

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Friday, May 14, 1993**

10:00 a.m.

Date: 93/05/14

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

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

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

Amen.

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

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Order!

MR. SPEAKER: The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province for the 12 months ending March 31, 1994, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province for the 12 months ending March 31, 1994, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

Please be seated.

head: **Notices of Motions**

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to give oral notice of the following motion:

Be it resolved that the debate on third reading of Bill 67, Deficit Elimination Act, shall not be further adjourned.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Environmental Protection.

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to table with the House the surface reclamation fund annual report for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1992.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table copies of the response to Motion for a Return 271.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-North West.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to the Deputy Premier's claim that no opposition members had asked for information about construction projects, I'm tabling four copies of a letter dated May 4, 1993, to the minister of transportation asking about a construction project in my constituency.

MR. SPEAKER: Different minister, I guess, but anyway carry on.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce someone who is associated with the Treasury Department who has been working very, very hard to bring together all of these estimates and all of the materials. This is the first time that I've

been able to introduce Mr. Garry Mackay from the budget bureau. I'd ask him to stand and receive the warm welcome from all members of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to be able to introduce a number of visitors from Rundle College, students who attend that college in the Calgary-Mountain View constituency although they come from all over the city of Calgary. They're here today with their teachers Rod Martens and Ken Kroeker. They're in the public gallery, and I'd like all members here this morning to give them a warm welcome from the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly a visitor from Drayton Valley, a former county councillor of the county of Breton, Brad Janishevski. If you could stand up in the public gallery and receive the warm welcome of this House.

head: **Oral Question Period**

Health Care System

MR. MARTIN: Let me see. Who do I ask over there? Oh, come on in, Premier. Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. A couple nights ago the Premier was waxing eloquent about the need for an illness tax called user fees. Of course, he was speaking again, as he speaks to the people of Alberta, to people at a \$300 a plate dinner, well-heeled Conservatives. Now, when we asked about user fees before, we did not know if it was government policy. When I asked the Premier the questions back in January, he said that he was just musing. Don't take him too seriously; he's just musing. I don't know if he was just musing with his well-heeled friends or not, but I want to ask the question to the Premier. Was the Premier just musing again, or is he seriously advocating an illness tax in this province?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I was asked the question at the Premier's dinner in Calgary: am I fundamentally opposed to user fees? I said no, and I'm not. I said that we would explore a number of economic instruments that could help reduce the cost of overuse and abuse of the system. They can check. There were a few NDs and a lot of Liberals, by the way, who paid \$300, and I appreciate their donations. I was asked the question, and I said: look, there are some things that might be explored, and that's why we have set up a Health Planning Secretariat, to look at new and different and better ways of doing things. I cited one example. I said: perhaps in hospitals where there are spare beds and open spaces, we can look to the European model of preventive medicine and have people pay a premium to go in and spend two or three weeks on a healthy diet and an exercise regime to get healthy. If they think there is something wrong with that, then I have no idea where they're coming from.

MR. MARTIN: A rest home for rich Tories, Mr. Speaker. They need a rest.

Mr. Speaker, rather than the double-talk – and it's always he's musing. I notice he got great applause from those well-heeled, whether they were Tories or Liberals, I'm not sure. I want to say to the Premier: how does he justify an illness tax, a sickness tax

at the same time that he's not prepared to look at taxation for those same \$300 a plate people? He's not prepared to bring in fair taxation on them.

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not looking at an illness tax, a sickness tax. I'm looking at some way – and this will be discussed through the hon. Member for Drayton Valley, who's in charge of the health care planning commission – to sit down with various hospital boards in the proper jurisdictions to figure out how they can deliver services better, how they can perhaps impose penalties to cut down on abuse.

You know, Mr. Speaker . . . No. I'll save it for the supplementary.

MR. MARTIN: Well, I know he thinks he's a messiah, but now he thinks he can read minds, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to say, because the Premier is talking about abuse of the system, that it's not the patients that check themselves in because they want to go to a hospital. Mr. Speaker, the abuse comes from the other end, if there is. Is the Premier not aware that when they had this tax in Saskatchewan – they had user fees – the studies indicated very clearly that it did not cut down on utilization at all? It didn't do what it was supposed to. Is he not even aware that this has happened and been tried and not been proven to be successful in the past?

10:10

MR. KLEIN: You know, had the hon. leader of the ND opposition really wanted to attend that dinner, Mr. Speaker, we could have given him a freebie just so he could have heard for himself what I said.

I also said, Mr. Speaker, that we ought not to concentrate on those people who deliver the line services: the nurses, the doctors, the technicians, those people who tend for hospitals. I said that perhaps we should start at the top and look at the administration of hospitals. The hospital boards should look at the salaries paid to administrators: \$160,000 a year, nice expense accounts, pensions. That would appeal to the NDs: pensions. I said: perhaps you can start cutting the administration and look at the administration, which in some cases accounts for one-third of the cost of the delivery of health care. That's what I said in my speech to people who paid \$300, and they applauded that. They applauded that because they knew what I was talking about.

MR. SPEAKER: Second main question.

MR. MARTIN: Yes, I'm coming to that, Mr. Speaker. I wouldn't even have taken a freebie, because I probably would have got indigestion and would have had to check into the hospital, and that would be very costly.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to designate my second question to the Member for Vegreville.

Telus Corporation

MR. FOX: Good morning and thank you. Mr. Speaker, privatization is a word that makes Conservative and Liberal politicians salivate, makes men and women employed in the public service worry about their futures, and makes taxpayers, who foot the bill, break out in a cold sweat. Look at what's happened since they sold off AGT three years ago: hundreds of millions of dollars lost and thousands of jobs across the province. Today is D day for hundreds of AGT employees across this province who are being laid off: business centres, phone centres closed all

across the province. I'd like to ask the minister responsible for economic development why this government has failed to use the golden share given them in the AGT Reorganization Act to try and protect these jobs and the important tax revenue that they provide to the people of the province of Alberta.

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, the philosophy and policy of this government is to facilitate development and growth through the private sector for jobs. Each and every private-sector firm out there over the last 10 years has had to go through a downsizing to get their administrative costs and their overhead costs into line. Now that Telus is privatized and is totally under the control of the private sector and their shareholders, it is up to them to make those decisions to make sure that they keep their rates competitive for the consumers of this province. It's the consumers of this province that are going to be the benefactors of lower rates if the efficiencies of downsizing is the way that management of that company wants to provide it to them.

MR. FOX: So naive, Mr. Speaker. The rates are going up, for pete's sake, while we lose money and lose jobs.

The Liberal leader for one called AGT a fat and bloated organization. I'd like to explain to him and members of the Conservative caucus that AGT made money for the people of the province of Alberta and employed people in every region. These people are being laid off in alarming numbers in rural Alberta, 56 in Vegreville alone. I'd like to ask the minister responsible for rural development why he has done nothing to try and protect these jobs and the economic development opportunities for rural Alberta that they provide.

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, if we're going to do meaningful rural development, it's going to have to be based on economic realities, not on propping up existing things.

MR. FOX: Well, the reality is that there's no job creation strategy in their budget, and the skills development and employment training section of the minister's budget over there was cut by 14 percent. So I'd like to ask the minister responsible for career development what specific plans his department and this government have to address the needs of these skilled men and women that are being laid off in alarming numbers all over Alberta.

