

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Friday, April 30, 1993**

10:00 a.m.

Date: 93/04/30

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

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

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

Amen.

head: **Reading and Receiving Petitions**

MR. DOYLE: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I tabled some petitions on behalf of the Association of Alberta Taxpayers and the Alberta taxpayers. Could I now have that read?

CLERK:

The undersigned respectfully petitions the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to urge the Government to reform the Members of the Legislative Assembly Pension Plan by converting it to a self-funding, defined contribution plan. I furthermore petition the Legislative Assembly to eliminate the Members of the Legislative Assembly Re-establishment Allowance.

Speaker's Ruling Quoting Petitions

MR. SPEAKER: The petition which has just been read is somewhat at variance with the wording that was used by the Member for West Yellowhead yesterday. The Member for West Yellowhead, on page 2477, got somewhat creative and added some words which are not there in the petition: "and to immediately stop double-dipping." In presenting a petition, one states what's in the petition. Thank you.

Calgary-Buffalo.

head: **Reading and Receiving Petitions**
(continued)

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I had submitted a petition with 10,000 signatures. I ask that that be read this morning, sir.

CLERK:

The undersigned respectfully petitions the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to urge the Government to reform the Members of the Legislative Assembly Pension Plan by converting it to a self-funding, defined contribution plan. I furthermore petition the Legislative Assembly to eliminate the Members of the Legislative Assembly Re-establishment Allowance.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, yesterday tabled numerous petitions pertaining to the pension question. I would ask that they be read this morning.

CLERK:

The undersigned respectfully petitions the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to urge the Government to reform the Members of the Legislative Assembly Pension Plan by converting it to a self-funding,

defined contribution plan. I furthermore petition the Legislative Assembly to eliminate the Members of the Legislative Assembly Re-establishment Allowance.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to file with the Assembly the 1992 annual report required by the Public Contributions Act. This report contains the statements of receipts and expenditures for each organization conducting charitable campaigns in the province of Alberta. As well, I file with the Assembly the 69th annual report of the Alberta Liquor Control Board for the fiscal year ended January 5, 1993.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table this morning the response to Motion for a Return 277, which was accepted yesterday.

MR. SPEAKER: Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table four copies of a petition presented some time ago to the Premier by the Fort Victoria historical society, a society in the Smoky Lake area that is trying to keep an area going in which Alberta's first house, built in 1864, is present, for which they would like to get an answer. There are 196 names.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure this morning to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 29 visitors from the Altario school from the Altario area. They're seated in the public gallery, and I would ask that they rise while I introduce them. These are school students who are visiting the city and have spent the morning at our Legislature. They're accompanied by Mrs. Louanne Baier, Mrs. Pat Beier, Mrs. Marcine Evashkevich, Mrs. Bonnie Gramlich, Mrs. Carol Strankman, Ms Anne Spencer, Mrs. Sharon Kelts, and their teacher Miss Cathy Groulx. I would ask all members to give them a very warm welcome.

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to you and Members of the Legislative Assembly a young man, Nicholas McLoughlin, who's six today. He's off from school, not playing hooky but on a PD day, and he asked if he could come and watch question period. I take it a budding politician. I'd ask him to stand and have the Assembly give him our traditional warm welcome.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the MLA for Edmonton-Highlands it's my honour today to introduce a group of newcomers to Alberta society who are part of a job entry project of the Mennonite Centre for Newcomers. In total there are 20 of them here. They're accompanied by instructors Dolores Huizinga, Indira Singh, Jean Gurnett, and Kathy Thompson. They're in the public gallery. I'd like them to rise, please, and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by Edmonton-Glengarry.

MR. GIBEAULT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased this morning to introduce to you and the other members of the Assembly a dynamic group of young students from Ellerslie school in the constituency of Edmonton-Mill Woods. They're accompanied by their teacher Mrs. Phyllis Olson and bus driver Mrs. Melrose Cockburn. I'd ask them to stand now and receive our very warm welcome.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Glengarry.

MR. DECORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to introduce to members of this Assembly 20 students from St. Anne school in my constituency. I'd ask the students to stand along with their teacher Shawn Carson and be recognized by the Assembly.

head: **Oral Question Period**

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition.

MLA Pensions

MR. MARTIN: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Well, today is a new day, and the Premier has probably changed his mind again on the pension issue. You know, watching the Premier's machinations on this issue reminds me of a balloon in a windstorm. Albertans were reminded again today that MLAs have the richest pension plan in the country. Albertans are watching to see if the Premier is going to do the right thing for the people of Alberta, the taxpayers of Alberta, or do the right thing for his caucus. That's the issue, plain and simple. There are no moral or legal impediments in his way. My question is simply this: will the Premier commit today, a new day, to retroactivity in dealing with the MLA pensions?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated in the past, we have a Bill before the Legislature, Bill 62. That Bill is based on the recommendations contained in the Peat Marwick report. That report was commissioned by Members' Services Committee, which has on it representatives from all political parties. As a matter of fact, all political parties were interviewed on this matter and indicated that they would accept the report, the independent assessment. I would like to remind the Legislature that Mr. Bruseker was interviewed, Mr. Fox, Mrs. Gagnon, Mr. McInnis, Mr. Mitchell, Mr. Pashak, and Mr. Taylor, all members of the official opposition parties. Basically the Bill that we have before the House is the Bill that was recommended by the firm of Peat Marwick, a highly respected accounting firm in this country.

10:10

MR. MARTIN: Anybody knows that people being interviewed does not indicate that they agree with what comes out, Mr. Speaker. The Premier is, frankly, being a little silly in this whole answer.

If he's been listening to the phone, it's time that we had some straight answers from the Premier. Now, I know the double-dippers over there are getting excited, but the reality is that it's up to the Premier on this issue. I want to say to the Premier that there are persistent rumours. Because the Premier is not telling Albertans here in the Legislature what's going on, you're getting one rumour after another, and it's probably to the detriment of this government. Now there's talk about backroom deals for compensation. I want to ask the Premier this: will the Premier assure Albertans there will be no backroom compensation deals with retiring MLAs?

MR. KLEIN: Yes, I will provide assurances to Albertans that there are no backroom deals. Unlike the NDs and the Liberals we don't do backroom deals; right?

Mr. Speaker, I simply have to reiterate. We have a Bill before this Legislature . . .

MR. MITCHELL: Nobody believes you, Ralph.

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MR. MITCHELL: Nobody believes . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MR. MITCHELL: Nobody believes you.

Speaker's Ruling Warning a Member

MR. SPEAKER: Excuse me. Hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, that's the third time. You were called to order for shouting across the first time, for the second time. If I hear it once more today, then other action will follow.

MLA Pensions

(continued)

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, we have a Bill before this House which would significantly reduce the pension benefits to MLAs from all parties. This is a difficult issue to deal with. As I indicated yesterday, there are a number of dynamics at play here. Certainly there is the issue of how it will reflect on departing members. Certainly there's the issue as to how it will reflect on those who plan to serve again in this Legislature. There are the concerns of the public, of course. We have to take all these things into consideration. I'm discussing with my caucus how we deal with this issue, and whatever we do will be the right and honourable thing to do.

MR. MARTIN: "The right and honourable thing," Mr. Speaker. We wouldn't be dealing with this issue if they acted right and honourable to begin with. It's a difficult issue only for the Premier and his caucus. It's pretty straightforward for the rest of us and the people of Alberta. No backroom deals: the Premier should take that out in a comedy act by this government.

Mr. Speaker, to be helpful to the Premier, just to be helpful, we're willing to give up our private members' day so he can bring back Bill 62 and deal with retroactivity. I suggest a way out of the dilemma for him and his caucus. I ask him this question. Simply do this. Will the Premier call a free vote in this Legislature, let everybody stand up in a free vote and deal with the retroactivity clauses that were brought in by our party?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, Bill 62 is now before the Legislature. As I understand, it will be brought back Monday for debate. The ND opposition has ample opportunity to debate that Bill, if they're really serious about reducing their pension benefits. I must remind this Legislature that everyone in that caucus across the way is a member of the pension plan, every one of them with the exception of the MLA for Calgary-Buffero. That's a fact that they aren't getting out there to the public. What we have here is a war of hypocrisy. It's very difficult for me to determine who's winning that war, but right now I think the NDs are slightly ahead.

MR. MARTIN: We brought in the amendments. We're prepared to take the cuts. How about you over there?

MR. SPEAKER: Second main question.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to designate my second question to the Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Mountain View, the clock is running.

Treasury Branches

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Provincial Treasurer. If a borrower can't repay a small loan, that's the borrower's problem, but if a borrower can't repay a huge loan, that's the bank's problem. This is why the superintendent of financial institutions has established guidelines limiting the size of loans that can be made to one borrower or corporate group. If these guidelines were applied to the Treasury Branches, the largest loan that they could make would be \$125 million. Given that Albertans backstop the Treasury Branches 100 percent, do the Treasury Branches use these guidelines, and, if not, what limits do they use?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I'll take that question as notice and provide the information to the hon. member.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Speaker, the North Stars hockey club, the owner of the Dallas Stars, signed a \$150 million debenture with the Treasury Branches last year. But that's only the tip of the iceberg. A statutory declaration filed in the land titles office states that this loan is on top of \$320 million in mortgage loans to the North Stars' parent company. That means that Norm Green, the owner, is into the Treasury Branches for almost half a billion dollars, three times the limit established by the superintendent of financial institutions. Will the Provincial Treasurer explain why the Treasury Branches have violated acceptable banking practices? If the Treasury Branches were federally regulated, these loans would not have been allowed.

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Treasury Branches have not done that, so I don't know that the hon. member really has a question.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Well, this is all based on public documentation, Mr. Speaker. The lack of policy and the lack of guidelines have resulted in the Treasury Branches being highly exposed to one borrower, and I submit that this removes their ability to pursue an independent course of action. Will the Provincial Treasurer now admit that the real reason he can't treat the North Stars hockey club the same way he proposes to treat the Edmonton Oilers is because of the extremely high loan exposure the Treasury Branches have to the North Stars' owner?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, that is simply not the case. The member is simply making an argument on the basis of conjecture. He doesn't know the financial relationships between the Treasury Branches and Stewart, Green Properties. I don't believe that is a subject that should be in debate on the floor of this Legislature. Where will the hon. member stop? He's going to pick off Alberta companies, Alberta individuals who have every right to privacy in their dealings with their banker. With all due respect to all of those Albertans – some 800,000 deposit accounts, some 200,000 loan accounts – I think that they should all be in fear of the next

kind of pieces of information that this member across the way will lightly, willingly, unwittingly provide and make clear to Albertans and expose Albertans to vulnerabilities that I don't think are fair. Frankly, I think it's downright immoral. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order. Keep the clock running, please, Clerk.

10:20

MLA Pensions

(continued)

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, Albertans had high expectations that Alberta's new Premier would be different from the last Premier. They expected him to answer questions in a forthright way, and for a while we did see that. Albertans saw those expectations being met. Now their hopes and expectations have been shattered. The Premier refuses to answer questions on retroactivity on pensions. The Premier does not give us a clear answer on scaling back. The Premier does not give us a clear answer on ensuring that his promise to Albertans that there would be pension legislation in place before the next election will be met. I'd like to ask the Premier. He talks about doing "the right and honourable thing." Mr. Premier, isn't the right and honourable thing to admit that we must have retroactivity on pensions?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the right and honourable thing to do is to give this reasonable consideration and put into place all the factors relative to this issue. Those factors certainly concern the outgoing MLAs, some of whom have given 20 or 22 years of their life to public service and to this Legislature. It's a factor that involves their spouses as well. It's a factor that certainly involves the public, as the hon. member has pointed out.

Indeed to answer his question with respect to the legislation, Mr. Speaker, I've indicated before that we have legislation before this Assembly as I speak. It will come up for debate again on Monday. That legislation would significantly reduce the benefits now paid to MLAs. We've said in the past that we would like to see this legislation passed, that we would be interested in seeing what amendments come forward, and they will be duly and properly debated.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, the Premier talks about taking into consideration all factors: the views of outgoing MLAs, the involvement of spouses. Mr. Premier, I'd like you, then, to defend the position. Do you agree with the position of outgoing MLAs that they should be entitled to a pension of \$83,000 a year or \$50,000 a year or \$47,000 a year? Is the Premier saying that that kind of discussion has merit?

MR. KLEIN: You know, now I find that perhaps the Liberals are winning the war of hypocrisy. When those candidates went into the election in 1989, they went in knowing what the pension plan was. When the raise was introduced, not one member over there opposed that particular raise. As a matter of fact, it was the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud who proposed most of the increases in benefits, including a 70 percent, not a 30 percent, increase in salary for the leader of the Liberal Party. Not one peep, Mr. Speaker. When pensions were debated in this Legislature, not one peep from that particular political party. So I have changed my . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. Premier.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, regrettably, in the same way that the current Premier refuses to answer questions . . .

Speaker's Ruling Insisting on Answers

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, hon. member. You know full well you're out of order on that. Take your place. You were given the warning earlier. That's twice. Three you strike out.

