

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, September 15, 1993** 1:30 p.m.  
Date: 93/09/15

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

Our Father, we thank You for Your abundant blessings to our province and ourselves.

We ask You to ensure to us Your guidance and the will to follow it.

Amen.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Medicine Hat.

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chairman of the Private Bills Committee I beg leave to present the following petitions that have been presented for private Bills:

1. the petition of Elda HoEVERS and Hendrik Jan Antony HoEVERS for the Karen Mavis Poor Eagle Adoption Act,
2. the petition of Ary DeMoor for the Youth Emergency Services Foundation Amendment Act, 1993,
3. the petition of Donna Kinjo and Brent Craig for the Mosaic College of Canada Act,
4. the petition of Howard V. Gimbel, MD, for the Gimbel Foundation Act,
5. the petition of Canadian Union College for the Canadian Union College Amendment Act, 1993,
6. the petition of Mennonite Mutual Insurance Co. (Alberta) Ltd. for the Mennonite Mutual Insurance Co. (Alberta) Ltd. Amendment Act, 1993,
7. the petition of Dymetro Fedechko for the Gerald Edwin Crabbe Adoption Act,
8. the petition of Allan Rothery for the Michael Caleborn Rothery Adoption Act,
9. the petition of Lawrence W. Marshall for the Adrienne Heather Cupido Adoption Act,
10. the petition of the King's College for the King's College Amendment Act, 1993,
11. the petition of Newman Theological College for the Newman Theological College Continuance Act,
12. the petition of the First Canadian Insurance Corporation for the First Canadian Insurance Corporation Amendment Act, 1993,
13. the petition of Gardner Bible College for the Gardner Bible College Amendment Act, 1993,
14. the petition of Hilary Jackson and Fred R. Jackson for the Benaning Osi Adoption Act,
15. the petition of Albert Ludwig and others for the Alberta Seniors' Legislature Act,
16. the petition of TD Trust Company and Central Guaranty Trust Company by its liquidator, Deloitte & Touche Inc., for the TD Trust Company and Central Guaranty Trust Company Act, and
17. the petition of Dwight I. Bliss and Gerald D. Chipeur for the Canadian Health Assurance Corporation Act.

Thank you.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

### Bill 8 School Amendment Act, 1993

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce a Bill being the School Amendment Act, 1993.

Mr. Speaker, among the changes contained in this Bill are provisions which provide a structure for the amalgamation of operating school boards, provide for the governance and co-ordination of Francophone education, and provide for accredited private schools being able to supervise home schooling.

[Leave granted; Bill 8 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to section 14 of the Motion Picture Development Act I'm pleased to table with the Assembly today the 1991-92 annual report of the Alberta Motion Picture Development Corporation.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this House Mrs. Nadia Madarash, a school teacher from Ternopol, Ukraine. She is most interested in our education system as well as other aspects of Alberta society, and she is escorted today by Lesia Kozak. [remarks in Ukrainian] Mrs. Madarash, we welcome you to our province, Alberta, and ask that you convey our warmest greetings to our brothers and sisters in Ukraine. [as submitted] With that, I would ask that we extend the normal cordial welcome to visitors who are seated right above Her Majesty's portrait.

head: **Oral Question Period**

### Provincial Fiscal Policies

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, Standard and Poor's, an international rating agency in New York, now confirms that they met with senior provincial officials from our province. They met them after the provincial election. They claim that they were assured by the Alberta delegation that the Alberta government is prepared to raise taxes if it cannot achieve its budget targets. We now have two rating agencies that believe that, and an international financial house that says that the financial plan is a flop and it will have to go that way, that is, to raise taxes. An undertaking appears to have been given. My question to the Treasurer is this. Mr. Treasurer, tell Albertans exactly what you or your officials said to these rating agencies in New York after the election about raising new taxes or taxes.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, we laid before the Assembly and before the people of Alberta on May 6 a plan, a four-year plan that spells out exactly how this government will deal with the deficit over the next four years, a plan that will eliminate that deficit by 1996-97. When the rating agencies came to visit the province in the summertime, we laid out that plan, and we left the rating agencies with absolutely no doubt that our bottom line is the bottom line and that we will eliminate the deficit. We spelled it out very clearly. It's in the May 6 document. It's in the September 8 document.

I would refer the hon. member to what Moody's and Standard and Poor's have actually said in their rating reports, which went to investors and interested people around the world. Moody's said:

The province has set highly visible deficit reduction targets, calling for rather severe cuts in spending when considering its four year timetable for deficit elimination, projections for inflation and population growth, as well as public expectations for government services.

Standard and Poor's said:

The . . . government has made deficit reduction the centerpiece in a variety of new financial control and accountability initiatives.

They went on to say finally this:

Alberta's economy, with its heavy resource orientation, suffered comparatively little in North America's recent manufacturing-based recession, and prospects for more rapid growth are good, as the recoveries in the U.S. and Canada gain momentum.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, when a question is asked, Albertans expect an answer. For the benefit of the minister who I guess didn't hear the question, I'm going to ask it again. What undertaking, Mr. Minister, did you give or did your officials give to Standard and Poor's or Moody's about raising more taxes if you don't meet your targets?

MR. DINNING: Well, that's precisely that. He's raised a hypothetical question. We made it very clear. You know what, Mr. Speaker? The joy of this is that Albertans believe in that plan, because they gave Premier Ralph Klein's government a renewed mandate to make sure the plan works.

MR. DECORE: Given that Standard and Poor's and Moody's believe an undertaking was given, Mr. Minister, again, for the benefit of Albertans, for the benefit of some decency in this House, give us the answer. What did you say about an undertaking to get more revenue from the creation of new taxes? What did you say?

1:40

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I gave no different undertaking than the hon. Premier did during the election campaign, when he made it clear that we are going to stick with our plan, that our bottom line is the bottom line, and that our approach is not to take the taxation route; ours is the spending route. I left them with absolutely no doubt that Alberta is committed to achieving a bottom line, and that bottom line is that by 1996-97 we will have balanced this budget.

#### **UniCare Integrated Software Inc.**

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, UniCare has lost millions of dollars of Alberta taxpayers' money by attempting to peddle computer software out of the U of A hospital. The hospital chairman says that the money came from the hospital's reserve fund. So what? It's his job and it's the job of every member of that board to ensure that care is given to people that go into that hospital. My question is to the Premier. Is the Premier prepared to defend the principle that hospitals should be running sideline businesses out of their operations?

MR. KLEIN: Well, as I understand, that was a decision that was made way back in 1988. I wasn't around here at that particular time, and neither was the hon. Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker. I will read from the press release that was sent by the university. They seem to say that "open ended statements" by the

Liberals "are incorrect or incomplete," and "the public should be given all the facts in order to properly form their opinion."

MR. DECORE: What do you have to do to get an answer in this place? What do you have to do? Can't you order them to give some answers, Mr. Speaker?

MR. SPEAKER: No. I'm sorry; I can't.

MR. DECORE: Isn't that your duty as a referee to ensure that answers are given?

#### **Speaker's Ruling Insisting on Answers**

MR. SPEAKER: Order. For the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition and other members, questions are not asked of the Chair. The rules are very clear that a minister may decline to answer any question, and there's no force on earth that can make a minister answer a question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: He did answer it.

MR. SPEAKER: And that is always a question of interpretation, whether there has been an answer or not. The public will generally decide what that's going to be.

#### **UniCare Integrated Software Inc.**

*(continued)*

MR. DECORE: Mr. Premier, it's a very simple question. Do you agree with the principle that an operation like the university hospital should be allowed to run a sideline operation, a sideline business out of its hospital rather than caring for the sick, the needy of Alberta?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the way the hon. member phrases the question: "should be allowed." He knows the operating authorities for hospitals as well as I do. Quite simply those authorities are the various boards, and they are given a tremendous amount of autonomy to conduct the business of the hospital as they see fit.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Premier, you're the one that's given the responsibility of ensuring that Alberta taxpayers are properly looked after. This operation is wasting money. This operation isn't caring for people like it should be with moneys that they have at their disposal. Yes or no? Is this a principle you endorse: allowing hospitals to have sideline businesses out of their operations? Yes or no?

MR. KLEIN: Don't get excited.

Mr. Speaker, I have a personal opinion. It's something that I would not like to see. That is a personal opinion. But the question is one of the operating authority for the hospital. Obviously the board at that particular time thought it was a good business decision to allow, as they say,

- (1) the University of Alberta Hospitals to continue to receive significant hardware discounts;
- (2) to capitalize on the considerable investment made by the University of Alberta Hospitals in the development of hospital information systems software.

That was deemed to be a good decision in 1988. As I've said before, Would've, Could've, If I'd've: those are all names for horses that sometimes don't finish where they should.

Now, I've offered my personal opinion, Mr. Speaker, but I would also like to point out that all funding provided to UniCare

to sustain its operation has come from funding sources completely separate from any government grants to support hospital operations and completely separate from funds raised by the University Hospitals Foundation.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, we're not talking about horse races here, although we are talking about how this government gambles with Albertans' money.

It's very necessary today, Mr. Speaker, to clarify statements made by the Minister of Health and by U of A hospital officials about UniCare's \$5.1 million losses. To the Premier: will the Premier tell us why his Minister of Health would know absolutely nothing about UniCare when financial statements signed by the Auditor General of this government require ministerial approval for certain expenditures made from the restricted revenue fund? I submit that a \$5.1 million expenditure would certainly qualify as a certain expenditure.

MR. KLEIN: Well, you know, I don't know where the hon. member is getting his figures. I'm just looking at the information that comes from the hospital, and they talk about

An investment of 4.2 million non operating dollars was made in UniCare by the UAH. It returned \$3.7 million in direct cash benefit to the UAH.

Indeed I think that the minister of the day was advised. I was certainly made aware of a letter than was written by her deputy to her advising her of the situation relative to university hospital.

MR. MITCHELL: How can the Premier stand here and tell us that the money that went into UniCare was nonoperating funds when the hospital's own financial policy – and I point it out to the Premier right here – states very clearly that the restricted revenue fund must be used to cover operating deficits?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I simply refer to the hospital's press release, and I ask the hon. member: are you saying that the officials of the hospital, Mr. Taylor and members of the board, are lying? Is that what he's suggesting?

MR. MITCHELL: Finally the Premier is doing what he's really qualified to do: be the hospital public relations executive. Mr. Speaker, he's reading their press releases.

Mr. Speaker, my third question is: will the Premier tell us why the hospital's restricted revenue fund, which financed the failed UniCare venture, dropped between 1992 and 1993 by \$3.1 million?

#### **Speaker's Ruling Seeking Opinions**

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Premier may reply, but the Chair would point out that that question is asking an opinion in the Chair's opinion. Hon. members will have to realize that they are asking the Premier to comment on the operations of a nonprovincial-government organization, and they're asking the Premier for his opinion of what was happening at the university hospital.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I agree with you.

#### **UniCare Integrated Software Inc. (continued)**

MR. KLEIN: Really, I'm not involved in the day-to-day operations of the university hospital. I will take the question under advisement. I only have two points of reference at this particular point in the absence of the Minister of Health. I have

their reference, and I have the hospital's reference. I suggest once again, Mr. Speaker, and I ask once again: is this member saying that the hospital board officials are lying? Is that what he's saying?

MR. SPEAKER: That is out of order. It demonstrates why I think we should be leaving this question.

The hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler.

1:50

#### **Job Creation**

MRS. GORDON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As part of welfare reforms announced in April of this year the Minister of Family and Social Services said that he would be transferring money saved by caseload reductions into public works projects. Can the hon. minister please advise this Legislature how much money was transferred to this initiative?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to advise the hon. member that when I announced the programs in April, I had indicated that \$53 million would be transferred to this particular program.

MRS. GORDON: What is the total amount of money for the public works jobs, and what organizations are eligible?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, the programs that come under that are of course public works related programs under the Alberta community employment program, where we are transferring dollars. The nonprofit organizations from municipalities pay a minimum of \$6 an hour to the employees to do public works related work, and we do have \$8 million under that program targeted to create 1,500 jobs. To date we've received 108 applications and expended \$2 million and created 345 jobs under that program, a very successful program.

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

#### **NovAtel Communications Ltd.**

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents are still inquiring and are still angry about the \$645 million loss on NovAtel. They want answers, they want clear answers, and they want all the answers, and I'm sure many other Albertans also want the answers. My first question is to the chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. Do you intend to pursue a full accounting into the losses inquired into in the NovAtel fiasco through the Public Accounts Committee? [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. [interjections] Order. [interjections] Order in the Assembly.

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: My hon. colleague from Calgary-North West, as chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, yes, we do have the mandate. Based on the fact that the previous government did block the Public Accounts Committee to do indeed an inquiry, I would be optimistic based on the Lieutenant Governor's Speech from the Throne and the commitment that the Premier of the province of Alberta made to open, accessible government and full accountability to Albertans, fiscal responsible integrity, and I would see the Public Accounts Committee being asked to undertake that.

Thank you.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, would it be in order to supplement the answer?

**Speaker's Ruling  
Supplementary Responses**

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. I think perhaps that the hon. minister would certainly be recognized to augment the answer at the end of the supplementaries.

The hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

**NovAtel Communications Ltd.**

*(continued)*

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My supplementary question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, is it true that you have muzzled your government members on the Public Accounts Committee and instructed them to vote against such an investigation as referred to by the chairman?

MR. KLEIN: Well, if I did it, I did it in my sleep because I have no recollection, Mr. Speaker, of saying anything. [some applause]

MR. BRUSEKER: I guess they're applauding the sleeping Premier.

My final supplementary. Since the Auditor General was hamstrung in his inability to call witnesses, my supplementary question to the chairman of the Public Accounts Committee: are you satisfied that Albertans got a full accounting into this loss in NovAtel? [interjections]

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

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Mr. Speaker, hon. colleague, no, I don't believe that the ability was allowed under the legislation that the Auditor General has to operate under. He does not have the legislative ability to have witnesses appear before him under oath. The bottom line is that \$645 million went somewhere, and we as Albertans have to be held accountable to find out what happened to that and indeed are there people responsible for that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, if I might supplement. It was just a few days ago that I was in this Assembly and I heard very, very nice statements forthcoming from the Liberal leader, the Liberal House leader about one of the policies of reform that everybody agreed to, and that was setting up a select standing committee on further reform, and one of the items designated for review was the Public Accounts Committee. Further to that, the review was to occur, and a report was to come back from that committee by a certain date which was very, very quick. Now, it strikes me that this is really a strange use of question period time when the hon. members just a few days ago agreed to the process. Now, I know that the Provincial Treasurer wants to further supplement.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I must inject some facts into the discussion we've just had, and the facts are simply this. The Auditor General did a complete review of the matter of NovAtel Communications Ltd. He provided that to all hon. members in the fall of 1992. He made five very straightforward recommendations. In the filing by the hon. Premier on January 25, 1993, in this Assembly the Premier made it very clear that we are implementing the recommendations of the Auditor General.

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

**Special Waste Treatment Centre**

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the critical areas in my constituency of Lesser Slave Lake is the Faust-Osmose site which is contaminated with PCBs and PCPs. That material is to be removed and used as part of the test burns at the Swan Hills treatment centre. The announcement today by the Department of Environmental Protection to allow the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation to conduct these burns is a welcome one. Nothing can be worse than living beside open, dangerous, hazardous materials, and of course the idea of ruining Alberta's number one lake, the Lesser Slave Lake, is very worrisome. [interjections] Could the Minister of Environmental Protection provide an update - this may not be relevant to Liberals, but it's certainly relevant to Lesser Slave Lake - on the nature of the improvements of the Swan Hills treatment centre?

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. minister.

MR. EVANS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Indeed we announced today that the test burn would occur on the new 40,000 metric tonne incinerator for hazardous waste at Swan Hills. This is as a result of a 1991 application by Swan Hills through the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation for a new incinerator. This process went through the NRCB, the Natural Resources Conservation Board. The licence to operate requires that we have a test burn to ensure that the new kiln is operating to its design capacity and according to the stringent laws that we have in the province of Alberta for air quality. What we will be doing is taking in both PCBs and PCPs and using those to identify whether or not the system is operating correctly, and we'll be initiating that process in the near future.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MS CALAHASEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I note that the minister has indicated that these wastes will be imported from out of the province. Could the Minister of Environmental Protection indicate why we would allow hazardous waste to be imported into Alberta?