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, we do indeed have a mechanism in place to assist people who find themselves out of employment. It's a program that's been in place for an extended period of time, and it's available in most major centres across the province. It has to do with job counseling, with assisting them in preparation of résumés. There are some programs to assist them if they're interested in entering into their own enterprise, to start up their own businesses. The unemployment insurance program will certainly be there for them for an extended period of time. We're endeavouring to create a climate in this province that will enhance the opportunity for investment to flow back to this province. That's one of the main thrusts that this government has, and we anticipate that there will in fact be jobs created in Alberta in the next year.

NovAtel Communications Ltd.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, the latest financial statements that have been released by North West Trust show that North West Trust received \$1.2 million from the government for three months to collect on NovAtel collection files in the United States. North

West Trust has now received some \$4 million from the government to do this collection in the United States. My question to the Treasurer is this: will the Treasurer tell Albertans how much money has been collected by North West Trust in view of the fact that we've given \$4 million of taxpayers' moneys to North West Trust?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, when the financials of that company are available, I will file them in the Assembly.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, it was bad enough that we couldn't get information on NovAtel a year ago. It was bad enough that we had to get information by way of freedom of information in the United States, not in our own province. For the Treasurer to stand up and not answer that question is outrageous and disgusting to the people of Alberta. I don't think the Treasurer heard the question. I want to ask it again. How much money has North West Trust collected on the NovAtel loans in the United States?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member is interested, and it is in the report of the Auditor General on NovAtel Communications. On page 80 of the report is a description of the arrangement between the government and North West Trust Company in the collection of those loans. Once the financials of that company are available, I will file those numbers in the Assembly so that all Albertans know the facts. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Please allow the Member for Edmonton-Glangarry to continue.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, the same financial statements that have been released by North West Trust show that their profit for the three-month period was \$1.1 million. In other words, if they hadn't received moneys from the government for the NovAtel portfolio, they would have been losing money. I would like to ask the Premier to give Albertans the timetable that shows how long the government intends to stay in the North West Trust business.

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, under the auspices of the hon. Deputy Premier and the minister responsible for government reorganization we are doing a complete review of all boards, authorities, commissions, agencies, and Crown corporations to determine which of those can be sent into the private sector, which of those can be eliminated altogether, which of those can be amalgamated, which of those can be restructured and reorganized to be made more efficient and more effective. We plan to involve the expertise available to us in the private sector to make this determination. That process is ongoing, and the minister I won't say in the fullness of time but in due course will be bringing forward a very comprehensive report as to how we deal with all these agencies.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Parkallen.

10:20

Edmonton Oilers

MR. MAIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am an Edmontonian, a hockey fan, an Edmonton Oilers hockey fan, and I am very pleased to see that the Edmonton Oilers will be remaining in the capital city. I'm sure all members of the Assembly would agree with me, except possibly those supporters of the Calgary Flames golf team. I am very concerned about the rumours surrounding taxpayer involvement with this deal, and I want to know from the

Provincial Treasurer how much money he had to spend to make this deal happen.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to make it clear and put it on the record that the provincial government and the provincial taxpayers were not involved in making sure that agreement came to pass last night. There are no tax dollars; there are no lottery dollars; there's no provincial government participation in making that deal happen. Yes, we share the concern and the interest of the hon. member that the Oilers be a vital part of northern Alberta, of Edmonton. It's important that the Flames have a hockey team to beat, and we're glad that the Oilers will continue to be in the business. Let's be clear: taxpayers have not been and will not be part of making that deal come together.

MR. MAIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's good news, and I receive with some assurance the assurances of the Treasurer regarding the general revenue fund and the taxpayer.

What about the lottery fund, Mr. Speaker? This is an entirely different kettle of fish. Are we committed to the lottery fund? I'd like to ask that question of the minister responsible for lotteries.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, the Provincial Treasurer alluded to that in his response that he gave just a minute or two ago, but I want to make it very, very clear with no opportunity for anybody to misunderstand this that there are no, no, no lottery dollars involved in any negotiation settlement that occurred yesterday between Edmonton Northlands and whoever it is that they made the lease with. I want to make that very clear. The province of Alberta is not involved by way of either direct taxpayer dollars or indirect taxpayer dollars by way of the lottery fund.

The involvement of the provincial government yesterday was led by the leadership of our Premier, who worked behind the scenes to ensure that the good offices of the province were involved, his good offices, to make sure that there was a deal. Mr. Speaker, those of us who do not have a hockey team in the community that we live in perhaps one day would find that there will be the Barrhead or the Westlock something competing with both Edmonton and Calgary. Then Alberta truly will have good representation. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

Edmonton-Avonmore, followed by Calgary-Buffalo.

Women's Issues

MS M. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Minister of Justice. Child poverty is a major concern in Alberta, and it is significantly linked with single mothers. One of the causes of this poverty is the failure of the maintenance enforcement program to fully enforce payment of child support orders and in fact in 30 percent of cases fails to collect any moneys. Given the history of inadequacy of this program, how does the minister justify a 13 percent cut, equaling \$600,000, from this program?

MR. FOWLER: First, Mr. Speaker, in respect to the preamble, just merely because a court orders payments from a divorcing husband doesn't automatically mean or put the money in that person's pocket. What I'm saying is that there are a great number of instances in which it is impossible to collect the money for one reason or the other, most often because a person may not in fact have it.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Justice has had the same experience as every department in this government except Education, and we have had budget cuts that we have had to deal with. We cannot reach the budget targets without cutting the expenditures that we're having. As our Premier has said: we don't have a revenue problem; we've got a spending problem. Yes, there have been cuts in that department in the number of people. However, since the program came in, the department has collected \$261 million on these matters and continues to improve the method in which they will proceed.

MS M. LAING: Well, Mr. Speaker, I hope the minister isn't suggesting that it's okay to balance the budget on the backs of women and children.

Mr. Speaker, my second question. Maintenance enforcement has been one of the many issues addressed by the Advisory Council on Women's Issues. Now the women of Alberta are concerned about the future of the advisory council, which has been a strong advocate to government on their behalf. To the minister responsible for women: will she now advise the Assembly of her plans for the future of the advisory council? Will it remain an independent council, and when will the vacancies be filled?

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, there will be an announcement this afternoon with regards to the name of a chair who will be appointed to the women's advisory council, and I hope the member opposite will pay attention. The women's advisory council will remain.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Maintenance Enforcement

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many single-parent families depend on regular and timely payment of child support, and for many of those single parents the maintenance enforcement plan is simply too slow and too ineffective. My question to the Minister of Family and Social Services: how many single parents in this province will need social assistance because they cannot recover child support which the courts have ordered?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to indicate to the hon. member that as a minister I am also not happy to see my caseloads increase. Also, the reforms that I have proposed to this Assembly and that have been approved will address a lot of those issues. Unfortunately, a lot of my caseload includes single parents, and a lot of these single parents are also employable, which our department is trying to assist.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, I would have hoped that the minister would have been able to give us an estimate in terms of what impact this will have on welfare rolls.