MLA Pensions (continued)

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, the previous Premier when he was corralled, when he had his back up against the wall, would always blame the opposition. Mr. Premier, stop blaming the opposition. Tell Albertans whether or not this legislation that will deal with retroactivity, that will talk about scaling back and put scaling back in place, that will ensure that this legislation is in place before the next election will in fact happen. Just tell us that.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I can only repeat again that we have Bill 62 before this House. I am now discussing this whole issue with my caucus. I indicated that yesterday. We are trying to come to grips with this situation, not in an emotional way and not based on what outside agencies are pushing the Liberals to do and getting a 37 percent commission to do it. We're trying to deal with this issue on the basis of fact, on the basis of concern for people in our caucus and on the basis of legitimate and real and honourable concern for the public.

MR. SPEAKER: Lesser Slave Lake.

Lesser Slave Lake

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Environmental Protection. There is concern regarding the water level in my jewel of the north the Lesser Slave Lake. Last year and years previous the concern was flooding, but this year it is the low level which is causing the concern. There was a meeting held, a community-driven initiative with all stakeholders involved, tourism, agriculture, and a number of other community groups, and the people would like some involvement from Environmental Protection. I would like to have the minister indicate his commitment to ensuring that someone will attend the next meeting and somehow get involved so that we can come to some decision. [interjections]

MR. EVANS: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is correct. Lesser Slave Lake is a jewel of the north. It's a very important water body in the province. We've been trying to keep on top of this issue.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Could we have order in the whole House. If we're going to have caucus meetings, they could perhaps take place over coffee outside.

Environmental Protection, please.

MR. EVANS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. This lake is a very important water body for recreation, for fisheries, for agricultural, and certainly for community water use. All of those factors are important. We in Environmental Protection have tried to be involved with the community, and I certainly give my undertaking to the member that we will become involved in this public input process so that we can look at this issue from a multiple-use philosophy and get the right answers.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Lesser Slave Lake, followed by Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister again. Whenever the groups come together again, if they make some decision, I'd like to know whether or not the minister will carry out the decision that has been decided by the groups involved.

MR. EVANS: Mr. Speaker, as I've said, I want to be involved in those meetings; I want to make sure that Environmental Protection is there at the table. I'm sure that if the decisions that are reached have that community interest and we have an involvement and a checkoff, if you will, from the Department of Environmental Protection on any of the decisions that are reached, then we will ensure that those decisions are implemented.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Jasper Place, followed by Calgary-Buffalo.

Doctors' Fees

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The statistical supplement tabled on the health care insurance plan yesterday shows that the average doctor's income for the year ended March 31, 1992, reached the level of \$195,000 on average with a very unsustainable increase of 7.2 percent. Now, I appreciate that the government thought that it was dealing with this issue when it entered a new three-year agreement one year ago, but that agreement seems a little more than generous by today's standards. It included a COLA clause, a factor for new money, and utilization increase. It works out to 5 and a half percent for the year just concluded, 4.4 percent for the year coming, and 3.8 percent for the year after that. Meanwhile, the government has imposed a zero percent increase on Alberta's hospital system, which is going to cost the jobs of nurses and health care support workers throughout the province. I'd like to ask the Minister of Health: does she and the government fail to appreciate that it's unfair to award the doctors a 4.4 percent increase, which amounts to some \$37 million, while it takes away the jobs of nurses and health care support workers throughout Alberta?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to comment on the AMA agreement which the member raises. I would like to tell the House that Alberta is the only province in Canada that has this particular type of agreement and one of a few provinces that has any type of cap on physician fees. So that's number one. I think it's a very important agreement.

Secondly, the Alberta Medical Association has been very responsible in discussing with us ways of reducing costs in that area. To say that the 4.54 that was to be the agreement for this year is simply a payment to doctors which increases their fees is not correct; 1.79 percent of that is for increasing fees. There is an amount in that increase for utilization for new things that may be added into the agreement.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very satisfied with the progress of the AMA agreement. I think that the doctors in this province are working very responsibly with this government to achieve some reductions in utilization, some reductions in costs. They are very cost conscientious. This minister is also very . . .

10:30

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

On to the supplementary, Edmonton-Jasper Place, much shorter than the first question.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, contracts can be renegotiated.

Now, the minister has said she's satisfied with the agreement. I'd like to ask the Premier a question. Will the Premier indicate how long he feels this government can go on awarding the economic elite such as doctors and retiring ministers while it punishes the people who work in the health care system? They get zero; the doctors get 4 and half. The minister says she's happy.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to answer that. I thought I clarified for the hon. member very clearly that the doctors do not get 4 and a half. The increase is 1.79. There is a utilization factor in there, and it has been a subject of discussion. I feel that the doctors have acted very responsibly in this in recognizing that there is a difficulty in achieving funding to cover health care costs. So I want that very clearly corrected: that that is not a 4.54 percent increase to doctors' fees.

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

MLA Pensions (continued)

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If there's one issue, sir, that Albertans are demanding immediate action on, it is the issue of overly generous MLA pensions. On the doorsteps of this province Albertans want to see the issue dealt with quickly and properly. Instead the government has decided to debate the Premier's motion today, a motion that's been met with complete apathy by Albertans. I want to direct my question to the Government House Leader, Deputy Premier, minister responsible for economic terrorism.

Speaker's Ruling Parliamentary Language

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, you should be familiar with Standing Orders and *Beauchesne* and *Erskine May* and parliamentary tradition, especially given your background. You will now retract that, because the minister is to be only referred to in terms of his portfolio.

AN HON. MEMBER: He never says he's sorry.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Yes, true. We'll see.

MR. DICKSON: Certainly, Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the last description.

MLA Pensions (continued)

MR. DICKSON: My question in any event to the Government House Leader, sir, is this: why has he placed Motion 38 on the schedule for consideration today instead of the Bill every Albertan wants to see debated, the hopelessly flawed Bill 62?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your intervention with respect to the unfortunate words the Member for Calgary-Buffalo used. It's not the first time he's done that.

Earlier this week a very important new economic development strategy called Seizing Opportunity was announced by the Premier. In that particular document some nine initiatives were outlined by

the government in terms of what the government's plan was to deal with very significant issues in the province of Alberta as well as looking at a target, a plan that we want to have implemented that would see some 110,000 new jobs created in the province of Alberta between 1993 and 1997. It seems to me that with the unemployment level that we currently have not only in the province of Alberta but in the country of Canada, those people who are unemployed would want to know what the province of Alberta and the government of Alberta are attempting to do in fact to ensure that they do have an opportunity for economic revival in this province and to have a future for themselves. I think it's very incumbent upon a government to show leadership in terms of the initiatives that it wants to take, and that is the reason why it is here for debate.

Mr. Speaker, we welcome the input of the members of the Liberal caucus if they have any innovative ideas to provide for a new economic strategy in Alberta.

MR. DICKSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the view of the Deputy Premier, the Liberal opposition and, I expect, the New Democrat opposition beside us recognize the importance of the issue of MLA pensions even if the government does not.

Mr. Speaker, our caucus is prepared to debate MLA pensions this morning, this afternoon, and tonight if necessary. Will the Deputy Premier, sir, propose the necessary changes to Standing Orders and allow debate to proceed in this House so that we can come to a resolution on this important issue of pensions?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate that the Member for Calgary-Buffalo is speaking on behalf of the whole Liberal caucus. We would welcome their support of Bill 62, which is before this Legislature. Bill 62 will see contributions raised some 33 percent, it will eliminate double-dipping, will change the age and length of service requirement from age 55 to 65, will suspend the pensions of retired MLAs if they work for more than a certain period of time, would include a 3 percent reduction penalty for each year that an MLA falls short of the 65 factor, and would reduce pension benefits by some 33 percent.

The Liberals are saying today that they're going to support the government Bill. It will be here on Monday, as already announced, and we want to see them stand and vote with the government: no filibuster from the Liberals, no deviousness from the Liberals, and no hypocrisy. [interjections] They're telling us today they're supporting it: wonderful. [interjections]

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, all hon. members.

AN HON. MEMBER: We don't need a Speaker. Let's just go.

MR. SPEAKER: You may think you don't need a Speaker; I think it's quite evident.

The Chair has noted that in the last series of questions there have been now at least 16 interventions shouted across the floor by the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

MR. DECORE: How many by . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, hon. member. Perhaps all members could be gracious enough to allow question period to continue without the harassment.

Bow Valley, followed by Edmonton-Calder.

10:40

Prescription Drugs

MR. MUSGROVE: Mr. Speaker, recently I was reminded that in May the Department of Health is holding what they call the Great Drug Round-up. People of Alberta are encouraged to bring all of their unwanted, outdated, or unused drugs into particular places to have them destroyed. Our senior citizens council has always been a great promoter of that. We have also been promoting what we call the brown-bag program, where seniors in particular but all Albertans are encouraged to once a year bring all of their medical supplies to a doctor or into a pharmacy and have them appraised to make sure that none of the medication they're taking is either overlapping or reacting to something else they're taking. Is this part of the Great Drug Round-up?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Great Drug Round-up is an important initiative. I should just say that it's really led by the Alberta Pharmaceutical Association as well as participants like the Alberta Special Waste Management, Medis Western, the poison and drug information service, Northwest Drug Company, and Alberta Veterinary Medical Association. It is a very important initiative. Some 500 to 600 children's poisonings are reported each month in this province, and it's really a terrifying figure. The drug roundup does encourage people to take from their homes drugs that have lapsed in time and take them to their nearest pharmacist. I believe over 700 pharmacies in this province are co-operating with that initiative. Also, we're encouraging the agricultural community. Producers would look at their veterinary supplies and ensure that anything outdated is taken in as well so that people, particularly our children, are not at any additional risk.

MR. MUSGROVE: Mr. Speaker, the council is certainly concerned with the overlapping of the use of medical supplies. We have been promoting that pharmacies have a computer printout of all the medication that everyone takes so that when you go into a drugstore to get a particular prescription filled, they can find out whether you are taking something that may counteract that or that may overlap it. Is the minister including this in part of the program?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, certainly the Pharmaceutical Association and their members have moved forward in computerization of their pharmacies, which has assisted them greatly in being able to check clients' records to ensure that they do not have drugs that might be working against each other. It isn't in particular a part of the initiative of the Great Drug Round-up, but it is a very important initiative that the Pharmaceutical Association is undertaking, and we certainly support them in that because there is a great deal of concern among our citizens, particularly, I think, our senior citizens, as the hon. member mentioned, that they may be indeed taking drugs that might be counterproductive.

Yellowhead Youth Centre

MS MJOLSNESS: Mr. Speaker, many children in Alberta are experiencing a crisis in their lives and are victims of abuse. Child welfare workers are apprehending extremely disturbed children, and these children need a safe and an appropriate place to go. Children may do well in a foster home if they're available, but many high-risk children need treatment and alternate care such as that available at the Yellowhead Youth Centre. My questions are to the Minister of Family and Social Services. In view of the facts that the Yellowhead Youth Centre is a place for high-risk children and there is a four-month waiting list for children to get into that facility, I'd like to ask the minister: what happens to a 10-year-

old, for example, who has been apprehended from his or her home because of abuse? That child is extremely disturbed and in need of treatment and is unable to get into YYC. Where does that child go?

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, first of all, I'd like to advise the hon. member and this House that as a government I think we do care. I as a minister know that moving forward with major reforms in the welfare system will definitely have a positive impact on issues of this nature in the very near future. We do have in this government a \$155 million budget under child welfare, and the foster care under that alone is \$38 million. The hon. member can be assured that my priority in this department again is to look after issues like this. I will follow up on that issue.

MS MJOLSNESS: Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister hasn't answered my question: where do these children go?

I'll go on to my supplementary. The truth is, Mr. Speaker, that many of these children don't have a place to go. They need spaces that are available to them in the Yellowhead Youth Centre. I'd like to ask the minister: how can he justify abolishing seven frontline positions in that facility, possibly closing one unit, when these services are so badly needed and there's a waiting list for these kids to get in there?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, again I'd like to indicate the seriousness of this government in dealing with those issues. We do have over 2,300 children we're looking after now. Also, I know I'm not proud to say that close to 50 percent of those children are native. We do only have, you know, 15 percent native foster homes in the area. This member can be assured that I will specifically follow up on the issue she has addressed in this House today.

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

Consumer Interest Charges

MR. CHIVERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last June I reintroduced into the Legislature a Bill called the Interest Charge Review Board Act, which would provide consumers with protection against illegal and unfair calculation of interest charges. The government not unexpectedly has ignored this Bill, and a letter I filed yesterday shows that the government is now refusing to intervene in the Dunphy case in the Supreme Court of Canada. This is a case which would deal with the issue. Would the Minister of Justice please assure this House that he will seek intervenor status in this case so that the views of Alberta consumers and not just banks and corporations are represented in this benchmark case?

MR. FOWLER: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona is well aware of this government's policy to stay out of the corporate sector's business as much as possible. This involves a private matter between two corporations, and this government has chosen not to intervene on the matter at the expense of the Alberta taxpayer.

MR. CHIVERS: It's the expense of consumers that I'm concerned about, Mr. Speaker.

The other letter that I tabled yesterday shows that the Borrowers' Action Society has tried, on behalf of Alberta consumers, to obtain a ruling on Criminal Code violations regarding interest charges. The Attorney General, however, has refused to allow charges to proceed and has offered no explanation as to why. I'm wondering if the Minister of Justice would please inform Albertans why he has not allowed criminal charges against illegal and unfair interest practices to be heard in the courts.

MR. FOWLER: Mr. Speaker, the duty of referring charges in the criminal courts is left with the prosecution section of the department of the Attorney General. In this instance, the special prosecutor who reviewed the case indicated that the department would decline to carry a prosecution on the matter.