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. minister.

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, for all members of the Assembly, we have an Alberta-only position with respect to hazardous wastes in the province. However, in order to effectively do these tests, we need a source of materials. As I indicated earlier, we need PCBs and PCPs, about 4,200 metric tonnes of each to do the tests effectively.

Now, we do not have a resource of those chemicals in that kind of a quantity in the province of Alberta, so what we are doing is we're going to be disposing of waste from Alberta firstly, and any additional waste that we require for the test burn will be acquired from our adjoining jurisdictions.

**2:00**

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you. Is the minister prepared to guarantee to my constituents that the Faust-Osmose site waste will be considered a priority considering what he has just said about the out-of-province wastes?

MR. EVANS: Well, actually, Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity to personally view the Faust site during the summer of this year, and because of that we have gotten into a process of examining

what we can do with the Faust site. It's through our health and landfill pollution program, and we have already started digging at that site. Now, the analysis of the contaminated soil at the site indicates that we do not have the kind of toxicity that would allow us to use that for the test burn. So it's certainly on the top of the list, hon. member, to be disposed of once the test burn is done, but we won't be able to use that material for the test burn.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore.

### Library Funding

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I support the government's recent move to give \$250,000 from lotteries to the Chinook Arch regional library system to purchase and renovate a building for its use in Lethbridge. This is a very welcome gift of fresh money, and it's new money. However, in its lack of wisdom the government did not at the same time provide for any fresh or new money for the actual operation of this new library system. To make matters worse, I understand that operating moneys may have to be phased in over a few years by reducing the size of grants normally available to all other regional public libraries in Alberta. My question is to the Minister of Community Development. I'll make this unilingual so it's clear. Why was the government so negligent in its planning for this new library system given that it's been on the books for some seven years, and will the minister now take the corrective step and commit to fresh, new moneys for the actual operating costs?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, I've heard the hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore ask for a fairly simple answer. Regrettably answers are frequently not simple, because a good answer requires preparation, it requires knowledge, and it requires thought, which regrettably are not the requisites for asking a question from the opposite side.

Mr. Speaker, if the member had looked in the budgets for my department, he would find that \$12.299 million was committed to library funding last year. The amount was frozen this year. It was not increased, and it was not decreased, but it was frozen. The introduction of a new library system is something that has to be considered in looking at the overall funding of libraries. My department is committed to libraries and library systems in this province. The Library Grants Review Task Force is currently conducting a review of library grant formulas and the regulations within the current fiscal reality. It will report back to me in approximately two weeks' time.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Well, Mr. Speaker, since 75 percent of the other libraries will have to experience funding cuts, why are you, Mr. Minister, planning to penalize three-quarters of all the other public libraries in Alberta in order to bring the Chinook Arch into the system? Couldn't you find a better way?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, the answer has been asked and answered once again. If the hon. member had been listening, he would have heard that we're looking at a review of funding of libraries. It must be done in an equitable and a fair manner. If that means that we have to look at the funding of individual library systems to accommodate a new library system, then that must be the case.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Well, would the minister at least commit to funding of a feasibility study, then, to examine a provincewide telecommunications information network, a move that would particularly benefit rural Alberta?

MR. MAR: I would be pleased to consider the hon. member's suggestion, and I will take that under advisement.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

### Home Schooling

MR. SOHAL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Education. Mr. Minister, in this morning's press release on home schooling you indicated a concern about inadequate supervision and evaluation of home school students. I notice that you are now conducting a series of consultative meetings with parents, school boards, and other interested parties to remedy the inadequacies. My question to the minister is: why are you now conducting a consultation on home schooling if you were previously aware of the inadequacies in the system?

MR. JONSON: Some hon. members will recall that during debate of Bill 41 this past spring in this House I indicated in response to representation that was made that a review would be taken of the regulations and policies pertaining to home schooling. Certain events intervened, but following the conclusion of the election on June 15 we took steps to put in place a consultation process with those parties involved in home schooling. That consultation process, Mr. Speaker, is nearing completion, and I look forward to the recommendations which should lead to decisions which will improve the overall situation in home schooling.

MR. SOHAL: Mr. Minister, is it your intention to discontinue home schooling as an option for Alberta parents and students?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I wish to emphasize that the purpose of the review is to improve the overall situation with respect to home schooling in the province, to do such things as clarify the roles of the various parties involved in home schooling, to make sure that there is adequate assessment of achievement with respect to home schooling. As I said, I'd like to emphasize that this initiative is designed to improve the quality of the overall situation.

MR. SOHAL: I'm glad to hear that home schooling will continue in the province of Alberta.

My supplementary to the minister is: in this era of fiscal restraint are there going to be any cutbacks to the individuals who home school?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I think it should be clarified that the funding with respect to home schooling and other school programs in this province is provided to school boards, and through them these programs are administered. So we are not in any way considering cutting funding to individuals. Funding is not provided directly to individuals with respect to these overall programs.

One other thing I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, is that certainly the funds that go to home schooling, that particular program, along with the many, many other programs that are offered by Alberta Education have to be part of the overall effort to balance the budget and are involved in the overall review of our finances.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

### Child Welfare

MR. SEKULIC: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have heard from the Minister of Family and Social Services that his department is

spending in excess of \$250 million annually for child welfare and that his department is currently working closely with Justice. Despite this, the lack of any formal government response to the Children's Advocate report on child welfare continues to be an embarrassment. My questions are to the Minister of Family and Social Services. Mr. Minister, you had the report a full two weeks before releasing it, yet we still wait for comments. If other provinces are able to give this report the attention and praise it deserves, why do Albertans have to wait to hear from their own government?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if I should repeat the answer again, but I've indicated to this House at least once this week and twice last week what my plans are. I've advised this Assembly what my short-term plan would be in relation to that particular program and also the long-term plan. That hasn't changed. I'd like to advise the hon. member also that on April 21, '93, I asked them for their welfare strategy, which includes child welfare programs. They say they have a long-range plan also. I haven't seen the copy of their plan. I'm still waiting so I can incorporate that plan with our plans.

2:10

MR. SEKULIC: Mr. Speaker, my supplemental to the Minister of Family and Social Services. Mr. Minister, I heard last week and the week before when you spoke of these short-term and long-term plans. When will you reveal the substance of your short-term and long-term plans? Can you commit to a specific date for this House?

MR. CARDINAL: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I advised the House earlier this week and last week also that my departmental executive is working very closely with the Children's Advocate to prioritize, number one, the 200 or so recommendations in the report. Once that plan is completed, I will bring it forward to this House. It won't be very long.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. SEKULIC: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, why are you working so closely with Justice when the advocate clearly spelled out in his report that the problems lie within your ministry?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, the child welfare system we're talking about identifies a lot of areas where there are some deficiencies, and the report also indicates that a lot of the child welfare problems we have are related to people living in poverty. Unfortunately, that includes a lot of native people, and in fact 50 percent of the children in foster care right now are aboriginal. I'm not proud of that, and that is why I work so hard to make sure that the welfare reforms that will change that life-style are a top priority for our government: to put people back to work, independent and self-sufficient, so we can look after these other problems. I intend to make sure also that wherever possible the parents are responsible and accountable. We try and keep the children at home with their families, and we'll provide the support services. That is why I work very closely with the Department of Justice: because the system we have I believe can be improved in that area.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Pincher Creek-Macleod, followed by West Yellowhead.

### Oldman River Dam

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the hon. Minister of Environmental Protection. Now the Oldman dam is completed and the reservoir that is just north of the town of Pincher Creek is filling up. That particular body of water serves as an excellent recreation facility for the people in the area, plus it also supplies a guaranteed flow of water downstream for the following communities. This particular dam and the reservoir also contain an abundance of bird and wildlife, and the fishing is better than it has ever been in that particular area. My question to the minister: now that the Navigable Waters Protection Act approval has been granted for the Oldman dam project, is the government going to have to significantly alter its monitoring and mitigation activities?

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

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, the Oldman River dam project is a very positive initiative and an improvement for the people of southern Alberta. Certainly the government of Alberta is going to abide by all of the conditions in the Navigable Waters Protection Act authorization. That's not going to require, though, a major change to our mitigation and monitoring system because we have a very extensive system in place at this point in time. Our government has been operating the project in a responsible and an environmentally sensitive manner and will continue to do so.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My supplemental also to the minister of environment: how can the citizens of Alberta be sure that the government is operating the Oldman dam project in a responsible and environmentally sensitive manner, as which you have just stated?

MR. EVANS: Well, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, in a number of ways. We are operating under the approval of the Navigable Waters Protection Act. We're operating under our water resources permit, our licence, and recently we appointed a citizens' environmental advisory committee. Now, that committee had its first meeting last month. They are working on terms of reference for a review of the operational plan of the dam. I'm very excited about that kind of an initiative because it's community based, it involves a number of people from the Oldman River basin, and they are going to be providing input to us on a continuing basis. I'm sure that that citizen input along with the approvals of both the provincial and the federal level will ensure that the dam is operated in a very thorough and a very positive manner.

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

My final supplemental is to the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services. To the minister: what is his department doing to guarantee that these are being monitored also?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services.

MR. THURBER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The fisheries mitigation program was put in place I believe in 1987 as a start to a 10-year program. The main function of that program is to enhance the habitat for the trout that you speak so highly about, not only above the dam but below the dam. I understand that so

far it's operating quite successfully, and we're looking forward to the recommendations that may come from the environmental advisory committee in the near future.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

### Home Schooling (continued)

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Education recently announced that roundtable consultations will take place in Calgary and Edmonton during the month of October. As mentioned earlier by the Member for Calgary-McCall, today he released information that a review of Alberta's home schooling policies and regulations has been under way for several months with specific meetings taking place in Edmonton today, Calgary tomorrow, and Lethbridge the day after. I would like to ask the Minister of Education: will the home schooling issue also be on the agenda for the roundtables, or are those tables in fact mere cutting tables at which only budget cuts are discussed?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly pleased that the hon. member has recognized that this consultation process is occurring. I'd like to emphasize that there is an overall continuing effort to consult with the stakeholders and the individuals involved in education with respect to the issues and the initiatives that are going on with respect to education in this province. Just this morning I met with a local school council and listened to their views on education and fiscal matters related to education. Certainly that was worth while. We have a round of meetings taking place with respect to looking at some of the technical aspects of our grants and the whole matter of regulation and deregulation. That is occurring across the province with school boards. I could go on through a number of the other consultation processes and meetings that are taking place with respect to education.

As far as the roundtables are concerned, Mr. Speaker, they are certainly a very, very important activity. The recommendations, the themes that are being expressed with respect to education will feed into those roundtable discussions where they will deal with some very key issues and an overall direction as to the plan for education.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I thought that the minister just tabled a Bill that deals with the supervision of students in home schooling. So my question is: what is really the purpose of these home schooling meetings that are going on right now?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, the provision which is in Bill 8 is along the same lines as that of Bill 41. This particular change was arrived at and proposed by the government some time ago. As I hope I clearly indicated in my response to a previous questioner, the review with respect to home schooling is centring upon the policies and regulations and procedures involved in implementing the provisions of the School Act with respect to home schooling.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Why were these home schooling meetings not announced until today, and are they in fact open to the public?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, the meetings that are mentioned by date in the document referred to by the hon. member are meetings which are based on invitation to the affected stakeholders in the field of home education. Therefore, they are not widely advertised as public meetings; that's correct.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, followed by Edmonton-Ellerslie.

### 2:20 Public Employees' Pay Rates

MRS. FORSYTH: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, I had a number of calls from concerned constituents on an alleged comment you have made suggesting that all public-sector employees take a 5 percent rollback. Could you clarify for this House what your intent is in this area?

Thank you.

MR. KLEIN: Well, certainly any rollbacks have to be considered in the context of the collective bargaining process. What I've been saying, and I've been saying it for quite some time now, is that the administration of the so-called MUSH-sector agencies – municipalities, universities, school boards, and hospital boards – should lead the way and set the tone by scaling back administrative costs, including salaries if need be. I've suggested also, Mr. Speaker, that perhaps the administrators of these institutions could do much the same as the ministers have done. We have rolled our salaries back by 5 percent. I think that we have taken some sacrifices. We have eliminated our pensions, and we have I think set the tone and provided the leadership. The challenge is now to these agencies to do the same.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question?

MRS. FORSYTH: No.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

### Airline Industry

MS CARLSON: Mr. Speaker, the government claims that they want to get out of the business of being in business, but in the past few days we have seen in the news that there is some question as to the stability of American Airlines, a Canadian Airlines prospective partner. Albertans potentially have \$37.5 million on the line. To the Premier: why doesn't the government do something about improving the tax regime for the airline industry rather than risking millions of tax dollars by picking sides in the air wars?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I welcome that comment, and I think that if the hon. member reads the economic plan Seizing Opportunity, you will find in that plan that we're looking at taxes generally to create as competitive a tax regime as possible. Perhaps the tax reform commission can look at the taxes that are applied to aviation fuel in the context of its overall review of taxation generally.

MS CARLSON: Will the Premier ensure our Alberta Advantage by reducing the aviation fuel tax to the levels found in other provinces?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I think I just answered that question. I said that there is no reason why this shouldn't be reviewed and

considered in the context of the overall review of taxation by the tax reform commission.

MS CARLSON: So is that a yes or a no?

Again to the Premier: how can the government justify meddling in the airline industry by backing one player when such government involvement in the meat packing industry resulted in plant closures across the province and the loss of hundreds of jobs?

MR. KLEIN: Well, we certainly know where the Liberals stood and stand on Canadian Airlines. They were willing, Mr. Speaker, to allow 4,000 employees in this province to go down the tube.

MR. KOWALSKI: That's what they were going to do.

MR. DINNING: Still are.

MR. KLEIN: That's what they were and still are.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Calgary-Bow, followed by Edmonton-Rutherford.

#### **Blood Fractionation Plant**

MRS. LAING: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism. Last October the Canadian Blood Agency called for proposals to build a Canadian plasma fractionation plant. The Canadian Red Cross and the Miles corporation proposal won the bid. Later the CBA withdrew their offer. However, the Canadian Red Cross and the Miles corporation decided to go ahead and have now received proposals from 10 Canadian cities including Edmonton, Spruce Grove, and Calgary. Naturally, my preference would be for the plant to be built near the Foothills hospital in Calgary-Bow. However, being an Albertan, I think we all would be very pleased to see this plant with its economic advantages located here in Alberta. Mr. Minister, has there been any indication as to how the Alberta proposals compare to the other seven?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I'm unaware as to how these proposals would be viewed in other provinces and other jurisdictions. I am encouraged, though, with the quality of work gone into and submitted to the Canadian Red Cross and Miles Canada by at least three communities in the province of Alberta who kept us apprized of their interest in this regard. Just recently I met with the Canadian Red Cross and Miles Canada, and they said that overall they were very impressed with the positions being taken by these several communities in the province of Alberta.

MRS. LAING: Mr. Minister, does this proposal have any financial implications for the government such as loan guarantees and grants?

MR. KOWALSKI: No, Mr. Speaker, none. It was made very, very clear to the proponents, both the Canadian Red Cross and Miles Canada, that in fact Alberta would welcome the presence of this large fractionation plant that would be a cost factor in the neighbourhood of something like \$150 million and might have upwards of 300 jobs associated with it, but I made it very clear that on the table were not such things as guarantees, loans, grants, and the like.

MR. SPEAKER: The time for question period has expired, but before proceeding to the next order, would there be unanimous consent to reverting to Introduction of Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

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

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce a constituent from southwest Calgary – formerly a constituent; now a constituent of the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore. Mr. Murray Kobe is a bright young entrepreneur in the city of Calgary here for a home show this week. I would ask him to rise and receive the warm welcome of all members of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury.

MR. BRASSARD: Yes, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly June and Don Morris from Stratford. I wonder if they would stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

#### **Point of Order Members' Statements**

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, please, may I cite Standing Order 1? When the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly were dealt with the other day to be effective September 13, 1993, the Standing Orders read that Members' Statements would occur on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The reason for that came about as a result of consultation between the two caucuses. Members' Statements would come on a Tuesday, which would be normally reserved for private members' day, and then on a Thursday, for which the business of the day would be normally reserved for government members' day. There have been some discussions with the Clerk with respect to this matter. I do notice that the Order Paper dated Wednesday, September 15, 1993, indicates Members' Statements on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. I would like to apologize if there was any misunderstanding in anything that I may have said to the Clerk with respect to this, but the Standing Orders were quite clear, and the intent was that Members' Statements would be on Tuesday and Thursday.