Given this cutback and the serious injury to single parents that will result – and I'll ask this question to the Minister of Justice – will the government move immediately to put in place a system whereby employers deduct child support at source, a system that has worked effectively in Australia, a system that's now been introduced in Ontario, and a system that would make the situation of single parents much easier than currently exists?

MR. FOWLER: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is obviously somewhat behind the times, because we already do a garnishee process whenever it is possible and whenever it is legal.

Dinosaur World Tour

MR. MUSGROVE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. Minister of Community Development. Last night I was over at the dinosaur show. One of the things I noticed was that there was very little recognition of one of the greatest suppliers of dinosaur fossils in the world. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MR. MUSGROVE: Mr. Speaker, Dinosaur provincial park is in my constituency. It is a world heritage site, and it has supplied dinosaur fossils all over the world for almost 90 years. Could the minister tell the House why there was not more recognition of this very famous site?

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, it's sad that the opposition makes fun of an important project like this Dinosaur World Tour. The Member for Bow Valley brings up a very important point. Yesterday the Premier and the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism and I had a chance to attend the opening. The minister of lotteries has put in a large number of dollars for the show, and it has a significant impact for Albertans. Dinosaur provincial park is a significant part of this show, and I agree with the member opposite that even though there is some small signage, it doesn't recognize the park as it should, and this will certainly be addressed.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that all Albertans see this show. It will be traveling across Canada, across the United States, and across China and has a significant impact to Alberta.

MR. MUSGROVE: Mr. Speaker, during the summer of each year there's a crew of scientists and researchers that excavate fossils at Dinosaur park, and they're very well-known people in the province of Alberta. I didn't recognize any of them at the opening last night. Would the minister tell the House whether or not these people had been invited?

10:30

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, I will make a commitment to the member that we indeed do give higher recognition to Dinosaur provincial park based on the member's comments.

University of Alberta Privatization Plans

MR. GIBEAULT: Mr. Speaker, my questions are to the Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development. I have received many letters and calls from constituents who are very concerned about the University of Alberta's intention to privatize its housing and food services. They feel that the process is far from fair and open and that it seems to be motivated more by a blind faith in privatization than what is in the best interests of the students, the staff, and the university community. Given that privatization has proved to be a failure at other universities across Canada, such as Windsor and McMaster, will the minister now give Alberta universities some direction to abandon these privatization initiatives, which only compromise the quality of educational services in our province?

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, I can only assume that the member opposite is talking about the housing at Michener Park, which is housing that's owned by the University of Alberta. There are single residences there; there are residences there for married couples. Some 574 married couples have accommodations there. The Michener Park housing complex is owned by the university.

The university is a board-governed institution, and they would have jurisdiction over what they might do by way of upgrading the park or make recommendations to deal with it in some other manner.

MR. GIBEAULT: Mr. Speaker, if the government's not prepared to reject out of hand privatization policies that have failed elsewhere, I wonder if the minister would at least give some assurance that he would instruct the universities in the province, particularly the University of Alberta, to negotiate in good faith, in a fair and open manner with the students and the staff that are affected by these changes.

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, again I have to make an assumption about some of the things that the member is alluding to. If he's talking about privatization, he must be indicating that the university has some plans to dispose of Michener Park, the complex there, and I would have to tell him that I have received no such indication from the board that they plan to sell that, and let him be clear that before the university board could dispose of an asset such as Michener Park, under the Universities Act, section 20(3), it would have to be passed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. I've had no request from them to sell the property. I would hope that they can negotiate something within the university and within the communities there to upgrade the park and make it available under their present budgeting to continue to provide housing for the university students.

Child Care

MS MJOLSNESS: Mr. Speaker, in all the government's talk about putting people back to work even though there are no jobs, one major component has been missing, and that is good quality child care and more specifically out-of-school care for children over five years of age. My questions are to the Minister of Family and Social Services. Given that there is a serious need for quality out-of-school care for families and in some cases out-of-school care centres are in jeopardy of closing, why has this minister not followed the recommendation put forth by the FCSS Review Committee and adequately funded out-of-school care so that it remains a service for those families and those children who need it?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, I believe this hon. member also realizes that just recently we announced that 29 new FCSS communities may join the program this coming year, which will assist in a number of ways. I'd also like to indicate to the member that in the past hundred days or so I've visited about 25 centres across Alberta in relation to day care and different institutions. In fact, in Edmonton alone I've visited five private day cares and one nonprofit day care specifically to review the concerns you've addressed today. You can be assured that this government and this minister will deal with the issues appropriately in the future, if there is a need.

MS MJOLSNESS: Well, Mr. Speaker, I asked specifically about the FCSS review recommendation.

Anyways, my supplementary question. Currently in the province there are no standards whatsoever for out-of-school care. Even the government's own Social Care Facilities Review Committee continues to recommend year after year that standards be developed. My second question to the minister is: when will this minister start acting on behalf of the children in this province

to ensure that they have good quality care by developing standards for out-of-school care?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to advise the hon. member that I think this government and this minister are very concerned about people that are needy in Alberta. In fact, if you look at our budget, our budget did not decrease in the needy area. In fact, it increased by \$12 million this budget year. We have over \$155 million in our child welfare budget in Alberta. For a province this size I don't believe we're doing too bad.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, my report and recommendations are ready in relation to the FCSS review and will be filed in this House in the new future. That will deal with a lot of the issues that the hon. member has mentioned.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Whitemud.

University of Alberta Privatization Plans (continued)

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have some questions, different questions, of the minister of advanced education dealing with the matter of Michener Park. The minister has correctly identified the Universities Act as being a tool, that the cabinet can in fact become involved in this particular concern. The minister has said that he has not received any written documentation outlining such a request, but it is very, very apparent by reading newspapers and such that the university is very, very seriously considering disposing of this particular property, of privatizing it. To the minister: will the minister outline specifically what his position is in dealing with this matter that is of critical concern to those residents within that complex?

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, I really feel that I've dealt with this issue. The member has obviously done his research in the newspaper again. From that perspective I guess I welcome the question to put some fact and clarification on what really may be a difficulty with Michener Park. I understand that the Michener Park facility needs some capital upgrading, and that falls under the jurisdiction of the board. The board of the University of Alberta receives something in excess of \$8 million in capital upgrading in this upcoming budget, and it's their responsibility to allocate within that budget. Hopefully they'll be able to address the problem at Michener Park.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, maybe the front lines here have spent too much time at the dinosaur show. It is very, very apparent by comments being made that this is more than just newspaper research.

Under the previous minister a committee was set up in 1989 to review the issue of student residences. To the minister: will the minister agree to create a new committee including residents from Michener Park and representatives of adjacent neighbourhoods to explore all viable options that would allow for the retention of the very unique nature of Michener Park before he proceeds with any recommendation of any type to cabinet?

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, obviously the member raises a question about the concern that might be evident with the adjoining communities of Lansdowne and Malmo and one other that I don't recall right at the moment as to what may happen to the property that is adjacent to their communities. I can say that in the past those communities have worked well with the university to resolve difficulties like this. I anticipate that the university will meet with

them again in an effort to come to some resolution to the problem that will give them some comfort and also continue to provide adequate housing to the students in the area.

MR. SPEAKER: Wainwright.