Auditor General's Report

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, in his most recent report the Auditor General made eight major recommendations to address flaws in this government's budgeting and accounting processes. The Premier said that he would provide Albertans with a status report on the progress that he is making with the implementation of these recommendations and he would deliver the status report sometime in April. Well, it's the last day of April: no report and this new management is on the verge of breaking yet another promise. To the Premier: when will the Premier provide Albertans with this status report, if ever?

MR. KLEIN: Well, I think the fundamental point here, Mr. Speaker, is that there were 37 recommendations in the Auditor General's report, and this government has decided to accept all but one of those recommendations. Certainly, without revealing what is going to be in the budget, I imagine there will be some reference to how we plan to address those issues contained in the Auditor General's report when the budget comes down next Thursday.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, one of the most important recommendations both by the Auditor General and by the Financial Review Commission was that the unfunded pension liability should be recorded properly as a liability. Now, the Premier and the Treasurer keep neglecting to do that. Will the Premier please tell us why he and his Treasurer continuously neglect to refer properly to the unfunded pension liability?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark be patient and wait for the budget presentation.

MR. SPEAKER: Lloydminster.

10:50 Chelation Therapy

MR. CHERRY: Thank you, sir. During the previous sitting I asked the Minister of Health a question regarding chelation treatment in this province. Following that I did some research, and I understand now that it is not the approval of the physicians and surgeons that we need for a project but the approval of Health and Welfare Canada. The question to the minister: could she indicate to me what work has been done on this project and how soon we can see it become a reality?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, the drug EDTA, and I apologize I can't use the technical name for it, is not licensed at present by Health and Welfare Canada for that particular use.

Health and Welfare Canada do have the authority of approval of any and all drugs for use in this country. I am sure that when the appropriate testing and research has been done, they will consider that drug for that particular use.

MR. CHERRY: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister for that information, but I guess to direct the question more directly: will we see that this year, or will it be another year and another year?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, the hon. member is asking this minister a question that the Minister of Health and Welfare Canada has to answer, sir, so I'm unable to provide him with that answer. However, I would say that in Alberta the chelation therapy association have, as I understand it, made a submission to the College of Physicians and Surgeons to look at this treatment, and we expect a report back from them in due course.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Belmont.

Workers' Compensation Board

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think there are some rather odd events going on over at the Workers' Compensation Board. We've had a change in the mission statement, we've had questionable terminations of valuable staff while at the same time the president gets a salary increase, and now I find that we have a computer system contract to Andersen Systems Management. Would you believe that the 1991-92 public accounts show that professional fees paid by the Workers' Compensation Board have skyrocketed some 500 percent to \$15.8 million in just over two years? I'm wondering if the Minister of Labour, who is responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board, can advise the Assembly what portion of that massive increase has been due to the Andersen contract.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has referred to a couple of different situations, one being the streamlining, actually, of management, which is delivering a far more efficient service now to the injured workers and at less of a cost administratively to employers. So I'm glad he brought that up because that's been very positive and very well received by both labour and business groups.

In terms of computerization and increased use of technology that's been going on at WCB for the last two or three years, a system was implemented over the last three years involving higher levels of computerization. What this has done, Mr. Speaker, is removed the problem that workers had experienced beforehand. A file might be in Calgary to be looked at and then have to be shifted to another department and might go to Edmonton for something else. Now those types of things are available on computer. Naturally when you go to an increased level of technology, there are some increased costs that weren't there the year before you had those systems. That may explain part of it.

If the member has some more specific details that he'd like me to look into, I'd be happy to do that.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Edmonton-Belmont.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My information tells me that the computer system at the Workers' Compensation Board hasn't increased the pace at which workers' files are dealt with. In fact, the computer system is fraught with problems. Investigators, adjudicators are not able to go back through the file

system because they're only able to call up one page at a time. So what we have is a computer system that is really turning out to be a \$100 million white elephant. I would ask the minister if he could tell the Assembly just how much was spent on the contract in the last fiscal year and how much will be expended on the contract in this coming fiscal year.

MR. DAY: Well, I think the Order Paper and also public accounts would suggest that that can be addressed, but I'll do the research that the member opposite can't do, and I'll get the figures to him.

The member opposite prefaced his question by saying: his information tells him. Mr. Speaker, the member opposite stood in question period two days ago and said his information tells him and brought up an issue which had absolutely no basis in fact, which I totally put to bed and he has not been able to respond to it. So when he says, "my information tells me," I suggest there's very little credibility to that statement. [interjection]

MR. SPEAKER: Order, order. [interjections] Order.

The Minister of Justice wishes to supplement information to a question raised earlier by Edmonton-Strathcona. Minister.

Consumer Interest Charges

(continued)

MR. FOWLER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Reasonable questions reasonably put deserve reasonable answers. In this case the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona showed the courtesy of delivering directly to me the two letters that he referred to today. Those were letters from the Attorney General's department, prior to the combination of the two, to a group referred to as the Borrowers' Action Society. In one instance we were asked to take criminal charges against what was felt to be exorbitant interest rates on credit cards. All of us may in fact agree with that, but it was the decision of the assistant director of special prosecutions that a case did not lie, and that is why we in the department declined.

In the second case, with the same company we were asked to provide funds on a private matter, not with the society but between two corporations outside of the society, and we were asked to assist with funds to a Supreme Court of Canada appeal. Mr. Speaker, if we were to get involved in funding private appeals to the Supreme Court of Canada, I'm afraid what is going to happen to my budget in a month or so would have to be different from what that case would be.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. CHIVERS: Well, Mr. Speaker, this Assembly had no difficulty in intervening in a recent Supreme Court of Canada case with respect to the Legislative Assembly.

My question was: why was the government . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. On that last piece of information I believe the hon. member has the duty to consult with Parliamentary Counsel to ascertain what the true facts are. Thank you.

MR. CHIVERS: Mr. Speaker, my question was: why is the government not intervening in this case on behalf of the people of Alberta?

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Justice has the right of reply.

MR. FOWLER: I thought I had explained why. If we start intervening on private matters, there just would not be enough money in my department to do it. Supreme Court of Canada actions are extremely expensive, and while we may agree in some

instances with the difficulties that Alberta companies or people have, it doesn't mean that there's a case in law every time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Might we revert to the introduction of guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

Redwater-Andrew, followed by Fort McMurray.

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

MR. ZARUSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague the hon. Member for Drayton Valley I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly 47 students and visitors from the Calmar school. They're here bright and eager this morning, and they're accompanied by teachers Suzanna Dojohn and Carrie Erdmann and parents Mrs. Stark and Mr. Smolke. They're seated in the public gallery, and I'd like to ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Fort McMurray.

MR. WEISS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege for me today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a young gentleman from the constituency of Fort McMurray. This gentleman's name is very similar to our leader, Mr. Premier Klein, and while there's no relationship, I'm hopeful some day we'll see another Klein in this Assembly. He's a strong supporter of government and is here to view government firsthand. I'd like to introduce Mr. Mark Klein, sitting in the members' gallery. Please rise and receive the cordial welcome of the Assembly.

Point of Order Clarification

MR. SPEAKER: Was the Chair given to understand there was a point of order during question period which the Chair missed?

MR. MacDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I stand on a point of order under Standing Orders. Earlier during question period the Premier stated that our only member that was not in the MLA pension plan was our Member for Calgary-Buffalo. For the record I would like to state that I am not a part of that pension plan either.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Government Motions**

Fiscal Restraint and Administrative Reform

38. Moved by Mr. Klein:
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly approve in principle the government's program of fiscal restraint and governmental and administrative reform.

[Adjourned debate April 22: Mrs. Black]

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak on Motion 38. The Premier the other day read a document into the record. Well, I shouldn't say he read this document, but he read a speech which outlined the main points in

the document called *Seizing Opportunity: Alberta's New Economic Development Strategy*. It is an understatement, I guess, to say that most people were disappointed, including myself, in the statement. It was much too vague. It didn't really have any specifics in it. Even the Conservative supporters around the province found it disappointing in its vagueness.

11:00

Mr. Speaker, I want to put forward today some ideas that the New Democrats have developed over the last few years that we think the government could adopt that would help to improve the economy of Alberta. In fact, my one wish would be that if they stay in office and they do so, that they do it in a way that is productive and helpful rather than messing our programs around as they've tended to do in the past whenever they've borrowed our ideas. Since they are about to call an election anyway, I don't think they're going to be in a position to implement these ideas, but I think the New Democrats will be in a position to implement some of these ideas, and I know that the people of Alberta will like what we have to say in terms of an economic plan. It's much more specific than the Tory plan, and of course the Liberals have no plan. We'll take care of that as I go along and show the differences between the three parties as I explain and outline some of the things that our party thinks would help the economy of this province.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

I want to say that our plan starts out on a short-term strategy, and I'm going to go into some detail, with some medium-term ideas involving mainly small business and local economic initiatives. Then in the longer term – but we need to start on the ideas right away, of course – is education policy so that we develop a knowledgeable, technically proficient, and sophisticated body of workers in this province that can prosper in a knowledge-based international economy. We will, of course, have to reorient our thinking from the kind of attitude that this Tory government and the federal Tory government have taken, from one of seeing what we can give away and how fast in free trade deals to one of what we can do for ourselves at the local level. So, Mr. Speaker, just to show that we do have a lot more detail in our policy suggestions than the Premier, I want to look at some very specific things.

Our first proposal in terms of short-term strategy was to get people back to work by encouraging municipal infrastructure development: roads, sewers, water systems, taking care of the environment in our local communities of Alberta. Now, Mr. Speaker, we didn't just say that that's a good idea. We said that we would put some specific amount of money in. In fact, we came up with a figure of \$73 million and detailed where that would come from. It's not just a figure chosen out of the blue. The fact is that the \$73 million would be necessary just to restore the funding that this government has cut from municipal grants in the last two or three years. For instance, we would restore the Alberta cities transportation partnership agreement to \$50 per capita. That would provide an extra \$42 million that this government has refused to give to municipalities in the last couple of years. We would restore funding for provincial highway construction and upgrading to the 1991-92 levels, putting an extra \$23 million annually into local economies compared to what the Tories were doing in their '92-93 budget. We would restore funding for sewer and water grant increases to the 1991 levels, providing another \$8 million annually. So that's where that \$73 million came from. We are prepared on this side of the House to put

those kinds of details together and tell the people that that's what we would do.

Mr. Speaker, we wanted to make the point at the time that we were not necessarily going to increase the deficit to do that. So what we did was we looked at some of the government programs that have been going on for years, some of which are unnecessary, and totaled \$75 million in savings in other areas so that this reprioritization of dollars would actually create more jobs and do more good to the economy than some of the things that the \$75 million was previously spent on.

Let me just name a few of them. We were going to cut cabinet by a third, reduce the civil service senior management. This government has already made moves in that direction, but let me tell you how they cut in the economic development portfolio that Mr. Sparrow has, the cabinet Minister of Economic Development and Tourism. His department now has, I believe, two deputy ministers and six assistant deputy ministers. Because they amalgamated some other departments, they had to give them all jobs, so they brought them all in and just put them all at the top of that department. That doesn't really save very many dollars, Mr. Speaker. We've cut the use of government planes, reduced consultants, and there are two or three other things here. The total would be a \$75 million savings which could be reoriented, then, to pay for this municipal infrastructure.

Now, let me say that this was put out in November, and since then both the federal New Democrats and the federal Conservative government have indicated that they finally have agreed. Now, the New Democrats have been saying it all along, but the federal Tory government has finally said that the municipal infrastructures of this country are deteriorating and we need to put some money into it. An election is coming, and they want to try to keep the economy going. So they've admitted that money needs to be put into the municipal infrastructures, and both parties are suggesting a partnership between the federal government and the provincial governments and the municipalities to do just that. We of course, if we form the government, would be prepared to participate in that, over and above this very specific suggestion that we made.

Now, I want to go on and talk a bit about small businesses and local economic initiatives. Mr. Speaker, it's time we reoriented our thinking in this province away from the idea that trade is the be-all and end-all of everything. It's not to say that trade isn't important, but Canada is already the most open trading country in the world. We have bared ourselves to international competition in a way that has led to a situation where Americans have access to our resources, but we don't have a great deal of access to the American economy as we were supposed to get out of the free trade deal. In fact, we hadn't done our homework in this country to make sure that we had our local economies healthy and were in a position or able to compete on that international level, and the international trade has proved to be disastrous.

I have here the statement that the Canadian Manufacturers' Association sent to Don Mazankowski to make suggestions for his budget. They start off by giving some facts about Canada's manufacturing industries. I'm not going to bore you with a lot of the details, but there's one short paragraph here that just summarizes it. They say on page 1 of their economic outlook document:

The slight improvement in manufacturing shipments in 1992 follows upon three consecutive years of declining production and sales. Manufacturers in Canada entered into recession in the fourth quarter of 1989, a full year before the rest of the Canadian economy, the year the free trade deal came into effect and, I might add, a full year before the Americans went into recession as well.

By the end of 1992, manufacturing output had fallen in total by just over 12% [in those three years].

So the time has come for the idea that we need to reorient our thinking: what can we do for ourselves and how can we develop our local economies? Even Michael Wilson talked about it just prior to his stepping down from being the Finance minister. He never, of course, admitted the disastrous policies they have that are causing the troubles that led to that conclusion.