MR. SPEAKER: If there's been a misunderstanding, then we'll just postpone this till tomorrow.

#### **Point of Order Questions to a Committee Chairman**

MR. SPEAKER: A point of order?

MR. MITCHELL: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today in the flurry and intensity of debate the House leader for the government stood and made a statement to the effect that it was inappropriate use of question period time for the chairman of the Public Accounts Committee to be asked a question and to take the time of the House to answer those questions. I would simply like to draw the attention of the members of the House to *Beauchesne* 405, which very clearly states that private members have very strict limitations about answering questions. I quote: "Virtually the only question possible would refer to a committee of which the Member is the Chairman." There is perhaps no more official committee of this House, obviously, than a standing committee of the Legislature, and the Public Accounts Committee is such a committee.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, on this point of order I concur completely with what the House leader for the Liberal opposition has said. I've defended in the past the appropriateness of hon.



members asking questions of chairmen. That wasn't what I was saying. It was not at all a question about the lack of appropriateness with respect to a question to the chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. I just said that it was a cute use of question period time. I never said that it was an inappropriate question. It was a cute strategy is all that I said, Mr. Speaker.

2:30

MR. SPEAKER: Well, the Chair just hears a disagreement between two members as to the interpretation of the rule, so we'll let that one go by.

### Privilege

#### Access to Health Roundtable Document

MR. SPEAKER: While the Chair is on its feet, though, there is the matter of the question of privilege raised yesterday that the Chair would like to deal with. A question of privilege was raised by the Member for Edmonton-McClung on Tuesday, September 14. The Chair notes that proper notice of the question of privilege was given pursuant to Standing Order 15(2). The Chair is satisfied that the question was raised at the earliest opportunity pursuant to Standing Order 15(6).

The facts giving rise to this question of privilege are these: on Friday, September 10, 1993, an advertisement appeared in the *Calgary Herald* announcing a public roundtable on health. The ad was placed by the Alberta Health Planning Secretariat. The ad said:

Before the meeting, pick up a copy of Our Bill of Health – the easy to read work book being used as a discussion document on health reform. It is available from your local MLA or public health unit.

Members of the public contacted the constituency offices of at least two opposition members. Neither office had copies of the workbook. The Member for Edmonton-McClung stated that no opposition constituency offices had copies of the workbook or had any knowledge or notice that these workbooks would be advertised as being available through their offices. The member further stated that someone at the Alberta Health Planning Secretariat advised that the book

is only available through the constituency offices of Government MLAs and will not be provided to Alberta Liberal MLA constituency offices.

The Member for Edmonton-McClung alleged that this advertisement coupled with the failure to provide the workbooks to opposition members constitutes a breach of privilege on three grounds. One, it puts some members in the position of being asked to fulfill an obligation it could not fulfill because they did not have the workbooks. Two, government members were treated differently from opposition members. Three, it placed some members in a position where their credibility could be questioned when they were unable to provide the workbooks to the public.

In the ensuing debate on the question a number of issues were raised and numerous citations from *Beauchesne* and *Erskine May* were offered to the Chair. The matter of a telephone conversation between the Member for Edmonton-McClung and the minister responsible for the Alberta Health Planning Secretariat was raised.

The Chair is of the opinion that the public is entitled to rely upon ads such as these, and where the public is invited to become involved, it would want to become involved on an informed basis. It is certainly true that these events did put some members in a difficult position in that they could not provide the workbooks that they were alleged to have. It follows that this could call the credibility of those members into question. This is a very serious matter and particularly so at a time when all members of this Assembly are under close scrutiny by the public. These events may well cast all members, not just opposition members, in a bad light to those members of the public who tried to obtain these

workbooks through the offices of opposition members. This is a serious matter.

Is it a breach of privilege or a contempt of the Assembly? The Member for Edmonton-McClung cited *Erskine May* at page 115 as follows:

Generally speaking, any act or omission which obstructs or impedes either House of Parliament in the performance of its functions, or which obstructs or impedes any Member or officer of such House in the discharge of his duty, or which has a tendency, directly or indirectly, to produce such results may be treated as a contempt even though there is no precedent of the offence.

The Chair has weighed the matter carefully. In this case the members were not obstructed in the discharge of their work as it relates to a "proceeding in Parliament." Let me refer hon. members to the book *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* by Joseph Maingot at page 200. The workbook was part of a process directed at formulating government policy. The workbook is not a parliamentary document, nor is it part of a parliamentary proceeding. This distinguishes it from the budget document which was the subject of a previous ruling by the Chair. This alone would be sufficient to dispose of the matter; however, there's also the question of whether or not the dissemination of this workbook could be considered an aspect of parliamentary duties. The Chair does not propose to comment on this question.

Finally, this incident cannot be said to constitute an act of sufficient severity to bring members into disrepute. In the opinion of the Chair, this incident is not sufficient to call into question members' credibility and thereby impede or obstruct them in discharging their parliamentary duties. Therefore, it is the ruling of the Chair that a prima facie case of privilege does not exist.

It is only left to the Chair to express the disappointment in the way this all came about. If the workbooks were advertised to be available in a certain way, it is reasonable to expect that they would be made available to the public in that way. As stated, this kind of incident does not cast any member in a good light.

The Chair also notes that during the debate on the question of privilege, the Deputy Government House Leader, the Minister of Labour, stated that some members should not "whine around like a bunch of babies saying, 'Feed me, feed me.'" This is not the level of debate which is expected in this Assembly.

Thank you.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, before addressing Written Questions, in light of your ruling on my remarks I am happy to withdraw those.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Written Questions**

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I would move that written questions appearing on today's Order Paper stand and retain their places with the exception of the following written questions: 144, 145, 147, 148, 150, 151, 154, 155, 156, and 157.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Before putting that motion, the Chair would like to point out to the hon. Deputy Government House Leader that there is no shorthand for numbers and sometimes it's very difficult to get those down, but if the Table has them, fine.

[Motion carried]

### Advanced Education

Q144. Dr. Massey asked the government the following question: What are the government's projected enrollments at Alberta's colleges, universities, and technical institutes for

each of the 1993-94, 1994-95, 1995-96, 1996-97, and 1997-98 academic years?

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, you don't have to do anything with regard to this. The government will indicate what its disposition will be, and if you're not happy with that indication, then you're allowed to say something.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, our understanding was that if the member wanted, he could in fact read that question into the record. That would be up to him, and it's up to further interpretation, as this is somewhat of a new process. I'll leave that up to the Chair to decide.

Also, since the written question numbers were given a day's notice yesterday, my presumption was that the members would have them at table. However, I can read slower also.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if my request might be reconsidered. The information that I asked for is crucial to our assessment of the Department of Advanced Education and Career Development's future plans and the kind of work that they're going to carry on at the roundtables.

#### **Speaker's Ruling Written Questions**

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair feels the hon. member is a little premature in those remarks because the government hasn't indicated yet whether it's accepting or rejecting your question. As the hon. Deputy Government House Leader pointed out, the Chair believes there's been some discussion. It's sort of agreed that members may wish to read their question if they want to, but they don't have to, and they might so indicate. If you'd like to read your question, you may.

**2:40**

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, maybe I can just clarify that. Under the new Standing Orders a written question will be debatable, and we would assume, of course, that it would only be debatable if the government chose to reject it at the time at which the government made a designation of rejection or of acceptance.

MR. SPEAKER: It would be the Chair's opinion that an efficient way of handling this would be that if the government rejects the question, then that's deemed to be a motion by the government that we hereby move that the question be rejected. They may not say it in those terms, but if it's rejected, that's what the Chair will infer: that there's a motion to reject, and therefore that's debatable without anything further in an effort to try to save time, and the less words the better. So if we can proceed on that basis: if the government accepts, everybody will be happy; if they reject, then the proponent of the question will have the opportunity of speaking to the deemed motion of rejection.

The hon. minister of advanced education.

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for clarifying the process and procedure. All of us were a little hazy on how this was going to come together under the new House rules. I had assumed that the originator of the question would stand and read the question into the record and perhaps make some opening remarks. However, apparently under the House rules he has that flexibility, and I respect that. So I'm prepared to respond to Written Question 144.

#### **Debate Continued**

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, our department monitors our enrollments to our postsecondary institutions, and we follow application trends very closely in our province. I appreciate my distinguished colleague's interest in this area, and I'd be happy to highlight some of the information that we have for him.

About 60 percent of new fall full-time students to Alberta's three residential universities are drawn from high schools within the province. This figure has remained constant over the past decade. The proportion of new university students coming from educational sources outside of the province has declined from 21 percent in 1981-82 to 15 percent in 1991-92, while the proportion of students coming from other postsecondary institutions within the province has risen over the same time period from 19 percent to 25 percent. Last year approximately 5,000 Albertans studied in other provinces, while approximately 3,400 came to Alberta.

The vast majority of fall full-time credit enrollment at our public colleges, technical institutes, and universities is accounted for by students under the age of 25. Only 28 percent of part-time students are under the age of 25. The typical age of these students has increased by about one year over the past decade, due in part to the tendency in recent years for students to take longer to complete their programs. An interprovincial comparison of the age of full-time university students indicates that Alberta has a somewhat older student population than Canada as a whole. I can also report that fall full-time credit enrollment in our public postsecondary institutions is comprised of a greater proportion of females, 51.4 percent, as compared to males at 48.6 percent.

Total full-time enrollment in 1991-92 was 113,000 students. This was over 57 percent higher than in 1980-81. Full-time university enrollment grew by 48 percent between 1980-81 and 1991-92. Full-time enrollment in public colleges grew by 103 percent. Enrollment in technical institutes has remained relatively stable during this period, reflecting program quotas that attempt to balance labour market supply and demand. Enrollment in university transfer programs at the public and private colleges has increased by over 73 percent since 1987 and now serves over 7,600 students. Almost 2,000 additional places have been funded in the university transfer programs in the seven public colleges since 1987.

Relative to the 18- to 24-year-old population, Alberta's participation in higher education is one of the highest in Canada.

I have more information to share, but in the interests of time I'll urge the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods to read the documentation I sent him after his question was tabled.

As you can see, I cannot answer the hon. member's question as it is written because Advanced Education and Career Development does not make detailed enrollment projections for each sector on a year-by-year basis. We monitor trends and directions in our system with the best available information. Therefore, in light of that, Mr. Speaker, I move that we reject Question 144.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I apologize for misunderstanding the procedure that was to be used.

The minister has answered my question. They don't have the projections.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair is of the opinion that because there has been a rejection, there must be a vote at this stage unless the question was withdrawn.

Does the Assembly grant unanimous consent to the mover of this question to withdraw same?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried. The question is withdrawn.

#### **Poaching Fines**

Q145. Mr. Langevin asked the government the following question:

For the period April 1, 1991, to March 31, 1992, what was the total amount in court fines imposed on those found guilty of poaching?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, the government will accept this question.

#### **Environmental Laws Enforcement**

Q147. Mr. Collingwood asked the government the following question:

How many prosecutions were brought before the courts for infringements of the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act between April 1, 1991, and March 31, 1992, and how much revenue was collected for the province from fines under those prosecutions?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, the government will accept Written Question 147.

#### **Stocking Lakes with Fish**

Q148. Mr. Collingwood asked the government the following question:

What was the total cost of stocking lakes in Alberta with trout, walleye, and yellow perch during the period April 1, 1991, to March 31, 1992, and what was the proportion of this amount that was spent on restocking lakes north of Edmonton?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, this open government will accept Question 148.

#### **Licences under Clean Air Act**

Q150. Mr. Collingwood asked the government the following question:

How many plants were issued licences under the Clean Air Act in each of the years from April 1, 1989, until March 31, 1993, how many of these were monitored by on-site inspections, and how many of these inspections were unannounced?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, the government will accept Question 150.

#### **Special Waste Treatment Centre**

Q151. Mr. Collingwood asked the government the following question:

With respect to the landfill cells at the waste facility near Swan Hills that is operated by Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation and Bovar Environmental Services Inc., what volume of leachate has leaked from each of the landfill cells from commencement of operation until March 31, 1993, what is the chemical composition of

this leachate, and what is the cost of repairing or replacing cells X1, D1, and D2 and rehabilitating cell C1 and how much of this cost is covered by insurance with respect to each cell?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, the government will accept Written Question 151.

#### **Pollution Cleanup Costs**

Q154. Mr. Collingwood asked the government the following question:

For the period April 1, 1991, to March 31, 1992, and from April 1, 1992, to March 31, 1993, what were the remedial works carried out and how much did the Department of Environmental Protection spend

- (1) as the provincial share of cleaning up each of the sites in Alberta designated under the national contaminated sites remediation program and
- (2) on cleaning up each of the other orphaned sites identified in the Help End Landfill Pollution inventory?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, the government will continue in this vein, accepting Question 154.

#### **Social Assistance Statistics**

Q155. Mr. Sekulic asked the government the following question: How many social assistance files have been closed between the period January 1, 1993, to August 31, 1993, and how many of the files were closed because the client found full-time employment, the client was transferred to a student finance board, or the client did not comply with policy?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, the government will accept Question 155.

#### **Social Assistance Statistics**

Q156. Mr. Sekulic asked the government the following question: Of the number of Albertans who have had their social assistance files closed since January 1, 1993, how many are working full-time, how many are working part-time, how many are enrolled in a training/education program, how many have left the province, and how many are there whose status is unknown?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, the Department of Family and Social Services has no method at this time of determining this data with any of the existing computerized systems we have for the collection of information on the welfare program. Therefore, we will be rejecting Question 156.

MR. SEKULIC: Mr. Speaker, I just want to clarify that in order to assess the program and the way in which the cuts are being carried out in the department, a department that expends annually \$1.75 billion, it is critical that we be able to track where individuals that leave social assistance go. I acknowledge that maybe at this time the systems aren't in place, but when the expenditures are this high, \$1.75 billion, it's critical - it's the third-largest expenditure in this government - that we know where these people are going. I would encourage the minister to find a way to

respond to these questions and to put the statistics before the house.

**2:50**

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. deputy leader.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's incredible to me, with a program that has been described as a great success story on many occasions in this House and outside of this House, that there is no record, that there is no research analysis in place that tells us how and why. It seems to me that when this program was first announced a number of months ago, a year and a half ago, I guess, approximately, we asked the question at that point: how were we going to track whether or not it was successful? Now, the program has been in operation for some many months. It's indicated to us that it is successful, and all we want to know is: how do you know that? What is the track record of this program? How many people have found employment? Are they in part-time jobs? Are they on unemployment insurance now? Are they coming back around? How many of them were there before? What are the tracking records of this program in this government? When we are expending huge amounts of money and when we are being told it's a success, I think we have every reason to know how the government intends to prove that to the people of Alberta.

MR. SPEAKER: In this situation are we prepared to have the question withdrawn?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, then we will have a vote on the question.

[Question rejected]

#### **Family and Social Services Administrators**

Q157. Ms Hanson asked the government the following question: How many administrators working in the corporate office of the Department of Family and Social Services have direct employment experience working on the frontline service delivery for the department and what was the period of time spent working on the front line?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, the government accepts Question 157.

head: **Motions for Returns**

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I move that the motions for returns appearing on today's Order Paper stand and retain their places with the exception of the following: motions for returns 178, 179, 182, and 194.

[Motion carried]

#### **Government Aircraft**

M178. Mr. Kirkland moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the flight logs and passenger manifests for fixed aircraft and helicopters owned or chartered by the government between January 1, 1991, and June 30, 1993.

MR. KIRKLAND: I think that when we look at what we're asking here, we're simply attempting to get a handle on exactly how extensive the aviation movements are with the provincial

government. We're trying to get a handle, of course, and understand exactly what component dollars are associated with it and understand the purposes, and to offer positive input to the Transportation and Utilities department, it's very important for us to have that at hand.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services.

