reasons he ran was the pension plan. I assume it wasn't because it's less than generous. In any event, I'm prepared to withdraw the word "generosity."

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair thought for a time that we were headed towards a different conclusion than what has occurred. Therefore, the Chair will hold in abeyance a decision and review the Blues. [interjections] Order.

A matter of privilege, the Member for Camrose.

Privilege Imputing Motives

MR. ROSTAD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I commenced setting the case yesterday, and the Member for Calgary-Buffalo was absent. In your ruling and certainly in my belief the proceeding should not have continued.

11:10

As I mentioned in my opening comments yesterday – and I might even before I start perhaps reflect on today's proceedings – we do have cut and thrust, and all of us who run or serve here certainly come with the understanding that we're going to have comments and innuendo sometimes lobbed back and forth with no ill will. The Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, who ceases to amaze me with his depth of wit and humour, although he may be a burr under your saddle every once in a while, Mr. Speaker, does break the monotony and sometimes tension that comes in the Assembly.

I rise on this point of privilege because sometimes comments are made, perhaps not even intentionally, that can affect the ability of a member to carry out their duties as MLA. I think that in this instance that is a circumstance. I bring my point of privilege under Standing Order 15. My parliamentary references are *Erskine May*, page 69; Standing Order 23(h) and (i); *Beauchesne*, 481(f) and 487(2).

The earliest opportunity that I could bring my case was yesterday because the Blues were not available until 5:30 on the day the comments were made. I also made the point that I think the comments that were made during question period of Wednesday, April 21, by the Member for Calgary-Buffalo in both his main and supplementary questions implied both false and unavowed motives: that I was attempting to influence a judge.

I might mention that I have arranged a meeting with the Ethics Commissioner for next week to in fact have all the details before him so that he can also make a decision and determination as to whether there was in fact a conflict in terms of the Conflicts of Interest Act.

I'd also at this time like to file the letter in question, Mr. Speaker. The letter of advice to you that I wish to rise today has also been provided to the Member for Calgary-Buffalo as a courtesy. When I table the letter, perhaps I should go through portions of it instead of reading it to allow people to know the caution and the forethought that went into this letter, that it was not a haphazard letter written without seriously considering what might happen. I also make the point that it was clearly written four months after I ceased to be in Executive Council.

May I ask a few questions? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo as an officer of the court has received a letter that although not marked "private" is certainly not addressed to him, and I wonder how he feels that he can, without at least coming to

the writer, bring that forward. I ask the question how he in fact got it. Also, it was dated March 23; it was brought to the Assembly on April 21. How long had the letter been in his possession when he had an opportunity to either discuss it with me or to find more detail?

Getting to the letter itself. The salutation definitely said, "To the Court." I did that consciously, because in this instance, if I'd written the letter personally to the accused and then through him to his lawyer and it was to be used in the Court, there was the possibility in my mind that the court might not allow it, saying: "This is a letter to you personally. Do you have the permission of the writer? Do you not have the permission of the writer?" So I wrote specifically, "To the Court," not "Dear Judge," not anything else, but "To the Court."

I have excluded in the letter any impression of writing on behalf of an office or as an officer of the court, which all lawyers in fact are. I was writing it as a private citizen. In the letter I cite that the offence the accused was charged with is indeed a serious offence. In fact, any sexual offence is very, very, very serious. I don't at all condone sexual offences. I cite that it's extremely difficult and harmful on the victim as well as the accused. I also think bringing this kind of issue forward and into the Assembly must be much more difficult on the victim probably than even the accused, because the accused has now been found guilty, but it's something the victim's trying to put behind them, and it's brought out, and again it's before the media and the press.

I also want to point out that I canvassed, and I canvassed with legal counsel, that it's standard procedure for an accused who is found guilty to seek character references, not letters that are intimating that there should not be guilt or that there is innocence but character references. I can submit in this case that there were numerous; there was a whole sheaf of letters from the broad community that knew the accused, none of which addressed at all or intimated that there should not have been a finding of guilt. I did delineate how long I've known the accused and some of his characteristics which in my view had a redeeming value. I expressed the possible harshness of the penalty and expressed, in view of the redeeming values, that society as well as the accused would be better served if he served whatever penalty the court gave him outside prison rather than inside prison.

The quality that allows anyone to fully and constructively serve in our society is a person's reputation. Indeed, I and in fact we as MLAs have a duty and a right to advocate on behalf of our constituents, and my ability to have the trust of constituents or citizens to approach me to help solve their problem or give them advice and direction or represent them or their view in a particular circumstance is predicated on my reputation. Mr. Speaker, I have a great difficulty in standing up and tooting my own horn, but I do pride myself on my reputation: one of respect, honesty, fairness, equity. My respect is not only important in my constituency but also in this House. I'm honoured and privileged to say that I have generally earned the respect of all other members in the Assembly. In fact, during my seven years as the minister of justice, either as SG or AG, my opposition critics, other than the current ones who are with us today, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, were the late Gordon Wright and Sheldon Chumir. There was a mutual respect between us such that when an issue would arise, either or both of these hon. members would stop me, call me, or visit me to discuss the issue. Even after that, they might raise the issue in the House to make their point, but it was never an issue of privilege with them. It was an issue of respect. They raised the issue with some background and knowledge but made their point.

11:20

Over the past seven years, I've attempted to be open and fair and honest about each legal issue or other issue that I was confronted with. I studied law for three years, I practised for seven years, and I've served as a minister of justice in one form or another for seven years. I learned the law; I respect the law. Although sometimes the law is an ass, we are here charged with the duties of changing that. I'm appalled, Mr. Speaker, that the Member for Calgary-Buffalo could think that after my experiences, my performance as a minister of justice and as a member of this Legislature, I would stoop so low or make such a major or grievous error as to try and influence a judge in deciding an issue at trial.

I have known the young man, the accused in the letter, for some time. I've seen a redeeming characteristic which should be exemplified to help him correct his ways. Yes, he must and should serve his penalty but, I suggest, in a constructive and not in a destructive way.

Mr. Speaker, the first time I met the Member for Calgary-Buffalo was when I was serving as Solicitor General. He was representing an interest group, an organization that fights for and fosters the recognition of prisoners and their characteristics such that they can be more productive citizens. We do this by treating them constructively, not destructively. That, frankly, is the aim of the John Howard Society. I suggest that the member has lost track of that philosophy or commitment in the interests of crass politics. I hope his attempt at character assassination is not a precursor of the type of campaign that is intended to be run in the coming election. If it is run in the absence of principle and policy, we'll all find that the electorate won't stand for it, because Alberta believes in principle.

I suggest that the imputations in the member's remarks have affected my reputation in a way that impedes my ability to act as an effective MLA. They act as an obstruction to my performing my MLA duties and thus are a reflection on this House and its ability to act.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I ask the member and I caution all members to raise our sights, to plant ourselves firmly on principle, to be open and fair and to not be caught up in the crass politics. As lawyers we're all officers of the court, and the member should have realized that if the court had received my representation, they would have raised any impropriety in that letter and the receipt of it if in fact there was any. There isn't, and there hasn't been any comment by the court.

My letter was nothing more than a representation for an accused who was a constituent, who lives outside of the province, to have a chance to redeem himself, perhaps through treatment but outside of prison rather than inside. It's unfortunate that the victim and the accused have to have the case brought to the media's attention again, and I wish the victim well in the future.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I commence, I have for both you and the Member for Camrose a binder of authorities that I'm going to refer to. Just one preliminary matter before I deal with the . . .

Speaker's Ruling Tabling Documents

MR. SPEAKER: I'm sorry, hon. member. I'll accept it as four copies to be tabled with the House, but I will not accept it in this form.

MR. DICKSON: Well, we'll have four copies made, sir.

I wonder, Mr. Speaker, did you as well as the Member for Camrose wish to have this to refer to now on my undertaking that you will have the appropriate copies?

MR. SPEAKER: I'm sorry, hon. member. The practice of the House is four copies. [interjection] Order please. Take your place, hon. member.

