

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, September 29, 1993** 1:30 p.m.
Date: 93/09/29
[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

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

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

Amen.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to table the document Meeting the Challenge, an education roundtable workbook. This is the workbook which will be used at the two education roundtables being held in Calgary and Edmonton. All members of the Legislature will be receiving copies of the workbook through their offices this afternoon.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to introduce to you and to Members of the Legislative Assembly a group of 94 visitors from Central Memorial high school in my constituency in the city of Calgary. They are accompanied by Ms Elaine Schmidt, Ms Demers, Mr. Paterson, and Mr. Boutillier. I would ask that they stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Legislature Randy and Judy Olsen, who are a farm couple from the Camrose area who came in specifically today to this Legislature to relate in this building their concerns, the experiences that they've had with the health care system, which the Premier says is running so effectively.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly one of the best informed and toughest questioning constituents of Edmonton-Glenora. Jason Cassidy is here today, and he's brought along his parents, Pat and Kim, so they can learn something more about this process as well. I'd ask them to rise and encourage all members to give them the traditional greeting of the Assembly.

Speaker's Ruling Designated Supply Subcommittee Reports

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Before the Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition, the new rules provide for a little different procedure this evening with the reporting of three subcommittees on estimates, on which there will be, as the Chair understands it, no chance for broad debate. The debate will

involve, if you can characterize it as a debate at all, an overview by the chairman, the minister, and the critic from the opposition side. The Chair raises this matter because of the question of anticipation. The Chair does not propose to rule out questions on these three departments so long as they relate to policy and not to budgetary matters.

The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. KOWALSKI: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Just for clarification, sir, the process would entail the standing policy committee chairman with a brief report and then the possibility of up to two reports from the opposition critics and then a brief report from the minister. That would be two opposition critics, if they choose to do that, rather than one as the hon. Speaker had indicated.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much. The Chair doesn't believe that really broadens the debate that much further, so if there's general consensus with this position, we will proceed in that manner.

head: **Oral Question Period
Rural Development**

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, Albertans have often heard the Premier of Alberta talk about how important agriculture is and how it is the backbone of our economy. On a motion introduced by the Liberals in this Assembly, in fact introduced by me, the Legislature was asked to implement the government's own local development initiatives report for rural Alberta. Incredibly, the motion to revitalize rural Alberta was defeated in this Assembly because of the majority of the Conservative members, including the Premier. I'd like the Premier to tell Albertans why he voted against an initiative to revitalize rural Alberta.

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, in fact, I voted against it because to vote for it would have been totally and absolutely redundant. Virtually everything that is contained in this motion has already been implemented by a Conservative government deeply concerned about the farm community.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, part of the motion included the government taking the initiative, in fact, the Premier of our province taking the initiative to organize western Premiers to deal with the international farm subsidy war. Mr. Premier, tell Albertans why you wouldn't provide leadership, why you wouldn't do anything in this area.

Speaker's Ruling Items Previously Decided

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The Chair is having difficulty with this question and the line of questioning because the Assembly has come to a decision on this motion, and it's really not open for debate. Hon. members can say that question period is not a debate, although some hon. members seem to think that it is a debating period of the Assembly's time. If the Premier wishes to answer the question, he may do so.

Rural Development
(continued)

MR. KLEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, relative to the implementation of recommendations of the local development initiative, that, sir, is under way.

Relative to the creation of a coalition of western Premiers to work with the Prime Minister and leaders of farm organizations and agribusiness to find a solution to the international subsidy wars, Mr. Speaker, agriculture and the breakdown of interprovincial trade barriers is a matter for ongoing discussion. As a matter of fact, just – what? – two days ago when I referred to the hon. minister of agriculture, I met with all the representatives of agencies who are supporting supply/demand to find out how we can better work for them to help them market their products and at the same time avoid cumbersome tariffs both on an interprovincial level and on an international level.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, this motion was designed, was set up, was crafted so as to help rural Alberta. Why would the Premier vote against a motion that talks about helping small business and talks about a leadership strategy to deal with the international subsidy war?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, this motion in my mind was drafted and it was presented by the Liberal Party to make them look good, knowing full well that we were in the process of implementing just about everything they had put forward.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. minister of agriculture wishes to augment.

1:40

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, if I can add to our Premier's comments, our Premier and this government certainly believe that agriculture is Alberta's future, not its past, and this is something that we are working from. What was brought about in this motion was Alberta's past. We have a future that we're developing, and we're going to be building from.

MR. DECORE: You goofed on this one, Mr. Minister.

Health Care System

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, my second question can be categorized as health care horror story, part 2. Today a Camrose farmer and his wife told the media of their horrible experiences while at an Edmonton hospital. They related a story of dust balls on the floor. They talked about blood having dripped out of an IV and being left on the floor for two or three days. They spoke of serious infections resulting from overworked cleaning and nursing staff who were forced to cut corners. This is the bad part. These people called on the Premier's office for help, and they were told that they had to go and talk to the minister responsible for Health. That minister was too busy to take or return messages, and they went off to the minister responsible for health care planning, whose office said that she didn't have time to talk to them. We have been told that we have a Premier who cares and listens. Mr. Premier, tell Albertans, tell these two people from Camrose why you didn't care about them.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to discuss any individual's health issues in this Assembly. It would not be appropriate. However, I would like to respond.

If any person in this province runs into any unfortunate incident while accessing our health facilities, there is a process available to them. That process is, first, through the administration or the board of the individual institution. If they do not feel that they have received satisfaction from that initial contact, we have in place in this province a Health Facilities Review Committee,

whose mandate is to review such situations and report to the minister. That is the process that is in place for facilities. If an individual has a concern with a physician, there is an opportunity and they should rightly take it to the College of Physicians and Surgeons in this province. That is the process that is in place.

Mr. Speaker, I respond to, I would say, 900 to 1,000 letters a month. I make every attempt to respond to phone calls. I am not saying that our system is perfect, but I do believe that the responses and the opportunities are offered to individuals in these cases. Certainly I am pleased to meet with any person who would like to meet with me on this issue.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, elected representatives are supposed to represent people; elected representatives are supposed to meet with people; elected representatives are supposed to care about people. I'd like to have the minister tell Albertans why she stonewalled these people, why she pawned them off on a bunch of bureaucrats instead of doing the job she was elected to do.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, that allegation is totally unfounded and incorrect. If any individual calls my office and receives help from a department person because the minister is not available – and you know that we are not always in our offices – and that person does not feel that they have received an appropriate response, they can call back and be taken further, and I believe that does occur.