Now, Mr. Speaker, some of the ideas we have for developing the local economy. One is a one-stop shopping centre idea for small businesses, for people who want to ask about the economy and what's available in terms of government support and that sort of thing: information centres throughout the province and a phone line into those centres for those people that choose to phone in rather than drive to the centres. We think the government should act as a facilitator in the gathering and disseminating of information. That should be a primary role of the government. It should be done in a number of different ways. I just introduced a Bill the other day, Bill 350, to set up an Alberta economic council, and one of their primary jobs would be to detail and gather information about the resources of Alberta, including the people resources, but also to gather information from across Canada and around the world about economic development and what's happening with the economies in other parts of the world that would affect directly the economy of Alberta.

11:10

We think the Alberta Research Council to some extent should act as a gatherer and disseminator of information. It's cheaper to copy technology than it is to duplicate the research that it takes to develop the technologies in many cases. So the Alberta Research Council and other research institutes in Alberta should spend a lot of time, of course, finding out what else is going on around the world and bring that information to Alberta and pass it on to our small businesspeople and Albertans generally. Of course, we should also be facilitating the development of economic corporations and businesses in research parks and that sort of thing near our major centres and even in some of our smaller centres.

One of the directions that we need to look at that this government has pretty well totally ignored is the idea of import replacement. Now, it seems to me that there are three aspects to this. One is to get local communities taking a really good look at what they can do to match buyers and sellers to make sure that there is full knowledge out there. You know, the theories of economics have really been based on the idea that there is perfect knowledge on the part of all entrepreneurs, whether they be buyers or sellers in the economy. Of course, that has not been true in the past, but now with computers it could nearly be true. We should see to it that small towns and regions of Alberta and eventually the whole province share that information on computer banks that makes it so that anybody in the town of Hythe who wants to buy something can first check and see if somebody in Hythe can produce that. If they can't, then they can look to the next town, Beaverlodge. If Beaverlodge doesn't have it, then they maybe have to look to Grande Prairie. If Grande Prairie doesn't have it, they might have to look to Edmonton. It should be that kind of approach.

Nobody's necessarily saying that you have to allow percentage preferences for those kinds of buyings, but if you talk to the people about the importance of buying locally, as Oregon did when it set up its import replacement program back in 1982 through to about '85, you would find that people, when they start to recognize the importance of buying locally, go from a town where maybe 10 or 15 percent of the population has some idea that buying locally makes some sense to a town where 80 or 85 percent of the people are willing to buy locally if it's at all feasible.

Had we done that in Alberta first and then had we done that with Saskatchewan, Manitoba, B.C., and right across Canada, we might have been ready for a free trade deal. But we went into a free trade deal without any of that kind of preparation, and now we've got a North American free trade deal being added on top of it which basically tells us that the government of Alberta doesn't have the right to give any kind of preference to local purchases. It's sort of not being enforced yet, but it will be over the next 10 years as the North American free trade deal is eventually enforced through Ottawa, because they're the ones that signed the agreement. In other words, some company from New York or Dallas, Texas, can come in here and undercut our local entrepreneurs, put them out of business, and then raise the prices to anything they want after that because we won't have any local production of that particular item. That's exactly the kind of thing that's going on and will continue to go on as the free trade deal and the North American free trade deal are further implemented.

Now, we say that that's wrong. There are other aspects to local import replacement, it seems to me, besides getting the local people aware of the need to buy locally. We should be running a provincewide advertising campaign. There is a Better Buy Alberta program that should be supported, and there should be that kind of encouragement for Albertan firms to try to sell in Alberta and to get all people in Alberta to buy Albertan. Then we should also make sure that we do retain our right to have local procurement policies. Municipalities should have that right; cities like Edmonton should have that right; a provincial government like the government of Alberta should have that right.

We should also be thinking in terms of: if the taxpayers of the Peace River country contribute 10 percent to the economy of the province of Alberta, then the Alberta government should make an effort to purchase, if possible, 10 percent of their procurements from the Peace River area to put some of the tax money back into that area. Otherwise, you denude it. Just like Alberta should be insisting that Ottawa, because Alberta's about 10 percent of the population of Canada, should make sure that Alberta gets about 10 percent of the procurement policies of Ottawa. But we don't even do that. We just think it's all right for Dallas and New York firms to come in and compete in Alberta. That's what this government thinks, and I think that's wrong. I think we should be looking after ourselves first.

Now, all these job layoffs and the disastrous manufacturing sector problems coming out of the free trade deal in the last three or four years have meant that there's an awful strain on small businesses to try to pick up the pieces. I think we need to look to small businesses and try to get them some help, more than just information. I think we do need to be prepared to put some money into small businesses. One of the problems of trying to do so is to depoliticize it a little bit or at least to the extent that you don't have ministers making decisions out of their office as to who gets money and who doesn't.

So you have to set up a program, and I'm thinking we should look at the Alberta Opportunity Company and probably revise it. One of the things we should do is administer it through the Treasury Branches. That would be our suggestion on this side of House. It probably needs to be expanded, whereas this government is cutting it back, and the Liberals are saying scrap it all together because it loses \$15 million or \$20 million a year. Listen, if you consider it just to be another program of helping a certain group of people that really need help, then a \$15 million or \$20 million expenditure – it's not the same thing as Myrias losing us \$20 million by itself. The minister tried to pick a winner in high-tech stakes in international competition and failed. That's not the same thing as loaning \$140 million to a whole raft of small

businesses throughout all of Alberta, and the net effect is to lose \$15 million or \$20 million per year. Mr. Speaker, most of the small businesses obviously paid back, and then that money is available for the next small business that comes along. So I think we need to take a good look at the Alberta Opportunity Company.

One of my great disappointments is the way the Toward 2000 Together process totally ignored program funding. The government was not prepared to put its programs on the line, give out some information and have a good discussion and analysis by the people of Alberta about the effect of those programs and whether they should be expanded, shut down, changed, or whatever. We lost a great opportunity. They kept the debate in the Toward 2000 Together process so theoretical that the ideas coming out of it will be of a similar nature to what the minister was talking about the other day in the House in his new strategy, almost totally useless in terms of actually getting anything done.

This is one area where the New Democrats really do part from the Liberals, on this point about any taxpayers' money directly into companies. Certainly no more Myrias, no more GSRs, no more NovAtels, not that kind of thing where ministers are trying to pick winners, but if you say never, then you're going to get caught in a situation like the PWA situation and the Gainers situation. What the Liberals will find if they get in power is that they won't be able to resist, and they'll make the decisions out of ministers' offices on an ad hoc basis again. It may be necessary sometimes to make ad hoc decisions about that. If their decision is going to be no, then they're wrong on both the PWA and the Gainers thing; okay?

MRS. GAGNON: It's nice you think we're going to win. That's great.

MR. McEACHERN: No, you're not going to get a chance. That's the policies you're talking, so I'm just putting them out there.

They're also saying: shut down Alberta Opportunity Company; shut down Vencap. I've also called for shutting down Vencap, and I'd really want to take a good look at that.

MRS. GAGNON: Is this about our paper or the Premier's paper?

MR. McEACHERN: No. I said it long before you were even elected.

Maybe you need to look at Vencap and see if that money should be reoriented to small business or something like that. There are some movement and changes that could be made to Vencap, certainly.

The export loan guarantee program also is another program that needs to be looked at, analyzed, and perhaps continued. But the Liberals are saying: no, don't do that; throw away all the program funding just because Tory ministers couldn't pick winners out of their offices. We're saying, well, we'll stop the idea of cabinet ministers picking winners out of their offices, but we will take a review of the programs. In the case of the Alberta Opportunity Company my inclination at this stage, with the limited debate I've been able to get on it, is that it should probably be increased, that some of the other funds of the heritage trust fund could be reoriented toward the small business sector. I mentioned Vencap a minute ago. I think that would pay off.

11:20

On the education and training side I'm not going to say a lot except to say that in the United States the new guru that is advising Clinton, a man by the name of Reich, and a number of

people that follow his sort of philosophies – and to some extent I agree with him, to some I don't. In one of his papers Reich says that any national industrial strategy should contain 10 points. The very fact that he's talking about a national industrial strategy is an improvement over what we've had out of the Mulroney government and the Tory government here. They don't acknowledge that there should be any national industrial strategy, it seems to me, although businesspeople and labour leaders right across this country have been calling for one for some time now. In any case, he says that 10 points of any national industrial strategy should be – and it lists those 10 points, and four of them are on education.

The first one, Mr. Speaker, is on universally accessible day care, would you believe? Start with small children so that you free up both parents who have to go to work to make ends meet in this day and age and give them good, accessible day care. So that's the starting point. Next was kindergarten, then he talked of public school, and then he talked, of course, of postsecondary. There are a lot of things happening in postsecondary education. We're already seeing more interest on the part of the public and businesspeople wanting to get involved. The turmoil that that's going to cause in our classrooms and in our postsecondary educational institutions over the next while is going to be interesting. I think there will also be a lot of positive things come out of it. In fact, there already are.

Entrepreneurs are going to have to spend more time training their workers. If they don't do it voluntarily, then we're going to need to put on a tax. Our federal party has suggested a 2 percent payroll tax to be oriented toward education. If a particular firm actually does some training on their own premises that qualifies, they can actually get that tax reduced to the amount that they spend. The United States is doing it with a 1.5 percent payroll tax in that line. If a company doesn't want to do their own, then they can just pay the tax and that will go toward the postsecondary educational institutions which will train the workers we need. So there are a whole number of things that need to be done there, but I won't take the time to mention more of them right now. It should be an interesting development in that area over the next 10 years or so.

Now, the other day the minister of agriculture said that the government should just be acting as a facilitator, that it should just be listening, that it should not be telling people what to do. I agree that when you go out to talk to people on the doorstep or in groups, you must go there to listen, but the consultation processes of this government – he enumerated a few of them, the Toward 2000 Together process as an example. It's not enough to just start a theoretical discussion and let it sort of stumble along from one stage to another stage to another stage and really lead nowhere, except to a bunch of contradictory statements with a variety of different suggestions from a whole lot of different points of view. It's up to the government to put some of their policies on the line. It's up to them to put some of their ideas forward as to how they would intend to proceed and to make the discussion more concrete and specific so that we actually get something we can work with. I haven't seen the government do this. You know, they didn't tell us, for instance, what happened with the Alberta stock savings plan. They didn't tell us about the SBECs, and I already mentioned some of the other programs. There's not much use having theoretical discussions.

In fact, I would suggest that the Tory economic policy, both at the federal and provincial levels, is just a theoretical idea, that you should deregulate everything and let the big corporations do as they please. They'll bury us all in cheap goods and services. It's called supply-side economic theory. It's what Brian Mulroney

and Ma Thatcher and Ronald Reagan and George Bush proposed. It's nonsense of course. What that deregulation brought us was leveraged buy-outs, junk bonds, mergers and takeovers of unprecedented size, layoffs of workers, the savings and loan scandal in the United States. In Alberta it brought us Principal, North West Trust, CCB collapse, Northland bank collapse, Tower, Dial, a whole series of mortgage companies that collapsed. It brought us disaster, Mr. Speaker. Of course the government needs to take a hand in the economy, and of course there has to be reasonable regulation.

Mr. Speaker, this new strategy of the Tories called Seizing Opportunity is the same kind of sort of hands-off, vague, wishy-washy ideas and nothing specific. For instance, there was absolutely nothing on specific job creation and help for municipalities to fix up our infrastructures in this province. The targets that the Premier set in his book about 110,000 jobs to be created over the lifetime of a Tory administration are nothing more than wishful thinking. They're like the targets that the former Treasurer set to balance the books. You know, he kept swearing that he was right. Back in 1986-87, after the collapse of the oil industry in this province, he set these targets where in four years he's going to have a balanced budget. Well, he kept pushing it back one year at a time and then back another year. But he was right on target all the time while he was pushing it back a year. Then finally he's going to have a balanced budget, and it turns into a \$2.1 billion deficit. Well, these targets are just as never, never.

Now, the New Democrats, on the other hand, recognize the importance of sound fiscal management as well as economic development. I've spent time talking about economic development, and I want to take a look a little bit at the fiscal side. We have a 2 and a half billion dollar problem, and we are going to have to do something about that. This New Democratic caucus recognizes that, and we've put forward some ideas that would go a long way helping to close that gap. In fact, we have a very specific paper called Putting Albertans First, a sensible financial plan for government, in which we detail some 27 recommendations.

Here's what the *Edmonton Journal* had to say about those recommendations. This is from the *Edmonton Journal* on January 23, 1993. They said:

The biggest difference between the New Democrats and the Liberals, at the moment, is in attention to detail. Opposition leader Ray Martin released a fiscal plan for Alberta this week with 27 suggestions described with admirable precision.

They go on to say in another section:

The New Democrats are firmly opposed to a sales tax. They would overhaul the tax system to achieve a better balance between corporate and personal taxes. . . . The Liberals would consider a sales tax . . . The rest of their taxation policy, if they have one, is unclear.

Now, the same can be said for the Tories, and I will bet any money that anybody wants to that if either the Tories or the Liberals form the government after this next election, within a year we will have a sales tax, because it is the only tax that is acceptable to the corporate sector of this province. [interjections] We'll talk to you later about that.