Please let the record show that I'm certain that the Member for Camrose and the Chair will examine the documents when the proper documents are filed in the proper form. In the meantime, I'm quite certain that the Chair for one will be quite closely following your arguments.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, I'd perhaps misunderstood the process, because the last time I stood before you on a question of privilege I had provided both you and the Premier, who at that time was the subject of the question, with copies of authorities, and I'd understood that was an acceptable practice. So I stand corrected.

Privilege Imputing Motives (continued)

MR. DICKSON: Sir, one preliminary matter I want to deal with. Wednesday you had mused inwardly as to whether this material had been brought to the attention of the Ethics Commissioner. I want to assure you that notice was given by me to the Ethics Commissioner. I signed the letter to him before leaving for Calgary Wednesday evening. I've been assured that the letter from me was delivered in the morning of April 22, 1993.

Now, I have a number of materials that I'm going to refer to, and I'll refer to them by tab numbers so that at least for the benefit of *Hansard* later, sir, you and the Member for Camrose will be able to see the text of the documents. At tab 1 is a copy of my letter to the Ethics Commissioner dated April 21, 1993, putting this to him. At tab 2 is a copy of the letter from the Ethics Commissioner to myself dated April 23, 1993, acknowledging receipt of these documents and indicating that he would undertake an investigation.

Before I start with my formal submission, sir, I want to be clear that what I raised on Wednesday in question period dealt with a particular incident. What I raised in question period was the response of this government to it. Now, the Member for Camrose spoke in terms of characteristics that he prides himself on; namely, respect, honesty, fairness, and equity. I readily acknowledge that I myself have seen in previous dealings with this member all of those qualities and all of those characteristics. I had no wish when I raised this matter in question period to criticize the past performance of the Member for Camrose either serving as a member of Executive Council or serving generally as a member of this House. The issue that I had raised in question period related solely to what he did or didn't do on March 23, 1993. I urge the Speaker to focus specifically on that event because that truly is the issue before the Legislature.

Sir, there are a number of reasons why the claim for privilege is not properly founded and ought to be dismissed. Firstly, with all due respect, I think the member misapprehends the scope of parliamentary privilege. Tab 4 is a copy of the letter from the Member for Camrose, dated April 22, 1993, to you. The second paragraph says, and I quote:

I believe my rights as a Member of this Assembly were breached during question period on Wednesday, April 21, when the Member for Calgary Buffalo in both his main and supplementary

questions, implied both false and unavowed motives in that I was attempting to influence a Judge.

Now, his duties to his constituency, however, his constituency representation activities, even if they had been impaired – and I don't acknowledge that for a moment – clearly cannot be the subject of a claim of breach of parliamentary privilege. My authority, sir, is *Beauchesne*, article 92, page 25. This appears at tab 5 in the materials, and I'll simply quote article 92:

A valid claim of privilege in respect to interference with a Member must relate to the Member's parliamentary duties and not to the work the Member does in relation to that Member's constituency. Consequently, Mr. Speaker, the only issue is whether the ability of this member to perform his duties as a Member of the Legislative Assembly was impaired.

11:30

I have been unable, after what I suggest was a diligent search, to find any authority that writing letters to judges to promote a suspended sentence for a constituent convicted of sexual interference is a parliamentary duty of this member or indeed any Member of the Legislative Assembly. I'm unable to find any authority, sir, that requires a member to contact individual judges about individual cases in order to discharge their parliamentary duties. Quite to the contrary: one would expect, I submit, the reverse to be true. So taking the claim for breach of privilege at its strongest point surely, Mr. Speaker, is that this has somehow impacted or infringed or adversely affected his ability to do his constituency duties. My suggestion is that that isn't far enough.

Mr. Speaker, there's another parliamentary duty involved here that comes up with the question of parliamentary privilege, but it's not the parliamentary duty of the Member for Camrose. I'm the Justice critic for the Alberta Liberal Party caucus. Part of my responsibility is to raise in this Legislature, sir, as I did in question period on Wednesday, issues related to the independence of our judiciary, and that includes raising matters that either compromise or appear to compromise the independence of our judiciary.

Now, the second point I want to make is that the member references both my main question and my supplementary question. That's clear from his letter. I say to you, Mr. Speaker, with respect, the supplementary question cannot be the subject of a complaint from the member because it doesn't deal with him. If we look at the quote from *Hansard*, sir, page 2310 from April 21, 1993, I'll simply read the supplementary question, and I quote:

Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is: what steps has the Premier taken to ensure that members of the current . . . and I underline that

. . . Executive Council are not involved in either influencing or attempting to influence members of the courts in this jurisdiction?

Now, the last time I looked, the member who raises this issue was not a member of Executive Council, has not been a member of Executive Council, I think from his comment, for some four months.

The third point I want to raise, sir, is that it's clear that the member acknowledges he wrote the letter. I regret that he made it clear to us that he gave a great deal of thought to it. I would have hoped, quite frankly, that this would have been something he had written quickly and without due consideration. The point is that he acknowledges sending this communication to the judge. There's no question about that, so we can proceed to deal with his communication.

The fourth point I want to raise, sir, is that the Member for Camrose asserts – this is the most interesting part of his claim – that I implied he “was attempting to influence a Judge.” That's the allegation; that's what he sets out in his letter to you, sir, raising the issue.

Well, let's look at the facts. Let's look at the letter itself. It's at tab 7 of the materials when you see them, sir. It's dated March 23, 1993. It's addressed, "To the Court." I would have thought it was patently obvious that the member was attempting to influence the judge. The addressee is the court. Now, as a member of the bar, as a member of the Law Society of Alberta the member must have understood that "the court" means the presiding judge. It doesn't mean the courtroom. It doesn't mean the furniture in the courtroom. The letter of March 23, 1993, was not written to influence the convicted person. It surely was not written to influence defence council. It surely was not written to influence the court reporter, the court clerk, the court orderly, or any members of the public that happened to be in the courtroom during any part of the proceedings. This would be from the penultimate paragraph, the fourth sentence from the bottom, and I quote:

A period of incarceration would not serve society, a suspended sentence, probation and/or community service would allow for continued service to society yet bring home to [name of the convicted person] the seriousness of his actions.

Thank you for your consideration.

Who would the Member for Camrose be addressing, Mr. Speaker, if it wasn't the judge presiding, if it wasn't the judge who was about to impose sentence? If you agree, then I think it's clear that the case that he purports to make hasn't been made out, and it falls on that basis.

My fifth submission, Mr. Speaker, is that the Member for Camrose goes further. He says that by suggesting that he was trying to influence the judge, which seems patently obvious, as I said, this member was implying, quote, both false and unavowed motives, close quote. Well, you need only deal with the main question I asked on Wednesday for the reason I said before. We're not concerned with the supplementary question; it's only the main question. What was the main question? Let me simply read it to you, sir.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sir, just three months ago the Member for Camrose was the Attorney General for this province, the man responsible for the administration of justice, the man responsible for the appointment of members of the provincial court. On March 23, 1993, the Member for Camrose wrote to a judge.

So far it seems to me that all of the evidence and representations from the Member for Camrose affirm all of those facts.

He was writing on behalf of a man convicted under the Criminal Code of sexual exploitation of a minor.

And I say parenthetically that no issue was taken with that. I go on to ask:

The member recommended a suspended sentence and probation.

I can only ask: isn't that exactly what he recommended? The letter is there. He takes no issue with that. I then said:

My question: does the Premier find this action by the former Attorney General of Alberta acceptable?

That's the question.

There are no motives alleged expressly. I simply recited certain facts which the member himself today now acknowledges to be true. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, I didn't care on Wednesday and I don't care now whether his motives were malevolent or benevolent. I assume that they're benevolent. I assume that he was trying to assist a constituent, but what he did, in my view and in my submission, was bad. It was improper, it was injudicious, and it was foolish given the previous position he held.