MR. THURBER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the information of the hon. members in this house perhaps I could just mention a few things that go on in the aircraft division of Public Works, Supply and Services. First of all, I might mention to you and let you know the priorities on the use of all of our aircraft which this government maintains. The first priority, of course, is human life emergencies. From there we go down the gamut of natural disasters, such as forest fires and floods, et cetera. I might also mention to you that our own airplanes that we have, fixed wing and rotary wing, only incur about 23 percent of the actual aircraft movement and usage that carries on.

The other thing that I might mention to you is that if you want to go back and pull all these logs and documents together, there's an immense amount of paper that would come forward on this. This has been asked for before. My predecessor, the then Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services, who is now the Deputy Premier, had agreed to do this at one point in time. He had a massive amount of documents in his office, and he offered people the opportunity to come in and look at them. There was a great degree of time and money and use of resources expended to gather this, and there was very little use of it after he did it. I guess in our opinion this is an inappropriate use of time and resources. I would rather, hon. member, if you wish to have knowledge of a certain flight or a certain time period or something like that, that you put those forward in writing, and we'll certainly try and accommodate your wishes.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to speak on this a bit. They use the excuse that the volume has built up over the last few years. Then to say that it has built up because the previous minister and the previous one and the previous one and the previous one didn't answer is a little bit like asking the fellow that's trying to get off . . .

#### **Point of Order Clarification**

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

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. minister is rising on a point of order.

MR. THURBER: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is alluding to a buildup of paper by the previous minister or by this minister over a period of time. That's not what I said. I said that it had been handled by the previous minister and that there was a large amount of paper that had to be brought together in logs and documents and stuff. I did not allude that it had built up because of the previous minister or this minister for that matter.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, I guess I've got to go back to school. It sounded to me like he said that he had a large amount of paper.

#### **Debate Continued**

MR. N. TAYLOR: I don't think there's any question that he said there was a large amount of paper there. The reason there is a large amount of paper is that the report hasn't been made regular-

ly. For instance, in Ottawa or in many other jurisdictions in addition to Ottawa when a government plane is used, you file, and the opposition can go in and look every 60, 90 days. To now throw yourself on the mercy of the House and say that there's so much material there is a little like the fellow that's murdered his mother and dad now wanting to throw himself on the mercy of the court on the grounds that he's an orphan. If there's anybody that's put themselves behind a huge pile of literature, it's the minister himself and the government. Catch it up. Catch it up once, and then file it every 30 or 60 days. I know that he has a cherubic, innocent-looking, never-cover-anything manner about him, but the fact is that if there's anything that's subject to misuse by this government, it's the government transportation, the planes and the helicopters that whirl around here, and the minister well knows it.

I've been at many a picnic out here in the rural areas – after I had suffered my way through the mud, got up early in the morning, drove halfway across the province – and saw the little whirligig come in with an entourage not only of the cabinet minister but the little acolytes that they have: somebody carrying his suitcase, somebody carrying her speech, somebody else carrying the goodies. In case the picnic isn't good enough, they had to have their own eats. Then on top of that, a number of people that I can only qualify: they must be wearing blue and orange underwear because they obviously didn't work for the government, but they were friends of the cabinet minister. We see that type of thing coming all the time.

Now, the minister gets up: well, there's a big pile of data; it's been piling up; haven't got time to look at it. Well, what's he trying to get away with, Mr. Speaker? All he has to do is bring it up to date once and then every 30 days tell us who is flying. You know, we have to do it. Who is flying, and whom did they take flying? Male friends? Female friends? Political friends? Workers? That's all we'd like to know. We're not going to try to ruin your social life, but we would like to know who's going around in these planes and who the taxpayer is paying for.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Is the Assembly ready for the question on this motion, or does the hon. Member for Leduc wish to close debate? The hon. Member for Leduc.

MR. KIRKLAND: Certainly I won't be as eloquent as our senior politician and statesman. I think the hon. Member for Redwater indicated that in fact there should be an ongoing process that gives the public a general look at exactly where these aircraft and rotary-wing aircraft are proceeding within the province. I do not think that in fact it's asking too much to compile that, and if it's done on an orderly basis and if there's nothing to hide, then in fact with the new promise of open government here, this would be one small step to ensure that we carry on in that particular vein.

[Motion lost]

### 3:00 Provincial Aviation Strategy

M179. Mr. Kirkland moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing any and all reports, studies, or departmental plans outlining a provincial aviation strategy as of August 31, 1993.

MR. THURBER: We accept, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried]

### Privatization of Registry Services

M182. Mr. Wickman moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all documents prepared by Alberta registry services or on behalf of Alberta registry services pertaining to the privatization of services and the costs/benefits achieved by the privatization of such services for the period September 1, 1992, to August 31, 1993.

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

DR. WEST: Yes. I stand, Mr. Speaker, to reject this motion.

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

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The brevity of the minister's answer, I suppose, is the only thing that can be applauded there. We have a government that is in dire financial straits. We have a government that has embarked upon selling off anything and everything that it can get its hands on in an attempt to balance the budget. I recall not many years ago when the government came forward with the proposal to sell off AGT. We asked for studies, and the answer was: well, we haven't done any. They've now embarked on the privatization of the Liquor Control Board, and they're saying that they haven't done any studies on that.

Now it looks like the same applies to the Alberta registry services, whereby consideration of privatization is either not occurring or else the consideration has occurred without any forethought. Given the track record of this particular government with respect to privatization and its willy-nilly attempt to sell things off, I'm inclined to believe the latter, that the plan is without a plan, and that's really the indication behind what's happening here.

Mr. Speaker, I'm just registering my concern in the Legislative Assembly that the government is pursuing privatization, it seems, in a variety of areas, and the evidence is clear from past experience that indeed anything and everything is on the mark. I guess I'm wondering how the government can get the best bang for the buck, if you will, without doing any studies on any of these things they propose to sell off. I think it's a shameful approach to reasonable, proper management of our resources.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

DR. PERCY: Yes. I would like to speak in favour of this motion because I think that if this government is going to come forward with business programs and business plans, a fundamental element of that is to project future revenues and costs and to come forward with some mechanism so that we assess each move towards privatization on a consistent basis. So it's not too much to ask to see on what grounds the decision was made to privatize the registry services, because this has been done in other provinces. It would be useful to see what the comparisons were of the Alberta scenario compared to, for example, British Columbia. We would just like to see the factual basis on which this decision was made, and we'd like to see that there was a structure to this process rather than our belief, given the rejection of this request, that it is ad hoc and reactive and that he comes up with the idea when the Premier's asleep.

We should have a plan in this regard, and there should be a consistent way of assessing what ought to be privatized. If it is going to be undertaken simply on philosophical grounds, we might

as well know what the cost of that philosophy is. One can accept the philosophical view that there are things that can be privatized and done so at a cost, but we should know what the cost is.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford to close debate.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reason, I guess, that this motion is so particularly important at this time is that we're not only talking in terms of privatization of Alberta registry services. We've seen of course what's happened with the Alberta Liquor Control Board. There is some speculation about Access Network, and we hear out there in the community that the government may even be undertaking a possibility of privatizing lodges. We don't know any more exactly what is sacred from the point of view of the government and how these decisions are arrived at. It appears, in some cases, that balloons are kind of floated, and depending upon what direction those balloons are floating, I guess, there's a decision that's suddenly sprung up. We see things occur that would lead one to believe that the opposite is going to happen as to what happens. We look, for example, at the ALCB, where new leases were signed and then, bango, we find a complete turnaround. A lot of this privatization, the specifics of it, was not debated during the election. They weren't brought forward during the election. Now they start to occur.

I'm led to believe, Mr. Speaker, a couple of possibilities. One is that it's a government that is going to govern by polls. There may be polls being done by the government on certain aspects, getting a reading from Albertans as to whether they like this or that. If they like this, then the next day the minister stands up and announces, "We're going to do it." That's the way it appears to happen – on a whim, on a political whim – that we're going to do it without the research being done, without the documentation being done. If it is there, why not provide it? Why not provide it, Mr. Minister? This is the government that preaches freedom of information. We heard it time after time after time, and here's an opportunity for the Minister of Municipal Affairs to stand up and say: "I'm going to do it; I'm going to fulfill one of the promises that the Premier of this province made, that he will not let the people down. I will provide that information." So, I challenge the minister to produce that information. If it's not there, admit it's not there and that the decision was made on a whim.

[Motion lost]

### Children's Advocate Report

M194. Ms Hanson moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all written strategies that document the processes and time lines the government will be using to implement the recommendations of the Children's Advocate report on child welfare.

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, it's not possible to provide the requested information to the member at this time. As previously stated in this Assembly, I have asked my department along with the Children's Advocate to develop both short- and long-term plans to implement recommendations of the recently released child welfare report. The plans are currently under development along with time lines and, hopefully, projected costs.

Again I would like to remind the hon. member that we are reviewing the whole program of child welfare. It's in *Hansard* that in April I asked the Liberal opposition to come up with their

child welfare strategy, and I would like to see that as soon as possible so I can incorporate this plan along with our plan.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I have no choice but to reject Motion for a Return 194.

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

MS HANSON: Yes. I'm very disappointed, particularly given the history of reports on the child welfare system in this province. There's been a great deal of concern for a number of years and, generally, very slow, very superficial responses to the report. I was unaware until today that the minister had asked the Liberal Party for . . . [interjection] Okay; well, perhaps we could look at that. I wonder what the minister's time line would be for a response from the Liberal Party.

### Speaker's Ruling Supplementary Responses

MR. SPEAKER: Unfortunately the rules don't allow for the minister to reply to that. You might have that as a question tomorrow, hon. member.

### Debate Continued

MS HANSON: Well, I just need to express my concern, then, that we do have a good response to this report with very specific recommendations and changes.

[Motion lost]

### Point of Order Imputing Motives

DR. WEST: A point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs is rising on a point of order.

3:10

DR. WEST: Yes.

MR. BRUSEKER: Citation.

DR. WEST: Citation: Standing Order 23(h). The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford indicated that my motives here were to hide information. I wanted to clarify that, and I'd like a reading on him imputing those motives, because there's a Bill on Alberta registries coming forward that will be introduced in this Legislature that will be fully debatable here. At that time, from first, second, committee, and third readings we will have ample time to go through in detail all of the ramifications and directions of the Alberta registries. Therefore, I wanted to have a chance for you to judge whether I was withholding information.

MR. N. TAYLOR: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: On this point of order?

MR. N. TAYLOR: No; the point that I just wanted to speak on – he's referred to paragraph 23, and actually the hon. member is an expert in that area. It refers to "sitting" and doing nothing. Indeed he picked the right one.

MR. SPEAKER: While the hon. member referred to 23, the Chair believes he was referring to 23(i).

MR. N. TAYLOR: *Beauchesne?*

MR. SPEAKER: No, we're talking about Standing Orders. I believe he was referring to Standing Order 23(i).

The hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

MR. BRUSEKER: Just speaking to the alleged point of order. Mr. Speaker, I don't think the hon. member was imputing any motive whatsoever. I think he said it very clearly. He refused the information. I don't think that's any clearer than that. The minister stood up refusing to provide the information and said: I reject the motion for a return. It seems pretty clear that the minister has condemned himself with his own actions.

MR. SPEAKER: Does the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford wish to address this point of order. No?

Well, the Chair finds that there's a disagreement between members over the meaning of words. We'll proceed.

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

**Bill 202**  
**Deficit Elimination Amendment Act, 1993**

[Debate adjourned September 14: Mr. Mitchell speaking]

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in support of this Bill, and I rise to urge each Member of this Legislative Assembly to consider that what we are debating at this time is second reading, and second reading addresses the principle of a Bill. The principle of this Bill is that there must be teeth in the Deficit Elimination Act. The fact of the matter is . . .

**Point of Order**  
**Imputing Motives**

MR. SPEAKER: Excuse me. Is the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw rising on a point of order?

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes, I'm rising on a point of order. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to pursue the comments that were made yesterday by the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, and I'm pursuing them on the basis that he has imputed "false or unavowed motives to another member," pursuant to Standing Order 23(i).

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to refer to the comments that the hon. member made, page 225 of *Hansard* from yesterday. If I could just indicate them to you.

It's very interesting, after what he has said publicly about the need for teeth in the Deficit Elimination Act, that he would be the one selected by this caucus in some kind of motion, in some kind of effort to punish him, that he would be the one who would actually contradict and be required to contradict the principle of this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, some time ago I made my position on this Bill quite public, and there's been a lot of discussion on it. It reached a stage where it was brought before caucus, and I discussed it with my colleagues at some length. Subsequent to those discussions I decided to pursue a private member's motion. That was a decision which I made. The caucus was very supportive of endorsing whatever path I took.

Despite that, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung made statements that I had been muzzled, humiliated, embarrassed. Those were followed by statements from the hon.

Member for Edmonton-Whitemud that I had been brought to heel. Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that the only time that I have felt humiliated since the election is the time that I have spent in this House listening to the incessant interruptions, questions, and heckling from the opposition, and that's quite contrary to the position which the opposition and, in particular, the Leader of the Opposition took during the election.

**Point of Order**  
**Relevance**

MR. MITCHELL: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. Relevance to his point of order, please.

MR. SPEAKER: I believe the hon. member should refer to language used in this House as it reflects him and not by other members outside the House prior to the members being elected.

MR. HAVELOCK: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that; however, in the statements made by the hon. member, he did refer to statements that I had made publicly, and I'm simply trying to put my comments in context.

In any event, Mr. Speaker, I can assure you and the other members here that at no time did my caucus punish me by having me speak first on this Bill. At no time was there a motion. I elected to speak first on this Bill because I actually believe in penalties in the Deficit Elimination Act. I believe in good legislation.

MR. N. TAYLOR: It's not a point of order.

MR. HAVELOCK: It is a point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, the Chair doesn't want to put words or cut the hon. member off unfairly, but we must be concise in these points of order. I believe the Chair understands what the hon. member's complaining about in the remarks of the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung yesterday.

The Chair would like to take this opportunity to apologize for forgetting that this point of order was before the House when we rose yesterday.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung may wish to say something about his characterization of the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw at this point.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I accept the member's point that I may have impugned his motives, and I would like to apologize to him and withdraw those statements.

**Debate Continued**

MR. MITCHELL: I would like to go on to say that I was very, very interested in some of the comments that he was beginning to make that weren't directly related to his point of order. I would offer that were he to gain enough support in his caucus for the principle of this Bill, we could actually pass it, and he could rise in committee on any number of occasions and in third reading on any number of occasions and pursue this debate further. He obviously has much to say that is of value to this Legislature about this Bill and about this issue, and I would truly like to give him the chance to do that.

So that brings me to my point, Mr. Speaker, that we are voting on the principle of this Bill. The principle of this Bill is that the Deficit Elimination Act needs teeth. It is a toothless tiger. It is a useless piece of legislation because it does not outline what happens when nothing happens. Therefore, I don't want to put

words in the member's mouth, and I don't want to imply or connote things that he doesn't mean, but I do believe and I do accept his sincerity when he says that we need teeth in the Deficit Elimination Act. What I will say is that were we to pass this on second reading – and we can because we all agree about that principle; he's been very clear about that – then we could entertain formal amendments by that member and many other members in this Legislature to bring that Bill into a form that might be more acceptable to his back bench.

So this is a classic opportunity early in the process of these rule changes to make these rule changes truly work for the effect and the influence of the private member, the back-bench Member of this Legislative Assembly. All that the member has to do is acknowledge with his vote, as he has done verbally in this Legislature, that he accepts that the Deficit Elimination Act needs teeth. That's easy. All he needs to do is convince some of these hardworking new backbenchers that it needs teeth and that that's what the orientation and belief of this Bill is. Then we can get down to details and see about getting a structure in this Bill that would be acceptable to members on both sides of this House.

I welcome his comments, and I hope that he will progress in his thoughts in a way that will allow us to move on to committee and third reading. It's not enough anymore, Mr. Speaker, to stand up here and say: well, we're stopped now. You could do that before when we didn't have a chance to progress, and it didn't matter. Now we have a chance to progress. Now standing up and saying a few different things means something. Well, I challenge the member to vote with us, to get his back-bench members to vote with him.

**3:20**

Another member talked to me about how he wanted to get things done in the Legislature and that's why he's a Conservative. Now the Member for Calgary-Montrose has the opportunity to get something done. He can put teeth in the Deficit Elimination Act. This hard-nosed businessman, this entrepreneur from Calgary who has entrepreneurial business credentials about balancing budgets, about tough-minded management has a chance to bring his words to bear in legislation, Mr. Speaker.