Our party, on the other hand, has come up with some very specific proposals to reduce expenditures to the tune of \$450 million and specific tax increases that will raise \$550 million. So we will be able to close that 2 to 2 and a half billion dollar yearly gap, that deficit, by a billion dollars in the first year in office. We have specific, detailed ideas of how to do that. The taxes that I mentioned I'll detail more just so people know exactly what they are.

First, we think there should be a surtax on upper incomes, because we are upset that the federal government has lowered the

upper-income tax rates in what used to be a progressive income tax system for personal income tax. So upper-income people, over \$80,000 and \$120,000, would get a surtax. We would also increase the financial institutions, tax them 2 percent to 3 percent. The other thing: we would also tax corporations that have over a million dollars of share capital. We would tax them a .3 percent tax on that capital. We would reduce the royalty benefits to oil companies to a maximum of \$500,000 per firm instead of 2 and a half million dollars per firm. That would save as much as \$150 million.

So taken all together, with the cutbacks in other areas of government and with these tax increases we would actually close the 2 and a half billion dollar structural deficit gap that we have by a billion dollars, which is not a bad start for a party that's on the outside looking in at this stage but has watched this government very carefully for the last seven years. This makes a lot of sense. It's a good starting point, and it's only New Democrats that are going to be fiscally responsible enough to close out that deficit over the term of a New Democratic government. Our leader has said that he's not going to make that as a promise but is going to set out that that will be the aim. It is possible that the economy will turn in such a way and go down even further. We don't know who's going to be the federal government. So that will be our fiscal plan.

11:30

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

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to discuss the Premier's paper, Seizing Opportunity, from the perspective of education, both K-12 and advanced education.

I'd like to quote from the paper. It says on page 3:

The design, delivery and financing of our education and training systems must adapt to changing social and economic realities. In response to an increasing pace of change, individuals must embrace an attitude of lifelong learning and skills updating.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if the recent past is considered, those ideas contained in the quote are nothing much but rhetoric.

Our caucus and myself certainly agree with support for lifelong learning. Actually, this is a major theme of our Liberal education policy paper entitled Education for All. Unfortunately, lifelong learning requires something that the Premier neglects to address: accessibility to postsecondary opportunities. My information is that there were 26,000 more applications than spaces available for students in postsecondary systems last year. While this number certainly does include some duplicates because we have no central registry system, we estimate that there are about 15,000 people, qualified eager students, who could not find a seat in a postsecondary institution in Alberta. Most of those were turned away from technical institutions and colleges, and we do get our information from registrars, I must say. Ten percent of qualified university applicants were also unable to find space last year.

This inaccessibility to postsecondary levels of education has led to students returning to grade 12 for a second year, retaking courses that they've already successfully completed but need a mark just a few percentage points higher in order to meet some quota. Both Edmonton and Calgary public school boards say that 20 to 25 percent of their grade 12 students already hold a high school diploma. This is a waste of money, of resources. It really backs up the grade 12 classes in our high schools, and it's also a waste of human potential and time.

The solution, of course, is a reinvestment in our postsecondary system to provide for growth. There must be more money to

provide space. The Conservative legacy has been to cut and to cut at the postsecondary system. Funding for students has fallen by 18 percent since 1986, quickly dropping Alberta from first place among provinces to fifth. The Premier heard a thunderous applause for U of C president Murray Fraser at the Gorbachev convocation when Fraser told the Premier he is willing to immediately provide more spaces when the province provides adequate resources.

The Conservative government has a similar record of neglect of funding of K-12 education, which has led school boards to rapidly raise local taxes. The problems of fiscal inequity between school boards can be attributed directly to off-loading onto municipal levels of government, particularly onto school boards, because when school boards have to pay a higher portion, the local property rate becomes a much greater factor in the equation.

The paper as enunciated by the Premier resurrected the idea of corporate pooling, a concept which has soundly been rejected by the business community, by municipalities, by parents, and by school boards. If the Premier were serious about his commitment to listen to Albertans, this idea would not have been included in his economic strategy. We continue to support the idea of both a long- and short-term strategy to address this issue, including a long-term consultation process in which boundaries, taxation, school funding, and the responsibility for provision of services would be addressed to achieve a permanent solution. Dipping into the lottery funds for election bonanzas is not the solution either.

The Premier also discusses new decision-making strategies. I hope the Premier intends to change the blatant patronage system that now exists in the selection of boards of governors and members of the Students Finance Board. Even student reps on the Students Finance Board are appointed through Conservative connections.

The design and delivery of education are also raised in this paper, and I support innovation in this regard. For both K-12 and advanced education, distance learning opportunities are certainly the answer, and those must be provided throughout the province regardless of where the student lives. This, of course, is the key to the future for rural Alberta. I have visited many small rural schools, and I do believe they can be viable. They can keep small towns and villages alive as long as full distance education opportunities are available to the students there. I know that certainly is what parents and parent groups in those villages and towns want very badly.

Another issue is brokering of postsecondary programs throughout Alberta. I think this would also make available opportunities throughout the province. Now, if the government is serious about such an innovation called brokering, why is it that the Minister of Education has still not approved the program request from Grande Prairie Regional College to broker U of A BEd degrees? I was up in Grande Prairie just two weeks ago, visited the college, and heard many presentations. Everything is ready to go. The University of Alberta is keen, the local staff and students are keen, yet the minister has still not given his approval. The proposal is gathering dust in the minister's office.

The Premier has also called for better school-to-work transition programs. However, once again we see that it's nothing but rhetoric. A proposal from the U of C for expansion of their co-operative education program, which would provide 800 more student spaces at the university, has sat for three years in a pile of proposals on the minister of advanced education's desk.

The paper also neglects to mention accreditation of foreign professionals. This is a lingering problem that wastes human potential.

Regarding research and development, the Premier hints at but does not directly say that he will support the electronic highway called for by our four university presidents. I would like to know, if there's an opportunity for someone on the government side to respond: will the government make a commitment to the electronic highway?

The Premier addresses applied research in his strategy. However, applied research is not enough. We must also support pure research. We have a number of very qualified people who wish to come to Alberta and engage in pure research, and it's definitely part of the answer towards economic development and the future of this province.

Finally, I'd like to say a few words about the amalgamation of student aid with Alberta vocational training programs and parts of the supports for independence program. This has caused a great deal of concern among many students. I'm very happy that there is an increase in the amount; that was approved recently in one of the Bills that we dealt with. However, when you consider the number of people who will have to go to the Students Finance Board now, there is concern that this is actually a cut in disguise. I would hope, again, to have some answers regarding that strategy. The fear, of course, is caused because no details were provided regarding the new program nor were there adequate funds announced in order to follow the shuffle. Now, maybe the increase in the provincial liability is, you know, the number, the funds, but we're not sure about that, and a number of people are quite concerned. Of course, we know that many regulations would have to follow if this amalgamation occurs, such as changes to loan ceilings, grant programs, and so on, and we await those.

Mr. Speaker, those are my comments on the paper, but I would like to say one other thing in regard to the allegation that the Liberals have no economic paper. Well, we do have a terrific paper. It's called *Visions of Prosperity*. I'm handing it out at the doors, and I'm getting calls from people who are saying that they will join our party based on the contents of that paper. We're very proud of that paper.

Thank you for listening.

11:40

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

MR. TAYLOR: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to speak a note or two on the motion as presented. Now, I notice that the very cornerstone or one of the cornerstones of the speech was the provision of jobs, jobs, jobs, which is certainly a good idea, although in this case it sounded like an echo of a retiring Prime Minister who has not got that much credibility. I was a little surprised that he borrowed the line from the poet laureate of the Tory Party, Mr. Brian Mulroney.

Nevertheless, we're going on from that. I had some of the public finance researchers, which I thank the House for, look at what the cost of jobs has been to the Alberta taxpayer. It's not only a question of supplying jobs but how the Tories supply jobs. NovAtel, for instance, had a staff of 1,600. We lost \$614 million on that. That means every job, Mr. Speaker, cost the taxpayers of this province \$383,753. Three hundred eighty-three thousand dollars: that would pay pensions to all the members of the back bench coming from Calgary for quite a while. But \$383,000 a job is absolutely fantastic.

Jobs, jobs, jobs. We go on to MagCan. We haven't finished putting all the money into MagCan. We now find that that big cement plant down there near High River can't make magnesium because whoever sold it to us took off with the formula on how to

make magnesium, and we're going to have to buy it back. If we just take the money we have in that – and this comes to a record, Mr. Speaker, a record – we spent \$125 million there for 145 jobs. That's \$862,000 a job. Eight hundred and sixty-two simoleons, as Damon Runyon would say, is a lot of shekels. It's absolutely fantastic. Per job, nearly a million dollars, and this government has the nerve to say: will you give us some money to create jobs?

You can go on. GSR, \$31 million for 130 jobs. That works out to \$238,000, over a quarter of a million dollars. And they got a bargain – they got a bargain, Mr. Speaker – in Myrias Research. That was a bargain; you've got to give them credit for that. They got a hundred jobs for \$13 million. That's only \$130,000 a job, \$130,000 a job out of the taxpayers' money. Not bad at all. For employees working here, I calculate that if an employee lived to be 120 – and 120 years of age might be possible with some new chemicals – they would pay back the \$130,000 in income tax. That's without interest, though, without interest. You'd have to be a Social Creditor to believe that you don't have to pay interest. This is the type of investment we're talking of.

We go on and on. You might be interested in the average. The first billion dollars we spent to create jobs created 2,065 jobs, Mr. Speaker; \$385,956 – we dropped off the pennies. Actually, when it comes to this outfit, this government over there, I think they drop off the millions.

MR. CHERRY: Nick, you're a real calculator.

MR. TAYLOR: The Member for Lloydminster shouted out something. The problem with his area and the upgrader is that he has to share half the jobs with Saskatchewan. That's all right, because those socialists have to have someplace to work, I guess. I'm getting some dirty looks over here to the right.

Nevertheless, that works out to close to half a million dollars a job too.

So, Mr. Speaker, jobs, jobs, jobs is fine, but the government is to create the climate, not spend the money, to create jobs. It has to concern us when we see what's going on. Government is really not in the business of creating jobs. Government is in the business of creating an atmosphere within which jobs will be created by the private sector.

AN HON. MEMBER: Come on over, Nick.

MR. TAYLOR: They say, "Come on over." You know, actually, if you'd adopted the philosophy of what you originally had, it might be interesting.

But what's happened is what happens with all governments that have been in too long, and it could happen to a Liberal government. Historically speaking, I've seen it happen. Twenty-two years in power, Mr. Speaker, and any politician starts to forget that he or she is appointed and starts thinking that they are anointed. You can almost see the episcopal timber coming out as they strut into their office chairs after 22 years.

The fact that we would even question, for instance, why \$140 million of the taxpayers' money is loaned out to a Calgary realtor firm and an American hockey team – they pull themselves up in high dudgeon. Such private matters. How would you like your business put in? Well, what they don't seem to realize is that it's so private that an MLA is not allowed to borrow or have business or have a mortgage with the Treasury Branches. That's how open we feel that it has to be. Yet when one of our taxpayers borrows from all the taxpayers of this province over \$140 million: "No, it's a secret. We can't show you what kind of security. We can't show you whether the loan is any good." The same arguments went back to Pocklington.

It's not the creation of jobs when you do that, Mr. Speaker, when you take, holus-bolus, money out of the Treasury to create jobs, which this government has done in the past. That is not free enterprise conservatism; that's a pragmatism. Even worse than a pragmatism, an insidious philosophy has got in that now, after 22 years in power, they think they are gods and they can't do wrong.

Mr. Speaker, they may have changed the driver of the getaway car, but it's the same old gang in the backseat. Look at the Deputy Premiers; look at the minister of agriculture. The people that threw away money for the last eight years: it's the same ones in there. So they changed the driver of the getaway car or maybe even changed the ornament on the hood; it's hard to say. In this case I think they probably changed a bit of the chrome on the taillight.

Nevertheless, whatever it is, Mr. Speaker, they are not Conservatives. If they were Conservatives, they might deserve a chance to be running for election. Even worse than taking the public Treasury and spreading it out between half and three-quarters of a million dollars per job, as I have said, is that they borrowed the money to give it away. I've known people who have borrowed money to buy engagement rings. They go on, and somehow or another that is sort of accepted. But when you borrow money to create jobs at three-quarters of a million dollars a whack, that's adding insult to injury. I mean, it's bad enough to take the cash to create the job, but to borrow the money to create the job? Yet they're going to have the nerve to come and ask for another term at government.

Certainly as a lawyer you're quite familiar with the argument of the young man that had murdered his mother and dad and was now throwing himself on the mercy of the court on the grounds that he's an orphan. That's the same thing we have over here. They've murdered the Treasury, they've murdered the heritage trust fund, and they're now going to the public and asking to be re-elected on the grounds that they didn't know what they were doing and that they can do something new in the future. Well, if you can expect something new from that group, you've really got to do a lot of working.

DR. WEST: That's what the Liberals did under the national energy program. They spent it all, and then they claimed they didn't know what they were doing.

MR. TAYLOR: Somebody mentioned that's what the Liberals did. Well, I'm saying that if you have the courage, dissolve this House this afternoon, dissolve it Monday, and go to the electorate with your fat pensions and ask them. [interjections]

I see the canola king of the Peace River is speaking up here. We haven't told how much every job costs that he's created. Every bushel of canola could be hauled down to Edmonton and processed for half the cost as in the Peace River. Why? To keep some of the member's friends and relatives occupied for a while. If he wants that canola plant to exist, then this is how you create jobs: you take the plant and give it to the farmers for one measly dollar. Give it to them for a dollar and let them run it.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: They had it.