Grain Transportation

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister of agriculture. Low world grain prices have plagued the grain industry these past few years, and the cost of transporting producers' grain to the ocean can be as much as a third or a quarter of the value of a bushel of grain. Consequently, any change to the Western Grain Transportation Act is extremely sensitive to the producers. Could the minister update this House and the industry on the status of the Western Grain Transportation Act and whether or not the method of payment will be changed this season?

10:40

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, I had discussions yesterday with the Hon. Charlie Mayer, Minister of Agriculture Canada. It's his goal to have the enabling legislation with respect to the change in the method of payment introduced in the federal House approximately the end of this month.

MR. FISCHER: Thank you.

My supplementary question is: is this for all of western Canada or is it for Alberta alone, and if so, has Alberta made a decision on how the entitlement will go to the producers?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, the enabling legislation would permit a national solution affecting the entire Canadian Wheat Board area; i.e., Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and part of B.C. It will, if it fulfills the agreement that we reached in Calgary, be flexible enough to allow differences in how it is dealt with in different provinces. It is still the position of this government that the farmer entitlement should be based upon arable acres, adjusted for productivity and distance from port.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Mountain View, followed by Calgary-North West.

Treasury Branches

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Apparently Alberta Treasury Branches adopted a policy in 1990 to not lend more than \$25 million to any one borrower. The Provincial Treasurer has not yet tabled any evidence of this policy, although he's had some time to do so. Of course he's had ample opportunity to present us with a budget too, and it's still missing important pieces of information a week later. So I guess we shouldn't be surprised. Could the Provincial Treasurer explain to the Assembly why it is that Alberta Treasury Branches are participating in over \$180 million worth of loans to an Ontario company called Capital Properties Limited Partnership?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has asked in his preamble about the policy of Treasury Branches to not provide funding to new accounts, to new borrowers over the amount of \$25 million. I in fact tabled that documentation when I filed in the Assembly the 54th annual report of Alberta Treasury Branches for 1992, wherein the superintendent and chief operating officer of Treasury Branches advises in his report that that policy is in fact in place.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: It should be remembered, Mr. Speaker, that Alberta Treasury Branches are backstopped a hundred percent by Alberta taxpayers. That means that if they extend poor loans or make the wrong call, taxpayers are on the hook. We need to ensure accountability.

A newsletter for investors indicates that Capital Properties Limited Partnership owns a hotel chain across Canada worth \$180 million, exactly the amount of the loans extended to them in October of 1992. I'd like to ask the Provincial Treasurer: given his reference to the annual report of the Alberta Treasury Branches, could he tell us what policy was being followed by the Treasury Branches in October 1992 when they participated in 100 percent financing to this Ontario-based hotel chain?

MR. DINNING: You know, Mr. Speaker, the Treasury Branches provide financing to successful Alberta companies who invest in Alberta and who create jobs in Alberta. In securing those loans, they do so to ensure that the Treasury Branch can maximize its recovery in the event of default. So in doing that, the Treasury Branch attempts to place as many assets as security against that loan, including assets that may from time to time be found outside of the province but frankly to backstop that loan as much as possible with secure assets. I think that's a wise and prudent financial practice to operate under.

The Auditor General has advised the member across the way on a number of the questions that he is raising. The superintendent of Treasury Branches has offered to sit down with this member at any time to go through the practices of the Treasury Branches, but instead I'm sorry that the hon. member chooses to stand in this Assembly and simply grandstand and sort of create speculation and in fact create a spectacle as to the practice of the Treasury Branches. Mr. Speaker, what he does . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Order. [interjections] Order. Part of the challenge for the Chair here is that this particular question from Calgary-Mountain View plus another one earlier from Calgary-Buffalo should really have been directed as motions for returns.

Calgary-North West.

Economic Development Strategy

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government strategy paper entitled Seizing Opportunity is more musings from the government but without any specific plans. In particular I want to refer to the government's budget document that says that the unemployment rate will increase and that job growth will be negligible in 1993. My question to the minister responsible for Economic Development and Tourism is: can the minister explain how this government plans to promote, create 37,000 new jobs in 1994? How are you going to do it?

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, the document Seizing Opportunity is very definitely a challenge for all of us. We cannot as government create jobs. We can facilitate, though, those industry sectors that have the opportunity to create additional jobs. I may point out on page 17 the international strategy alone, whereby the industry working with us has targeted to move exports from \$19 billion to \$24 billion in four years. On average, from the exports to date there are about 15,000 jobs per billion dollars. That's 75,000 possible jobs if we help and facilitate the increase of exports in all industries across the province. Along with that, the tourism opportunities have been identified, and the tourism

industry has identified a target. That target – their target, not ours – is to create some 17,800 jobs in the next four years.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, Mr. Speaker, the target is 110,000 jobs, so it sounds to me like the minister's just planning on the economy to grow and create some jobs. There are 144,000 Albertans currently out of work. My supplementary question to the minister is: what, if anything, is the government planning to do to get those 144,000 Albertans back to work today?

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, the document very clearly also spells out, as does our budget, that we should, number one, keep taxes low to allow the private sector and corporations throughout this province to create those jobs. The members opposite tend to think that government can and will, and the Liberal Party would like to, create jobs, but government policies like the national energy program, which was created by a Liberal government, supported by the leader of the Liberal Party, who did the documentation some years ago, killed the economy in this province. I can testify to that with numerous companies. [interjections]

Speaker's Ruling Interrupting a Member

MR. SPEAKER: Order. [interjection] Order. With due respect, as the phrase goes, although sometimes I'm not certain it really means what the words are saying, hon. members from the Liberal caucus, you're interrupting your own member's question and answer time, which makes it very difficult for the rest of the House to hear what the answers are.

The Minister of Labour, very briefly on the supplementary.

Economic Development Strategy (continued)

MR. DAY: Yes, Mr. Speaker, very briefly. Information reported to my office in the energy sector alone: when we moved to readjust the royalty rate and deregulate, projections were for about 8,000 jobs. We've been informed that now it's closer to 16,000 jobs. Mr. Speaker, that's just one example alone of what happens when we deregulate and adjust taxation schedules.

MR. SPEAKER: Drayton Valley.

10:50 Volunteer Ambulance Attendants

MR. THURBER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Minister of Labour. There is a large network of voluntary, unpaid ambulance operators in this province, particularly in rural Alberta. The concern is: will these volunteer operators be required to be registered under the prehospital association under your department?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, there has been an ability for these individuals to be registered so that they may on a voluntary basis be able to attend in the ambulances. There is a registration, and there is a process for them to receive certain instructions, certain education, but not to the place where it would actually prohibit them from operating in a voluntary capacity.

MR. THURBER: Mr. Speaker, knowing that these volunteer people don't get paid and they volunteer a lot of their own time to perform this service in rural Alberta, there has been a concern raised about a very high registration fee that may be levied on them, which will provide a great amount of undue financial

hardship on these volunteers to perform their duty out there. Could you comment on that, please, for these volunteers?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, that concern has come to my attention from a number of members, constituents, and from the member opposite. I've asked that that be looked into and addressed. There will be a notice going out to the voluntary emergency medical responders notifying them that a registration will not be required for the next six months, that that fee will be waived. During that period of time there will be a fee worked out whereby people who are actually in a bona fide way full-time workers and gaining their full-time income from this will have to pay a registration fee, which will be evaluated. Those who are more on the voluntary aspect will be assessed a fee, but it will probably be in the neighbourhood of \$15 to \$20 just to cover the cost of their registration.