Mr. Speaker, the delivery of health care in this province is very complex and very difficult. No doctor, no hospital, no minister provides ironclad guarantees. However, our staff – our nurses, our doctors, our support workers – in those institutions are hardworking people who provide millions of services to Albertans each year. I do believe they endeavour to do that. I do believe the administration and the boards that operate our hospitals operate them with the best interests of the patients in mind, and I do believe they are prepared to respond if a problem arises in one of our institutions.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, we have a Premier who passes the buck to the Minister of Health, who stonewalls these rural Albertans. Then we have a minister responsible for health care planning who says that she's too busy. Mr. Premier, I'd like you to give us a list. Who in your government, who in your cabinet is prepared to listen to people, is prepared to do something over there? Give us a list.

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, we're all prepared to do something in the interests of Albertans and their health and welfare. As the hon. minister pointed out, the people who sit in government and who also sit in the opposition do not run the hospitals on a day-to-day basis. We have set up a process with the hospitals to try and find new and better ways of doing things, to create more effectiveness and more efficiencies, to remove cumbersome rules and regulations to allow these boards to operate more effectively and more efficiently with fewer dollars. That's what we're trying to sort out. We are not going throughout this province to find the absolute worst possible cases.

MR. DECORE: Do your job.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I will do my job. If this hon. member wants, day after day after day I will bring people and introduce them in this Legislature who are willing to stand up and say, "I was treated well in a hospital; I received good care." I would invite the people of Alberta to join with me in touring any hospital

in this province to see the level and the quality of care that we are providing generally and overall throughout this province.

MR. MITCHELL: Today, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health has referred the Olsens yet another time – that's probably the fourth or fifth time – to yet another bureaucratic destination. Yesterday the Premier said, and I quote, "I challenge the hon. member . . . to bring me the very specific case." Here are the specifics of the Mr. and Mrs. Olsen case: blood on the floor left uncleaned, dirt and filth in the room left uncleaned, nurses without the time to change dressings regularly, infection after an early discharge, \$1,500 in personal health care expenses because the Olsens were told that they fell between the cracks. What can the Premier stand in this Legislature and say today to Mr. and Mrs. Olsen after yesterday dismissing experiences like theirs as being "nothing more than melodramatic horror stories?" Ralph may not be listening, but Mr. and Mrs. Olsen are.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to state that I have a complete documentary of the discussions with the Olsens. If they would like to meet with me, I will sit down and go over those and ensure that they have pursued every opportunity open to them. I clearly outlined the process that is available to people in this province to deal with those concerns. If they feel that there was some lack in my office or on my behalf, I will sit down and discuss that with them. I will not do that personal discussion in this House.

1:50

MR. MITCHELL: Is this minister speaking on behalf of the government, a government that says that it's open and it's accountable? Is she speaking on behalf of the government when she says that she will be open and accountable? [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The hon. member must craft his supplemental question in a more precise manner than he's doing so far.

MR. MITCHELL: Is it government policy that they will be open and accountable, that they will meet with a constituent from Alberta, an Albertan family like the Olsens, after and only after that family has contacted the government three or four times, that family has done a press conference, that family has asked the opposition to ask questions in this House? Is that what they mean by open and accountable government, Mr. Premier?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I have clearly outlined the contact that I have had. I will not and it is not appropriate for the Minister of Health to discuss a family's personal medical issues in this Legislature. I will sit down and discuss it in privacy with that family. I have some deep regard for the need for their privacy, between them and the Minister of Health.

However, I also will reiterate that there is a process that we ask be followed when there is an issue with an institution that we operate under board governance. There is also a procedure to follow if there is a concern with a physician. We in this province put in place a process for that very reason, and that is the Health Facilities Review Committee, that will visit a facility, that will make a complete investigation of any individual's concern, and that does report directly to the minister. Then appropriate action is taken.

MR. MITCHELL: We're not talking about bureaucratic processes. We're not talking about shuffling people off with serious problems

to yet another bureaucratic process. We're talking about human consequences to individuals and to families of across-the-board, arbitrarily, improperly planned cuts. I think, Mr. Speaker – and I'm going to ask this now – that after the Premier said yesterday that these kinds of cases are melodramatic horror stories, it's time that he stood in the Legislature here and now and apologized to people like the Olsens and other people across this . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order. [interjection] Order please. That is not a question.

The hon. Member for Three Hills-Airdrie.

Social Assistance Policy

MS HALEY: Yes, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Family and Social Services, who announced a major welfare reform package in April of this year. This was the first major reform of welfare in Canada, and I'd like the minister to inform the House as to what the caseload reduction has been to date.

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to again remind the Assembly that six months ago I announced a three-year welfare reform strategy to change from a passive welfare system to an active re-employment and training system. Since then, I'd just like to advise the hon. member that I have confirmation now that the caseload in that system has dropped by 17,000.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MS HALEY: Yes, Mr. Speaker. My first supplementary is: could the minister explain what impact this reduction will have on federal cost sharing under the Canada assistance plan?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to advise the Assembly that the annualized reduction of 17,000 cases is \$170 million to Albertans that can be better utilized in high-needs areas.

In 1989 the federal government placed a ceiling on the Canada assistance plan, which allows only 5 percent growth per year for Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario. The Canada assistance plan normally cost shares on programs on a 50-50 basis with the provinces. Since 1989 the changes in policy have cost Albertans an additional \$87 million, and with these recent changes in the reduction as far as caseloads, Mr. Speaker, we'll be able to take advantage of an additional \$14 million for Albertans.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MS HALEY: Yes, Mr. Speaker. My final supplementary to the minister is: how much of the caseload reduction is due to clients leaving the welfare program and going into training programs funded by Students Finance Board grants?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, part of the welfare reform strategy was to make sure that we provide the options necessary for people to be able to move from being on social assistance to active training or the work force. Part of the announcement included the transfer of \$32 million to Advanced Education and Career Development for that specific issue, where students can now take advantage of grants or a combination of grants and loans or student loans. I believe I'd like to ask the minister of advanced education to possibly supplement the answer.

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

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Family and Social Services has given part of the answer. Probably the information that I could supply in addition is that the Students Finance Board has in fact taken responsibility for some 5,000 students from the supports for independence program. The board has now assumed the responsibility for them inasmuch as they've left the welfare rolls of the province. We're also working on the possibility of transferring an additional 1,000 clients from Family and Social Services to the board, and that will be along with sufficient funds to carry them through the programs within the Students Finance Board.

We feel that by enhancing access to training and student assistance for supports for independence clients, long-term savings to the province will be achieved as these individuals secure employment and leave the welfare rolls.

Psychiatric Care

MR. SAPERS: Last night, Mr. Speaker, at a public meeting sponsored by the Edmonton chapter of the Schizophrenia Society, the Minister of Health said that there are adequate psychiatric hospital beds and she denied knowing about the long-standing need for additional psychiatric beds. Now, this in spite of an earlier admission that her department has not conducted a study to determine the adequate number of beds that will be needed or their appropriate geographic distribution. My question for the minister is: which is it? Are there or are there not adequate active treatment psychiatric beds available to meet the immediate needs of Albertans?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, there are an adequate number of psychiatric beds in this province to meet the needs. In the discussion that occurred – I think the House should have the full context – there was a discussion of moving the mental health treatment to more community based, and that is supported by the Schizophrenic Society and many people in the mental health field. The question is: are we ensuring that we keep an adequate number of psychiatric beds while we're doing that shift?