11:50

MR. TAYLOR: Yes. They've had you too. They've really had you.

The point is this, Mr. Speaker: if we gave it to the farmers for \$1, they would then run the plant in such a way that it wouldn't be costing us \$8 million to \$10 million a year.

Now, the member as a true Conservative says: "They had it. We tried it once." The farmers did have trouble with it a number of years ago; they tried it once. But this government figures it's all right to try it once, try it twice, try it three times. They've tried it for 10 years and lost money every year, Mr. Speaker, yet they're afraid to turn it over to a group of farmers. I could go on and on and on.

So we get our Premier, the genial character from Calgary, who came up here, took a roundabout raid with the Member for Barrhead and the Member for Bonnyville's help, took over a grand old party that used to stand for something, a grand old party that used to stand for ruggedness and free enterprise. He's taken it over, and now he preaches: "Oh, we're going to create jobs. We're going to go out there and spend more money. We're going all out." We know there's no money in the Treasury, so all they can do is borrow money.

This is the same government, to talk about creating jobs, that goes to Calgary and gives a quarter of a year extension to royalty-free holidays for oil companies but then comes up to northeast Alberta and says, "There's no money in the Treasury for people that have dried out; as a matter of fact, I don't even see any drought," as he flits about in his helicopter like a giant grasshopper from town to town, never bothering to get down and drive through the thing. He's got the nerve to say, "There's no drought, but those poor oil men in Calgary," of which I am one, I'll admit, "deserve to have another three to four months holiday." Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure I'll decline the royalty holiday. I don't know how much oil I'll find, but I have declined the increase in the pensions. So I don't think I'll be broke or worry about declining the royalty holiday either. The fact of the matter is that the minister of agriculture now is dashing off to get into his blue and orange grasshopper to visit another place and another place, while the rest of us have to drive, and I'll bet it's not even fueled by ethanol. He probably imports the gasoline he puts in that machine.

So this is a government that talks about creating jobs. It has to be one of the more laughable matters that we've ever seen. Now, I don't mind a politician creating jobs if they do it all with wind and rhetoric, but what this group does is borrow the money, charge it to me, and then come back and say, "I've created a job." All that I think the public of Alberta would like this government to do is take one oath – because they're not going to last till after the next election – that they will not create a job. That would create news; that would create satisfaction. That would create happiness, if they said: "You know, we're not going to go out there and create jobs. We're going to let you people create them. We're going to keep the money in the Treasury." That would be the best news that they ever heard. No; there has to be a thunder-clap, the clouds are coming apart, and they have to be afraid that there's a hailstorm coming over the hill when you see the Premier get up and say, "We're going to create jobs." You look through the record of nearly a billion dollars spent in the last few years at an average of over \$350,000 a job. If that doesn't put fear and terror into the hearts of the public, I don't know what will.

Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

MR. GIBEAULT: Yes, Mr. Speaker, thank you. I do want to add a few comments to this debate this morning.

You know, one of the main things that the government promised in the Seizing Opportunity speech that was given earlier is 110,000 jobs. That grabbed the headlines, and it gave a glimmer of hope

to 140,000 people in this province that don't have jobs today. Mr. Speaker, I want somebody on the government side this morning, now, today, to tell us where constituents of Edmonton-Mill Woods and all around the province can apply for those 110,000 jobs. We want to know exactly where those jobs are. Or is this just a lot more empty rhetoric from this government that is totally bankrupt?

Mr. Speaker, I think it was immoral to raise those kinds of expectations without putting something concrete on the table. A lot of my constituents have been working for a long time. Many of them have extensive professional and technical skills, training, degrees, and certificates. They are looking to contribute to the economy of this great province of Alberta, to raise their families, be self-sufficient. For the government to be alleging these vague promises of 110,000 new jobs – where they are going to come from, we don't know. What we do know is that they're not here today, and that was totally irresponsible of the government to do. They should have come forward with some sort of concrete proposals to create jobs today.

Mr. Speaker, I suppose these guys who are lusting after those \$83,000 pensions that they just can't wait to get their hands on can't relate to people that are out work. They don't know what it's like to try to raise a family in these times, single-parent families or even families with two parents where people are suffering layoffs. We've had the layoffs at AGT, at Woodward's, all over the province, not to mention the government's own downsizing. And here they are, talking about 110,000 jobs that are going to come out of the air from somewhere, but who knows where? It was the most irresponsible action of this government to create that kind of an expectation but not to deliver a single job.

Now, they could have looked at the alternatives that the New Democrats have put forward. We could have said: let's redirect some of those millions of dollars that are going to go to those fat pensions and to some of the other wasted expenditures that are put out by this government, a lot of those boards and commissions that are unnecessary and extra payments and fees for going to various functions and committees. We could have directed millions of those dollars to work in partnership with the municipalities of this province to re-energize and to redevelop the infrastructure that is in disrepair: the roads and bridges, the other communication facilities, the sewers and so on that are deteriorating. I mean, you only have to drive around many of the municipalities in the province, even the capital city, and you don't need to be a rocket scientist to see the kind of work that needs to be done on the infrastructure. We could have had that kind of a partnership. We could have said: we are going to make sure that jobs are provided to Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, New Democrats know that we're going to tackle the deficit problem in this province when people are working and paying taxes and not until then. If this government is serious about their concern about the deficit and the debt, then let's have some sort of initiative and creativity to ensure that people get back to work, because when they're working, they're paying taxes. They no longer have to claim unemployment insurance or welfare benefits, and they feel a lot better about themselves and their ability to support their families. It's just better for everybody all-round.

Not only do we have 140,000 officially out of work in the province; it represents some 10 percent of the work force. One worker out of 10 who wants to be productive and work in this province finds there's no opportunity to do so. If you look at young people – and that's very important in a constituency like mine, which has a much younger demographic make-up than many – it's up to 20 percent of the age 15 to 24 group that is out of work. Twenty percent, and all the people who are graduating now

from the universities, the colleges, the technical schools, the high schools of this province – Mr. Speaker, you ought to talk to them.

I suggest the government members talk to some of the young people in this province. There is a very serious morale problem and credibility problem. All these young people who are looking for an opportunity to join the work force of the province, start their careers, who were told, Mr. Speaker, that if they went to school, if they stayed in school, got their high school diploma and then got some advanced training, there would be a place for them: there's no place for a lot of those people.

In fact, in this document, *Seizing Opportunity*, there was a reference to the government's commitment to quality education, as I've said. Yet the cutbacks on the part of this government have resulted in a substantial number of layoffs of teachers and other educational workers this year by the Edmonton public school board, despite the fact that there's going to be a thousand more students in the system this year. How do you improve quality when you're cutting back on teachers in the classroom, when you're increasing the class sizes? It's ridiculous, absolutely ridiculous and totally contradictory. Mr. Speaker, that's not going to be lost on the people of Alberta when they have to make a choice about who's going to be the government of the province in the not too distant future.

That document also talked about quality health care. Well, what's happening with quality health care in the province? How can you have quality when government restraints and cutbacks in hospitals are causing, for example, the Caritas Health Group here in the capital city, of which the Grey Nuns hospital in my constituency is one component, to have to lay off licensed practical nurses and other health care workers? How are we going to improve quality in the health care system when we're cutting back on the number of people who provide services to sick Albertans, people who need care and treatment?

It's so contradictory that this government, which has been the government of NovAtel, with hundreds of millions of dollars lost, and MagCan, another hundred million, and Mortgage Properties Inc. – how many millions more did that cost? There's such a long list, Mr. Speaker. I know the government doesn't like us talking about that, but their record is their record and they have to be accountable for it. They've poured all that money into all these boondoggles, and of course now they want Albertans to believe that instead of these adventures with their corporate friends, somehow they are really concerned about quality education and health care when the facts of the matter are totally opposite to that.

12:00

Mr. Speaker, in that same document the government talked about the contribution of immigrants to our province. I was glad to hear the Premier say that, because that's a total opposite and a total contradiction of the Minister of Community Development. I was glad to see that. I really think he should have gone further and gotten rid of that minister, but if he wants to ensure that people like me are re-elected to this Assembly, then he should just keep on with people like that in the cabinet. From knocking on doors in my riding, I can tell you that the Minister of Community Development, who seems to be more interested in pointing fingers and blaming newcomers and talking about why we can't have human rights for people in this province for all Albertans and how we don't want to have the Alberta advisory council on the status of women and they won't appoint people for that agency – all of these things that she's responsible for, she seems to be against. So I just say those things to the Premier as friendly advice: if he wants to make sure that all of us New Democrats and many more

are elected, he ought to keep her in the cabinet. She's helping us greatly, and we appreciate that.

Mr. Speaker, we were looking again to come back to the question of jobs, because that is so fundamental. We were looking for some kind of action or indication from the government in a number of areas. Related to the situation with jobs, of course, are the labour laws that exist in the province. We have been trying to convince the government for a long time to have some kind of major improvement in the labour laws in this province, because it makes it so difficult for workers to organize and to have unions represent them where they wish that to be the case. It makes it very difficult for workers to enjoy job security in a province like this where, if you're not in the organized sector, you can be fired with virtually no recourse.

Then, of course, we were hoping that the government might have noticed that the minimum wage in this province is nothing that anybody could live on. It's one of the lower ones in the country. We thought that maybe one of the things the government could have done is look at having some increase in the wages of the people who are at the bottom of the pay scale. Again I suppose that when you're just looking at those big fat pensions down the road, you can't get too excited about the minimum wage, Mr. Speaker, but there are a lot more people working at or just above the minimum wage than are going to be beneficiaries from the MLA pension plan after this election. I think this government just ought to keep that in mind.

The other thing that we were looking for hopefully was some indication that the government was serious about redressing the serious imbalance in the tax system. Currently, Mr. Speaker, the last report from the Treasurer showed that personal income tax accounts for 30 percent of the government's revenues – almost a third – yet corporate income tax accounts for barely 6 percent of the province's revenues, and it's been going down. I don't imagine it will be very long before corporations are just not paying any tax in this province. That seems to be the trend the government's been taking in the last few years, and so then we'll just have individual workers and families burdened with perhaps 50 percent of the provincial tax burden. That's clearly opposite.

I don't know how many of the members opposite have had a chance to do some door knocking lately, but I can tell you people are feeling that the tax load is a heavy one. When they see all these boondoggles – the NovAtels, the MagCans, and so on – they just shake their heads. In fact, they just look at this government and think, you know, that it's sort of like the guy who has burned down your house and then suggests to you that he's the guy to rebuild it. That's basically what this government has done. They've destroyed the financial affairs of this province, and they're now suggesting – trying to do it with a straight face – that they are the people to restore the financial integrity of the economy of the province. That is something that no one who doesn't sit on the other side of this Chamber believes. It's simply not true, and very soon all Albertans will know that.

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

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to rise and give some reasonable response to some of the comments that have come from members across the way. In reference to the comments having to do with advanced education and education in this province by the Member for Calgary-McKnight on this very important motion, they're the same old answer that always comes from that area of "more money solves everything." Well, I think all of us – hopefully all of us – understand there is not any more

money. Taxpayers in this province don't have great gobs of money to pour into whatever whim the members opposite may come up with. I don't say that advanced education is a whim, but that's always the answer: more money – not a matter of sitting down with the stakeholders in the programs and deciding how can we do it better, how can we save the taxpayers some money, how can we do some things that will be innovative and let our young people get access to our institutions – as opposed to meeting the challenge with some realistic processes that will address it.

I have to go on to commend the major institutions, the two major large universities in the province, for the initiatives they've taken in recent weeks to rationalize their system and to bring about some changes that will continue to increase access to our post-secondary institutions. I'm not here to say that they can do it all by themselves. That's not the objective. I believe that everyone is going to have to be involved in that in order to reach a solution that will address the problem, and the problem has come about in the last eight to 10 years. We've had a 55 percent increase in students wanting to access our postsecondary institutions. We now have 112,800 students in the system. That's a dramatic increase that's very difficult for the institutions and the government and the taxpayers to digest. In recent years it's increased dramatically, and we understand that. We know that it has to be dealt with, and we're moving about that in a very reasoned approach that will involve all the stakeholders, that will let them have some input. Certainly there are some good ideas out there, and we anticipate having some resolutions to that in the not too distant future.

As far as cuts go – they love to use that word “cuts” – they are a reduction in funding. That's what a cut is. When you receive the same amount this year as you received last year, how do you equate that to a cut? I don't understand that. Now, if we were giving 25 percent in grant last year and we give 24 percent this year, all of a sudden, they've got a cut. Well, it's not a cut.

AN HON. MEMBER: Inflation.

MR. ADY: In the increase: that's what you're talking about.

The member also talked about the method of nominations of young people to the Students Finance Board. You know, when I traveled around the province and visited some 16 or 17 institutions in the last few weeks – and I met with student organizations at almost every one of them; wherever they wanted to meet, we met with them – not one complaint came from them about the students that sat on the Students Finance Board or on the appeal committees. They seemed perfectly happy with that. They talked to me, rather, about the difficulties they were having with the repayment schedule, that it came across to them as being too rigid, that it wasn't giving them quite enough opportunity to respond and be responsible to pick up their obligations. We've put in place a process to address that. I had barely finished the tour when we initiated a process that will see that addressed, and I'm confident we'll see some good innovation come and some good ideas and recommendations that will come forward from the Students Finance Board and the consultant that will be commissioned to carry that out.