MR. SPEAKER: The time for question period has expired.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Private Bills
Third Reading**

Bill Pr. 17

Cory Brad Irwin and Shawn Lee Irwin Adoption Act

MR. McEACHERN: I move third reading of the Cory Brad Irwin and Shawn Lee Irwin Adoption Act.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 17 read a third time]

Bill Pr. 27

Calgary Chinese Cultural Centre Association Tax Exemption Act

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Bow.

MRS. B. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to move third reading of Bill Pr. 27, the Calgary Chinese Cultural Centre Association Tax Exemption Act.
Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to urge all members of the Assembly to support this private Bill. I think anybody who has been to Calgary and seen the change in the skyline of downtown Calgary would acknowledge that this is a beautiful building and that it's been long awaited by the Chinese community in Calgary. We all know that they do a tremendous work for the people of the city.

I look forward to seeing this Bill adopted by all members in all parts of the House.

MRS. GAGNON: Mr. Speaker, I also urge members of the Assembly to support this Bill. The community centre in question is definitely an addition to Calgary. It provides for cultural understanding and experiences and certainly meets the needs of many people of Chinese descent. Also, there is precedent in Calgary; there are similar types of associations which have received this type of legislative permission.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 27 read a third time]

head: **Royal Assent**

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor will now attend upon the Assembly.

[The hon. Mr. Elzinga and the Sergeant-at-Arms left the Chamber to attend the Lieutenant Governor]

[The Mace was draped]

[The Sergeant-at-Arms knocked on the main doors of the Chamber three times. The Associate Sergeant-at-Arms opened the door, and the Sergeant-at-Arms entered]

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise, please. Mr. Speaker, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor is without.

MR. SPEAKER: Sergeant-at-Arms, admit His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

[Mr. Speaker left the Chair]

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, Gordon Towers, and the hon. Mr. Elzinga entered the Chamber. His Honour took his place upon the throne]

11:00

HIS HONOUR: Please be seated.

MR. SPEAKER: May it please Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly has, at its present sitting, passed certain Bills to which, and in the name of the Legislative Assembly, I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

CLERK: Your Honour, the following are the titles of the Bills to which Your Honour's assent is prayed.

No.	Title
66	Members of the Legislative Assembly Pension Plan Amendment Act, 1993 (No. 2)
68	Public Sector Pension Plans Act (No. 2)
Pr. 17	Cory Brad Irwin and Shawn Lee Irwin Adoption Act
Pr. 27	Calgary Chinese Cultural Centre Association Tax Exemption Act

[The Lieutenant Governor indicated his assent]

CLERK: In Her Majesty's name His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor doth assent to these Bills.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise, please.

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, the Lieutenant Governor and the hon. Mr. Elzinga left the Chamber]

[Mr. Speaker took his place in the Chair, and the Mace was uncovered]

MR. SPEAKER: Be seated, please. Hon. members, I wonder if you would be good enough to allow us to revert to Introduction of Special Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Avonmore.

MS M. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly 10 members in a LINC program; it's a language instruction for newcomers. They are accompanied by instructors Lida Somchynshy and Joann Blais. This group includes women from Somalia, Ethiopia, Cambodia, Afghanistan, Iran, and Fiji. I would now ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Bill 67
Deficit Elimination Act

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure and honour to move third reading of Bill 67, the Deficit Elimination Act.

What this does is put in place the government's budgeted four-year commitment, now legislated commitment, to balance the budget by 1996-97 with clear allowable annual deficits, with a requirement that there be a good, strong, conservative tendency in our revenue estimations, that the audit committee be called upon to report publicly on the government's budget track record in meeting its commitment, and that the Treasurer be called upon and required publicly each quarter to report on the budget performance and how well it's on track or off track and the actions taken to bring it back on track. It's precedent-setting legislation in this country, Mr. Speaker, an important landmark piece of legislation which I would ask all hon. members to support.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Speaker, when I debated this at second reading, I was approached by one of the hon. members on the government side who seemed to think for some reason that I didn't like the legislation. I don't know how I could have made myself any clearer about the limitations of this particular Bill.

I did fail to point out one positive element of this legislation, and that is that for the first time in legislation the Provincial Treasurer will give us quarterly budget updates. That's the one thing that I could find in this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, that improves the situation over what we have today. This is something that now the Provincial Treasurer will be reporting publicly. Within the first three months of the fiscal year, on or before August 31 we're going to get a budget update. Then six months into a fiscal year, before November 30, we'll get another update, and before February 28, one for the first nine months. So we're going to get regular quarterly budget updates, and that is the one improvement which I can see that comes from the passing of this legislation.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

As for the rest of it, Mr. Speaker, I've heard extravagant claims, repeated again this morning by the Provincial Treasurer, that simply carry no weight or substance whatsoever. He said it's precedent setting. Well, he set the precedent a year ago with the Spending Control Act, but this Bill repeals that. So I don't know what the precedent is, other than perhaps we'll get this Bill repealed a year from now. I don't know. He said it puts in place some four-year plan. It doesn't put in place any four-year plan. There's no penalties if they don't achieve any of these so-called

targets, and if they don't make it, there's no penalty to be paid. Really, it's quite distressing to hear him make such extravagant claims when I don't believe there's really that kind of substance to it.

What it does do, Mr. Speaker, is basically give the government some platform to go into the election with, but it's a faulty platform. The planks are rotten. Somebody's going to fall through this platform and make an embarrassment of themselves, I'm convinced. This is just simply fluff, and if he wants to make something of it, he's certainly welcome to it. They tried this a year ago, and it didn't work then. The Spending Control Act is being repealed. I don't see how they can make any claim for this kind of legislation when the precedent they set a year ago is so clearly faulty, and even they acknowledge it by repealing the legislation, the Spending Control Act, with this particular Bill.

I'd also say what's equally distressing is that now in legislation under supply votes we're only going to get one supply vote per department for operating expenditure purposes. The information we're getting now is scanty, with hardly anything there to inform us. What this legislation is requiring is even less information to be provided in the budget estimates. We should be calling on government to provide more information, not less. So in the guise of greater accountability we're getting less accountability out of this government.

It's just simply flawed legislation – flawed in concept, flawed in practice, flawed in the provisions that it sets forward – with the one exception that I noted earlier, that now for the first time we'll get quarterly budget updates. Of course, if they had wanted to follow that practice, as they have in the province of Ontario, for example, for the last 20-some years, it's a practice that they could have implemented without putting it into legislation. I can't object to that particular provision being added to legislation, and that, in looking through it, is the only thing I can see that is of particular benefit here.

11:10

Perhaps I give grudging passing marks to the idea that now special warrants are dealt with in a somewhat different way, but I think the proof of this government dealing with special warrants will come in its practice, not in this legislation. Despite some changes here in special warrants, I suspect that it leaves wide open a huge loophole here for abuse of special warrants. We certainly have the track record in the practice of this government to demonstrate that they have clearly abused special warrants unlike any government ever before them. While the words on paper look good, there's a big loophole here for future abuse by some future government if they chose to use it.