My sixth submission, Mr. Speaker, is that the member makes much of the fact that he was an ordinary member of this Assembly. The implication in what he says is one I find astonishing. What he would have you accept, sir, is that one day after he ceased being the Attorney General of the province of Alberta he

became just another government backbencher. Is that his position? It appears to be. If that's the case, why is it that this government, this very House included part 6 in the Conflicts of Interest Act? If the minute a minister ceases to hold ministerial duties and becomes an ordinary member, why did Judge Wachowich recommend a one-year cooling-off period for former ministers? When this House decided not to go with a one-year cooling-off period but a six-month cooling-off period, it was accepted and it was passed by this government and this Legislature.

11:40

Now, there's absolutely no suggestion – I want to be very clear on this – that the Member for Camrose in some way benefited personally from what happened here. The only reason I reference the Conflicts of Interest Act is that it I think explodes any suggestion or notion that influence ceases at the time the officeholder leaves office. Clearly, there's a residual effect and influence continues to exist. So I simply say, sir, that the conflict of interest provision is powerful, compelling, cogent evidence that there should be a concern about influence that ministers have subsequent to holding office.

Mr. Speaker, I can ask rhetorically: why does the draft code of professional conduct for the Law Society concern itself with lawyers who – when a member of a law firm is appointed to a position as a judge, there are all kinds of limitations on members of that firm not being able to go and present argument in front of that former partner, that former member of the firm. In fact, the code of professional conduct proposed for the Law Society of Alberta proposed a two-year period.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. A point of clarification: did you say that this is proposed or this is in place?

MR. DICKSON: Well, in the material which you will be receiving, sir, there's an existing code of conduct. There is a proposed code of conduct which is more comprehensive. I'm making reference to both documents, sir.

MR. SPEAKER: But at the moment you're dealing with the proposed?

MR. DICKSON: Absolutely, sir.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR. DICKSON: Now, the member asserts – and I find this also surprising given the fact that this man has been the man responsible for the administration of the courts for seven years – that this was only dealing with sentence, that it was postconviction. Well, my response, sir, with respect, is that the question of sentence is every bit as critical, every bit as important as the finding of a conviction or acquittal. In many respects my constituents, and I suspect many other Albertans, attach even more significance to the type of sentence and the type of disposition than the finding of conviction or acquittal. Surely this member, seven years as a distinguished and effective Attorney General, would have been mindful of that, and I find it stretches the credulity of all members to have this same member now speak in terms of: it was only a question of sentence.

I think it's useful to consider some of the regulations governing the conduct of lawyers. I want to say firstly, sir, that it's clear that this is a matter for the Legislative Assembly; it's not a matter for the Law Society. In the materials you will receive, I've referred you to a commentary, page 36 of the Law Society,

Professional Conduct Handbook. I'll just read from it, sir. It's item 8.

Generally speaking, a Governing Body will not be concerned with the execution of the official responsibilities of a lawyer holding public office.

It goes on to say, and I don't think this applies:

But if his conduct in office reflects adversely upon his integrity or his professional competence, he may be subject to disciplinary action.

The authority for that is: Quebec Queen's Bench decision cited 1968, page 235, the case of Barreau du Montreal and Claude Wagner. Also a further citation: Gagnon and the Bar of Montreal, 1959, Supreme Court reports, page 92. That was the decision of the Quebec Supreme Court. So when I refer to the Law Society rules, it's not suggesting that there should be some process going on there, but I think it's of some assistance to you, sir, in assessing how to deal with this.

The existing code of conduct, sir, says – this will be at tab 12 of the material when you see it – and I quote:

Public confidence in the administration of justice and the legal profession may be eroded by irresponsible conduct on the part of the individual lawyer. For that reason, even the appearance of impropriety should be avoided.

Sir, at tab 11 I've cited from the draft code, and just by way of background, as all lawyers in this Assembly will know, the draft code of conduct is something that's been worked on by a committee of the Law Society for almost two years. It's received extensive input and comment. Article 9, which appears at page 76, says – this is part of the commentary – and I quote:

Except with the consent of all parties, a lawyer shall not appear before a judge or a court when the lawyer's past or present relationship with the judge or the court would create a reasonable apprehension of bias.

Now, that was intended to address the question of a lawyer appearing as counsel, a lawyer as advocate. The message is the same; the concern has to be the same.

Going on, the draft code commentary at page 81. This is at tab 11 of the materials, and I quote:

Impartiality is an essential element of judicial proceedings, from substantive viewpoint and also in terms of society's perception of the justice system. Accordingly, lawyers have an ethical obligation to contribute to the fact and appearance of impartiality.

Tab 10.

A lawyer shares the responsibilities of all persons to society and the justice system and, in addition, has certain special duties as an officer of the court and by virtue of the privileges accorded the legal profession.

Rule 3:

A lawyer shall not act in a manner that might weaken public respect for the law or justice system or interfere with its fair administration.

In this Camrose case the member who raises the question of privilege was the Attorney General of the province when the police investigated the case. He was the Attorney General when a charge was laid. He was the Attorney General when a preliminary inquiry was held. He was the Attorney General when a committal for trial took place. Three months, four months, two days: the point is that this particular member had this chief responsibility at the time that this case was before the courts and being dealt with. This member was presumably instructing his agents at each one of those steps.

I think, sir, with respect, it is improper. I think that even if you should determine otherwise, even if you're not uncomfortable with what happened here, I still respectfully submit that there's absolutely no prima facie case here of breach of privilege for the other reasons I've mentioned.

Thank you, sir.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. It's quite evident the Chair will be taking the matter under due consideration.

head: **Orders of the Day**

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

11:50

Bill 57
Electoral Divisions Amendment Act, 1993

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Justice.

MR. FOWLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to move second reading of Bill 57, Electoral Divisions Amendment Act, 1993.

This Bill, Mr. Speaker, is intended to correct some errors and omissions in the legal descriptions of the electoral boundaries created by the passage of the Electoral Divisions Statutes Amendment Act, 1993. These amendments are largely of a technical nature.

The most important amendment relates to the community of Muir Lake. Inadvertently a part of this community was not included in any electoral division. This amendment will cause all of the Muir Lake community to be included in the electoral division of Stony Plain. This is what was originally intended. In two other situations the boundary line was not properly described, which had the effect in one case of splitting an Indian reserve between two different electoral divisions. In another situation the boundary lines overlapped. This error was created when House amendments were made to the Electoral Divisions Statutes Amendment Act, 1993. As you can see by these examples, Mr. Speaker, these technical amendments are necessary to correct errors in the boundary descriptions.

Mr. Speaker, I would emphasize that the government remains committed to the principle of effective electoral representation.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Speaking to second reading, the Member for Vegreville.

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise and speak on the principles of Bill 57, the Electoral Divisions Amendment Act, 1993. The principle simply described is what the minister basically did for us here today, that the electoral map of Alberta should be made to conform with the intentions of the government when they introduced the new Electoral Divisions Statutes Amendment Act in January of this year. It's impossible for us to divorce the technical descriptions contained in this Act from the reasons, from the methodology, from the impact of these changes and indeed the Bill that it seeks to amend.

We have to consider the whole ball of wax, because this is, in very simple terms, the result of a fairly shoddy and hasty process. I'd like to remind Members of the Legislative Assembly that had it not been for the diligent effort of the New Democrat opposition, their highly skilled and hardworking research department, and indeed the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, we might not until this day know that there is a portion of the province of Alberta that had fallen off the electoral map as a result of the unseemly haste and anxiety of this Conservative government.

The people of Muir Lake were indeed left out. I don't know why they didn't decide to declare themselves some sort of a tax-free haven and refuse to co-operate with the other items of this government's agenda that seek to cut important programming and tax the daylight of hardworking average Albertans, Mr. Speaker. They perhaps could have gotten away with that because they were treated by this government as if they did not exist. We're talking about not a handful of people but I believe somewhere in the

neighbourhood of 1,700 people, perhaps two-thirds of them who would be eligible to vote and who hopefully will in the upcoming election. They were indeed left out, and it's important that they be put back in so that they along with other Albertans can exercise their franchise, so that they can exercise their democratic right to say who they want to have represent them in the Legislative Assembly in the first instance and, in the broader case, have some input in deciding who's going to be government in the province of Alberta following the next election.