Also, as far as the nominations to the Students Finance Board and appeal committee, I receive nominations from the student boards and associations from the institutions. They are considered, and I believe I could look back and verify that in several instances those nominations have been approved. They're not necessarily someone who knows someone, not necessarily that at all.

We speak a little bit about the brokering of degrees. Perhaps we could move a little bit further and use the term “degree granting.” That's something that is under consideration. We're

looking for alternatives to do things to satisfy the needs for access and do it in an economical way.

12:10

The member said she was in Grande Prairie two weeks ago and there was a proposal that was “gathering dust in the minister's office.” Again not true. That proposal landed in the minister's office, I believe, as recently as last night or this morning. When the member says that she was there, that everything was in place, that there was an agreement reached by all the stakeholders, and that the minister was holding it up: not so. I haven't had an opportunity to see it yet because it only landed last night. One of the proponents of the program had not finished their work. Why would the member stand in this Assembly and say something like that? I don't understand that kind of rationale, to have it recorded in *Hansard* when it's categorically not true.

We talk about the electronic highway. Again when I was touring the major institutions in the province, certainly they do have an interest in that, and it's an important component of the future. The Premier has said that he's going to entertain that proposal and that it would serve our province well, but again the dollars: it's a very expensive proposal, and it's something that will have to be addressed over the long term.

I might like to talk a little bit about the Premier's comment about 110,000 jobs that could be created over the next four years with his economic proposals that he brought forward. Well, it's interesting to listen to what the members opposite talk about when it comes to creating jobs. The Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods stood in his place and said: take some taxpayers' money and dump it out there. Now he didn't say this, but this is probably the way it would work: for every \$2 of taxpayers' money you put in, you'll get 30 cents back in income tax, and that's going to build some house of cards that the NDP believe works. All we have to do is go to Ontario, where those people down there were finally accountable for all the things they've had to say in past years about how this great philosophy will work: just dump taxpayers' money in at the top, and out the bottom comes prosperity. It doesn't work. Do you know that in the last two years 85 percent of the jobs lost in Canada were lost in Ontario under that great administration of the NDP? That great administration of the NDP has finally found its way. The NDP were elected in B.C. The people are sick over what they did out there. They're looking up and saying: “What in the world have we done? The NDP have shipwrecked us.” Now, 250,000 jobs lost in Ontario in the last two years, a deficit that is rocketing through the roof: they're roaring along. Who is lowest in the polls in Canada? The NDP government in Ontario is the lowest in the polls in Canada.

Well, I think that when it comes to creating jobs, if you're going to do it in a logical manner, you take a look at what the growth potential and the economy of a province is, you factor that in, you provide an environment where you don't have a sales tax that is retrogressive, and you have a tax structure on corporations that invites them to come here and to invest their money. When you build that environment, then you get real growth of gross domestic product that's produced. Then you get employment that stays and lasts and is not sessional and doesn't dry up when the taxpayers' money going in at the top dries up.

You know, hon. members across the way, it just doesn't make sense. Let's talk for a minute about the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon when he said how immoral it was that we would give support to some projects that perhaps were not as successful as they might have been, never mentioning those that were, and then said that we had done it with borrowed money. Let me submit to him that it's better to have done it with borrowed money than with

stolen money that the federal Liberals took out of Alberta through the NEP years ago. That member stood right in this Assembly and advocated that we bring back the NEP. It's in *Hansard*. He wants to bring it back to Alberta: another \$60 billion. Hey, hon. member, are you going to go down to Ontario so you can cash in on it? He complains that the oil industry is being rejuvenated in the province. I don't understand that kind of thinking: why he would want to see an industry that has contributed what the oil industry has contributed to this province die on the vine. Maybe because the hon. member is not involved in the industry any more he sees fit to have it totally crash. Not so. The oil and gas industry, the resource industry in this province has a great future. They're going to contribute to this province for a long time yet. We're going to create an environment that will let them survive and not only survive: sustain themselves and grow and continue to be a dramatic input and emphasis on the future of this province.

Thank you.

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

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just have a few short comments to add. [some applause] Thank you, gentlemen. To say that this is a disappointment is an understatement. I was certainly disappointed after all the hype we had around this particular speech coming out. We all waited with bated breath, and the media lined up and so on, and then out came a mouse. I expected more, Albertans expected more, and I believe we deserve more. Mr. Speaker, too little too late, no creative ideas, but then why should I expect them? This is too much to expect from this government. This government has squandered the resources of the province of Alberta. No apology, no amount of mea culpa is going to hide that fact from Albertans. No apology can eradicate that very certain information. This document reflects the same people, the same ideas, and is simply unforgivable.

A local correspondent in one of our daily newspapers I thought summed this up very well. He said that Seizing Opportunity should have been called Seizing Up. I think that's an accurate description of what this document says and what this government is doing: they are seizing up. The government says consult, consider, review. After seven years of secrecy, finally they've decided they want to come out of the closet. Mr. Speaker, they talk about targets, pilot projects. They've been on automatic pilot for the last five months. During those few months, the time that we've had the current Premier and while they were preparing this so-called economic plan, the debt has grown by nearly \$1 billion.

This is a government that has not only bankrupted the province financially, but I believe it is bankrupt in ideas.

Albertans have told us very clearly for years now that they're fed up with a government that intervenes in the private sector. A government that talks about itself being conservative and committed to private enterprise continually interferes in the private sector, distorting the competition that can and should exist in the private sector.

12:20

Mr. Speaker, Albertans are totally fed up with a government that piles up one deficit on top of another and has presided over the creation of a debt that's now over \$20 billion. They're fed up, too, with a government that has mortgaged the Alberta heritage savings trust fund.

The Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, I thought, was very eloquent in his comments about governments creating jobs. Governments don't create wealth; people do. The Liberal Party,

I can assure you, has tremendous faith in the people of Alberta. If they were left alone and not forced to deal with interference on the part of the government, I believe that Alberta could have a much brighter economic future, Mr. Speaker. Seizing Opportunity, on the other hand, or Seizing Up, offers the same old failed course that the government embarked on eight years ago. There's nothing new in this document. It recycles the same old ideas that we've heard year after year.

The document speaks to nine so-called targets. These are not goals or objectives; they're simply targets. First of all, the one on fiscal issues offering "a balanced budget over four years." Now, we see some slight shifting in the promises here compared to the promises made by the current Premier as he was looking for the leadership. The notion of a balanced budget in four years must provoke laughter in many Albertans as they watched this government's performance over the last seven years and the consistent promises to deal with the deficit. We have had consecutive budget deficits now for seven years, Mr. Speaker: absolutely unforgivable, and a pathetic response in this document.

Mr. Speaker, the current Premier's government commitment to creating a favourable tax environment is also subject to a great deal of suspicion. In the last seven years, this government has created or raised taxes, health care premiums, fees, and licences a total of 125 times. Personal income taxes, flat taxes, gasoline taxes, health care premiums, hotel rooms, marriage licences, drivers' licences, you name it, this government is an expert in raising taxes. Premier Klein told Albertans he's not going to raise taxes. Now he said he was only talking about income taxes. Well, let me tell you, it's the same pair of pants; it's just a different pocket that the money's coming out of. This just is a retreat of the previous direction of the previous Premier.

Again in fiscal targets: reducing or eliminating financial assistance to business. Well, which is it? The Premier vacillates on this. Maybe another musing. I don't know which it is. I don't think he can make up his mind on it. It's evident by his action in the last few months: promises that we're going to stop interfering in the private sector, yet a turnaround that provides a \$50 million loan guarantee to PWA and nine-something million to Gainers. These bailouts continue in spite of the Financial Review Commission report which revealed that the government had lost \$2.1 billion in loans and loan guarantees over the past eight years. And further losses will come, Mr. Speaker. We haven't heard the end of that story.

The International Strategy. Interesting. We're opening new offices in Taiwan, Siberia, and New Delhi. We don't even know yet if the ones we've got are working. We've had no real evidence, no empirical data that tells us what the benefits to Albertans have been from our present so-called international strategy. Seizing Up simply adds or exacerbates that problem.

Job Creation and Skill Development: another target. Government claims that we're going to have 110,000 jobs over the next four years. How they're going to be created, Mr. Speaker, is a mystery. The government hasn't given us any economic assumptions behind these kinds of projections. We don't know if these are full-time jobs or part-time jobs. We don't know what kind of wage they will command. Albertans need some kind of answers. If these promises are going to be made and if they're going to hit the headlines and raise expectations in the labour force and particularly in the unemployed in this province, I think we need far greater depth of information on what they are based. Otherwise I believe it to be unfair to raise these kinds of hopes in the minds of Albertans. I don't know how the Premier explains his projections in the light of what the Conference Board of Canada is saying; the Royal Bank, the TD Bank predicting unemployment

rates at 9 percent for '93, employment growth of 1.5 to 2 percent GDP. I don't where the Premier got his numbers, Mr. Speaker. It sounds like the same old technique, the same old creative accounting technique that we're so used to.

Mr. Speaker, when the current Premier became Premier, the unemployment . . . No, in 1989. I'm sorry, I've got my figures wrong, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JOHNSTON: All the way through your speech you've had your figures wrong, let the record show.

MRS. HEWES: I thought you liked my figures, Dick. A little bit of humour there.

In 1989 when the current Premier was elected to this government, Mr. Speaker, the unemployment was at 7.2 percent; today, in 1993, it's 10.7 percent. In '89 there were 94,000 Albertans unemployed; today there are 144,000 Albertans without jobs. I would hesitate to project those numbers down the road because I think, there again, that would be a terrifying kind of experience if we had a look at them.

Mr. Speaker, Liberals think about the need to invest in people. Now, I heard the minister of advanced education comment on the remarks of the Member for Calgary-McKnight, who expresses, I believe, some real concerns about education in the province. I'd just like to expand on that a little bit. The Minister of Family and Social Services has introduced in recent weeks a fairly extensive paper, again not a lot of content in it, but stating what he's going to do in reforms to the program called supports for independence. That paper tells us that certain departments of the government will be combined to give a greater opportunity for people now unemployed and requiring social assistance to get into educational training institutions. As yet we've heard absolutely nothing from any minister about how this is to occur. We've had several people speak this morning about the overload in our existing educational institutions, the waiting lists to get into them, the young people who are turned down, who have had expectations of getting into education and are not able to do so, yet we see now that we're going to allow and we're going to encourage – and I certainly agree with that – people on social assistance to get into these institutions. Wonderful. Now, how is that going to happen? Nobody has told us that. Nobody has said that there will be more places created. Nobody has said there will be more money for student loans. Nobody has said how this is going to be financed.

Once again an empty promise, an idea that has merit but has no action plan attached to it. Mr. Speaker, Albertans deserve better. Unemployed Albertans are in a great deal of pain. The numbers are increasing as we stand here. This document does not speak to that issue in any way, shape, or form.

12:30

Mr. Speaker, last year the then Minister of Health introduced some reforms in health care and got Albertans started on a process that would try to contain costs in health care while providing a continued quality of care and access to Albertans whatever their place of residence. The people in Alberta responded to those initiatives by the Minister of Health and got themselves organized and started working on new networks around the province, whether they were in institutions in the province or in community organizations. There was a great deal of interest in this.

Mr. Speaker, one of the major problems in health care reform taking place in our province is a labour adjustment problem. It has not been dealt with in this paper, and I'm assuming the government has no intention of dealing with it. Yet today once again we see layoffs at the Royal Alexandra hospital in Edmonton.

We see them every day in health care institutions. The paper is grossly deficient in my view in not dealing with that.

[Mr. Moore in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker, I think Albertans who are unemployed, Albertans who are terrified about losing their jobs – who call each one of us, I'm sure, every day – have only to contrast their circumstances with the discussion taking place in the House these days on pension payments to see where this government has failed.

A Liberal plan has been presented which produces a proposal for a process of budget change, how budgets would be developed, a much more open process, working with the major players in our province and concerned citizens alike. It also contains specifics for short-term reductions in expenditures of government and contains considerable development of political will which exists within the Liberal Party. Mr. Speaker, I believe we have demonstrated that political will to make these changes in the short term and, along with the people of Alberta, to develop a long-term plan for reduction in expenditures to finally put this government in a position where it can deal appropriately with the ridiculous and indefensible financial situation that presently exists. The Liberal Party offers a new course, a course that will invigorate the economy, which has been totally damaged now by a government which is fiscally incompetent and in which Albertans have certainly lost confidence.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been interesting listening to the debate this morning, especially listening to the last member and some of her comments saying: we're going to go to the people; the Liberal Party is going to go to the people. I think the hon. member should read page 4 of the book *Seizing Opportunity*, the first paragraph. Maybe the Liberals didn't choose to take part, but I believe at least one of their members was involved in *Toward 2000* in Calgary, where all groups throughout the province had come together and talked about the economy.