I just can't see that this Bill is going to accomplish anything like what this government has proposed, especially given that the proposed penalties, in terms of the cabinet having to change or pay out of their pockets for failing to produce the requirements of the Bill, were defeated in committee. So I can't really see that anything has been provided to us with this Bill at third reading to convince us that it's going to achieve anything worthwhile in the future, Mr. Speaker.

MR. McINNIS: Well, Mr. Speaker, reflecting on this Bill, I think that the government would probably be better advised to implement the plan rather than talk about it. I remember in times when I used to train in endurance athletic events that there were two kinds of participants: those who talked a lot and those who actually did things. I would encourage the government that instead of talking about balancing the budget, they go ahead and

do it. I mean, why do we have to debate whether or not the government is going to do this thing? Why don't they do it?

One of the things that's implicit in this legislation is that the government operate on a financial plan. I think having a financial plan is a very good thing, but unfortunately there is no evidence today that the government actually has a plan on how to do it. They certainly don't have a plan when they go off and hold secret discussions with representatives of Peter Pocklington down in Calgary which apparently give that person, Mr. Pocklington, the impression that he will be funded, via the Northlands agency, with public funding of skybox construction and other alterations to facilities. They certainly don't operate on a plan if the Treasurer is himself involved in discussions with representatives of the Calgary Flames organization along similar lines. That doesn't indicate a financial plan. So I think what we should say to the government about this legislation is: if you're going to balance the budget, go ahead and do it. Don't just talk about; do it.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just speaking briefly to Bill 67. The intention of the government, I guess, to eliminate the deficit is certainly a laudatory goal, and I don't think any member or any Albertan should be upset with that goal of reducing and ultimately eliminating the deficit. We are in a situation where we really don't have any choice any longer. We must eliminate our deficit.

However, in Bill 67 there are some problems with the Bill in that there are no teeth. Mr. Speaker, the Bill outlines I guess a strategy, if you can call it that, a pretty loosey-goosey strategy. It talks about reduction of expenditures over the course of the 1993-94 and so on fiscal years through to the plan for 1996-97.

The Member for Calgary-Mountain View raised an interesting point. He said, "You know, last year we had this Spending Control Act, and it didn't work, so this Bill proposes to repeal that." Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't be surprised if in this House next year we were to be in the unfortunate situation where if this government were returned after an election, we would see another Bill just like this one. It would say: "The Deficit Elimination Act, 1993, is repealed because, gee, it didn't work. We're going to have a new Bill. It will just have some new dates, will have some new targets, and we'll come forward with a new Bill."

I guess I'm more than a little bit skeptical about where this Bill is going to go because it doesn't have any penalties if the Treasurer doesn't achieve his goal or if this Assembly collectively does not achieve its goal. I believe that's a fundamental flaw of this Bill. However, as I said, I do like the idea of trying to get rid of the deficit that we have.

Mr. Speaker, we've had a deficit elimination plan since I've been in this House, for the last four years, and it's always a four-year, rolling deficit elimination plan. We've got a four-year plan this year. We had a four-year plan last year and the year before that and the year before that, and our target just keeps slipping away. So I'm wondering how it is that the Treasurer really expects us to believe that this Bill is really going to achieve everything that he says it's going to. But I guess we'll have to take him on faith because we have nothing else to believe in other than what we see before us.

There are a couple of positive sides. The quarterly reporting is mentioned in here as being a step in the right direction, but there's something peculiar, Mr. Speaker, that I just want to look at in particular. Section 7 talks about supply votes, which are of course the votes in our estimates on different programs and so on

that after coming in dribs and drabs, the Treasurer finally released the bulk of. I guess he had his photocopiers working overtime the last couple of days, and now we've got the balance of our budget. It says in section 7 that there shall be not more than three supply votes for each department, but there are a number of departments that have a number of different votes in them. So I'm wondering if this is going to affect government restructuring or if it will impact on the size of cabinet, as we talked about.

When I review, for example, Economic Development and Tourism, one of the portfolios for which of course I am responsible, which the Liberal caucus is watching, there are seven programs mentioned in that particular department. We have a number of different initiatives, some of which of course I've taken exception to. If you look on page 68 of the budget, you see a total of seven different programs. The section then further talks about operating capital and then supply votes, nonbudgetary items. So I'm wondering if the Treasurer could clarify that a little bit, because it doesn't seem to be consistent with the supposed downsizing the government claims to want to have, on one hand, yet increasing the responsibilities of ministers, on the other hand. It seems to be a rather contradictory sort of statement.

Nonetheless, Mr. Speaker, I think we should look at this Bill with some certain reservation, some concern that given the track record of this government, we haven't seen a real move to reduce the budget deficit that we've had in the past. The deficit reduction that the Treasurer speaks of in the goal of deficit elimination, a reduction of nearly \$700 million in the deficit that was mentioned in this year's budget, is a bit illusory when you consider that the deficit that was originally projected was around 2 and a half billion dollars, and it grew out of control yet again to well over \$3 billion. Really all the Treasurer is proposing to do is get back to the deficit they tried to project for last year but couldn't achieve last year. So I have some real concerns about whether or not the targets that are in here are achievable, and I guess all we can do is look forward to seeing what happens in the future.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Vegreville.

11:20

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to try and explain in straightforward, fairly simple terms why we can't support this Bill and why I don't think members opposite should support the Bill. We consider the passage of legislation to be a very important process in this Legislature, a concern that the government members obviously do not share, because just about every Bill that we debate these days is under closure.

That being said, it's important that we respect the legislation that we pass, that we live up to the laws of the province, of the land. Indeed, if we're going to expect anybody in the province to respect or to obey the law of land, they have to know that we're prepared to do the same. I suppose if the government hadn't introduced and passed with much bravado the Spending Control Act last year – this was the Conservative vehicle for wrestling the deficit to the ground and proving to the people that they've got this tough-minded, mean-spirited determination to wrestle the deficit to the ground and to control government spending, only to find out that they violate the law almost willingly a few months later, Mr. Speaker. It seems a cynical process to us.

I could remind members opposite about provisions in the MLA Pension Plan Act that require an independent board to be established to monitor the Act to ensure that no unfunded liability accrues to the people of the province of Alberta, an Act that was ignored and, by implication, violated by the government for eight

years, Mr. Speaker. So how can we on this side of the House have any faith in a government that introduces laws, passes them, rams them through the Legislature, and then violates them, doesn't obey their laws? How can the people of Alberta have any faith in a Conservative government that passes laws without their input, rams them through without debate, and then ignores the law, breaks the law in a flagrant sort of way? How can we have any faith in the process? Indeed, how can we have any faith in the final product or faith in the government's determination to live up to what they pass in this Legislature? We can't.

I want to emphasize for government members that we on this side of the House take debt very seriously. We consider it a serious problem, and that's why we have introduced not one but two very detailed policy papers dealing with deficit elimination, dealing with revenue generation, dealing with job creation and the economy in the province of Alberta. Because we, too, want to wrestle the deficit to the ground, Mr. Speaker, by creating jobs and vitality and economic wealth in the province of Alberta. That's why we tabled those two along with six other detailed policy documents as part of the New Democrat plan to revitalize the economy in the province of Alberta. So we do care about debt.