One of the ways that we monitor the availability of beds is by the utilization of those beds. It is a fact that on a utilization basis there is a very adequate number of beds and probably will become even more so as the shift moves to more community-based care, which indeed is supported by the society that we visited with last night. I think their concern is that we maintain that balance. It's certainly my concern as well.

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Speaker, the minister's response seems to demonstrate a confusion between institutional housing and active treatment beds.

What will it take, Mr. Speaker, for the minister to admit that not only is there a critical shortage of active treatment psychiatric beds but that your department has known about this critical shortage and ignored it for a long, long time?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I think that the member is probably the one that is a bit confused on this issue. We do have a lack of specialists in this area. That is where the real lack is. We have a lack of psychiatric doctors in this province, not as many as is felt necessary to meet the need. That is one of the things that we're working on with our physicians, with the AMA, with the college: to ensure that we have the proper mix of care givers to meet the needs of the province. So there is a difference

between having enough active treatment beds or having enough staff. So we're working very hard on that issue.

I think the important issue here and the important issue for that society is the desire for people to move from institutionalized care to community care, and I think there is good success happening there. We have a report that was developed by the government of Alberta in 1992 on meeting long-term needs. That was taken by a committee to the regions of this province, and they have provided a report back to address this.

2:00

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you. Of course there's a shortage of staff, Mr. Speaker. This government's policy is forcing health care workers out of work.

While we wait for this issue to be resolved, Mr. Speaker – and this is a specific question, Madam Minister – how does the minister plan to meet the needs of the 15 chronically mentally ill children and their families who are being forced to endure a nine-month waiting list for the precious few beds at the Glenrose hospital?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, there is no policy in Alberta that prohibits the number of physicians that practise here, in fact one of the few provinces in Canada that have not developed that.

Secondly, on the needs of children we have a pediatric plan in this province that is working in all areas, mental health and all. Through the ministers of Justice, Education, Family and Social Services, and Health we have looked at the co-ordinated approach to meeting the needs of high-needs children, and I think we have begun the process that is required to ensure that we meet the needs of all of our citizens requiring health services in this province. In mental health we have a very complex service delivery, and one of the things we talked about last night is how we make that less complex, more accessible, and more designed to meet the needs of people with mental illnesses, whether they are children or adults.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by Edmonton-Centre.

Senior Citizens Programs

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A very brief preamble. The seniors' advisory group of Calgary-Varsity have advised me of the need for government to evaluate seniors' programs in light of two targets: one, efficient delivery and, two, effective targeting. Would the minister responsible for seniors assure all seniors in Alberta that he will not reduce or eliminate benefits to those seniors who are truly in need of this support?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, the issues relating to seniors in this province are of great concern to this government. The Premier made it clear during the election that no changes would be made that directly affect seniors' programs without a consultation. That consultation has taken place. I'm looking forward to Mrs. Bowker's report as I'm sure all members of this House are looking forward to it. Now, her report deals with the specifics, and I think it would be inappropriate for me to comment on what the specifics might be and for me to displace my judgment for Mrs. Bowker's. However, I am prepared to share with this House what I believe to be the broad general principles that have emerged from the seniors' consultation at Red Deer.

The first broad general principle is that seniors have said that they've contributed to building this province in the past in order to assure that this is a strong province, and they are prepared to continue to make that contribution in the present to ensure that our future remains bright. Secondly, seniors have asked us to examine programs where age is the only criterion to establish eligibility, and, thirdly, seniors have asked government to assist and to concentrate on those that are in the greatest need.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If we're talking about need, I'd like to know how the minister will determine which seniors are truly in need of these programs.

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, the strong message delivered by seniors at the roundtable in Red Deer is that they do not want to have a means test. However, there was also a strong message that seniors feel that certain programs that the government provides should be geared towards income, and this is in accordance with the broad principles that I stated earlier.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped

MR. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On several occasions we've heard the Minister of Family and Social Services stand up in this House and speak about the changes in the AISH program as if no real people were affected. First we heard that there were quotas and then that it's not quotas, that it's just targets. In any case, people are being shifted off AISH, and changes are being made. I'd like to ask the minister a very direct question. With regard to the changes in the AISH program, how many – get it? – how many people are going to be affected by the changes?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I'd like to advise the hon. member that when I introduced the welfare reforms in this House, I always advised the members that the high-needs area of the department is a top priority, and I will continue to do that. That includes people on AISH. When we have 17,000 employables and trainables, young, healthy people back into the work force, we should have additional dollars to redirect to the high-needs area.

I would like to advise the hon. member also that under the AISH program we have \$158 million allocated presently. There are 15,000 clients on AISH. We are now undergoing a review, and the files of the people that are not employable, anyone that's severely or permanently handicapped, will not be reviewed and they will continue receiving the assistance they have received. But, Mr. Speaker, there is a percentage of people on AISH that want to get back into the work force, and this minister will assist them to get there.

MR. HENRY: Mr. Speaker, I'm perplexed. I ask a question about policy, and the minister responds on a budget issue, yet I'm not allowed to talk about the \$1.3 million cut in the AISH budget.

I'll stick to policy. There are changes in the AISH program. I'd like to know specifically: who did the minister consult? What information did the minister use to come to the decision to start these reviews again?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, I believe there is more than one question in there.

I'd just like to indicate what process will take place. Number one, these reforms were announced before June 15, and Albertans knew that the reforms were in place and elected this government to carry out that mandate. We intend to do that.

I'd like to advise the hon. member again that we are moving very carefully and cautiously, Mr. Speaker, as to how the review will be done. First of all, we'll review the files, and we'll only move forward with the files that we feel contain employable people. A face-to-face meeting will take place with a client. The decision is not made at that level. We go to the next level yet, and the regional director will be involved in reviewing those files. From there on, changes will be made only by providing 30-days' notice to the client if there is going to be a change in their situation, and they have an opportunity to appeal the process. If they cannot hear an appeal within the 30 days, we will extend that appeal process until a proper appeal is heard.

MR. HENRY: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure the minister really heard my question, because I didn't hear an answer.

Mr. Speaker, it may come as a surprise to those on the front bench, who were obviously the only ones consulted on this program, but we do have a Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. That Premier's council has very clearly asked to be involved in a complete review. I'd like to ask the Premier if he would allow his Premier's council to initiate an outside complete review of the AISH program and stop the minister from tinkering with it before we know what really needs to be done.

2:10

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, I met with the person that is responsible for that area recently and indicated that there is support for the move that I'm making to make sure that the number of the 15,000 clients that want to participate in the training program or want to get back into the work force feel that they can participate. The member advises me that they support our move to make that change.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross, followed by Edmonton-Mayfield.