Let's not minimize the importance of the Bill or the significance of the history that led to the introduction of this Bill before the Legislative Assembly.

Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, the current Member for Stony Plain will have a chance to rise in this House and tell the Assembly what was on his mind, what was on his agenda, what he was doing as a Member of the Legislative Assembly when this Bill was debated in the first instance. Was there something that was otherwise occupying his attention? Was he thinking about his plans in the future when this Bill was debated and 1,200 of 1,700 people whom he hopes to represent in the future were left off the electoral map? Maybe he'll have a chance to talk to us about that in the Assembly. I for one and members of our caucus would be interested in hearing that, as would, I'm sure, the people in the Muir Lake area and the constituents generally west of the city of Edmonton.

There are some other amendments in this Bill that we will be dealing with: the constituencies of Calgary-Foothills, Calgary-Nose Creek, Edmonton-Gold Bar, Edmonton-Strathcona, Drayton Valley-Calmar, Lacombe-Stettler, Rocky Mountain House, Whitecourt-St. Anne. I accept the minister's interpretation that these are minor, that these amendments merely clarify in technical and legal terms the actual constituencies that we approved collectively as a Legislature in the month of February 1993. I accept him at his word, and I believe that we're just doing what was intended with respect to those constituencies.

I do need to point out that this whole botched job is the result of, I think, unseemly haste on the part of the government to try and parlay their leadership convention in late 1992 into an election as soon as possible in 1993 before the people of the province of Alberta find out just how shallow, how transparent, and how vacuous their agenda really is, Mr. Speaker. We heard members in the Assembly stand time and time again on the government's side and say: time is running out, we must do this now, we don't have time for public hearings, and we can't involve the people of Alberta in the process because we're in a hurry.

Well, what's the hurry? This government has almost a full calendar year left in their mandate, a mandate that they won in 1989. I won't discuss the process there. I respect it very deeply. Albertans had a chance to have a say. They chose in the main more Conservative members than New Democrat or Liberal members, and they get to govern for a period of five years before their legislative mandate runs out. The argument that we need to do this very quickly, that the four-member Conservative committee behind closed doors without involvement from the people, without involvement from independent sources, indeed without involvement of New Democrat or Liberal members needed to hurry this up, to patch together this Bill and foist it on the people so they could have an election before their members retire or they exhaust their agenda prior to the end of their legislative mandate just doesn't hold. There was time.

I think it's imperative that we as Members of the Legislative Assembly do a good job with the Bills that we put forward, debate, and pass. These are, after all, Mr. Speaker, the laws of the province of Alberta. It's not something to be taken lightly or

casually, as some government members do: call for the question the minute the Bill's introduced. We're obliged to scrutinize these Bills, look at them very carefully, consider their impact on the people of the province of Alberta, speak out on behalf of the people we represent, and then make decisions. I don't think it was done very carefully with the electoral boundaries process, and we don't need to look very far to find substantial evidence of it. Bill 57 is rock-solid evidence of the fact that the job was done too quickly. The job was done poorly and without due consideration or the involvement of the people of the province of Alberta.

We hear daily about different issues being argued in the courts of the province of Alberta, Mr. Speaker. First, from Mayor Tom Maccagno on behalf of the council and people of the town of Lac La Biche arguing that their interests were not represented by the changes made by their MLA and his colleagues on the government committee with respect to how that constituency would be described on the new electoral map for the province of Alberta. Now, I'm not going to argue the specifics of that; that's being done in the court. Whether Lac La Biche has the potential to be well represented if it's included with St. Paul or Athabasca or Fort McMurray is something . . .

Speaker's Ruling Sub Judice Rule

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, hon. member. Thank you. We will not have any further references to that particular case. In terms of the discussion of this Bill, there's plenty of latitude with regard to the various constituencies that are mentioned there. Because the Athabasca-Lac La Biche case is before the courts, we will not be discussing it.

Thank you.

MR. FOX: Mr. Speaker, the Bill that we're seeking to amend is before the courts. I don't know if that precludes discussion on the Bill.

MR. SPEAKER: Specifically in regard to that one constituency.

MR. FOX: Yes, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Court of Appeal, I believe, is hearing a case on a reference to the court by the government on the Bill, and different parties have intervenor status. We'll follow that with interest.

Debate Continued

MR. FOX: The point I'm trying to make is that there is ample evidence that this was a rush job on the part of the government because they had a political agenda. That is too often the case in this Legislative Assembly, where the government does not have a social or an economic agenda doing things for the people of Alberta. They have a political agenda that is related directly to their desire to get elected, to hold on to power so that they can do what they need to do on behalf of the people that helped them get there.

12:00

Mr. Speaker, this Bill that we're dealing with today I think is a testament to that kind of agenda, and I don't like it very much. I think it's embarrassing for some of us as Members of this Legislative Assembly to have been part of a Bill that was so poorly drafted that it needs to be amended in so many sections, after the fact, before an election can be called. I would like to appeal to the government that we take a second look at the Bill. The Bill can be dealt with in a more effective, more inclusive way between now and April 1994 when the government's mandate runs

out. It's not too late; it's not the eleventh hour. We do have the opportunity to do a good job on behalf of the people we represent, to put in place on behalf of the people of Alberta electoral boundaries that reflect their communities' best interests, reflect their own desires and needs respecting the need for relative equity between the numbers of voters in each constituency so that people feel empowered – when they make decisions, they know their vote is going to count – and that we respect important issues related to geography, economic patterns and development in areas, history, culture, things that people share in common.

We could pay the appropriate amount of attention to all these things if we decided to put in place a legitimate, independent public consultation process to develop electoral boundaries for the people of the province of Alberta rather than rushing headlong into an election that we understand has been rumoured to be called on May 6 or 7 after apparently we're going to get a budget or a financial statement or some sort of equivalent flimflam from the government. We'll be into an election on boundaries that have not been vindicated as the government had promised through reference to the Alberta Court of Appeal. That apparently will occur after the election. That's going to be some comfort to the people of the province of Alberta, because the Bill that we're seeking to amend today, I would remind members, says that the electoral boundary issue shall not be revisited until after the next federal census, which is, to use the Premier's words from last night, after the close of this century and after the beginning of the next century. We're not dealing with trifling matters here. We're dealing with the electoral boundaries of the province of Alberta that will be in place for some time to come and determine the type and pattern of representation that Albertans have.

Mr. Speaker, there are other problems that may arise as a result. The government's agenda has been hurried in other ways as a consequence of the Bill that we're seeking to amend by this Bill 57, and I'll refer briefly to the process of enumeration which is ongoing. The clock is ticking on that process now, because as the Legislative Offices Committee we had to amend certain portions of the Election Act so that an enumeration could be accomplished prior to the normal September 15 to 30 time frame or whatever – I forget the exact dates . . .

MR. LUND: The first two weeks of September.

MR. FOX: The first two weeks of September. Thank you, hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House.

That's the normal time frame that enumerations would be held in the province of Alberta: during the first two weeks of September every year except those years in which an election is held or the year immediately after an election is held. We've not had an enumeration since September of 1988. That's almost five years. Some constituencies where there have been vacancies and by-elections have undergone enumerations, but in the main we have not had an enumeration for four and a half years in the province of Alberta. Amendments were passed to the Act that would bump up that whole process so we would have an enumeration during the last week of the month of April. The time lines have been compressed substantially, and I want to take my hat off to the Chief Electoral Officer and his staff and the people who are working in mapping for all the work – I know the Member for Highwood thinks I look better with a hat. They've done yeoman service trying to accommodate the government's political agenda, making sure that all the forms that are used in the enumeration and election process are up to date and ready to go. The minister of environmental protection and enhancement has likely had the mapping branch working overtime trying to accommodate the

mapping of the province and the polling subdivisions that need to happen as a result. Their people are working very hard all because the government is in a hurry.