Let's review the history of debt a little bit in this province. It was sort of a relatively recent phenomenon after the ascent to power of then Premier Don Getty seven years ago. We came in 1986. All of a sudden we're in a deficit position. We've got a debt that year of close to \$3 billion. I think my hon. friend for Edmonton-Kingsway has these numbers at his fingertips in meticulous detail, but I'll refer in a more general way to them. We had a debt problem in 1986. It was compounded in '87, '88, '89, '90, '91, '92, seven or eight straight deficit budgets introduced, Mr. Speaker. I submit that if the government had come clean with the people of the province of Alberta, had told them the truth about the economic problems that we were faced with and worked together with other members of this Assembly and the people of Alberta to come up with some plans to deal with the deficit and the mounting debt, we wouldn't be in the mess that we're in today. But that's not the case. They tried to always bluff their way through the situation, had this persistent Pollyanna attitude to the whole thing, that everything's okay, we're in charge, we understand business, leave it to us and everything will be okay.

This close your eyes, cross your fingers, and wish and hope that the economic problems will get better in the province of Alberta – well, it just doesn't work that way, Mr. Speaker. Nor did it work for the government to shovel hundreds of millions of taxpayers' dollars into the pockets and briefcases of their corporate friends, with no strings attached, no performance guarantees, no indication that anything useful was going to happen for the people of the province of Alberta as a result. So the debt is indeed a problem, but it's a problem manufactured by this government: by their inept policies, by their stubborn refusal to deal with debt and deficits in a realistic and thoughtful way.

I well remember that in 1988, just days before the provincial Tories gathered in Edmonton, I think, for a little conflagration, they were anxious to show the Premier in the best possible light because there were some knives out, there were some challenges possibly to his leadership, so they came up with a budget that didn't recognize the sort of structural deficit that they'd built into the budget, that didn't acknowledge that we had these serious problems. They came up with a budget that promised Albertans a \$33 million surplus – a \$33 million surplus. What a joke, because we on this side told them it would be in excess of a \$2 billion deficit, and history proved us right. The Member for Edmonton-Kingsway, the Member for Calgary-Mountain View –

indeed the Leader of the Official Opposition stood in his place day after day and told people exactly what the budget deficit was going to be, and we were within probably a few thousand dollars with our predictions. But no. They said "\$33 million surplus." How do you do that? Well, let's see. The price of oil, 19 bucks a barrel. No, that doesn't work. How about \$20? No. Let's pick \$21. That'll do it: \$21 a barrel.

MR. DINNING: Are you saying that that's what's here now?

MR. FOX: No, no; 1988, hon. Provincial Treasurer. Thanks for listening.

Well, we need some other predictions about growth and the economy. Let's see. What can we make up that will fit there? Gee, we need a little extra cash. Maybe we can go knock on the minister in charge of propaganda, pork-barreling, and patronage and see if he can shovel some bucks from the lottery fund into the general revenue fund to come up with this manufactured \$33 million surplus. It was . . . I can't remember what his name was back then. They changed the names of the ministry so often, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker's Ruling Relevance

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Vegreville, the Chair has been very lenient in allowing this history review, but really on third reading we are supposed to be dealing with the contents of the Bill as it has emerged from committee.

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess I'm just expressing the frustration we on this side of the House feel after so many years of trying to show this government that there is a better way, convince them that there is indeed a deficit and a debt problem in this province and we need to deal with it, that wishing and hoping and smoke and mirrors and all the Tory baffle-gab you can manufacture just aren't going to solve the problem.

Debate Continued

MR. FOX: We need to come up with a plan, and the Deficit Elimination Act is not part of a reasonable plan. There are no penalties in the Act. The government rejected out of hand the amendments proposed by a member of the Liberal opposition to at least put some teeth into the Bill.

The underlying truth is that the Bill will be ignored. The law will be ignored by the government if they choose to ignore it, Mr. Speaker, so how can we possibly convince anybody – convince anybody – that the government is serious about this legislation, that they're serious about eliminating the deficit, that they will indeed live up to the feeble sort of dictates of this legislation? We can't.

You know, the government members in their speeches always talk about Saskatchewan. So I will very briefly, just to give them a lesson, talk about a province where in 1982, when Roy Romanow was the Deputy Premier, their government was turfed because they'd become out of touch, arrogant, aloof, and incompetent. Does it remind you of any other government, Mr. Speaker and government members? Can you look in the mirror and talk about the situation in the province of Alberta, the kind of decay and arrogance and disregard for democracy that's set in after 22 years of Tory rule in Alberta?

Anyway, in 1982 the people of Saskatchewan exercised their franchise and turfed out the NDP government. At the time they had money in the bank, the best social programs in North America, and a wide range of income-generating assets for the

people of the province of Saskatchewan. They were in good shape. When the NDs were elected as the government only nine years later, nine years of Conservative government, they were \$15 billion in debt – 400,000 taxpayers \$15 billion in debt – because of Conservative mismanagement of the economy. They are in worse shape than the country of Brazil because of Conservative mismanagement of the economy. Everything that wasn't nailed down in terms of assets in the province was either sold or given away to the friends of the Conservative government, and most of the worthwhile social programs were scotched as a result of Tory mismanagement. They canceled half of them. What a mess. It's a Devine mess that they left for Premier Romanow and his aggressive, thoughtful, forward-looking NDP government. [interjection] The Minister of Transportation and Utilities can check the record and dispute anything I've said with facts, and I'll listen to him. I'm just trying to illustrate that it may have taken 22 years in the province of Alberta for these guys to louse up the economy, but it only took nine years in the province of Saskatchewan for the Conservatives to louse it up.

11:30

No, Mr. Speaker, we do have this deficit problem, and I could support this Deficit Elimination Act, Bill 67, in third reading if I was convinced the government had a plan. If this was more than just a cynical hoax, I could support it. If the government had a plan to deal with the deficit and the debt and build the economy of the province of Alberta in a reasonable and thoughtful way, I could support it, but their plan as enunciated in this budget on the instalment plan that we've been receiving in dribs and drabs from the Treasurer – still missing, by the way, for hon. government backbenchers who never look at these things, element details. We still don't have element details of the budget here, Mr. Speaker.

Their plan includes cutting spending, \$700 million apparently. Well, they're not going to tell you where that is, but they're claiming \$700 million expenditures and that they will over the subsequent three years reduce the spending such that the budget is balanced. I think that shows a dishonest approach to the people of the province of Alberta because they're saying that they're going to simply reduce expenditures to the point where current revenues balance expenditures, and they're not telling people how they're going to do that. They're not going to tell them that that means cuts of as much as 25 percent to the basic budgets of Health, Education, social services, advanced education. They're not telling people what that means in rural Alberta for school closures and class sizes. They're not telling people what that means for the closure of hospitals or for doubling of tuition fees at universities. [interjection] Well, we've got to have roads, hon. minister, to transport people from one place to another so they can come from rural Alberta to look for jobs in the city, where there are none, because Tory mismanagement like the privatization of AGT is driving people in rural Alberta out of work, where Tory mismanagement of agricultural policy is driving farmers broke all over the province.

No, we need a plan, Mr. Speaker. We need a New Democrat plan to put people back to work, to get Alberta working, so that we can wrestle the deficit to the ground, so we can reduce the debt, so we can build a healthy and prosperous province, and I can't support the Bill.