Special Education

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is for the Minister of Education. Yesterday a news release was sent out from the Education department which shows that a policy has been finalized which integrates children with special needs into the classroom. Many educators have made statements to the effect that they are not trained to be care givers and in fact do not want to be in that type of situation without assistance. So my question is: how much funding does the minister expect will be needed to establish individualized services for these students, specifically in the area of nursing and allied health personnel?

Thank you.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to first of all emphasize that the direction of this particular policy, which was developed after considerable consideration, is that the focus should be on providing the best possible educational program and most appropriate educational program for special-needs students. Secondly, I think it should be pointed out that at this point in time approximately 90 percent of Alberta's special-needs students are being educated, accommodated in regular school settings and regular classrooms. This is being done with the resources available currently.

In terms of specialized services, as I've indicated in response to previous questions, we are working on the better co-ordination of services to schools and to the individual students through a number of initiatives.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The supplemental is: will the minister please share with us if there will be any other departments or agencies that are involved that will provide further funding? Although I know we've heard about the 85 percent, I can see that they're anticipating other students entering that system.

Thank you.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, in terms of resources there is a considerable amount being provided in the area of special education. The emphasis is going to be to better utilize the resources that are available through a greater emphasis, as I've said, on better working relationships, the co-ordination of services. I anticipate that the job will be done. We will be looking at it in the context of using existing resources.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to hear that co-ordination and reallocation of resources are being looked at, but I'm wondering if the expenditures for this service are included in the current budget figures.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, Alberta Education's current year budget provides for in excess of \$114 million that is directed towards special-needs education in this province. We expect that money to be spent on programs for special-needs students. Those are the resources that are available from Alberta Education.

Charitable Fund-raising

MR. WHITE: Mr. Speaker, this Premier has mused about hospitals raising funds through bingos, and only yesterday this Premier told Albertans that they must be more generous in their giving to charities in order to provide essential services in this province. Charities are having a very difficult time raising these funds in these difficult times. In telling Albertans to look to these charitable organizations, is the Premier simply abdicating his responsibility to provide these essential services?

MR. KLEIN: The simple answer to the question, Mr. Speaker, is no.

In response to his preamble, I had the opportunity to participate with public service employees yesterday in Hawrelak park to kick off the public service component of the United Way campaign. I indicated to the employees of this province that we're tremendously proud of them for the lead role they have taken to generate funds through the private sector and voluntary contributions and to do it in a way that demonstrates a sense of community and a pride in community, and I indicated to these people that in these times of financial constraints indeed we're going to depend on those people who have to give as much as they possibly can to institutions like the United Way to support community-based social services programs and other community programs that generally serve the welfare of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, just to add one more point, I pointed out also that when times are tough and when governments are going through

tough times – and I know that the Leader of the Opposition went through the same experiences I did when I was the mayor of Calgary during the mid-80s, when literally thousands and thousands of people were becoming unemployed because of low energy prices and so on. For the first time in many years the United Way campaign and the Red Shield campaign started to exceed their goals because people started to look after other people and started to care for themselves and came to the realization that government cannot do it all, unlike the way the Liberals would like it done.

MR. WHITE: Mr. Speaker, it was nice of the Premier to relate what happened yesterday. Did the United Way tell him that they can and are able to raise these extra funds to provide for these essential services?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should know that the United Way is simply a vehicle. The United Way collects the funds and distributes those funds to the member agencies. The United Way wouldn't exist if people didn't give to the United Way. What I'm saying is that the United Way doesn't do this, but the people the United Way are appealing to should give as much as they possibly can to the United Way. I will reiterate that: give to the United Way; support your community.

MR. WHITE: Certainly the Premier's advice is very well given and will be heeded by this side of the House and others too, I'm sure.

Mr. Speaker, how can the Premier ask these charitable organizations to dig deep and raise more money when the member sitting right beside him, the Deputy Premier of this province, is taking the lion's share of gaming moneys and putting it in the VLT market that does not raise funds for these charities. How could he do that?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, lotteries, of course, provide a tremendous amount of money to charitable organizations. All I'm saying is: let's look at all the resources we have including that great population of concerned citizens that we have in Alberta who I'm urging to get behind the United appeal.

Relative to the amount lotteries contribute to charitable organizations and other institutions in this province, I'll have the Deputy Premier respond.

2:20

MR. KOWALSKI: Gee, thank you very much, Mr. Premier. I'll be happy to supplement. Mr. Speaker, virtually all of the dollars from the Alberta lottery fund are returned to the people, either directly by way of assistance to charitable groups in this province or through the educational funding portion of the general revenue fund or the health costs of the province of Alberta. In addition to that, please remember that in terms of the nearly \$650 million worth of activity done by casinos, bingos, raffle tickets, and pool tickets, zero of those dollars come to the people of Alberta through their provincial government. It all goes back to the charities.

We have going on here in Edmonton a very exciting lottery, the home lottery that's being sponsored by a consortium of Edmonton area hospitals. It's a hundred dollar ticket, and my understanding is that at this point in time, which is nearly three weeks to a month away from their final target, they're well beyond half, and they really believe they're going to be sold out completely. So the gentleman here has a certain view of reality which doesn't seem to be reflective of what's happening in the marketplace, Mr. Speaker.

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

Workers' Compensation Board

MR. DUNFORD: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question to the Minister of Labour in reference to the unfunded liability. We tend to think in terms of an unfunded liability and place some of the burden perhaps on employees, but employers have a direct impact on these numbers as well. I would like to ask the Minister of Labour: are employers taking full advantage of their right to appeal WCB decisions?

MR. DAY: There is an appeal mechanism, Mr. Speaker. Actually its a twofold path. An employer can request an appeal of assessment to the Appeals Commission, but what's offered before that, should they want that, is an assessment review committee that can actually take their concerns and try and resolve it for them before they actually go to a formal appeal. Just to let the member know, in terms of numbers there are approximately 60,000 assessment accounts in the province. By the end of August there were about a hundred that had actually gone to appeal. So out of 60,000 accounts about a hundred had gone on to an appeal.

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

MR. DUNFORD: Yes, Mr. Speaker, and still referencing unfunded liabilities. Given the bankruptcies that can take place in recessionary times, are there outstanding assessments owed by employers in Alberta?

MR. DAY: There are some, Mr. Speaker. The legislation is pretty strong in terms of allowing WCB to be one of the first creditors to collect in the case of a bankruptcy. Again, if it's on a comparative basis, there's about \$500 million in terms of assessments that are out there. I would say something less than 1 percent of those would be classified as outstanding.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. DUNFORD: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Given the employers' record in making their contributions, is the WCB and the Minister of Labour prepared to consider a worker contribution of some formula to the Workers' Compensation Board?