They weren't in a hurry a couple of years ago when they had a chance to do this properly, but now when they realize their time is running out – their legislative mandate isn't running out; perhaps the legitimate moral mandate is running out, Mr. Speaker – they want all this hurried up. So instead of a 14-day process for the enumeration in the province of Alberta, we now have a six-day process for the enumeration in the province of Alberta. I understand that if you're someone who is missed, the chances of getting picked up the second time around by the enumerator are slim. We're going to see a substantially larger number of people involved in the revision process, the court of revision, which I believe is scheduled for May 13, 14, and 15. It's going to be a very rushed and hurried process, and if Bill 57 is any example of how shoddy this government is in its planning and process, I worry that there are going to be a lot of mistakes made in this hurry-up job that's being done with respect to enumeration because too much is being asked of mere mortals. The people who are hired as returning officers, the people they hire as enumerators and people to assist them have been given a very difficult task by the government all because they're in a hurry to call an election, Mr. Speaker.

[Mr. Main in the Chair]

It's a shame that we as members of the Official Opposition have to be involved trying to help the government do it right, correct their mistakes after the fact. We spent so much time trying to light the way, show them the error of their ways, tell them that what we should have been doing is involving Albertans in the process. The people in communities like Rocky Mountain House or Nanton or Mundare have a right to be involved in decisions that are made about the constituencies in which they live, and they were denied that through the process. They were not allowed any opportunity for open, public input in an organized way with regards to the recommendations of the Electoral Boundaries Committee involving four Conservative members behind closed doors. That opportunity was not there, and we've heard some impassioned debate from the Member for Calgary-Currie with respect to that very issue in previous sittings of the Fourth Session of the 22nd Legislature. I want to remind hon. members of that debate so they're aware of what has gone before. We could have done it better, Mr. Speaker, and we should do it better.

I'd like to appeal to the government, to the hon. Minister of Justice and his colleagues to give Albertans a chance to be involved. Don't think that you have to go out and get wiped out in an election that you're going to call 10 days from now. Give yourself a chance to establish credibility. Give yourself a chance to show Albertans that in spite of all that's happened in the last six months maybe you can turn a new leaf, that maybe Premier Ralph with the pictures in his little reports can turn it around, that maybe there are Albertans that will still vote for you guys. Give them a chance. The way to do that is to suspend the current electoral boundaries process, put in place a legitimate independent process that involves Albertans, and a much better job will be done, Mr. Speaker. We won't have to come back after the fact and seek all kinds of amendments to something that we spent almost three weeks on in a previous session of this Legislature.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Calgary-North West.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I almost feel it's déjà vu. Here we are debating an electoral boundaries Act yet

again. I'm not sure how many times we've debated electoral boundaries on this issue.

MR. HYLAND: Where's your caucus support, Frank? Tell us how your caucus stands. Where are they?

MR. BRUSEKER: I wouldn't worry about it, member.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. Order please.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker; good point. The Member for Cypress-Redcliff is once again out of order.

Mr. Speaker, we're asked to debate the principle of the Bill here today, and I must confess I didn't have to go far before I ran into something that I disagreed with, and that was the very title of the Bill. I thought maybe the government would have been more honest if they'd called this Bill what it really is: the electoral divisions sloppy workmanship amendment Act, because that's really what it comes down to.

12:10

MR. SIGURDSON: Work person.

MR. BRUSEKER: Work person, okay. Sloppy craftsmanship: that's not a good word either. Gee, we've got to find a whole new lexicon here.

Really, Mr. Speaker, the only reason we're debating this today is because of the government's imposed closure when we dealt with this issue a scant month and a half ago in mid-February. Yet again we are dealing with boundaries, primarily, as I understand it, to deal with the Muir Lake problem. I certainly agree with the hon. Justice minister: we couldn't conceive of having an election without every Albertan having the right to vote in an election in some constituency somewhere. So I think it's certainly appropriate that we're finally recognizing that difficulty.

Mr. Speaker, the difficulty that arises with Muir Lake and I guess some of the other ones here too is the hurry-up-and-wait routine. You know, it's interesting. We started the boundaries review process in August of 1989. Here we are in April of 1993 still trying to finally resolve the issue.

I echo the concern of the Member for Vegreville when he says that really what this should be and is supposed to be all about is effective electoral representation. How you define representation, of course, was a topic of discussion on the Electoral Boundaries Committee version 1, of which I was a member, and I suspect continues to be a concern of a variety of members as well.

What we're asked to support, I guess, in this amendment is the boundaries of - there are only a couple of Calgary constituencies. My own constituency is in the city of Calgary, and I'm sure you can appreciate that I'm therefore concerned about the Calgary constituencies in particular but all constituencies across the province. That really put into place again the concept that the Calgary, Edmonton constituencies on average are going to be much larger in terms of their population compared to some of the other constituencies. I use, for example, because it's mentioned in the Bill here, Rocky Mountain House. The population of that constituency will be substantially lower.

Mr. Speaker, I guess when I think about this Bill and other Bills that have been before the House that deal with electoral boundaries in various iterations, I can't help but wonder about all the things that are left out of the Bills we have been discussing, the things that should be there, that deal with, for example, constituency offices and services offered there. There are difficulties that rural members have with respect to distance that urban members don't have. On the other side of the coin, there are issues of numbers

that urban members have that rural members do not have. My hon. colleague from Calgary-Buffalo tells me that much of his constituency, for example, is going to be a very transient kind of constituency because of the fact that many of the residences there are rental property. So there are lots of changes that are occurring to constituencies, and yet none of those issues are addressed in this particular Bill or addressed in other Bills.

Mr. Speaker, the attempt, as I understand, from the hon. Justice minister - I guess the way to describe this is: many of the amendments we have today are an attempt to close the circle, if you will, to make sure that one end of the circle meets up with the other end of the circle. Then in effect you have a closed circle for each of the constituencies, and then in fact all parts of the province fall within one or the other of those constituencies. I must confess I'm rather surprised that we're four years into this process and they finally realize that that's necessary. However, I guess better late than never.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Vegreville talked about the hurry-up-now process that seems to be being put in place, because apparently according, at least through the front page of the *Calgary Herald*, to the Lieutenant Governor, we're having an election soon. We do know that we have the better part of a year remaining in this mandate, that we could be debating this for a while yet. There are errors, I believe, that still need correction, that are not in this Bill that we have before us, Bill 57, the Electoral Divisions Amendment Act, 1993. I think there are some things that we need to be dealing with that unfortunately are not here.

The Member for Vegreville also talked about workload and talked about the incredible strain, I guess is the way to describe it, that is being put on individuals who are being asked to prepare for the upcoming election which we know we must have at least within the next year sometime. The problem with hurrying up and pushing things is evidenced in this Bill. The entire Bill 57 we have before us, all the amendments we have before us today are here because of that hurry-up kind of concept: let's rush things through; let's push in closure; let's put in deadlines that may or may not be reasonable, but son of a gun, we're going to put them in anyhow. I just don't think we as legislators do ourselves proud or do Albertans proud when we rush things through and impose deadlines that are going to be difficult to meet.

Let me put a personal note on that. For example, as I'm sure you're aware, Mr. Speaker, each constituency must have a returning officer. The duty of that returning officer is to ensure that the electoral process in each constituency occurs fairly, that an enumeration is held, that polling stations are set up, et cetera, et cetera: a long variety of tasks. One of those returning officers was of course appointed from my own constituency of Calgary-North West. When that individual finally looked at all the tasks that were being presented before him and then looked at the deadline, the time frame, the time constraints in which he was going to be asked to complete those tasks, the result was that he resigned the position. The gentleman said, "I just don't want to tackle that kind of job in that kind of time frame." The end result, of course, because every constituency has to have a returning officer, was again a scramble: gee, now we have to find someone else. The government did find a replacement returning officer who because he stepped in following the resignation of an earlier returning officer now has an even shorter time frame to complete the tasks that are being put before him.

So the workload is being pushed on people. The time frame is being compressed for the enumeration, the time frame is being compressed for the allocation of polling stations, and the end result I'm afraid is likely to be errors once again.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill before us today closes the circle. I think that is an appropriate step. I understand from the hon. Justice minister that it attempts to clarify boundary descriptions so that it will be easier for candidates of all political parties and for the returning officers to clearly identify the boundaries of those constituencies. I cannot in all honesty say that I disagree with that aspect of clarity. I do disagree, however, with some of the boundaries that are being proposed for the reasons mentioned before: in terms of equity, in terms of fairness, and in terms of effective representation. So from that standpoint I will have some difficulty in supporting the Bill, not because of the amendments themselves but the amendments as they fit into the overall scheme of the Bill's description of boundaries as they are shown before us.