So now we have two people who are on the record, at least in our discussion – in fact, he's on the record in this Legislature about wanting to get things done – about supporting this piece of legislation. It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that all we need is about eight more of these people. Some of them are awake over there. They might just stand up and say: “You know what? We're going to vote for the principle of this Bill, and we're going to get it on to committee.”

Let's just give it a try. If it gets defeated in committee, okay. If it gets defeated in third reading, okay. Let's give it a try. Let's stand up against this front bench that has so controlled what you have been able to do as backbenchers and will in the future if you don't stand up now and take a stand and tell them, “The back-bench member means something in this Legislature,” stand up and say, “We're going to go to committee at least,” and then defeat it on third reading if you want or defeat it on committee. But give it a chance.

**Point of Order  
Gestures**

MR. SPEAKER: Is the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs rising on a point of order?

DR. WEST: Yes, under Standing Order 23(j), using “abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder.” He's standing there shaking his fist at this side of the House.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair would have to rule that shaking a fist isn't speaking or using language.

MR. MITCHELL: All five foot seven inches of me rose up and shook my fist at the six foot three Minister of Municipal Affairs. I'm sorry if I intimidated him physically. He knows a lot about that. I hope he checked his guns at the doors, Mr. Speaker.

**Debate Continued**

MR. MITCHELL: What I'm coming to, Mr. Speaker, is the basis for this piece of legislation. It isn't as though this piece of legislation was brought to this Legislature in a vacuum. This piece of legislation has been brought to this Legislature in a very, very serious fiscal context. Let me begin to describe the severity and the depth of these fiscal problems to some of the newer members of this Legislature who may not understand exactly what has gone on in their absence or prior to their being in this Legislature. Eight consecutive deficit budgets: 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994. Do you know, Mr. Speaker, that that represents 35 percent of the time that the Conservative government has governed this province? I use the term “governed” loosely. Thirty-five percent of the years that this province has been governed by the Conservative Party has been deficit financing.

Now, I remember the previous Treasurer standing up with horror at the tabling in Ontario of the first New Democrat budget and saying: it is enormously frightening to think that the New Democrat government would bring in a budget deficit of \$18 billion. You know what, Mr. Speaker? That budget deficit was \$12 billion and represented about 18 percent of their total expenditures. The very first deficit budget brought to bear, brought to this House by the previous Treasurer represented almost a 30 percent deficit budget. So criticizing the Ontario NDP was exactly right, but here it was that the Treasurer himself brought in his first deficit that eclipsed the size of the Ontario deficit budget.

Now, they haven't stopped there. Weren't we going to get a new breath of fresh air? Weren't we going to get a change in fiscal policy? Not so, Mr. Speaker. What happened is that in 1992-93, which has just passed, this Treasurer oversaw about six months, about half a year of that. What happened? Well, Ontario's budget deficit was 24 percent. That Ontario socialist government had a deficit 24 percent of its total expenditure. This government's deficit in 1992-93, when they finally came to the bottom line after a number of iterations on that particular figure, represented 28 percent of total expenditures. They can't even do as well as the Ontario New Democrats. That's something to consider when you vote on second reading of this Bill. Now, for 1993-94 Ontario has got its deficit projected down to 12 percent of its expenditures. What happens to Alberta? The Treasurer, the breath of fresh air, has his deficit projection – and, of course, they've never met them yet – down to 19 percent. They are 50 percent worse than Ontario, the socialists, the New Democrats. It should be a very, very sobering observation for these back-bench members who are sitting behind this front bench who is demanding that they vote in a certain way.

**Point of Order  
Clarification**

MR. THURBER: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services rises on a point of order.



MR. THURBER: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to 23(h), this hon. member continues to call people who sit other than on the front bench the backbenchers. I would just like to assure him that there are no backbenchers on this side of the House; we're all part of the same team.

AN HON. MEMBER: We're all on the front bench.

MR. THURBER: We're all on the front bench, and these allegations are not fair at all.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair really believes the hon. minister's point is well taken. Any member who isn't in government should be called a private member, except for the opposition side where they have their Opposition House Leader, deputy leader, and Whip, but everybody else in the Chamber should be private members.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will use the term "private members." I appreciate the minister's point.

#### Debate Continued

MR. MITCHELL: Not only have we had eight consecutive deficit budgets, which started in the first year as a 35 percent deficit expenditure and now, through various ups and downs, is at 19 percent for the next year of expenditure and of course is 50 percent worse than Ontario's deficit projection this year, but we have also gone under this government's supervision from no debt in 1986 to \$32 billion admitted debt today, 1993. What's very interesting, Mr. Speaker, of course, is that for four and a half of the seven and a half years that it took us to get there, this Premier sat in cabinet. Isn't that an interesting coincidence? For seven and a half of the seven and a half years that it took us to get from zero to \$32 billion in debt, this Treasurer sat in cabinet. In fact, I could go across the front bench, if I can use that term, and I could point out that a number of these cabinet ministers – in fact as I face now: one, two, three, four, five, six, at least seven of these people were in cabinet and caucus over the entire seven and a half year period that it took this government to bring us to \$32 billion in debt.

If that isn't enough, Mr. Speaker, we have very, very serious reporting problems. This government projected last year that we'd have a \$2.5 billion deficit. By the end of the fiscal year they projected it to be \$3.1 billion, and three or four months later now, five months later almost, when they brought in the new budget, it arrives at \$3.7 billion. This government's projection of its deficit in the most recent year for which we have final reporting was out by 48 percent, and it was more than a 50 percent, in fact it was a 57 percent increase in the deficit over and above the deficit for the preceding fiscal year.

3:30

What I'm saying is that not only have we got an abysmal track record in absolute, actual dollar terms – deficit terms, debt terms – we also have a very discouraging track record in projections about what's going to happen. We can't believe what this government says about what it's going to do fiscally. Finally, Mr. Speaker, we have the ultimate admission. This Treasurer has said that prior to the election Albertans didn't have all the facts and figures. In this budget he brought out he said: all the facts and figures. Now, we appreciate that, as I'm sure Albertans appreciate that, but what's very disturbing about it is that there's not one figure that he brought out today that he as the Treasurer couldn't have brought out prior to the last election. What can we believe?

What this brings me to, Mr. Speaker, is the profound importance of a Deficit Elimination Act with teeth, with guts, that says to a front bench, to ministers who are less than accountable in this Legislature, who aren't being held accountable by their private members: we are not going to accept runaway deficits; we are not going to accept debt; we are not going to accept reporting that you can't believe; we're not going to accept reporting that changes conveniently before an election and after an election, when they had the figures. They had the facts five months ago, and they have them today. That's what this is all about. That's what's at stake in this Deficit Elimination Act.

Any private member across there who votes against the principle of this Bill to put teeth into this Bill is truly, truly not living up to the trust that has been presented to them by their constituents in the province of Alberta. I ask, I implore, I demand that these private members vote with us for the principle of this Bill to put teeth in the Deficit Elimination Act.

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

MR. EVANS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am just amazed at the kinds of statements that have been made by supposedly a veteran of this House across the way. The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, being the House leader on the opposite side, is taking a ridiculous, I may say, interpretation of Bill 202. I say ridiculous because he is not only dealing with one part of the principle, which is quite properly dealt with at second reading; he's very antiseptically washing over the most important part of this Bill, the part that is intended not to deal with the real issue of deficit elimination but the part that is directed at our Premier, the choice of Albertans to lead this province, and the intention being in no way, shape, or form anything other than embarrassment of this government and this Premier with the provision that our Premier would resign within two years if we do not abide by the Deficit Elimination Act. For the hon. member to stand across the way and wail and wax so eloquently about the imperative of all members of this side of the House to support this Bill and premising that on this notion that all that is in the principle of this Bill is that we put some teeth into the Deficit Elimination Act is nonsense, and I am certain that he is well aware that it is nonsense. There is tomfoolery and theatrics behind that particular provision in this Act.

Now, the hon. member who sponsored this Act could very well have brought forward a private member's Bill that would have dealt with the issue of deficit elimination, could have focused on that. He has a respected background in economics, and he could have made a valuable contribution to this House. Mr. Speaker, he has torpedoed his own Bill, and I presume with considerable thought about the impact of adding to what otherwise would have given us an opportunity to have a very thorough debate on the issue of putting teeth, if you will, putting some kind of a penalty provision into the Deficit Elimination Act. As I say, I think this is theatrical. I think this is intended to do nothing but embarrass the Premier and this government.

As a result of that, I will not vote for this Bill at this stage, second reading, when we are dealing with principles, because there are clearly two principles here. One is the principle of putting some kind of a penalty into a piece of legislation dealing with deficit elimination. The other principle is whether the people of Alberta should decide who is the Premier of this province and how long that individual remains as the Premier on a four- or a five-year tradition of going out and speaking to the people of the province and getting their input and finding out how the cards shuffle out in an election campaign. That is a very, very important

principle. That's a very important historical aspect to the British parliamentary system and to the system that we adhere to in this House. The purpose of this Bill is to subvert that process. Were I or any of the 51 members of government including the Premier to vote for the principle of this Bill, we would in fact be voting to take responsibility from the electorate of the province of Alberta and put it in the hands of this House to decide who is the Premier and who is the government. That is not the issue that we should be dealing with in this Act. This should not have been part of this Act. With all due respect, the hon. member who has sponsored this Act has done himself a disservice by including it.

Accordingly, I will not – I repeat I will not – vote for this Bill.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to say a few words on Bill 202 in front of us today. First of all, I think we have to just kind of pause for a minute, stop and think, look at where we are, and reflect a bit. I can recall – it's not that many years ago – a Tory government just lavishly throwing away billions of dollars of surplus money that they had to find cause to dispose of. One year they chose to give the municipalities a billion dollars. Everybody had their own little trust fund. It was squander, squander; spend, spend, spend.

Even when the Premier prior to the current Premier came into office, what was the financial position of this province? A half billion dollar surplus? We look now: eight, nine, less than 10 years later, less than a decade later. Where are we at? Thirty-two billion dollars total debt that has now been verified, and I commend the government for openly now admitting that there is \$32 billion of liability out there that every one of us as Albertans has to share. We must all feel that pain. We have children at home. We have grandchildren. If we don't tackle that deficit, it's going to be passed on to them. They're the ones who are going to have to pay the price, in terms of life-style, for the lavish life-styles that we've had in the past while elected representatives spent, spent, spent.

We're in a situation now – I don't care if it's the Tory government or if the Liberal Party were government – where we would all be concerned about the deficit. None of us is going to sit here or stand here and say that we're going to ignore the deficit and let it accumulate. We know that it has to be tackled. We hear about this plan, this plan, this plan, although this reference to “this plan” starts to get a little sick after a while because nobody is really fully sure as to how this plan is going to operate and what the hardship is going to be. We just hear about this plan, this plan, this plan. But forgetting that plan, let's look at the problem, the deficit that we do have to tackle.

The Treasurer comes forward with a deficit elimination Bill that is to eliminate the deficit in a given period of time. It has no teeth in it, absolutely no teeth. It just states it's going to happen. A new member from Calgary-Shaw gets up – and I commend him – and speaks from his heart and says: that's not good enough; it's got to have some teeth; it's got to have some penalties. Yes, in our caucus prior to the last election when we debated the whole question of the Deficit Elimination Act, in fact going to the last session prior to the election, my position was very, very clear. We had to support amendments to that particular Bill. We had to put some teeth in there. We had to put some penalties in there, some hardship. Those that are responsible – all of you that are responsible for allowing that deficit to occur, to continue to occur, and not meet those targets – have to pay a price. In the private sector, in a corporation, what would happen? Without question there would be a penalty imposed. The penalty would probably

be an instant firing of possibly the whole board of directors. Possibly the company would end up just going into bankruptcy. It wouldn't have that same opportunity government has.

3:40

So, yes, I support in principle the concept that is behind the Bill. I support it, and I would hope we could sit here and say that in second reading all of us could support the Bill in principle. We would advance it on to committee stage, and then we could start making amendments to the Bill. If the Member for Calgary-Shaw was not comfortable, for example, with the reference to the additional penalty that refers to the Premier, he could move that amendment. He would have the support of some members of this House, possibly enough that would eliminate that reference and have the Bill passed.

But we know it's not going to happen that way. We know very, very clearly that every member on that side of the House is going to vote in opposition to second reading of Bill 202, and it's not going to go into committee stage. It puts an individual into a dilemma. Do you support in principle a Bill that you can't support all the principles of, or do you vote against it, the same turmoil that the Member for Calgary-Shaw would be facing?

By and large, one has to say that some of the Bill is good, but there are members in this Legislative Assembly that are going to have difficulties with the additional amendment that was put into Bill 202 after the election: the reference to the Premier having to immediately hand in his resignation when it is determined that the deficit for '94-95 is off target, that it is not what was originally projected to concur with that Deficit Elimination Act. It becomes a question as to when does that happen. When is it determined that that deficit has not been met, that the Premier has to hand in his resignation? It certainly isn't going to happen March 31, 1995, because bookkeeping doesn't happen that way. The public accounts don't happen that way. It's some time down the road, much further on, before the actual deficit for that fiscal period comes in front of this House. In fact, it could possibly even extend a year beyond that particular date. In other words, we have now completed three years of a four-, possibly five-year term, and we haven't had this government call elections in two years and nine months.

So you see, there is a problem there that I am pointing out in terms of that particular reference. I wish that there would be an opportunity to advance this Bill to committee stage and make the reference to delete that particular portion, because I believe that the intent of the Bill is good. The concept, the principles are good. It's a question of how you achieve those principles. Ultimately, what I would like to see is a Deficit Elimination Act with monetary penalties. That's what can hurt. Possibly the amounts of dollars aren't sufficient, but on top of that we need one thing, and the Member for Banff-Cochrane almost hit upon it when he said: like a corporation, who makes the determination as to whether that CEO, whatever, is fired? It's the board of directors that that person is accountable to. In this particular House let's never, never forget who we're accountable to. We're accountable to the electorate, because they're the ones that put us here.

So what is missing in terms of legislation to ensure full accountability is recall legislation. Now, if you had a Deficit Elimination Act complemented with a recall Bill, that would allow the electorate to go out there and say: “Well, it's been two years since this government has been in power. They've accepted a 5 percent penalty in their wage, but that's not good enough. We've got to get rid of that Premier. We're going to sign a petition, and we're going to force recall. We also feel that the Treasurer was just as guilty, if not even more guilty, because the Treasurer may

very well have assisted in fudging books, cooking the books, whatever the case may be. Who knows?" Or they may look at the Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne and say he's just as guilty, or the Member for Banff-Cochrane. In other words, that decision is left to the electorate to target those that they feel are responsible for letting that deficit run away, for letting their futures run away and just not having that control mechanism.

Mr. Speaker, as I sum up here, very, very clearly I would like to see a Bill that would allow for the penalties in the Deficit Elimination Act, at the same time accompanied by a recall Bill. That, in my opinion, would be the ultimate in what I call accountability and a democratic process that respect who our bosses are, being the people of Alberta.

Thank you.

MR. WHITE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak against that which is before us, and I appreciate the silence on the other side. There's a principle here that we're speaking of today. We're speaking second reading of a Bill before us, but this is a free vote. The Whips are off. I heard a debate earlier, and the Whips were sort of off. I have a little difficulty with that. The Speaker aptly understands what the term means: giving this side of the House the same opportunity to speak against the Bill as that side of the House. I appreciate that, sir.

Now, the principle of this particular Bill and all others like it, including those of the other side – front, back, middle bench, whichever you were, you'll remember a Spending Control Act. I heard a member opposite say something about tomfoolery. This is the ultimate in tomfoolery, that he would sit in this Chamber, saying that doing what we're supposed to have been doing all of this time that we sit here – saying, yes, we were sent here to spend the people's money wisely – then we artificially bring upon us a very crude and unwieldy tool that artificially controls the spending after it's spent. Now, I don't understand how anyone can believe that you can sit here and get to the end of the day and say, "Ah, son of a gun; we've spent all the allowance, and now we're going to punish ourselves." That's so patently ridiculous I can't believe anybody could believe that that in fact will actually happen in this House.