MR. DAY: There was a question last week along those lines. I have communicated to the WCB to take a look at that question and get back to me with the implications on both sides of it. As soon as I get that back, I'll make that available to the member.

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

Driver Licensing

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Privatization of driver testing has raised many, many concerns with the public and particularly with regard to highway safety. To the minister responsible for Alberta registries: in view of the dismal failure of a similar program or concept here in Alberta five years ago and in view of the fiasco in Quebec when a similar program was attempted, why is the minister so determined to proceed with this ill-conceived scheme?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, it isn't an ill-conceived policy at all. One of the things that would be taken from a question like that is

that you only look back, you never look forward, and you never learn from anything in the past as you study and move forward. You just stop. You stay status quo for fear you might come out of what you're doing and make a mistake.

We are going to scrutinize to the best of our ability as we go forward with this new driver testing policy. I do share the concerns of the public and even concerns brought forward by the hon. member. We must scrutinize this to ensure that our graduates from the driver testing who will go out on the highway as full-fledged drivers are the safest that we can put out there.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, let's look to the future for a minute. Prior to the minister arriving at this decision to privatize this aspect of Alberta registries, can the minister inform this House as to what study he has conducted that will attest that this concept will not jeopardize highway or public safety?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, we have been working on driver education in the province for many years, retooling it, refining it to do the best job we can. The training program that we will use is a nationally and internationally certified training program that all of the new driver examiners and the previous driver examiners that have been working in the province to date will have taken. As we go forward, we will continually update and listen to any input we can across this nation or internationally to ensure that our testing model and the education that we put into the driver examiners as well as the education system will be the best that they can.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, at the present time driver examiners undergo six months' training. The minister's proposal now calls for a five-day training session. To the minister: how does the minister expect these five-day wonders to meet reasonable standards with such insufficient training?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, the training course that the individual is alluding to is the one that I just said is the internationally accepted and certified training course. The five-day course is internationally accepted and nationally accepted, and we are following those standards. As I said, once again if those standards change and we need more comprehensive training and direction, we will certainly do that.

I must add that once a driver examiner goes into the system, the education and training of that individual goes on forever. It's not just a five-day training course. It's continual. We will be keeping those individuals informed and perhaps someday looking to an association and standards set that they can indeed do by self-determination as examiners.

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

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Written Questions**

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

[Motion carried]

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, which are recorded in Votes

and Proceedings on page 2, but I will go over them: motions 159 to 163 inclusive, 167 to 169 inclusive, 171, 173 to 177 inclusive, 189 to 193 inclusive, 198, and 202.

[Motion carried]

Revenue Projections

M159. Dr. Percy moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing projections of the following revenue indicators as the government may have prepared for the 1994-95 through the 1996-97 fiscal years inclusive underlying the government's balanced budget plan: from personal income tax, corporate income tax, crude oil royalties, Crown leases, payments by the government of Canada, investment income, premiums, licences, and fees.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to recommence the debates over these wonderful questions and motions for returns. I stand before you today, sir, to move an amendment to the hon. member's Motion for a Return 159 by striking out the words "crude oil royalties, Crown leases," and replacing them with "nonrenewable resource revenue," and by adding "other taxes, and other revenue." I've circulated this proposed amendment. So the order would read:

. . . projections of the following revenue indicators as the government may have prepared for the 1994-95 through the 1996-97 fiscal years inclusive underlying the government's balanced budget plan: from personal income tax, corporate income tax, nonrenewable resource revenue, payments by the government of Canada, investment income, premiums, licences, fees, other taxes, and other revenue.

2:30

As you would appreciate, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure, this was a similar, very lengthy kind of question. It requires a little bit of research, and it's not the normal kind of question that you'd have in a question period. I think you would agree. Yet it is the question that - the hon. Leader of the Opposition stood up in righteous indignation yesterday, and I felt as though I'd been clawed by a toothless bear when I was finished. He said that I was somehow not providing him with information. But here we are today. I am very pleased to ask the members of the Assembly to accept this motion so that we can be as forthcoming as possible, in our typical way, to provide the hon. member with this information.

[Motion on amendment carried]

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

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This motion is requested because the government purports to have a plan. It purports to have a series of projections that ensure that it will have a balanced budget at the end of four years, so one naturally expects that it has these series of data readily available or they would not have come forward with such a plan. I'm somewhat surprised that it took as much work as it did, as one would think it would be there in place and part of the budget process.

[Motion as amended carried]

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

NovAtel Communications Ltd.

M160. Mr. Bruseker moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing details of the \$55 million U.S. in additional financing to be provided by NovAtel to systems customers as of May 29, 1992, broken down by RSA/MSA and company name as noted on page 78 of the Report of the Auditor General on NovAtel Communications Ltd.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This motion for a return again deals with the biggest boondoggle of them all, NovAtel Communications, and of course the particular reference here is to page 78 of the Auditor General's report on NovAtel Communications Ltd. and refers to an additional \$55 million U.S. to systems customers and requests information on who those customers are.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the pit bull persistence of the hon. member across the way. I know he has read the thorough and comprehensive Report of the Auditor General on NovAtel Communications Ltd. I realize that he is seeking additional information which will normally, customarily, be released or disclosed - some of it disclosed - in the public accounts of the province given that we have gone the steps that I have advised the Assembly that the government would take with full disclosure in our accounts. I look forward to sharing that information with the hon. member in the next few hours.

Mr. Speaker, I would refer the hon. member to some of his own documentation, which I know he will acknowledge supports my argument and my recommendation to the Assembly that we not accept and not support this motion. What the hon. member is asking for is a matter of individual loan accounts. For the very reasons that the hon. member and his caucus in the past have said, concerns over confidentiality arrangements, I am recommending that we not accept this.

I refer to two documents. The Liberal Party put out a document a few weeks or months before the provincial election entitled Alberta's Biggest Problem: The System Itself, proposals for reform of the parliamentary and fiscal management systems. In it they talk about freedom of information, and they refer to the Act that they would have proposed covering government expense accounts, studies, budgets, et cetera. Quote:

Of course, there are many valid reasons why information should not be given out. The Act has 10 sections listing exemptions, including . . .

I'll be specific here, Mr. Speaker. After a long list of exemptions:

Information which would reveal trade secrets or scientific, technical, commercial . . .

I underscore "commercial."

. . . financial or labour relations information supplied to the government.

Mr. Speaker, I would also refer the hon. member to proposed Bill 201, which has met with some debate in this Assembly and which, I gather, is going to be circulated wide and far across the province so that all Albertans will have the benefit of the wisdom spelled out in Bill 201. In it it proposes that "a head," I presume a department head or a minister or whomever, "may refuse to disclose a record that contains" - and I'll try and be narrow here in my reading of Bill 201:

(a) trade secrets or financial, commercial, scientific or technical information that belongs to the Government . . . or an institution and has monetary value or potential monetary value.