To that extent, Mr. Speaker, I guess I will close with a comment simply stating: I hope for the sake of this Legislature and for Albertans that this is the last time in a good long time that we have electoral boundaries legislation before this House.

12:20

MR. CHIVERS: Mr. Speaker, just on that last comment. I fear that it certainly will not be the last time we have electoral boundaries before us in this Assembly in light of the fact and the delay that has been deliberately occasioned in taking the constitutional question to the Court of Appeal with respect to whether or not the boundaries as drawn in Bill 55 pass constitutional muster. Based on that and taking into account also the fact that the government has given every indication that it intends to run an election on those boundaries before there can possibly be a decision from the Court of Appeal, it seems clear to me that this will not be the last time the Legislature is dealing with electoral boundaries. Indeed, I would surmise that it is quite likely that electoral boundaries will be one of the very early tasks facing any new Legislature run on these boundaries, and that is because the chances of them passing constitutional muster when they are examined by the court is highly questionable.

The Minister of Justice noted, if I can paraphrase a bit, that it would be beyond the realm of contemplation that there should be an election run in Alberta on boundaries which in effect had disenfranchised some voters. I'm speaking here of the Muir Lake situation. I certainly agree wholeheartedly with him in that regard. It would truly be beyond comprehension that that sort of situation could occur, but unfortunately it is not beyond the realm of contemplation of this government that Albertans will indeed be forced to vote on boundaries that systematically overrepresent the less populated areas of the province and systematically underrepresent the more populated areas of the province. That is precisely why, when these matters are vetted in the Court of Appeal, this legislation will not stand up to constitutional muster.

The unfortunate reality, however, as a consequence of the government's rush to carry out an election on boundaries that they know full well will not meet constitutional muster, is that Albertans will continue to have in place to govern them a Legislative Assembly that is not based on constitutional principles. That is most unfortunate.

It has, indeed, been a long and arduous task in dealing with electoral boundaries in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. The reason that it has been so long and arduous is because of the commitment of this government to circumventing the constitutionally required principles in terms of how the boundaries should be drawn and the refusal of this government to go through a process which would involve a determination by an independent commission. That, of course, is the reason why so much time has passed in terms of the process here. Had the government decided at the point when the first Electoral Boundaries Commission report came

back, when the commission's report was that they could not reach a majority conclusion – had the government immediately made the necessary changes so that the legislation could pass constitutional muster, then we would not be in this unfortunate predicament.

Mr. Speaker, as I say, it's unfortunate that the government is not in a similar rush to get a court ruling as to whether the boundaries on the map as presently contemplated in Bill 55 and with the amendments in Bill 57 do meet constitutional muster and make a commitment to Albertans that they will not run an election on an election map that has not received the approval of the Court of Appeal. Of course, that is not the strategy of this government; that is the reason for the delay in filing the reference in the Court of Appeal. Had that reference been filed in a timely fashion, it's quite possible that the Court of Appeal could have provided a ruling. That at the present time seems beyond the realm of possibility, unless other circumstances intervene.

In terms of the provisions of Bill 57: well, of course, the principal reason we're back here is because of the undue haste of the government in terms of the situation that led to the exclusion and disenfranchisement of the electors in the Muir Lake area. As we all know, what happened here is that the government had two amendments. One of the amendments would have been to remove the Muir Lake residents from the St. Albert constituency, where they had been placed in the original Bill, and the second amendment would have been to transfer them to Stony Plain. Unfortunately, the government quite carelessly passed the amendment to remove them from St. Albert, but they withdrew the second amendment which would have placed them in the Stony Plain constituency. Consequently, these voters were left in limbo.

There are other amendments here with respect to the boundaries, of course, quite a number of them, as has been commented on by members speaking earlier. Again they illustrate the undue haste and carelessness with respect to which the original Bill 55 provisions were drafted and the way in which it was carried through the Legislature. Indeed, it should not go unmentioned that the original Bill was passed through the Legislature on repeated closures brought in by the government.

I have a few comments, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the amendments as they impact the Edmonton-Strathcona constituency. I should say that under the Bill 55 provisions the impact on Edmonton-Strathcona constituency is that the new Edmonton-Strathcona will be the largest voting population in the province of Alberta, standing at 23.7 percent above the average constituency voting population. Unfortunately, those figures are based on a census in June of 1991, and that census does not take into account the student population which at other times of the year is present in the Edmonton-Strathcona constituency. Quite clearly, had the student population been included in the figures, the actual voting population in Strathcona would have been significantly higher. That is one of the issues the government has clearly not addressed in terms of drawing these boundaries, and I suspect the reasons that the boundaries are drawn in the fashion they are is not any accident. There clearly is a need for more urban representation in both the city of Edmonton and the city of Calgary, but of course it would be impossible without adding additional electoral divisions to have a voting population for the constituencies in Edmonton and Calgary which more nearly meets the norm of voting populations across the province.

Mr. Speaker, I conclude my remarks by reiterating again that the reason we are here today dealing with these amendments is because of the way in which the government has gone about crafting an electoral map for Alberta. The unfortunate consequence to Albertans appears to be that this government is

determined to run an election on boundaries that may well not be constitutional.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was surprised to be recognized so quickly. I thought the government would be defending the Bill. I think the concluding comment of my colleague, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, is a good jumping-off point. If this government is determined to proceed with an election on boundaries that it's not certain are constitutional, what does that say about the commitment of this government to constitutional government? In fact, I think it can be observed that the reference that was made to the courts was only made after a justice of the Queen's Bench court in Alberta issued an injunction restraining the government from proclaiming the Act and holding any legislation during court proceedings. It wasn't until a court in the province of Alberta issued that injunction that the Minister of Justice got moving to refer this legislation to the court.

That does account, as my colleague observed, for the fact that the reference is only now beginning to be heard by the court. The arguments have not yet been heard because counsel have just been appointed, the proceedings have begun. It's very clear that the government may be attempting to proceed with an election on the basis of legislation which it is not sure is constitutionally correct. I think that's a very serious matter and ought to cause us to pause in deliberation and debate and to consider whether in fact this is the right thing for us to do as an Assembly. I appreciate that the purpose of the Act today is to correct errors in the drafting of riding boundaries put through under Bill 55 a very short time ago, but surely error is in the eye of the beholder. What is an error to one person may be all right to another.

12:30

The situation in Muir Lake appears to have resulted from a difference of opinion between members as to which riding that particular locality should be located in. It seems to me what happened was that there was a changing of minds that took place partway through the proceedings and, I gather, some changing of minds that took place after the proceedings. All of that leaves us with a situation where the Legislative Assembly has to take corrective action on a matter that is partly technical but, in this case, partly political as well.

When we draw riding boundaries in the province of Alberta, we make political judgments in the final analysis. The argument around this has always been over whose judgment should prevail: whether it should be the judgment of people who have a partisan interest, whether it should be the judgment of people who are applying a set of criteria in a more or less objective fashion, or whether it should be some mix of the two. I have to say that with the absolutely miserable experience we've had with this process, perhaps we were better off when we had a mixture of the two. At least partisan considerations were more or less on the table rather than under the table or off in a back room somewhere where people didn't know.

I would like to relate my own experience, because there was a problem when Bill 55 went through the Legislature. The problem was that when this Assembly came to do the committee work, the committee work was truncated. In fact, it was worse than that. It was cut off by a closure motion that was moved before we even went into committee. Here we had a government that said: we don't care what it is you have to say, how relevant it is, how important it is to whomever, this debate is going to be over before

it begins; it's going to be over within 48 hours. Now, think about that for a moment, Mr. Speaker. When you say that closure is going to be moved in committee study of a Bill of such technical magnitude and importance, of course it's understandable that mistakes will be made, purely technical mistakes, because the opportunity for the committee to do its job was taken away from it.