We know what will happen. Somehow or other, if there are any teeth in the Bill or not, if there's some reason to say that it will be some embarrassment for the government at the end, somehow or other it'll meet that target. But I say to you: it is all the wrong reasons for meeting that target, not the right reasons, which I'm sure all members of this House would say are, "Look, we're trying to do the best we can all of the time, deciding where the elements of a budget are to be increased and decreased in order to meet that final end."

So hard decisions will have to be made, but they certainly aren't made at that end of a budget process: way, way, way out there in forcing one's hand.

It reminds me how ridiculous it is. Many of us were paperboys and that sort of thing when we were younger. You'd say: "Okay, it's cold out. I've got to finish this end of the paper route or that part of the paper route before I'm allowed to pull a candy out of my pocket." The effect is still the same; you'll still be able to do that. Each and every one of us in this House and particularly those that are on the front bench – I assume that is a term that can be used in this House – are the ones that are fundamentally in charge of the budget. Really, it's unbelievable that you can say: wave a magic wand. I remember some of the members opposite years ago waxed very, very poetic, sir, about the virtues of a Spending Control Act that was going to save us all this wonderful . . . And then what happened? Look at the deficit. I mean, we

come into this House, and the first thing that is said to us is: oh, we missed the target again; golly, there's a couple of billion here or there; I mean, we don't know. It's absolutely disgusting that we could waste the time of this House instead of dealing with the matters that are so vitally important as to where those dollars in the small sense are spent, the ones that are very finite elements of a budget.

### 3:50

I know there are some members here that have spent a great deal of time in a municipal government where every single dollar has to be examined. They don't go after the fact and say: oh, jeez, we can't overspend. In fact, this House put upon that level of government a Municipal Government Act that says you must do that; it's not an option. Here it happens to be that option, and I don't think it stands this House in good stead arguing this point over and over.

Now, there is the corollary to that. If you're going to put some punishments – if you're going to say "Bad, bad, bad, bad" – then the corollary, of course, is that you're going to reward somebody for it. I suggest to you that it's not even remotely possible that if the government was to decide that somehow or other it could, all errors being possible, meet the targets in a budget deficit, it could then reward itself, reward its members. We all know that's simply not going to occur.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank those members for listening patiently. I hope in future that others, particularly the Member for Calgary-Currie, will take quite seriously that it is, at least from this member, an honourable thing to do in a free vote to speak one's mind on a subject and not have to take umbrage with something that the other side might say.

MR. SMITH: I rise proudly, Mr. Speaker, as a government member from the back side of this House. It's actually my first formal time at this level, private members' day, and I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate you and the other elected officers of the House. Good reference informs me of your impartiality and fair judgment. Good decision-making has demonstrated that, and I applaud you for that.

Standing to speak against this motion and hearing the continuous wide-band rhetoric that I've never heard in businesses before, that I've never actually been a part of until I saw this, reminds me actually of a business opportunity, Mr. Speaker, and that would be to duplicate the success of the Trivial Pursuit inventors and actually make up a game for the members opposite. I would call that game Predict the Past. I've heard the past, I've heard the past, and I've heard the past. These private members, these government members go forward.

Mr. Speaker, I am confident that the intellect and the genuine concern for the welfare and human dignity of all Albertans, and that I believe is represented on both sides of this Legislature, will be put to the test in the ensuing term to ensure the continued well-being of this great province. It continues to be great, and it continues to have the opportunity to be greater.

If one person or one manifestation could guarantee to me right now that in four years there will be no deficit, I would gladly sacrifice a year's pay to bring about that goal. To reduce spending by \$2.3 billion in four years requires a tremendous amount of political will. It requires the strength of a government to stay on its intended course. It requires the strength that far surpasses a 5 percent wage reduction. To achieve this goal requires day-to-day commitment. It requires vigilant management of a \$14 billion business. That management is the responsibility of all government members. It requires the ability for us to have indicators to

monitor our progress. It requires the openness of a quarterly financial statement. That policy has already been implemented by this government. We are proving to Albertans that we are meeting our targets. In order to meet those targets, it requires a long-range business plan that outlines savings, cuts, reductions in spending. It has been clear that any effective business plan will require a strong helmsman. We have that helmsman. He is committed to that four-year plan. This government has taken steps to increase accountability and open up the process to public input, because as both sides of the House know and both sides of the House agree, your paycheque is signed by the electorate.

The Deficit Elimination Act legislates a four-year deficit reduction plan leading to a balanced budget. The government set up the Financial Review Commission and held a roundtable entirely devoted to the issue of deficit reduction. Other roundtables have followed demonstrating this openness, Mr. Speaker, to include health, education, upcoming with the seniors, as well as an all-party committee on access to information.

Sitting closer to the Member for Calgary-Shaw, I feel that I don't have to implore, beg, speak to. I have a feeling that he understands the logic of speaking against this Bill.

Quarterly financial updates provided by the government is in full agreement with the task force recommendations that were put forth. The standing policy committees will allow for greater public input into the budget planning process. There never has been a more open and accountable system in place in Alberta at any time in the past. But, Mr. Speaker, we're not here to predict the past. We're here to ensure that the future lingers and lives on for Albertans. We're already doing that without the threat of a wage reduction, and these are the goals that voters of Alberta endorsed on June 15. They selected a chief executive officer. They selected 50 other members to support that chief executive officer. I feel very proud that I am able to support him in whatever capacity I can to make this thing functional.

However, there are new ways to reach our goals. We must re-engineer government to reflect business and services in the '90s. We have to be in a position to predict outcomes, and I think, Mr. Speaker, we can do that. I applaud the hon. member for his commitment to the government's Deficit Elimination Act and the need for all Albertans to work together to meet this goal. However, we must concentrate on areas where we can save hundreds of millions of dollars, not hundreds of thousands. So, please, let's vote against this, and let's get on with the job.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray.

MR. GERMAIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank you again for looking after me. I appreciate it very much.

I listened to my friend for Calgary-Varsity with a lot of interest. He spoke with clarity, and he spoke with a practical businessman's application to this particular situation. I'm only concerned about his reference to the "back side," Mr. Speaker. Those of us that are worried about the size of our backsides would do well to adopt your phraseology and refer to ourselves as private members.

I also listened with great interest to the commentaries from the minister of the environment. The minister of the environment is a senior member of the House, and he speaks on the issue of the procedure of the step we are at in this process that is second reading. I listened to his comments carefully and with respect, because I take from his comments that the reason he will not support this is that he views the purpose of the legislation to be twofold, and he therefore rationalizes and makes his most eloquent statement that he cannot support this legislation because of what

he implies to be the secondary purpose. With respect to the eloquence of his comments, I cannot agree with them, and I would like to urge members of this Assembly to consider that argument very carefully before they stand up or holler out to vote on this particular matter later when it might be called, Mr. Speaker.

4:00

It seems to me that the purpose of this legislation is deficit elimination teeth. If you get to that point, what is left in the legislation is two teeth. We have one purpose, two teeth. When I resorted to the reference material that is so graciously supplied in this House to assist us in our arguments, to assist us in our debates, to assist us in our deliberations, I saw in *Beauchesne* the fact that you can amend at committee stage following second reading entire paragraphs of a Bill. You can take entire paragraphs out. It also indicates that the purpose of the Bill is often expressed in no further look than the title of the Bill itself. It seems to me that those paragraphs, put in that publication by more learned parliamentary scholars than I would ever hope to be, must by definition – must by definition, Mr. Speaker – make it clear that the purpose of any piece of legislation before the House must be narrowly channeled and narrowly focused.

If you come to that point of view, then with the greatest of respect to those people who would speak against this Bill for the procedural twist to it and the laudable objectives of rising and protecting their chief executive officer, as was described, it has to be identified as one purpose, two teeth. To my way of thinking and in my submission to this House, we will all do ourselves a measurable favour if we vote yes now at second reading of this legislation and get on to the fine tuning of it at the stage where I understand that fine tuning takes place.

Mr. Speaker, thank you again for looking after me.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to make my comments very brief. I don't like to stand up and try to make long, fancy speeches, but one thing bothers me when I listen to the proponents of Bill 202, and that's a principle which I don't believe is being followed in Bill 202. The proponents would have the Premier of Alberta, the first Premier ever elected by the general populace in the province's history, resign for a hypothetical or potentially hypothetical one-dollar deficit. I have a lot of problems with that. I'd like to suggest that when we the government meet our targets and a surplus does occur within any given year, the members of the opposition will challenge the integrity of the accounting procedure and try to argue that a surplus is in fact a deficit, all in the method of trying to get the Premier of the province of Alberta to resign.

The principle which I find hard to understand is simply this: the members who support Bill 202 would have a Premier resign for any deficit sum. However, I wonder if the proponents of Bill 202 would have a leader of a party or the opposition party also resign if they ran a deficit in their own caucus budgets, which I know has happened in the past. Now, I know that in the past some members have said, "Well, don't you just issue special warrants to cover these deficits?" I would hesitate to throw stones if I lived in a glasshouse. If our Premier were forced to resign for the hypothetical sum of one dollar, a thousand dollars, or a million dollars, then I think I would want to be prepared to have the leader of my party subjected to the same set of rules and they would also resign if their caucus budgets were overspent.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Roper.

MR. CHADI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps we should amend this so that we could all resign.

Mr. Speaker, make no mistake about it, we do have a Deficit Elimination Act currently in place. For an awfully long time, from the comments made by members opposite, it almost sounded like the Liberals were the ones that were bringing this Deficit Elimination Act in place. We already have it. While I commend this government and the past government for bringing in this legislation, the Deficit Elimination Act, which attempts to impose some fiscal discipline on the government, many Albertans are concerned that there simply is no penalty. I hate using the word "teeth," but for lack of a better word I will use it. There simply aren't any teeth to this legislation. And we're not the only ones. The Deficit Elimination Amendment Act, 1993, is really being said by an awful lot of people. Not only members in the House but Albertans have been saying it for some time. Members opposite have been saying it. There really must be a penalty imposed to ensure that the government actually meets its solemn obligation to Albertans to eliminate the deficit over the next four years.

Mr. Speaker, after eight plans to eliminate the deficit in this province, each one has failed. We are ultimately responsible, each one of us, every member in this House. We've been elected. We're the stewards of those dollars that Albertans hand in to the province each year. We have to ultimately bear the responsibility. After eight plans that have failed, finally the government has said: let us put in an Act so we can follow and ensure that we will not fail again.

That's what this Deficit Elimination Act is. Albertans not only have told us they're demanding fiscal responsibility. This government, the Conservatives, ran in the last election on the premise of fiscal responsibility and accountability. We did as well. I don't think there is a government in this world right now that is going to run on the fact that they're going to be spending tons and tons of money. Every province in this country currently is saying the same thing: we have to be fiscally responsible, and we have to be accountable. Whoever is saying those things and whoever practises those is going to get elected time and time again, provided they practise what they preach. That's what we're here for. There's no partisanship here, Mr. Speaker. We're all in this together to make this work. Six hundred and ninety million dollars was the target we would knock off for this year. Lately, it's \$714 million, whatever the case may be. Still, we are about to bring the deficit down to two and a half billion dollars. If we can achieve that, great. And we have to achieve that, because our Deficit Elimination Act says we should and we must. Seven hundred million dollars in 1994-95 and then further reductions in subsequent years up to and including 1996-1997 when we will finally have a balanced budget is what we're all hoping to ultimately achieve.

The government's Deficit Elimination Act simply does not provide the accountability mechanism required that Albertans made it clear they want. To suggest that a penalty of public opinion will ensure that the government will stay the course, as the Treasurer so often has alluded to, quite frankly is ludicrous and simplistic in thinking and certainly not what Albertans are expecting. What I'm saying is that public opinion alone is just not enough, Mr. Speaker.

#### 4:10

Let's look at the legislation as currently presented to us. Legislated consolidated deficit targets can be exceeded in the 1993-94 and '94-95 fiscal years and will be adjusted to compensate for failures in subsequent years. So we're saying, "Listen,

if we miss the targets this year, maybe we can catch it up next year or the year after that." That's just not acceptable. It's not good enough. We've got to meet our targets when we say we're going to meet them. If we're going to say that our targets are firm and, on the other hand, say that we can adjust our accounting to bring the targets on line, this is not right, Mr. Speaker. How can we impose fiscal discipline on ourselves? How?

The Treasurer not only made it clear in the Deficit Elimination Act but made it clear also in question period before this whole Assembly time and time again that any revenue windfall achieved in our estimates for a particular fiscal year would be applied to the debt and not used toward the deficit and allow the government to have an escape route. Yet in the budget – and I have a copy – it clearly states, "Gains in revenue over the budget estimate will go to reduce the deficit and debt." Now, clearly that should not be the case. The Provincial Treasurer told us in the House in question period that indeed the funds of any windfall will go toward the debt. The ALCB, for example, and the way we're going about the privatization. You would think for a moment here that what we ought to be doing is: all revenues that come from the ALCB sale should go toward the debt. Obviously, these were capital assets that we've had. We ran up a debt initially to create these assets. So now when we liquidate these assets, it's only logical that those funds go toward paying off that debt.

It is for these reasons, Mr. Speaker, that I feel the Deficit Elimination Act as currently constituted is seriously deficient.

In order to ensure that the deficit elimination is not simply an exercise in optics and to ensure real accountability to the people of Alberta, the accountability they've often so heartily endorsed, I and my colleagues and many other Albertans have come to the conclusion that penalty provisions are required to back up the commitment to a balanced budget. A Deficit Elimination Act with effective penalty provisions for noncompliance is one which gives the people of Alberta a stake in the process leading toward a balanced budget. Given that all Members of the Legislative Assembly have a stake in the plan to eliminate the deficit, we're proposing a levy of 5 percent on all MLA salaries for failure to reach the deficit target in the first year. This ensures that all Members of the Legislative Assembly are directly responsible to the people of Alberta for nonperformance. We're in this together. We're saying that we are willing to put our money where our mouths are as well. Please join us on that, because we're all in this together. This way all Members of the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker, are directly responsible to the people of Alberta for nonperformance. This is in accordance with practice in the private sector. Public officials should be rewarded for performance, not nonperformance.

We further said that should this lack of compliance and fiscal irresponsibility continue into the second year of the government's mandate, we feel it's necessary to impose the ultimate penalty: for example, the resignation of the Premier. Now, that's not carved in stone, but there should be something there. It is the Premier who sets the tone for government policy, and it's the Premier who is responsible under our parliamentary system for the actions of this government. This type of penalty sends a signal out to Albertans that there's a serious commitment to deficit reduction over the long term and not just at election time. One can argue that the suggested ultimate penalty is harsh or not necessary. Then we could make those amendments. We could make the necessary amendments and find a compromise so all members are comfortable. Obviously, we have members on this side who are not comfortable, and you heard that today. You only heard from one. I'm sure there are others. I know there are others.

I urge that we support and pass this Bill. Please, support it, pass it at second reading, and take it to committee where it can be debated and amended as necessary. Also bear in mind that the Bill would be really redundant should we indeed meet the targets for this year. Just remember that we've got six months left. Six months and we're there, and the Provincial Treasurer says we're on course. So what have we got to lose? This Bill is really redundant, then, at that point in time. We're saying 1993-94. If we don't meet the targets, it's dead. We don't have to worry about going and asking the Premier to resign. That's not what I would like to see, Mr. Speaker. I want to see a balanced budget.

In my conclusion I want to say this. I want to read something to you, and it's not my words because I'm going to quote from our Premier. You notice I said "our Premier," the Premier of the province. On May 19 this year our Premier Klein said that the one deficiency in the Act, and it's the one thing we've never been able to get our heads around, is: what punishment is there for violation of your own law? Our Premier said this. Our Premier further said that the law should be strengthened with a penalty clause to punish deficit spenders. Those aren't my words, Mr. Speaker. Those are the words of the Premier. We believe that. I believe in that. Obviously the Premier believes in that. Now let's get down to business and put some teeth into that Act.

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

MR. HLADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes it's difficult to be recognized. Anyhow, I rise in the Assembly today to speak against Bill 202, the Deficit Elimination Amendment Act, 1993.