Information that may be refused:

(c) information where the disclosure could reasonably be expected to prejudice the economic interests of an institution or the competitive position of an institution; [or]

(d) information where the disclosure could reasonably be expected to be injurious to the financial interests of the Government of Alberta or the ability of the Government of Alberta to manage the economy. Well, I am only referring to this because I appreciate any hon. member who would like to help us make good arguments in this Assembly. You know, we do return to the Liberal *Hansard* comments, we return to their position papers, and in this case we're returning to their Bill 201, which is being circulated wide and far for the people of Alberta to be inspired and gather wisdom from it. This is the kind of information that I think would fall under the provisions of the Leader of the Opposition's Bill 201. Therefore, I would recommend, Mr. Speaker, that hon. members not support this motion.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a fairly fundamental motion that I wanted to touch on, particularly for the newer members on both sides of the House. This is a chance that you have to really strike a blow for information as far as the people doing business with government. We all on both sides of the House seem to be agreed that the government should be out of the business of getting in business. What we're doing here, and this applies to this cabinet or the next cabinet or the next cabinet going on, what's sneaked into practice here – and I've borrowed as much money from governments as anyone else and am not lucky enough to get it off of this government. There are very few governments in this world that won't hide behind the secrecy of a business contract, but I don't recall in all my years of borrowing money – and I've borrowed a hell of a lot of it – that anything ever . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Order, order.

MR. N. TAYLOR: A heck a lot of it, then, if that offends some of the others there. I know Medicine Hat doesn't agree with that. They have it for a basement already.

The point is this: the fact is that very few loan agreements have secrecy details on business or patents or anything else. We should be sending a message out there now, and this is why I appeal to everybody in the House, to all future borrowers that come up and wine and dine a cabinet minister, take him out in their private jets back and forth, make 'em feel good. There's nothing like getting an old farm boy from Bow Island, where I come from, putting him in a private jet and taking him down to Esso's dining room and feeding him to make him want to give loans. The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that anybody that borrows public money should darn well be prepared to see their name on the borrowing document, any person at all. There's nothing wrong with that. The idea that when they borrow money they disclose where they're going to drill the oil well or that they're going to patent some new toy or whatever it is . . . I see the name Mr. Reichmann down on one of the lists, not on this particular one. But does that mean he's going to say where we're going to throw the next pass in the next football game? Nothing doing. It's a plain, old-fashioned loan agreement.

I appeal to members on both sides of the House not to let the government get away with this, because what it does is let all governments – Liberal, Conservative, NDP – get away with the secrecy idea, that they're giving away a business secret. There are no business secrets in borrowing money; there are no business secrets at all. If you want to borrow money in secret to go over and start some sort of business that's not legal, or something else, go to the bank. There are half a dozen banks, a hundred different

insurance companies, but when you come to the taxpayers and ask the taxpayers to loan you a million or half a million or five million, you should be prepared to at least let your name stand up there and say, "Look; I took your money, taxpayer." That's all I ask.

2:40

DR. PERCY: I rise to speak in favour of the motion. I can only echo the comments of my colleague from Redwater in terms of if we invest in a company, there has to be full public disclosure. We've argued that we ought not to be in the business of business, and if a company cannot withstand the scrutiny of having their name public, as feeding at the trough, then that's their problem. That's one point.

The second point is: NovAtel is not an ongoing entity. I think it's run into some financial problems. I think the Provincial Treasurer is aware that it has some.

AN HON. MEMBER: Heaps.

DR. PERCY: Yeah, heaps of financial problems. I think if we're going to understand how we ended up losing three-quarters of a billion dollars, we have to go through detail by detail.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: How much?

DR. PERCY: It's three-quarters of a billion dollars.

We have to understand how it happened, contract by contract. Who got what and when and who made the mistakes. By suppressing this type of information, we can never get a good handle on where the money went and what types of deals were struck. So I think the only cause being served by defeating this motion is preserving the secrecy of who got what when.

Thank you.

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

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to close debate on Motion for a Return 160. What we're talking about here is \$55 million U.S. Now, I emphasize the "U.S." for a couple of reasons.

First of all, we know from reading in careful detail, as the Treasurer pointed out, in the Report of the Auditor General on NovAtel Communications that many of the dollars invested by an Alberta corporation went to the United States. In fact, Mr. Speaker, when we look in close detail, we recognize that some of the dollars went to service particular rural and municipal service areas. That's what the letters RSA and MSA mean, in case people are looking for that information. One of the loans that was given to one of the cellular firms in the United States was to service RSA 1. Now, for those members who don't know where RSA 1 is, that's the Gulf of Mexico. Water, not even land but water: one of the loans went to provide cellular service to people in boats presumably out in the middle of the Gulf of Mexico. Millions of dollars going out to water: to provide cellular service to, I don't know, the crabs, I guess, or the octopus or buddies of the Treasurer. Maybe he's got some friends down there; I don't know.

Mr. Speaker, there's one little line in here that says "\$55 million to systems customers" in the U.S. All I'm saying is: we know it went to some of the sharks in the Gulf of Mexico, so I'm wondering what other sharks gobbled up \$55 million. The dollars are gone. NovAtel lost three-quarters of a billion dollars. I mean, absolutely frightening figures.

Now, I can't begin to tell you how pleased I was to hear the Treasurer quote from our Bill. I'm really pleased that he took the time to read it, and I'm really pleased that some of the ideas are starting to trickle down over there, because they're starting to get the idea that freedom of information is necessary.

MR. DINNING: Substance, substance.

MR. BRUSEKER: The hon. Treasurer I think said . . . Terrible discrepancies. I mean, it was interesting. He quoted from our Bill. But you know what, Mr. Speaker? We put forward this Bill in good faith and said that these are some of our principles that we on the Liberal side of the House believe in. You know what? They voted against them. They said, "We don't buy these principles." So I said to myself, "Well, if they don't care about trade secrets or financial, commercial, scientific, or technical information, then surely they'll provide me with all kinds of information." So I thought to myself: "I'm going to ask for the information. They'll say, 'Sure; we'll give him the information because we don't care about that sort of stuff; we'll provide him with all kinds of stuff because we buy into the concept of freedom of information'." Now they're saying "don't." I don't know; you never know what these guys really believe in. I guess the bottom line is: where did the money go? That's what we're trying to find out.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: All those in favour of Motion for a Return 160, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: Fails.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 2:46 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Abdurahman	Hewes	Sekulic
Bracko	Kirkland	Soetaert
Bruseker	Langevin	Taylor, N.
Carlson	Leibovici	Van Binsbergen
Chadi	Massey	Vasseur
Collingwood	Mitchell	White
Decore	Nicol	Yankowsky
Dickson	Percy	Zariwny
Hanson	Sapers	Zwozdesky
Henry		

Against the motion:

Ady	Friedel	McFarland
Amery	Fritz	Mirosh
Black	Gordon	Oberg
Brassard	Haley	Paszowski
Burgener	Havelock	Pham
Calahasen	Herard	Renner
Cardinal	Hierath	Severtson
Clegg	Hlady	Smith

Coutts	Jonson	Sohal
Day	Kowalski	Stelmach
Dinning	Laing	Tannas
Doerksen	Lund	Taylor, L.
Dunford	Magnus	Thurber
Evans	Mar	West
Fischer	McClellan	Woloshyn
Forsyth		

For - 28

Against - 46

[Motion lost]

Doubtful Accounts and Loans

M161. Dr. Percy moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a breakdown of provision for doubtful accounts and loans recorded as a budgetary expenditure under the general revenue fund by organizational entity and the amount of such obligation for each for the fiscal years 1989-90 through 1991-92 inclusive as contained in schedule 2.16 of the public accounts of Alberta.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I would move an amendment to this motion so that you strike out the words, quote, "by organizational entity and the amount of such obligation for each," and replace it with:

Analyzed between accounts receivable, loans and advances, and implemented guarantees, with a further breakdown of loans by borrower.

So the motion now reads:

. . . a breakdown of provision for doubtful accounts and loans recorded as a budgetary expenditure under the general revenue fund analyzed between accounts receivable, loans and advances, and implemented guarantees, with a further breakdown of loans by borrower, for the fiscal years 1989-90 through 1991-92 inclusive as contained in schedule 2.16 of the public accounts of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I would recommend to all members that we accept this amendment and that we accept the motion as amended.

MR. SPEAKER: Is the Assembly ready for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

[Motion as amended carried]

3:00 International Offices

M162. Ms Carlson moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the cost of operating Alberta's foreign offices for 1992-93 broken down by operating costs by government department, including accommodation costs and salaries for the agents general, clerical staff, commercial officers, and posted staff.

MS CARLSON: I have to comment that I believe it's very cynical for this government to have recently introduced an amendment to force disclosure of administrators' salaries in hospitals, colleges, and universities, while with this amendment they refuse to allow Albertans to know specific salaries for agents general.

MR. SPEAKER: Is there an amendment to be proposed to Motion 162?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Government House Leader, the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, I

would so move an amendment, which has been distributed to all members of the Assembly, to delete the word "salaries" and replace it with "salary ranges" so that the motion now will read:

That an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the cost of operating Alberta's foreign offices for 1992-93 broken down by operating costs by government department, including accommodation costs and salary ranges for the agents general, clerical staff, commercial officers, and posted staff.

[Motion as amended carried]

Trade Mission

M163. Ms Carlson moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a detailed itinerary and the results of the 24-day trade mission undertaken by former MLA Mr. Rick Orman on behalf of the government in April 1993.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, we are proposing to accept and amend Motion 163. The amendment as circulated is:

That an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a detailed itinerary and the results of the nine-day trade mission undertaken by former MLA Mr. Rick Orman on behalf of the government in April 1993.

The amendment is being proposed by the government as the former MLA's mission in April of '93 on behalf of the province of Alberta was for nine days, not 24.

MS CARLSON: I wish to speak to that amendment. I find it completely shocking that a nine-day trip could have cost the people of this province more than \$4,400 a day, when it turns out that the principal mandate of that trip seems to have been to collect business cards.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

[Motion as amended carried]

Export Loan Guarantee Program

M167. Mr. Bruseker moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing details on the outstanding guarantees under the export loan guarantee program, listing the companies which have been assisted, the amount of guarantee provided to each company, and an evaluation of the status of each guarantee as of July 31, 1993.

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

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reason for this motion before the House today – of course, we know that the government claims they're interested in getting out of the business of being in business, yet we see a continuing program called the export loan guarantee program. The difficulty that we have on this side of the House with this particular program is that the details of who and how much assistance is being provided is not being answered. So we look forward to this information being provided to all members of the House by the government.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, since 1984 there have been about 375 guarantees totaling something like \$297 million, and there are a number of export guarantees totaling \$22 million. The difficulty here is for all the details as opposed to a list. I know that the government would not have a problem with a list, but it's with all the details. On that basis the government must reject this motion.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the details, quote, that are being asked for, we're saying: provide a list of the companies. So we want the names. The member just listed how many there were. So provide a list of those names. Obviously, he had a list to which he could refer. So we're asking: can you give us a copy of that list? We're saying: "the amount of guarantee provided to each company." That's the other thing that's being asked for in this particular motion for a return. We're saying: you've got a list of companies. Besides that, you just told us the total figure. We're saying now that we'd like the breakdown of that figure. Presumably he got the information from that same list, so obviously the list does exist. Finally "an evaluation of the status of [the] guarantee." So we're saying: is it active or is it dead? That's the grand sum of the details to which we are requesting information.

Mr. Speaker, we are not asking personnel listings. We are not asking for the health status of the employees. We are not asking for a whole lot of things. We are asking for the information that says that these are public dollars that are being placed at risk or being exposed. The taxpayers have put the money into these corporations without any information or any input being provided to members of this Legislature.

One of the things that we heard many, many times and we keep hearing is that people want accountability from their government, they want accountability from their members of the Legislature, regardless of where they sit in this House. Mr. Speaker, the motion for a return asks for that accountability. It says: you've got a program out there. They admit that program. It says: you've helped companies. We've heard the minister say that they've helped companies. We know they've given money. The minister says that they've given money. All we're saying is: let the rest of the world in on the secret. It's public dollars; it should be public information. The government has made a commitment to freedom of information. We've got a committee struck, of which the Member for Calgary-Buffalo is a member, to go out and get input from Albertans on public information, on freedom of information. That's exactly what this motion for a return asks for, and I urge all members to support Motion for a Return 167.

MR. SPEAKER: The question before the Assembly is Motion 167. All those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion fails.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:10 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Abdurahman	Hewes	Sekulic
Bracko	Kirkland	Soetaert
Bruseker	Langevin	Taylor, N.
Chadi	Leibovici	Vasseur
Collingwood	Massey	White
Decore	Mitchell	Yankowsky
Dickson	Nicol	Zariwny
Hanson	Percy	Zwozdesky
Henry	Sapers	

Against the motion:

Ady	Friedel	McFarland
Amery	Fritz	Mirosh
Black	Gordon	Oberg
Burgener	Haley	Paszkowski
Calahasen	Havelock	Pham
Cardinal	Herard	Renner
Clegg	Hierath	Severtson
Coutts	Hlady	Smith
Day	Jonson	Sohal
Dinning	Laing	Stelmach
Doerksen	Lund	Tannas
Dunford	Magnus	Taylor, L.
Evans	Mar	Thurber
Fischer	McClellan	Woloshyn
Forsyth		
Totals:	For – 26	Against – 43

[Motion lost]

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

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In anticipating there may be future divisions this afternoon, I would request the unanimous consent of the House to waive or change or amend Standing Order 32(2), which talks about divisions lasting 10 minutes, and move that we change that time from 10 minutes to two minutes for this afternoon.