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

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was my intention to only say a word or two. It's one of the interesting things that

politics – maybe it's degenerated the same way everywhere else. I'm not going to blame that side any more than I blame our side, but what we're doing now when we introduce Bills like this is really introducing portions of campaign platforms into the Legislature and wasting a lot of taxpayers' money debating for days on it.

The fact of the matter is that in our parliamentary system, unless we throw it out, no House can bind a future House or no session can even bind a future session. So when we put out plans saying we're going to balance budgets or not balance budgets or build this or do that or anything else, hoping that somehow or another somebody in the media is awake enough to publish it in the papers and then some voter out there is going to take it as gospel, I think it takes away from us because I think we're pulling a bit of a fast one on the public at large. The public at large is used to a politician getting up on a platform or putting out a brochure making all kinds of promises, but then when we introduce Bills into the House saying we're going to do this and going to do that – all for motherhood, all for balancing bills, all for doing this and all for doing that – I think we're insulting the process and using up a lot of tax money unnecessarily.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Anyone that understands the parliamentary system even a minimal amount – not even a modicum; a minimal is less – will understand that this House, even that majority in another sitting can change things, or if the majority falls over here it can change things. They also know that a penalty doesn't mean anything. Sure, we've thrown some penalties in. We could have penalties that we'll sit out in a village square and let the voters throw rocks at us if we don't make a budget, or we could agree to even resign, and a lot of us do. Especially cabinet ministers could agree to resign if somebody in their department is not responsible.

This government has been famous more than most – and as a kind of student of history I would be willing to admit that Liberals and the NDP will do it, too, after they've been in power 20 or 22 years – that they forget about trying to live up to their promises and forget to live up to the parliamentary process, although I'm sure I'm going to vote for it, because it's good intentions. It would be a bit uncharitable of me not to try to take them at their face value. It's sort of like the alcoholic that wanders in in the morning and says he or she is not going to have another drink. I've got to accept their word. After all, that's what life is about. That's what salvation is all about, Mr. Speaker, as you know in your other profession. You pick yourself up, dust yourself off again, and promise that you won't do it again, and the rest of society is supposed to agree with you. The same way here. They could fall down, dust themselves off and agree and say they're now going to balance the budget. I say bravo. On the other hand, I'm a little bit bothered as a politician to go out to the public and say we sat around saying we were going to do wonderful things like approve motherhood, balance the budget – do all these sorts of things – when really all we're doing is taking up time and the taxpayers' dollar.

So I've been just a little disappointed that a government after 22 years has fallen down through just writing in campaign literature rather than something substantive.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: A call for the question.
Summation.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to briefly summarize, because I think it's important that I respond to one comment by the hon. member, and that is that the details are all spelled out in the documents that have been tabled this past week. We are moving to a more streamlined approach and deregulating within government and outside of government, and that is why we've moved to the three supply votes, one being operating expenditure, the second being capital investment, and in the case of Municipal Affairs and economic development this year the nonbudgetary disbursements vote. So that is spelled out in the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's an important time, as I've just received a note to advise the Assembly that there are others outside our province who are naturally watching and waiting to see the actions we take. I'm advised today that the Canadian bond rating agency has reviewed our budget and reviewed our legislation and has seen fit to reaffirm the province's double A credit rating. I think that's an important confirmation of the track that we are on. They have done the same thing with British Columbia. They've confirmed British Columbia's and Saskatchewan's, as a matter of fact, and reported that their across-the-country report is that they still are watching budgets with concern. The outlook is still negative, they say, but most importantly they have said that Alberta's double A rating is confirmed. They're concerned, naturally, about our deficit, but they've noted that the province's heritage fund remains a significant asset to the province. It added that Alberta has tried to diversify its economy to lessen its dependence on the energy sector, but to date results have been mixed. It said that the outlook for the province is for continued expenditure restraint.

Mr. Speaker, the likes of the Conference Board of Canada as well as The Toronto-Dominion Bank in their forecast yesterday confirmed our economic forecasts. The Conference Board last week said that we would have 4 and half percent growth this year, while our more conservative estimate is that it's going to be in the order of 3 percent, and that's reflected in our budget as well. I think that's good news. People watching Alberta from outside the province have confirmed their confidence in the government, confirmed their confidence in our plan, and that's what we have before the Assembly today: an important Bill that's integral to a four-year plan to balance the budget and with major, meaningful, substantial action. A 22 percent reduction in the deficit, nearly \$700 million in the first year alone.

I appreciate the support of hon. members, and I look forward to a positive response on Bill 67, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Provincial Treasurer has moved third reading of Bill 67, Deficit Elimination Act. Those members in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

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

11:40

[Eight minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Ady	Fowler	Oldring
Anderson	Gagnon	Orman

Bogle	Hewes	Paszkowski
Bradley	Hyland	Payne
Brassard	Isley	Rostad
Bruseker	Kowalski	Schumacher
Calahasen	Laing, B.	Shrake
Clegg	Lund	Sparrow
Decore	MacDonald	Stewart
Dinning	Main	Tannas
Drobot	McFarland	Taylor
Elliott	Mirosh	Thurber
Evans	Moore	Trynchy
Fischer	Musgrove	Wickman
Fjordbotten	Nelson	Woloshyn

Against the motion:

Chivers	Hawkesworth	McEachern
Ewasiuk	Laing, M.	Mjolsness
Fox	Martin	Sigurdson
Gibeault		

Totals: For – 45 Against – 10

[Motion carried; Bill 67 read a third time]

11:50

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The Deputy Government House Leader.

head:

Royal Assent

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor will now attend upon the Assembly.

[The hon. Mr. Kowalski and the Sergeant-at-Arms left the Chamber to attend the Lieutenant Governor]

[The Mace was draped]

[The Sergeant-at-Arms knocked on the main doors of the Chamber three times. The Associate Sergeant-at-Arms opened the door, and the Sergeant-at-Arms entered]

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise, please. Mr. Speaker, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor is without.

MR. SPEAKER: Sergeant-at-Arms, admit His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

[Mr. Speaker left the Chair]

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, Gordon Towers, and the hon. Mr. Kowalski entered the Chamber. His Honour took his place upon the throne]

HIS HONOUR: Please be seated.

MR. SPEAKER: May it please Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly has, at its present sitting, passed a certain Bill to which, and in the name of the Legislative Assembly, I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

CLERK: Your Honour, the following is the title of the Bill to which Your Honour's assent is prayed: Bill 67, Deficit Elimination Act.

[The Lieutenant Governor indicated his assent]

CLERK: In Her Majesty's name His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor doth assent to this Bill.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise, please.

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, the Lieutenant Governor and the hon. Mr. Kowalski left the Chamber]

[Mr. Speaker took his place in the Chair, and the Mace was uncovered]

12:00

MR. SPEAKER: Be seated, please.

Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. EVANS: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've had an excellent week of debate here in the House, we've made exceptional progress, and Alberta in all her majesty awaits us.

MR. SPEAKER: There's a footnote?

MR. EVANS: I would advise that the order of business contemplated by the government on Monday will be capital fund, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Order please.

[At 12:03 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday at 2:30 p.m.]