There's a more fundamental unfairness that was involved in that process of moving closure before the committee began, and that was that many Albertans were told in writing by representatives of the government, by representatives of the select special committee of the House that drew these boundaries, that if they wanted a change made in any particular they would have to contact a Member of the Legislative Assembly who could move the amendment on their behalf. That's what the government told the people. They said: "Sure, there may be problems. We recognize that this legislation was put together fairly quickly by a committee of MLAs. There are mistakes. There are problems. Here's the process. The process is that you contact your Member of the Legislative Assembly, and your MLA will have the opportunity to move an amendment." Well, guess what? I sat here in the committee and was denied an opportunity to move an amendment which had been put forward through that very process. The citizens in this case were pointed an avenue by which they could have redress for their concerns. Well, that avenue was cut off before it even began. The closure motion came, the record will show, before we even went into committee. We had two sessions in committee study. Most of us were here; we know what happened. Not all the amendments that were on the table could be put, chiefly because the Liberals discovered the parliamentary process and engaged in a kind of minifilibuster towards the end. So the very process that was devised by the government to deal with citizens' concerns was frustrated by the government in the way it put the motion.

Of course there were mistakes made. Haste makes waste in all fields of human endeavour, and that certainly applies to the making of laws. You know, there are people who say that those who love the law and those who love sausages should know very little about how either is made. Perhaps that's the case. But there is something in the fact that lawmaking in our province is a public process when it gets to this Chamber. That's never more true than when we're in committee of the Assembly, when the Mace goes off the Table and we roll up our sleeves and get to work on the Bill. Sure, it's embarrassing for the government to have to come back and move 11 substantive amendments to boundaries on account of the waste made by virtue of haste, but I think it's even more embarrassing that those honest citizens of Alberta who identified shortcomings, concerns, and real-life human problems they faced as a result of those boundaries were denied the very process identified by the government to resolve those problems.

So we're only dealing today with one type of mistake, the type that results in people being disenfranchised totally. As I understand it, the errors that are corrected in this Bill are errors where people are excluded or territory is excluded from electoral boundaries because of the way the descriptions were made. The other type of error remains unredressed, and the opportunity to address it is not yet fulfilled. As long as this legislation is the law of the province of Alberta, that condition will pertain. People who were told clearly and in writing by the government that they could have amendments put by their MLA in this Chamber were denied that opportunity. In the final analysis, they were not denied by anything other than the government's indecent haste to proceed with this particular set of boundaries. That fundamental indecency is as yet unredressed by the government. Then we have the

second haste, which is the haste to proceed to an election on those boundaries without ensuring that in fact this legislation is lawful, lawful in the sense that it conforms to the Constitution of Canada.

Now, as we all know in our oath of office, all members are sworn to uphold the law. That could never be the case more than when we're dealing with the fundamental law of the province, which is the Constitution of Canada. Clearly the government has a political commitment on record to ensure that these boundaries or the boundaries contained within Bill 55 to be amended in this way are constitutional. In fact, that commitment was made by the then Deputy Premier as a means of breaking a logjam, as a means of preventing this Assembly from making its own judgment about whether the rules of the game were in fact constitutional. We were told that the government would refer the matter to the Court of Appeal for determination. Now, you can say, "Well, from a technical point of view they've met that commitment," but the commitment is meaningless unless the result is taken into account before an election has been called. So that's the second haste. You have the political haste of ramming the first Bill through committee before the proper job of committee study, debate, and amendment could be done, and now the government is proceeding headlong with the second haste, to proceed with an election without having the question of constitutionality addressed.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

Like the Member for Calgary-North West, I'm a little tired of debating this matter. It is probably the sixth or seventh time this matter has come before the Assembly for debate and deliberation. Each time there's another problem that's been exposed in the process. Here we have two glaring problems that are not addressed. Sure, it does address the problem of fixing up mistakes in the drafting of legal descriptions, but no, it does not resolve the denial of opportunity for Albertans to have their concerns addressed by this Assembly, and no, it does not address the problem of constitutionality. So for that reason, I think we have to say that this Bill is a continuation of a process which has not served the province well and is inadequate to the purposes of the day.

12:40

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In rising to speak on this, I'm a little troubled the way this government seems to think there's one law for the peasants and one law for the people that run government. When we look back through the history of this, we started out with the idea that we were going to try to have an impartial commission, and the government, not satisfied with having an impartial commission, thought they would do the next best thing and saddled that commission with all kinds of restrictions and rules as to how many they could have rural and how many they could have urban and how many seats they had. In other words, they put an impossible creature together – what is often done by government – that no independent committee could meet the guidelines of. Then to fulfill their own prophesy, to show how impossible it was for anybody but them to solve the problem or untie the Gordian knot, they appointed themselves as people that could draw the boundaries that would bring peace and harmony and happiness to the people of Alberta.

Now, they've laboured long and hard. I don't know how hard, Mr. Speaker. At \$100 to \$150 a day, it's awfully hard to measure how hard anybody works anymore, but they laboured long at it.

They took in a great many hearings and came up with a set of boundaries that in many cases is most amazing. We've heard of the gerrymander, but this is a gerrymander dinosaur. It's got a long neck and little points sticking out and a long tail as well. Where the old-fashioned gerrymander more or less just went a blob here, a blob there – the way many of us are built – with this one they exceeded expectations of the people that invented the word "gerrymander." We had things like the Premier's seat in Calgary.

My own constituency wasn't gerrymandered; it was chopped up into little bits. It looked like it had gone through a garberator by the time they'd finished it – a Tory garberator, I might mention. But that's not going to matter. It's going to end up like quack grass, Mr. Speaker. They tore it up into three pieces, and we will probably end up with three Liberals instead of the one if they'd left it alone.

Anyhow, all through this process the last bit was that they were in a hurry, that there was no time – for instance, as had happened to the two earlier ones – to bring back the findings on the borders to the communities so the communities could pass judgment. They said, "No, there's no time for that; we've got to do it ourselves." Even the hon. member over there who has experienced a change in underwear from mauve to blue and orange brought up in this Legislature when he had the old mauve underwear that actually one of the faults of this system is that they hadn't gone back to the constituents to get the little frills and moves here and there.

In particular, one area adjacent to me and close to my heart is the Lac La Biche area, Mr. Speaker. It would have loved to have had a chance to look at the new constituency boundaries. Lac La Biche, which has always been Athabasca and into the north – and you must remember this is a town with a great deal of past pride, tying into an area they served for many years. For instance, most people don't know this, but in 1880 the town of Lac La Biche was bigger than the city of Edmonton. Wouldn't it be great if it was still that way? Nevertheless, it shows you what a foundation they had in their community and how they served such an area. Yet they never had a chance to look at the report after it had been put together to mention that. When they go to legal process to try to enforce that, there's no time. The government's minions come in and say, "We haven't got time to do it." Then the gall, the nerve to introduce in this House amendments, another Bill, at least a week after Lac La Biche has been told there hasn't been time to do anything. Surely, if there's time enough to pass the amendments in the House, there was time enough to address Lac La Biche's complaint that they had been put in an entirely different trading area and service area than they'd been used to. No, we come back again to the same old double standard, Mr. Speaker.