When they're condemning this package, they need to know and the people out there need to know that they're condemning those thousands of people that went to workshops throughout this province. They're condemning the 220 or 225, whatever it was, in Bow Island when we dealt with the portion related to agriculture. People came out; they worked in workshop groups around tables and then reported to the main group. Some of them got into the activity so much that if there was a coffee break called, they said, "No, we're having a great discussion here; we're going to continue." They're condemning them. They're saying they don't have ideas. Mr. Speaker, they're saying these people who went to all these places don't have any ideas; they don't know anything. They're saying: we do; we're going to tell you what's going on.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

To go out to the people – we've already been there, Mr. Speaker. We were there before this book was put together.

AN HON. MEMBER: The trouble is you don't listen.

MR. HYLAND: It's interesting. Some hon. member over there says, "The trouble is you don't listen." They're saying we don't listen. They don't listen, because any time they don't get their

view, the socialist view . . . The Liberal socialist and the NDP socialist are moving after each other so much they're falling over each other to get more to the left. If they don't get their view out of people, then they don't listen. We've got a view from the people here. Some of this stuff put together may or may not be something we all like individually, but it's a view of the people that went to those meetings and talked about what they thought the future of the province should be and how that future should go forward.

It's nice, Mr. Speaker, to get the Liberal position out on PWA. The Liberal Party is saying – and I wish they would ask this in question period so they could get it on live camera throughout the province – that 5,000 jobs in PWA, whatever it is, shut them out, close it down, let the people go, kick them out, let the airline fall. That's what they're saying. That's what they said today. Why don't they go over to Gainers and stand up in front of Gainers when the employees come off this afternoon's shift and say: "We say you guys should be down. We don't want you. You're finished. You're fired, because we don't believe you should be supported." It would be an interesting position for them to go over there and say that.

AN HON. MEMBER: Pinko.

MR. HYLAND: Somebody over there says "Pinko." Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that because I want to help people save jobs and hold an industry together, I'm a pinko and they're a saviour. And they laugh, Mr. Speaker. I'll bet you the jobs at stake in PWA and the jobs at stake at Gainers would really appreciate them sitting in this Legislature laughing about their jobs, saying: it's funny, you guys; we're laughing – ha, ha, ha! – we're getting you. It's an interesting situation.

Mr. Speaker, let me go on to the part of the paper relating to agriculture and building on our strengths. I got into a debate two or three days ago when an hon. member suggested that only great things happen in the city and you can only manufacture if you're in the city. We have some industries in my home town of Bow Island, a place of 1,500 people, that sell products and ship products worldwide. We went to a reception last night put on by the Alberta Wheat Pool to inform people of their activities, and in the information package and slide show it showed the Bow Island bean plant owned by Alberta Wheat Pool. It was started a number of years earlier by a group of private individuals in town. Then it got to the stage where because of knowledge in international marketing and such, the Pool bought it out and has continued to expand it since. Indeed, they've made an announcement that they're going to build another one in Taber to diversify and put more land into beans. That plant ships products worldwide. It ships products to South America. It ships products to the Middle East. It ships products all around the world.

I had a conversation a few years ago with the manager who looks after the operation of the plant and does the great majority of the sales for it. He talked about the necessity when you're selling products worldwide to be there and be face to face with the people buying your product so you can look at them across the table. When you're dealing on the phone or the fax, it's tough to sell when you don't see the people. That's often what he said to me anyway. In his mind, sometimes the Americans beat us because they're there selling. When things are tough, they keep their salesmen on the road. They don't pull them all back and draw them all back. They keep their salesmen on the road so that they keep selling or keep trying to find markets to move a product. He said that to him the great advantage in being on one of our agricultural trade missions was to meet the people buying that

product, to tell them about it, and to sit across the table and negotiate with them rather than sending letters back and forth. I believe that's a small example of how those kinds of trade missions indeed can help.

12:40

As I said, if times are tough and money's short, there's no question it's hard to be on the roll, but you can't also pull all your salesmen back. That's the time when you really need them, the time when you need to be looking for new markets and new places to sell that product.

Mr. Speaker, I think there are a lot of comments in this document. When we put this document together with the speech the Premier made last Thursday night in this Assembly and get the final key to it in the budget next week, whenever it is next week, we will have a package outlining things for the citizens of this province. It will show that they had input to this package and how this package was put together. This package is – what? – 22 pages long. The hon. members have said there's nothing in it; it's not enough. I'll bet if we added 100 pages to have more things in it, then the comment would be: "It's too long. People can't wade through it. There are too many words in it they can't understand." Obviously I have greater faith in the citizens of the province of Alberta than the opposition does in that I believe they will take this book – outlines and thoughts are in it – they'll put things together, they'll put jobs together, they'll put businesses together, and they'll succeed because the private sector is doing it. That's what will turn it: the thousands of small businessmen and businesswomen who take the ideas that are here and go to work and develop their businesses, develop the jobs. Those businesses will last and they'll make sure they last because they'll work hard at it.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for West Yellowhead.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The time is getting short, so I'll have to keep my speech short. [some applause] That's probably the last hand I'll get today from hon. members from the Conservative Party.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately I was busy with . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MR. DOYLE: I have yet to see the member from Smoky Lake stand on the floor and address the policy of the government. He sits there and babbles all the time, trying to interrupt other speakers.

MR. SPEAKER: Excuse me, hon. member. The Chair is taken aback. From this, might I assume you never interrupt? Carry on.

MR. DOYLE: Mr. Speaker, I have on occasion, yes.

Looking through the document, I appreciate the Member for Cypress-Redcliff complimenting those great Albertans who participated in this package. Indeed, they did have good input; there are many good ideas in here.

Under tourism they have 100,000 jobs in Alberta today generating close to \$3 billion in revenue in 1992. Last year the people visiting Alberta were down somewhere around 40 percent. The reason it was down some 40 percent – reported in Montana papers and in the southern part of the province – several crossed the border and the first time they gassed up, they found that because of our high tax on gas, gas was tremendously high. They go to

a hotel room and have a hotel tax. They also go and plug in and have an exorbitant cost of electricity. We have the fifth highest electrical rates in all of Canada, yet we have a government controlled Public Utilities Board that guarantees TransAlta utilities a 13.25 percent return on their common equity. The Public Utilities Board also granted the power companies a 6 percent increase this year. Those types of issues are not addressed in this particular document.

The other thing not addressed in this document, Mr. Speaker: I looked right through this, and in my riding of West Yellowhead I have somewhere over 2,000 employees in the coal mines. The coal companies in West Yellowhead have done a tremendous job in protecting the environment. On reclamation, they have put the land back to a much better state. They've created lakes, new bodies of fish for outdoor sports people. They have brought the sheep population back from some 45 to well over 500, and we've been able to export and bring those sheep into other ridings. The money generated from those jobs in the coal industry, of course, feeds the economy of West Yellowhead and the economy of Alberta, yet coal or increased jobs in coal is not mentioned here.

Last year, Mr. Speaker, I was involved quite extensively with the Ontario government to encourage them to purchase more coal for Ontario Hydro. The competing rates in the U.S., because of low transportation costs and shipment costs, allowed the Ontario government to take a strong look at American coal. Although it's a much higher content, they saved several billion dollars by purchasing from the States rather than our low-sulphur coal from western Canada.

They say also, Mr. Speaker, that they shipped some \$2.1 billion, I believe it is, of forest products out of the province. That's a great generator of jobs, but we have almost that same investment of government money in these major multinational companies that are allowed to pollute our rivers and leave our lands clear cut. Although some government members, I suppose, believe those trees are coming back, I travel in an area where there are acres upon acres and miles upon miles where you'd almost think you were above the tree line. Some of those areas were cut way back in the '60s and are not producing as of today.

The government kind of came down very hard by giving all this money to the multinationals, at the same time crippling the independent loggers in this province that never had 5 cents from the taxpayers of Alberta. They operated on their own. They employed their children and families of their neighbours. They purchased from all the local communities they cut their wood in. Those people have been basically stripped of employment in rural Alberta because this government handed everything over to the multinational companies.

The Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods addressed the minimum wage in Alberta in comparison to some of the other areas of employment. I was doing some calculating on a minister that would be retiring that would get \$83,000 a year. Mr. Speaker, on a 40-hour week, eight hours a day, that would work out to \$39.90 cents an hour. Yet people on the minimum wage at \$5 an hour – I believe it's \$4.50 for students – on 2,080 hours a year would generate \$10,000. So rightfully so, the taxpayers of Alberta are upset by the pension plans that were established many years ago.

I've been looking at the pension plan for quite some time. I've introduced Bills three years in a row to request the government to stop drawing a pension while they're sitting here as elected MLAs. The government refused to do anything about it, and now it's landed on their plate, quite rightfully so. Calculations as of yesterday, Mr. Speaker, for those government members no longer in cabinet who could draw their pension along with their salary would total – and I appreciate many members of the Legislature

are not drawing their pensions since they've left cabinet – just in a four-and-a-half-month period \$107,000. That does not help the economy in any way whatsoever.

Those members on the Conservative side take a stand that they're going to sue the government if they don't get their pensions . . .

Speaker's Ruling Relevance

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. Now we'll come back to the thrust of the motion. There will be ample time to debate Bill 62, and we've certainly been allowing ample time in question period.

12:50

AN HON. MEMBER: This one's free-ranging.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, the Chair is still determining that.

Debate Continued

MR. DOYLE: Thank you for correcting me, Mr. Speaker. While we're seizing the opportunity though, I thought I'd seize the opportunity to mention just that. The people of Alberta are certainly upset, very much upset, and rightfully so.

Mr. Speaker, this document is something that . . . Sure, it had lots of help from lots of Albertans, but all the ideas of Albertans of are not in this document.

Also, very briefly, I want to thank the minister of transportation for having job creation on his mind when he approved the upgrading of Highway 40 between Grande Cache and Grande Prairie. On behalf of my constituents, I want to thank him for his generous contribution to the economy of that area. Mr. Speaker, I believe jobs in transportation indeed employ a lot of local people, and the infrastructure of this province is most important.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The Minister of Transportation and Utilities.

MR. TRYNCHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't going to enter the debate, but after listening to some of the comments, I must. We want to talk about jobs. The first comment I heard today was from the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar saying that supporting PWA is wrong. Yet the other night on page 2442 in *Hansard* another Liberal member said that we have to do it; it's the right way to go. Now, when we talk about a flip-flop, flip said "Yes, we'll go" and flop today said "No, we won't go." So I wonder where they're coming from.

They talk about jobs, and let me speak about jobs for a few minutes. Mr. Speaker, to provide jobs in this province, the government must provide a climate. Government should not provide jobs. The climate is what we have to provide. So if every business place in the province, every person, every farmer can hire an extra employee, we would have within a year 150,000 more jobs. That's what we've got to do, provide a climate.

As you look at that document – and I'll get into it in more detail – that document provides a climate by working with people in regards to jobs. The Liberals say we should have no loan guarantees, kill PWA, continue a new program: no government guarantees. So let's have a look at what it does in my constituency. Let's draw the Alberta Newsprint guarantee back. Let's take away the thousand-plus jobs. Let's draw back Millar Western's government guarantee: another thousand-plus jobs. That's what the Liberals would do. Let's look at small business

across the province, which has some \$1.5 billion of government guaranteed loans. Let's call them all back and kill those jobs. Let's look at rural Alberta and farm programs: two and half billion dollars in government guaranteed loans. Let's call them all back because the Liberals and the NDs don't care about rural Alberta. Let's call them back. Alfalfa plants, a number of other loans we have through the Alberta Opportunity Company: let's call them back. Then when we go and announce a road program, which I just did, here's what the Liberals say: how can they announce this program; we don't have any money; don't do it.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker. I had a meeting on March 4 and made an announcement where I would work with ID 14 and ID 15 to assist them in a road program. Lo and behold – and I thought it was a joke, and I still do – I get a letter from the Member for Three Hills on March 5, three hours later, asking me what I am doing with this announcement. Unreal, Mr. Speaker. We're providing jobs. We're working with the local governments, and I get that kind of letter that says to respond. I'm responding today: I think it's just a big joke.

Mr. Speaker, we will announce programs and the Liberal says: don't do it; we have no money. So when I announced Moose Row from Whitecourt to Fox Creek: no money. I announced the four-laning in Whitecourt and they said: no money. We announced a hospital in Whitecourt: no money. As soon as the candidate was approached by the media, "Oh, yes, I support it," yet the leader of the Liberal Party says no to rinky-dink Alberta. No more.

AN HON. MEMBER: What?

MR. TRYNCHY: Yes. No to a Whitecourt seniors' lodge. And the NDP leader right there says: we'll have a six-year freeze. It's in *Hansard*: a six-year freeze. They say no. They say freeze. I say that we'll work with Albertans to provide jobs to turn the economy around, to listen to them as we have in this document, to put things together.

Mr. Speaker, we don't have to borrow money. I'll go through my budget here and what was done last year. We can do it within the dollars we have.

MR. TAYLOR: What are you going to do? Throw in your pension? [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order, hon. members.
Minister.

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Speaker, it appears that they don't want to hear the truth. Yes, we have the cackling from the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon. He doesn't want to hear the truth.

Mr. Speaker, I'll get back to it. I wish to beg leave to adjourn debate.

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the motion, those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: Carried.
Government House Leader.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, it having been a very productive week, perhaps it's time to adjourn for the weekend. We will reconvene at 2:30 on Monday. The order of government business after the question period will be reconvening in Committee of the Whole, and it will be our intent to bring Bills 59 and 64 to the forefront of the agenda.

[At 12:58 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday at 2:30 p.m.]