Along with other members of my caucus, I understand that the hon. member put forward this Bill before we had the reforms. I understand it would have had a different perspective, or I hope it would have had a different perspective, if it had been presented after that. However, Mr. Speaker, this Bill has one glaring flaw. It fails to deal constructively with the issues of including penalty provisions in the Deficit Elimination Act. I neither support nor object to the principle of penalty provisions. I would welcome the opportunity to debate pros and cons of such provisions with other members of this Assembly. The time to do so would be in Committee of the Whole.

However, Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of difficulty with the Bill before us, because its principal objective is not penalty provisions but the embarrassment of the Premier of this province. I find the sections in this Bill calling for the resignation of the Premier to be personally offensive and unworthy of debate in this Assembly. If the principle of this Bill was the inclusion of penalty provisions in the Deficit Elimination Act, I would gladly give my support in hopes of encouraging constructive debate. Some might argue that this is the case. Others might argue that the intent is the resignation of the Premier. I would say the two are indistinguishable, and for this reason this Bill is inappropriate. What is missing in this whole process is the opportunity for members to have input into the Bill prior to or during second reading. In this case, the Liberals should have taken the process more seriously and provided us with a Bill that was directed more toward the general concept of penalties and not so much toward the media and the political expediency of members opposite.

Why would any member of this House support the principle or intent of this Bill as it now stands? I feel that the principle behind the inclusion of penalty provisions in the Deficit Elimination Act warrants some discussion between members in this House. However, I find very little in this Bill before us that warrants due consideration, and therefore it would provide a poor if nonexistent framework for a reasoned discussion. The penalty provisions

brought forward in this Bill are little more than an insult to the Premier of this province. In fact, Mr. Speaker, if we were to ask for the resignation of one member, then as some other members have said, we should ask for the resignation of all members. Better yet, if the Premier is expected to resign if the deficit elimination target is not met in '94-95, then perhaps the Leader of the Opposition and the House leader should offer to tender their resignations when it is.

4:20

I would say to all members of the Assembly: where is the fairness in this penalty? It is nothing more than rhetoric and little more than grandstanding. If the Liberals were serious in their attempt to insert penalty provisions in the Deficit Elimination Act, they would have thought about a comprehensive plan that treated all MLAs equally. While the leader of the Liberal opposition might consider his role in this House as being useless, we are all accountable to the people of this province and therefore should be treated equally in any penalty provisions considered by this House. Mr. Speaker, the penalties in this Bill are both minor and extreme and, I would suggest, have little to do with accountability of MLAs in this province. As the Member for Calgary-Shaw has already pointed out, a system of penalties would have to be more comprehensive to deal with the issues in a really meaningful way. I have absolute confidence that this government under the leadership of the Premier will balance the budget by '96-97. Whatever reasons individuals have for supporting the inclusion of penalty provisions in the Deficit Elimination Act are their own. However, I would draw the line at calling for the Premier's resignation. If anything, it causes people to take sides, and any chance for a reasoned debate is lost.

Mr. Speaker, this province does not tolerate pessimists. The Liberal Party and its leader should be more diligent in preparing Bills for this Assembly. I personally would be embarrassed to sponsor such an irresponsible and pointless Bill. As MLAs we are supposed to work together to provide an example for all Albertans. The Bill before us proves nothing more than that private members' hour is considered a joke and an arena for political grandstanding by the opposition. Aside from other mechanisms that provide for increased accountability in this province, such as the Financial Review Commission, the budget roundtables, quarterly budget updates, the standing policy committees, penalty provisions in the Deficit Elimination Act, the principle of penalty provisions should receive due and diligent consideration by the members of this House. This is not the Bill that should be the catalyst for such debate.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Liberals in this House are serious about deficit elimination. They are also serious about keeping this government accountable for its promise. Debt and deficit are at an all-time high. Cynicism about the political process and confidence in the ability of politicians to do something about that cynicism are at an all-time low. Now, it's clear from the arguments we just heard from members opposite that where you stand on this issue of accountability depends only on where you sit. If anyone is serious about giving meaning to the Deficit Elimination Act, then they must support penalties if legislated targets are not met. If they really want to get serious and be truly accountable in a way that all voters will understand, then they must recognize that the most fundamental thing they can do is keep their promises. If they fail to do that, they should test their

continuing credibility with their constituents. Of course, the ultimate test of this is at the ballot box.

Leading up to the election, many, many voters asked me what I hoped for once I was elected. I answered them in as honest and straightforward a way as I could. I told them I wanted government to be as open, to be as honest, and to be as accountable as it could be. The provisions of this Bill will help me bring this about. Even for those who disagree with the notion of the Premier's resignation but support the principle of the Bill and support the principle of giving strength to the government's own Deficit Elimination Act, this Bill deserves their support. If this Bill has merit, it needs to get to the next stage where amendments may be considered if they're warranted.

Now, this Bill has as its root the notion of accountability. Its underlying principle is that there should be a consequence if a promise is broken. The government certainly has nothing to fear from this Bill. If they're on target, as claimed, then the substance of this Bill will never become an issue. If the government plan falls off the track, then every one of us who pledged accountability to their constituents will be able to put that pledge into operation as a result of this Bill. This Bill is not about the Premier. It's not about finding a scapegoat. It's about leadership, it's about commitment, and it's about integrity. I ask all members to vote to support this Bill.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross.

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to debate this Bill with the knowledge that the Deficit Elimination Act received Royal Assent on May 14 of last year, and quite frankly, listening to the debate today, I am astounded at the logic that's been put forward. I don't believe the Deficit Elimination Act needs to enhance its credibility at all.

One merely has to consider the actions taken by this government over the last few weeks to come to the conclusion that the Act does affect decision-making. The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud maintains that his amendments will increase the level of accountability in our government and conveniently forgets that numerous steps have already been taken in that regard. For example, the standing policy committee system has effectively addressed a gap within the current system: elected officials are meeting with concerned constituents, organizations, and colleagues in a formal setting. This is direct accountability and is a result of the leadership our Premier has given to this government. Because of this leadership, countless numbers of Albertans have been able to speak publicly and privately with elected members in order to explain their concerns and advise us as to what, in their view, must be done. These recommendations are then given directly to cabinet and in turn are dealt with in the Legislature for discussion.

Secondly, and just as important, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Treasurer, for the first time ever, filed a quarterly budget report on August 19 of this year. That report was one of the clearest, most concise, thorough documents that all Albertans can review and offer comment on at the standing policy committees. More than anything, this leads to accountability in regard to the Deficit Elimination Act.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, as recently as last week profound parliamentary reforms were passed unanimously by this Legislature, and these changes came about because the hon. Deputy Premier as House leader and the Opposition House Leader rolled up their sleeves and worked hard together on behalf of all members of this Legislature and Albertans to effectively change government structure. The result of their actions enables any member in this Assembly to discuss any issue for two minutes,

spend one day a week in the constituency while in session, and, more importantly, vote freely on private members' Bills and motions. These measures provide a much greater degree of accountability.

Mr. Speaker, the Official Opposition would have you believe that the Deficit Elimination Act does not have an accountability factor when, as you can see, the facts bear a somewhat different story. As it now stands, this Act is very useful to the people of Alberta. The amendments brought forward today are an intentional way of fostering dissent and simply are unacceptable. As a rookie member – I have only been here, I think, 11 days now – I find that what was put forward earlier is very unacceptable. There's no comprehensible reason for the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud to suggest that the duly elected Premier of our province resign, as outlined in Bill 202. Further, I don't believe there's any excuse for the disregard this member has shown this Assembly by couching this demand in an amendment. I believe we as elected representatives must recognize the negative consequences of these amendments and take the firm and irrevocable decision to defeat Bill 202.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

4:30

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We need a Deficit Elimination Act which cannot be adjusted to accommodate the government's need for creative accounting. This Bill clearly addresses that need.

Responsible management means applying windfall revenues directly against the structural debt. In contrast, this government is promoting using windfall revenue to reduce the yearly deficit. Responsible management means not deferring \$282 million in pension obligation interest payments but recognizing it in the year it is incurred. Responsible management means being prepared to accept the consequences of your actions. This Bill addresses the inherent responsibility of management by putting teeth into the Act. To manage in a responsible manner is not an act of tomfoolery, as has been suggested by the Member for Banff-Cochrane.

I challenge the Premier to be prepared to put his money and his job where his mouth is and support this Bill.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Calgary-Currie.

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll make my remarks brief, as I do not support this Bill, but I am very, very concerned that the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has some concerns about what happens with respect to a Bill that has no teeth. He had his debate on this issue a little earlier this afternoon, and he said quite emphatically that this is brought forward because the Deficit Elimination Act was an Act without teeth and this is what happens when nothing happens, quote, end quote.

Well, I can tell you what happens when something happens. When we passed the Deficit Elimination Act, the people of Alberta voted to return this government to power. So that's what happens when something happens.

In addition to that, I think my colleagues from across the floor should recognize that what happens when something happens is that the citizens of Alberta applaud this government's decision to enter into new elements of privatization, to get out of the business of doing business that they shouldn't be in, and that we had the support of the financial community. You're hard-pressed to whine and complain when the citizens of Alberta support this government

and these initiatives. That's what happens when something happens: your arguments lose credibility.

My final comment on this one is in response to the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung. What happens when nothing happens? Your opportunity to raise taxes comes to the fore. That is an option that's been clearly rejected by the province of Alberta, by the citizens, and will never be the stand of this government as we sit here. So when you're concerned about what happens when nothing happens, it would be more appropriate to direct some attention to what happens when something's happened. This is happening right now.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan.

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to this motion. It's indeed an honour to support my colleague who put forward this Bill.

We've heard much about parliamentary tradition and the reference to the British parliamentary system. I would suggest to you that within the British parliamentary tradition, if they had accumulated at any given time the amount that the past government of Alberta has done, not only would the Prime Minister of Britain have been held fully accountable, but also the equivalent to our Provincial Treasurer would no longer be holding his portfolio. That is what has been lacking within this Chamber: full accountability back to Albertans.

I listened to us being reprimanded and being called whiners. I would suggest to you there's a substantial number of Albertans who in their wisdom wanted to see democracy truly working within this House, resulting in 32 Members of the Legislative Assembly sitting on this side.

I do not just stand here to represent the people that voted personally for me; I stand here to represent every constituent within Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan. The message every one of those constituents gave was that they want a fiscally responsible . . . [interjections] It's not funny. It's not indeed funny when you are saying that constituents want a fiscally responsible and accountable government.

We presently certainly have a debt elimination Act, but it's toothless. I've used that term before in this House, as a toothless tiger, in our Public Accounts Committee. I'll use it with regards to the government legislation. What we want is members of this Legislature on either side of the House to be held fully accountable back to Albertans. That is where the penalty comes in. Now, to use the excuse of the clause asking for the Premier's resignation as the reason you won't support second reading I think is slim. In fact, I think it's insulting. We know that there's a step beyond there, that we could effectively, if the majority of this House wished, see that being removed.

I would ask hon. colleagues on both sides of the House that if we want to demonstrate fiscal accountability, we should demonstrate it and should support second reading. A \$32 billion debt is nothing to be amused about. It certainly wasn't this side of the House that created a \$32 billion debt, and I would say to you that my hon. colleague, Mike Percy . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Sorry; I apologize for saying your name.

Edmonton-Whitemud should be commended in bringing forward this Bill, and I would urge you to please support second reading of this Bill.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to speak to this Bill and perhaps indicate very quickly that I'm a little disappointed in how the Bill was framed by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. I think it's mischievous and has focused a lot of the attention, especially on this side of the House, on the question about the Premier resigning. I want to make it clear that I'm opposed to the idea of MLAs paying a penalty if the deficit targets are not met. There are four points that I would like to make in that regard.

First of all, I try to be as positive as I can, and I hope that I'll be able to maintain that through this Legislature. I don't believe in negative Bills, and this goes back to my involvement, I think, in the field of business. What I feel in this regard is that if there is no opportunity for reward, then it doesn't make sense to apply any penalties.

All afternoon there's been a sort of "we" and "they." I know that on this side of the House there is some recognition and perhaps some support over the idea of penalties, but I want to differentiate myself from those on both sides of the House that believe that. I'd like to indicate how I feel: that as private members, those of us who are sitting here in the second and third rows should really view what goes on in the front rows on both sides of the House. I am not the government; these folks here are the government. There's a difference, then, between what they do and what they're responsible for and how I see my responsibilities to the people of Lethbridge-West. It's the government who present the Bills for supply, and it's those of us who are private members who provide, then, the sanction or the approval for those particular areas. Once we provide that ability for them to spend the taxpayers' money, it is really the government that then becomes the decision-maker, and I believe reward and punishment must be directed at persons that are responsible for these decisions that are made.

4:40

So now referring specifically to the government, if people are looking for punishment in this particular House, there is already ample opportunity and a mechanism. That is simply that the Premier, as the President of the Executive Council, can fire and replace any minister who would be found to be deficient in their duties as it relates to the Deficit Elimination Act or any other Act for that matter. So I don't feel that in a British parliamentary system, with the Premier as President of Executive Council having that ability, we have to subject all members to some sort of penalty when we've had really no opportunity to be part of that decision-making ability.

Now, the Member for Little Bow talked about potential accusations that would come from perhaps the opposition side of the House or perhaps even from our own members if there was some fudging on the actual budget. I like the way that he presented that point, and I think it's an important point. Even more than that, I don't want a call from a constituent who has had a program they were involved in cut or eliminated, and I don't want a call from a constituent who has had a relative laid off who will accuse me of the fact that the only reason those cuts took place was so I wasn't going to lose 5 percent of my salary.

The last point I would make is really regarding, I guess, the first point of the principle of this Bill, and that is the calling for the Premier's resignation. I would simply say that in Lethbridge-West it was the Premier that got the Member for Lethbridge-West elected. That was not done to head up a team that was just going to last one or two years. That was done to head up this team for



at least the term of this 23rd Legislature. I think that's what they did, and that's what I want to remain true to.

Now, other members have tried to convince me that really the purpose of this Bill was accountability. I'm not opposed to any accountability on my part or anybody else's part in this particular House, but the words to this Bill 202 do not say that. My response, then, to it: if it looks like a duck, if it walks like a duck, and if it sounds like a duck, Mr. Speaker, it's a duck, and this Bill should be a dead duck.

MR. KIRKLAND: Mr. Speaker, I'll be very brief. As I campaigned, I advocated that there should be some substance to this Bill. It was shared by many that in fact that should be the case. I was pleased initially to see that in fact there was some substance in an attempt to put it here. I would share with you that I'm not keen on the Premier provision, as I would call it. I think it's ill-conceived as well.

AN HON. MEMBER: Well, vote against it.

MR. KIRKLAND: If it did in some wild way ever come to third reading, I would vote against it, but I am not concerned at this particular stage.

We should send it to the Committee of the Whole to refine it so in fact it has some substance. There's no one in this Chamber who did not encounter, when they were campaigning, that there was not enough accountability in politics. Perhaps this is not the best way to instill it, but it's one small step, I think, to bring back to the public that we are concerned about our perception and that we should make a move to correct it as such.

In closing, don't be afraid to let it go to committee. Don't lose site of the principle, and I think the principle here has been distorted to some degree. It simply is, in brief, accountability.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Highwood.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree with my colleague for Lethbridge-West. I do not agree with the concept of legislated penalties as proposed by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud or even those suggested by Calgary-Shaw. Electoral penalties in the parliamentary tradition, yes. Social penalties like tarring and feathering, no. Financial penalties, other than for public wrongdoing and found so in court, I do not support.

I think my biggest concern is what I see and perceive as a lack of appreciation for the parliamentary process. The fundamental element of parliamentary governments is that they are not elected for fixed terms, albeit a five-year maximum, and they are daily, while sitting, at risk. They are continuously accountable, if we're talking about accountability, and governments can be defeated and have been. We've got some rather classic historical evidence of that: the Macdonald government in the 1870s, the Meighen government in the 1920s, and more recently the Clark government of 1979. The parliamentary system has been adapted and adopted in many lands because it has continuous democratic accountability.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

DR. L. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also cannot support this Bill. I find it mischievous in intent. That has to do with the resignation of the Premier. In fact, we already have a deficit reduction plan. We have a deficit reduction Act in place.

This Act and plan, I must point out, we campaigned on and won on on June 15.