It goes back to when the committee was first formed: "No, they can't possibly know how to do things as well as we do; therefore, we're going to tell them how we want the borders." Naturally, they couldn't come up with anything that would fit that type of description. It was impossible. So they said: "Well, now the two committees have failed. We will take it on." They came up with – I hate to use the word, a modern word – an abortion that has a number of corrections, as was pointed out in the debate last February. But most of all, they didn't take it back to the communities so they could take a look at it. Even the hon. Member for Stony Plain, showing one of those few flashes of genius he's had in the last four years, came up with that point. That is one of the things that really, really has to concern us. Now they tell people in the community of Lac La Biche and all the others that they haven't got time; it isn't timely. Yet they have time to come into this Legislature and ask for a set of

amendments and move these amendments around to cover an error they made earlier which covered an error they made earlier which covered an error they made earlier yet.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

I don't know how far you can go back, but all of it has been a string – you might call it a comedy of errors, except it's not a comedy. It's not a laughing matter to the people out there that have been shoved and pushed in different communities and then told when they finally perceive, coming from high with a flashing light from the Legislature, what the boundaries are going to be: "Oh, I'm sorry; it's too late. You can't bring it up." It's not kosher, Mr. Speaker. "After all, time has gone by. We can't bring it on." Then they come in here and ask us today to approve an amendment to change the Bill and change the borders. When is this going to stop? Is it possible that if a Gallup poll or some other type of poll came out here and showed them running in second or third spot, they would suddenly shelve things and we would see a whole set of rules come September again? Would we have some more boundaries being drawn? When is this going to stop? It's an ongoing process to try to fine-tune it. Like the mechanic that never has a car in good enough shape, he has to open up the hood, that's the way these members are. All you see is their feet sticking out as they're in there twiddling with the carburetor again. Aren't they going to be happy with anything? What's next? That's all I ask.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak on Bill 57, and this being second reading, one's talking to the principle of the Bill.

The principle of the Bill, I guess, is to correct some errors from previous Bills that purported to set the electoral boundaries of this province. I would just like to point out that I went through and counted them, and there are, I believe, nine constituencies that had errors in their boundaries in previous legislation. In fact, there are 11 errors, because two of those constituencies had two errors each. The main purpose of the Bill was to put the people in the Muir Lake region back into a constituency so they would have the right to vote. I think there are some 1,400 or 1,700 people in that area. An incredible, gross error on the part of the government. They were going to totally disenfranchise over a thousand people in this province – but an oversight.

The oversight was the result of a long process where the goal of the government didn't seem to be to arrive at fair boundaries but rather to arrive at boundaries that would make it easier for them to win the coming election. I maintain, Mr. Speaker, that that was the object of the exercise right from the very first. The object of electoral boundary change every couple of elections should be to make adjustments according to population growth and changes and to make the minimum number of changes that would respect historical tradition and natural boundaries and communities of interests and those kinds of things. That should have been the aim of the government. That was not the aim of the government, Mr. Speaker. The aim of the government pure and simple was to make sure there was as big a discrepancy as possible between the size of representation in rural constituencies compared to urban constituencies so they could hope to hang on to power. The whole process was set up with that in mind.

12:50

They started off with an all-party committee to tour the province, then toured the province and tried their best to get their own people out and beat up on Liberals and New Democrats who had the audacity to believe that somehow one man, one vote is a principle that should be worth striving for. So they tried to make out that we were against rural Albertans, which of course is nonsense. You and I know that nobody in this House ever votes on rural/urban lines or a split on rural/urban lines. There has never been one vote in this House in the seven years I've been here that split on rural/urban lines. So it isn't whether rural Alberta is overrepresented from that point of view, from the point of view of good representation. It's merely a matter of whether the Tories could hang on to power or not by having more seats in rural Alberta, and that's what they were hoping to do.

So they set up the all-party committee and had hearings all around the province; proceeded to report back to the Legislature that they needed more hearings in the fall, as I recall, so they did some more of that. Basically, opposition party bashing was really all that was. Finally, they got around to setting up an independent commission and then saddled it with rules they couldn't possibly make work, or at least so it seemed to most of us. However, the committee was much more imaginative than the government and worked really hard. It had some good people on it. They made an interim report that in fact did what the government had told them to do, but the government wasn't satisfied with that because it didn't have a big enough discrepancy in the number of rural and urban seats. In order to achieve what they did, the committee had to make up these 'rurban' ridings that some people objected to so much: quite a clever device, given the rules they were given, and the only way they could possibly make those rules work.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you for that past history, but could you come back to the principle of the Bill.

MR. McEACHERN: Well, we're on the principle of the Bill and what they're trying to do.

So that committee reported – they trotted all around the province, of course – and this government made sure Tory MLAs and Tory backers were there to bash that committee as much as possible and tell them how terrible the report was.

I would just like to quote the final report of the committee, which came in in about three or four different parts, as you might recall. I'm quoting from the second last paragraph on page 6.

A majority of the members of the Commission (Judge Clare Liden, Jean McBean and Patrick Ledgerwood) still believe that the proposals in the Interim Report meet the terms of the Act and comply with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

So three of the four members not appointed by the Tories – the other two members were Tory appointees – believed that that report actually complied with the rules set by the government, as difficult as they were, and with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, yet this government went out there and said that wasn't good enough just because it didn't achieve the discrepancy in rural/urban representation they wanted. That's the only reason.

The Tories said, "Well, we'll have to have an MLA committee do this." So they tried to set up an all-party MLA committee. We on this side of the House stood on principle and said: no, we're not going to participate in that, because MLA boundaries should not be set by MLAs. You know, that's the correct principle. That was the right idea. But I for one, when I saw the incredible mess the four-member Tory committee made, regretted that decision. I suppose if the government had been prepared to sit in debate and allow amendments over a long enough period of time, we could

have fixed those boundaries, but nobody could have done worse certainly in the north half of the city of Edmonton, for example. I mean, a riding like mine was split in four ways. The Edmonton-Mayfield riding that I now will represent has parts from three different ridings. The changes were wholesale and totally unconscionable. There was absolutely no reason for them. There are at least half a dozen ways to divide up the north half of the city of Edmonton without adding one seat. It would have made a lot more sense and been a lot more fair to add one seat and there wouldn't have been much of a problem at all. But no, that wasn't good enough; you had to have those numbers right up there close to the 25 percent margin. So lines were drawn with just one consideration: get the numbers up there. Never mind community of interests. Never mind natural boundaries. Never mind trying to keep changes to a minimum to accommodate changes that had taken place in population and anticipated changes in population. Just draw the lines and get the numbers right, and never mind what it does to anybody in the constituency and what it does to community leagues or anything else.

So, Mr. Speaker, this report, this last little kick at amending these electoral boundaries, is just the end of a sad saga of Tory mismanagement and miscues and bullying of people and messing around with people with no other intention than to try and get themselves re-elected. I'd like to report that from all my reading of what's going on out in the population, that isn't going to work. They've manipulated and manipulated and manipulated, and they're still going to lose just like the Devine government did in Saskatchewan. The Devine government in Saskatchewan didn't want to redistribute the boundaries either and didn't, but he got kicked out anyway. That's what's going to happen to this government because what they've done is so scandalous. It is totally ridiculous the way this government has set about doing the electoral boundaries.

This Bill is sort of the last straw in putting the last few nails in the coffin of this Tory government. They've been messing around with the people in so many areas for so long that nobody's going to buy them no matter what boundaries they decide to run on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Belmont.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is the electoral boundaries Act, the sequel. We had a bad movie earlier this spring, and not wanting to put it to rest, we now have the sequel to the movie. I'm anxious to see the credits at the end of this, because I want to see who's responsible for what. I can't believe, like my colleagues who have spoken before me, the process we've gone through. I can remember after the election in 1989 when the government came back and said, "Well, we have to fix the boundaries because we have a constitutional question that puts our boundaries into question." So we struck a committee. I was a member of that committee. We went out and did the work. We went out and listened to representations. That's an important consideration. It was important after the committee had done its initial work and the commission was struck following that to then draw the boundaries based on the recommendation of the committee. That commission also went out and had public hearings. The problem was that people who attended those public hearings told commission members that they did not like the maps that had been proposed. The commission went back and couldn't come up with a map they all agreed with. The government decided it would be important to carry on with the work, and they struck another committee. That committee drew a map; that map never went to the public. That's part of the problem; that's where the flaw in the process rests. That map did not have any public input.

Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, if the people that had been excluded from a constituency – if those residents of Muir Lake had attended the public meeting, they would have been able to ask: "Well, what constituency do we fall into? Do we fall into St. Albert? Do we fall into Stony Plain? Are we going to be expropriated and moved into another area of the province?" They would have been able to ask that question, and that flaw would have been caught long before having to come back to amend it through a piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, in light of the hour, I'd move to adjourn debate.

[At 1 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday at 2:30 p.m.]