As I said, the resignation of the Premier is the point that I have great difficulty with. When I sit here, I see the Premier and the Treasurer putting forth a reasonable and responsible plan. What do I hear from the opposition, Mr. Speaker? Just foolish objections, objections that on the whole mean nothing. It would seem to me that because all these objections come from the Liberal opposition leader and his cronies, we should in fact call upon the Liberal opposition leader and the cronies to resign. [interjections] Mr. Speaker, please. Thank you.

We should call on the Liberal opposition and the cronies to resign, as opposed to the Premier and the Treasurer, who are putting forward a concrete and practical plan. [interjections] Mr. Speaker, please.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat may continue.

DR. L. TAYLOR: Thank you.

So for those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I cannot support this Act. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Utilities.

MR. TRYNCHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to try and be as kind as I can. I must say that in all my years in this Legislature, I've never seen such a silly Bill. I've never seen anything so silly.

Let me go through it with you, Mr. Speaker. They talk about principle and you can change the principle. Well, the principle of the Bill cannot be changed in committee. So when you vote yes on this, you accept the principle. You do not change principle in committee. That's something that they might take into consideration.

As I look at this Bill, Mr. Speaker, I see that if the actual deficit is not reduced, the Premier has to resign. Somebody mentioned: well, would you resign if your deficit is a dollar? Is that right? If it's a hundred dollars, a thousand, a million dollars? Well, I don't think so. That's why I think this Bill is silly.

So they say, "Let's put some teeth in it," and that's what they're going to do by having the Premier resign. Well, I say to you, Mr. Speaker, and I say to all the members here: if we really want to put some teeth in it, let us all resign. The members across the way in the Liberal caucus say: we are going to take responsibility, and we're going to make it happen. Well, if you can make it happen and you don't make it happen, then you all resign. You bet.

Mr. Speaker, when I campaigned before the June election, we took around a document. We showed Albertans our four-year plan; we showed them the document where it says no new taxes, no sales tax, a deficit eliminated in '96-97. Albertans accepted that. There wasn't one Albertan in my travels that requested that the Premier resign or I resign or the leader of the Liberal opposition resign while we campaigned.

4:50

MR. MITCHELL: Then there's no problem.

MR. TRYNCHY: Well, Mr. Speaker, he says there's no problem. I say to you that if we balance the budget and stay within the Act, what bonus does the Premier get if the target is met? What bonus does a minister get if the targets are met? What happens if we go

into our budgets and a disaster happens, if it occurs and it costs millions and millions of dollars to rectify? Would we say no because we have to live within the Deficit Elimination Act? Yes, we would. We would not help the tornado victims in the city of Edmonton because you couldn't do it. You couldn't do it. They say that we can balance the budget, eliminate the deficit. As we present our budgets in this Assembly, and I will be presenting mine tonight, I can balance the budget. I will stay within every cent of that budget, but when it comes down closer and closer to April 1 of '94 or April 1 of '95, I will have to cut back programs that we should be doing because I will not be able to go over my budget.

So then we'll hear, as we heard today, the member across the way asking about the grants for libraries: give us more. Can't do it, because we've got to stay within our budget. "Give us more dollars," the cry across there will come, just as sure as we're here. Yes. They say now they're crying because we're reducing the budgets and there are some cuts. What would they say if we had to meet our budgets? I'm looking at the ministers of Health, Family and Social Services, Education. What we'd be saying is that we have to stop now on February 1 because we don't have the dollars to go to April 1.

Mr. Speaker, as I've said, such a Bill is such a silly one. I want to say it again, I want it to sink in, and I want it to register. I really do. For us to sit in this Assembly and listen to this kind of - I've got to be kind - can I say "garbage"?

MR. SPEAKER: No.

MR. TRYNCHY: I can't. I'll take that back. . . . to such silliness and waste of time because they say we can change it in committee, which cannot be done when you approve the principle.

Mr. Speaker, to all the members of this House: if you think about it, you will say no to this silly, silly, silly Bill.

MR. SPEAKER: Would the Assembly allow the mover of the Bill to close debate? We're very close to the time for a division.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

DR. PERCY: I'm flattered in one sense; it's one of the few times in my life that anybody actually said an economist has a sense of humour. I've heard the word "mischievous" used a number of times, and normally that's not the term used to describe economists.

The bottom line, I would like to say, is the purpose of this Bill, to try and introduce accountability into the process, particularly with flagship Bills such as the Deficit Elimination Act, which both sides of this House supported. It is a core program. The costs of not meeting those targets are so large for future generations, particularly in the costs of squeezing out our ability to maintain our social services, our educational system, and the safety net, that we have to have fiscal discipline up front early. There has to be a role for accountability mechanisms, and that came across clearly as all members on both sides were at the doors. So I would urge you to listen to my learned colleague from Fort McMurray, who argued one principle, two teeth, and that you support the Bill so that it can be amended in committee. It could be defeated there or be defeated in third reading, but I would like to see the principle of accountability within a parliamentary system debated fully in this House. Again, I've heard many of the arguments, and it is with respect that I hear the arguments.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair regrets to interrupt the hon. member, but the time allotted for this stage of Bill 202 has expired. All those in favour of this measure, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:56 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Abdurahman	Henry	Sekulic
Beniuk	Hewes	Soetaert
Carlson	Kirkland	Taylor, N.
Chadi	Massey	Van Binsbergen
Decore	Mitchell	Vasseur
Dickson	Nicol	Yankowsky
Germain	Percy	Zwozdesky
Hanson	Sapers	

5:10

Against the motion:

Ady	Gordon	Oberg
Brassard	Haley	Pham
Burgener	Havelock	Renner
Calahasen	Herard	Severtson
Cardinal	Hierath	Smith
Clegg	Hlady	Sohal
Coutts	Jacques	Stelmach
Dalla-Longa	Jonson	Tannas
Day	Kowalski	Taylor, L.
Dinning	Laing	Thurber
Doerksen	Lund	Trynchy
Dunford	Magnus	West
Evans	Mar	White
Fischer	McFarland	Wickman
Forsyth	Mirosh	Woloshyn
Fritz		

Totals: For - 23 Against - 46

[Motion lost]

### Bill 203 Recall Act

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the debate that took place in this Chamber on Bill 202 just a few moments earlier has served as actually a very useful prelude and introduction to Bill 203, because I sat and listened to many members on both sides of the Chamber talk about the importance of ensuring that we treat all members equally and that we not single out the Premier for some special punishment or some unique sanction. It occurred to me that Bill 203 provides all members with exactly the opportunity that they were asking for.

Sir, the recent reform of the Standing Orders and parliamentary procedure has been a major, major achievement, and there's no

question that I think all members celebrated those reforms, reforms which go a long way to making individual members more responsive, more accountable, and most important more effective.

I think none of the reforms was more significant or more important than free votes. As important as free votes are, there is a companion reform which was missing. The free votes I think are going to work and be effective. I think on the three occasions when we've seen it to date, it's clear that members have to have a little greater measure of comfort with the notion of free votes, but I think it will come. I'm confident it will come. To make free votes work and work well, there's another reform that should take place, and that reform is recall. I think, Mr. Speaker, we have the opportunity to remedy that omission from the reform package that was put in front of us by the House leaders a week and a half or so ago.

In supporting Bill 203, I think it's fair to recognize that this is going to take a measure of courage from each member in this Chamber, but I'm confident that the 82 other Members of this Legislative Assembly have the requisite courage, the courage to take a bold step, a step to restore some measure of confidence that Albertans, that our constituents don't have now in the system. Is that a bad thing? Is it a bad thing that members in this Chamber may have to look over their shoulders from time to time, not just once every four or five years but on an ongoing basis, every session, every week, every question period, every debate? Is it a bad thing, Mr. Speaker, that individual members have to check on a regular, periodic basis to make sure that they're still listening to their constituents, that they're responding to the needs and wishes of their constituents? I expect that most members would agree that that's a positive thing. That's what we ought to be doing in any event.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I've had the unique opportunity in this Chamber of having participated in two election campaigns in less than a year, and that's an opportunity I'm not sure I'd recommend to any other member of the House. I recognize the fact that under this Bill it means that each of us are in the position that we may have to go in front of our voters more often; we can't wait until the next four years. Once again, the convention, as I understand it, is four or five years, but as I look at it, I think we all expect we're supposed to be accountable on an ongoing basis anyway. All we're talking about now is some way of saying to our constituents and our voters collectively that we recognize that principle and we're prepared to implement it in a way that is effective and it means something. I think that if 40 percent of the constituents of Calgary-*Buffalo* think I'm doing a lousy job, they should have an opportunity to do something about that without having to wait for four or five years.

Mr. Speaker, I might say parenthetically that perhaps the only member of the Chamber that should embrace or view this with some trepidation might be the Member for *Highwood*, the Deputy Speaker, and that's not at all because that member is not a diligent or an effective parliamentarian or a hardworking constituent worker. The last time recall existed in Alberta, some 56 years ago, it was the voters in *Okotoks-High River* that had the opportunity to get out and participate in the first two stages of a recall process. It occurs to me that here 56 years later . . .

head: **Consideration of His Honour  
head: the Lieutenant Governor's Speech**

Moved by Mr. Severtson:

That an humble address be presented to His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To His Honour the Honourable Gordon Towers, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

Moved by Mr. Decore that the motion be amended by the addition of the following words: but that the Assembly condemns the government for failing to develop a comprehensive fiscal plan which presents proper budgetary and human service priorities, since the most severe budget cuts made by this government have been extracted from Albertans who form the most unfortunate and vulnerable sectors of society, such as children, the poor, and the disabled.

[Adjourned debate on amendment September 13: Mr. Evans]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The Chair sincerely regrets having to interrupt the hon. Member for *Calgary-*Buffalo**, but under Standing Order 19(1)(b) I must now put the question on the amendment to the consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech.

[Motion on amendment lost]

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

**Bill 203  
Recall Act  
(continued)**

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would just finish off my observation by saying that it's crossed my mind in speaking to recall that there may still be some senior voters in the *Okotoks-High River* area who relished the opportunity 56 years ago to send a powerful message to their MLA, who at that time was Premier *Aberhart*. I'm sure, though, that they feel they're getting a much better and much higher level of service and representation now than was the case 56 years ago.

Mr. Speaker, in *British Columbia* just, I think, two years ago there was a referendum in that province. What we watched was 1 million voters; 80 percent of the people who voted in a referendum in *British Columbia* supported the notion of recall. That, I think, was a powerful, powerful message not only to legislators in *Victoria* but to legislators right across the country. I'm not sure that Albertans feel any differently than those 1 million residents in *British Columbia* who went into the referendum and said: we want the right to be able to recall an MLA that isn't effective, an MLA that isn't doing the job we put him or her there to do.

AN HON. MEMBER: Only lawyers. There must be a million lawyers in there.

MR. DICKSON: You know, we talk about recall and pulling back members that aren't competent. I think we in this Legislature are a bit of an anomaly. There are fewer lawyers in this Legislature than in any other Legislature in the country. It's occurred to me, Mr. Speaker, when I look at some of the laws that have been passed by this Legislature in the last few years, that we could have done with a few more lawyers in this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, dealing with the Bill in front of members, I want to describe briefly the process that's envisaged by Bill 203. The first step is an application by 50 electors. The second step is a petition, and the petition must be completed within a 60-day period. Within that 60-day period the applicants have to sign up 40 percent of the electors in the constituency. The third step is a referendum. The referendum has a very simple proposition: do you wish to recall Gary Dickson, MLA for Calgary-Buffalo, or whoever the member is?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Yes, yes.

MR. DICKSON: Of course it's hypothetical, hon. members, without doubt.

To get to the next stage, the referendum would require that 50 percent plus one of the electors in the constituency vote in the affirmative. If that's successful, then the fourth step and the most important one is that a by-election is held, in my case in Calgary-Buffalo. I as the MLA who is subject to recall would have the opportunity to run again. I suppose if I were foolish enough and couldn't read the message, if I had that many electors telling me they thought I'd done a lousy job and I still wanted to try and persuade them otherwise, I'd have the opportunity to do that.

Now, we tried to provide some other conditions and to make this reasonably workable. I should back up, Mr. Speaker, and say that there's something of a challenge here. On the one hand, you try and make a recall process that can be effective, that can work. But on the other hand, we have to recognize that jurisdictions that have recall and have had some experience with it typically don't have multiple parties. They typically only have two parties. We have a difference here because cabinet ministers are members; they also represent constituencies. So what we tried to do is devise a process that recognized those unique features of a parliamentary system. What we've done is tried to avoid a situation where a constituency could be effectively hijacked by a special interest group or if there were a particular group that was anxious to bump off, if I can use that word, a cabinet minister because of an unpopular position he had taken not as an elected representative but as a member of the Executive Council. So that's why the thresholds are reasonably high.

We provide in our Bill that this could only happen one time. If the voters in my constituency initiate this process and it's unsuccessful – in other words, there aren't enough electors that sign the petition or the referendum – that would be it; they wouldn't have another opportunity before the next general election. It could only happen one time, then, between general elections. It couldn't happen between a by-election and a general election, it couldn't happen for the period of six months immediately after an election, and it couldn't happen after the 42nd month after the last election. So there's a six-month period for an elected member to attempt to demonstrate to his or her constituents that they're going to be effective and get their feet under them, so to speak.

5:20

I anticipate that some members may say: well, this seems like a really convoluted, involved, complicated process; why do you need a referendum if you've already had the petition? The reason is simple. The petition is an open kind of balloting. There's no privacy. It's open to abuse, and that's why we've said that there would be the petition first and then there would be a referendum. A referendum means a private vote, a secret vote. We think that's important before this important process would be initiated.

I think there is a concern in terms of cost. My understanding is that the cost for the least populated constituency would probably

be \$50,000. In a densely populated constituency the cost could be as high as \$110,000. I think that's something that has to be assessed by members.

I think there will be other speakers to this Bill, Mr. Speaker, that can review some of the interesting history of recall, and I don't intend to belabour that. I would just point out that it's important that we not oversell recall. I'm anxious not to oversell recall. I think it would be foolish and perhaps unfair to Albertans to suggest that this is a kind of remedy that would be utilized on a regular basis, on a frequent basis. If you look at the I think 33 American jurisdictions that allow recall at the municipal level, the 15 states that allow recall of state legislators, it's rarely used. Typically even when it's initiated, as happened in Alberta, something else intervenes. In Arizona Governor Meecham saw the writing on the wall and ended up losing office through another process, a parallel process. He was in fact impeached by the legislative body that he presided over before this matter saw the full course. The point is – I think Harry Truman described it – that the attractiveness, the potency of recall is the cannon behind the door. It's a way of reminding all of us individual legislators that we're here serving. Whether it's 36,000 or whatever the number of constituents are, it's a useful, powerful reminder that we're here to do what they wish us to do. We're here to serve their needs not our needs, to be working their agenda not our agenda.

When I say that it's important not to oversell recall, there was a quote I saw in a periodical. There was an essay by a distinguished Alberta political scientist, Dr. Peter McCormick with the University of Lethbridge, who had written in a periodical called *Policy Options* in December of 1992. I thought he described in a pithy and a colourful way the challenge with recall. I quote:

Only at our peril do we expose ourselves and our political system to the corrosive cynicism and boiling anger generated by voter helplessness. It may well be that the periodic power to overturn governments every few years is the "steak" and the power occasionally to recall distant or unresponsive individual members is just the "sizzle" – but if we do not offer the voters both, they may simply lose confidence in the restaurant.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all members to support Bill 203, to allow us to take it to the next step: to look at the detail, to work cooperatively on both sides of the House to see if there's a way that we can take a very old Alberta experiment, update it, modernize it, and turn it into a way of helping individual Albertans feel a greater sense of confidence in individual members and what we do collectively.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to begin debate against this motion. It's a little unique for me, because while I'm not personally in favour of recall, my hon. MLA for Calgary-Buffalo has brought it forward. I'm looking at the opportunities. If I were to initiate recall, I would have a different MLA and I bet we'd probably have a Conservative one. It puts me a little bit in a moral dilemma.

However, having made that somewhat frivolous introduction, I would prefer to, given the lateness of the hour, have the opportunity to complete my debate in its entirety and would ask leave to adjourn debate at this time.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie has moved that debate be adjourned on this item. All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say no. Carried.  
The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We reconvene at 8 o'clock this evening as Committee of Supply.

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