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the motion by the hon. Member for Calgary-North West, all those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion fails.

NovAtel Communications Ltd.

M168. Mr. Bruseker moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of the following consultants' reports on the operations of NovAtel Communications Ltd.:

- (1) Burns Fry report dated June 1988,
- (2) Arthur D. Little report dated November 1988,
- (3) First Boston Canada Limited report dated October 4, 1990,
- (4) Price Waterhouse report dated November 28, 1990,
- (5) S.G. Warburg & Co. reports dated September 1989, December 1989, March 28, 1990, and May 1991,
- (6) Coopers & Lybrand Consulting Group report dated January 1991, and
- (7) SRI International reports dated April 29, 1991, and June 19, 1991.

MR. BRUSEKER: Mr. Speaker, again the issue of concern in this particular instance deals with the Auditor General's report, which I'm sure all members have read and digested thoroughly. Curiously in the back of the Auditor General's report appendage G talks about a number of studies and reports that have been done

by a variety of corporations, which I won't cite here because of course they're mentioned in the motion for a return listed on today's Order Paper. Since we have had some difficulty with respect to NovAtel – I think it was the delicate term the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford used. It seems that there is some background information that not all hon. members have had access to, and the motion for a return asks that all hon. members be provided that information.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, speaking to this and also speaking to what is taking place here this afternoon. It's a matter of record that in most areas in terms of requiring information, when you compare this government and the legislative process with other governments across the country, you will find that we are probably allowed the most opportunity of any other legislative process in terms of acquiring information. One of those is question period which is, I believe, still the longest in this country. There is the process of estimates, which continues for some 25 days. There is a new process which we have agreed to, suggested by the opposition, in terms of specific departments being designated four hours of scrutiny. There's a process called Public Accounts, which has a chairperson of the opposition party, and I understand the opposition attendance at Public Accounts was absolutely dismal this morning. It's a joke as far as they're concerned, demanding this. Shameful attendance.

This process of written questions and motions for returns: you will see so far this session that the government has been very accommodating, very open. It does require time of people in the various departments. We don't begrudge that. These are questions which in many cases their own research people could easily access: in many cases, not all. Yet we still provide the information. Mr. Speaker, in many cases the opposition knows beforehand – and this is a very key point – that it would be impossible for a variety of reasons, including legal and sub judice reasons, for the government to say yes to a particular motion worded the way it is.

So the cheap trick here is: put forward a motion, get it rejected, and then at some later date, maybe in question period tomorrow, maybe at some date, you stand up and you go, "Nyah, nyah, the government wouldn't respond to the question." [interjections] Oh, I see that it's getting to them.

Point of Order Allegations against a Member

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

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-North West is rising on a point of order.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On a point of order. I rise under Standing Order 23(h), of course well familiar to the hon. member: "makes allegations against another member." As I heard the hon. minister speaking, he used the words "cheap trick." No one in this House should consider referring to NovAtel with the word "cheap": \$645 million. He's saying that I put it on the Order Paper as a cheap trick. I'm looking for information. I have yet to hear the hon. minister refer to anything even relating to . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The hon. member is now debating with the hon. minister. The Chair did not hear those words used against an individual in the Assembly. If they were, of course the Chair might be compelled to rule on their admissibility, but when it's addressed to a group, it's different than being addressed to an individual.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

MR. HENRY: Mr. Speaker, a point of order, again, under 23(i). The Provincial Treasurer might laugh. Very clearly I accept your ruling on "cheap trick," but the hon. member has moved a very responsible motion looking for information that in his view and our view should be in the public domain. Standing Order 23(j) very clearly states that it is improper to impute "false or unavowed motives to another member." That's very clearly what the hon. minister has done. I'd suggest that you rule on that, please.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member is referring to 23(i), I believe, not (j).

MR. HENRY: Right. Thank you. My glasses aren't here.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. DAY: Thank you. I'll proceed, Mr. Speaker. Going on and talking about the . . .

Point of Order Written Questions and Motions for Returns

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

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

MR. MITCHELL: Yes. I'd just like to rise under Standing Order 34, which is the standing order which governs the manner in which written questions and motions for returns are undertaken. It also, of course, is based upon the agreement that was struck between the House leaders in the early part of September, which was part of the restructuring of the rules and the procedures of the House, Mr. Speaker. One of the items in that agreement was that the Whips, the government's and our Whip, would meet to discuss how this written question and motion for a return process could be improved, appreciating and understanding, as the Government House Leader pointed out to us, that the government truly does want to answer most of these questions and sometimes the wording and the implications aren't such that they feel they can. We are more than happy to meet with the Whips, our Whips, to begin that process. I've written in fact to the Deputy House Leader, and we haven't had a response that would indicate when that process could be undertaken. If he's frustrated with this process, all he needs to do is get his Whip to initiate with us this process, and we'll sit down and work it out.

MR. DAY: The process as described in Standing Orders, which was negotiated in good faith between the two parties here, is a good process. I'm talking about the misuse of the process – and you can call it a subprocess if you want – by the opposition. I'm explaining it for the purpose of members here who haven't seen this ridiculous approach before and for others who would like to read *Hansard* to show that there can be a misuse of a properly negotiated process in good faith, where they know a government cannot be forthcoming in certain cases with information and therefore they ask the question and then they're able to say, "Nyah, nyah, you didn't answer." So we're working through this little charade. It's difficult. New members especially are wondering why they would want to waste the time in this House on going through the bell ringing, but they've been hearing bells in their ears for quite a period of time, Mr. Speaker, and they're going to for quite a while yet.

Point of Order Explanation of Speaker's Ruling

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Opposition Government House Leader is rising on a point of order.

MR. MITCHELL: Yes, under Standing Order 13, which would be a request for the reasoning behind a Speaker's ruling. Now, I'm raising this matter because in effect the Deputy House Leader is really criticizing the Speaker's supervision of this debate. He said that the process is being misused. I for one, Mr. Speaker, have the confidence in you that you wouldn't allow that to occur. So if he says it's occurring, I would say he is directly confronting your ability to supervise this Legislature, and I think he should stop.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, the Chair didn't make that interpretation. The Chair really doesn't have much control over what appears on the Order Paper. The Chair understands the present debate that's going on between the two sides as to the appropriateness of the material that does appear on the Order Paper. Perhaps we can get through that in an expeditious way.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

3:30 Debate Continued

MR. DAY: Thank you for your usual sound ruling, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to say, as an example, that the reports that have been asked for reside with the various parties that commissioned the studies. A little detail gets left out here, Mr. Speaker, on this particular question, a little detail: these reports were made available to the Auditor General for his review. As a matter of fact, the Auditor General even commented on some of these reports. We'll send it to them if we have to, but that was a September '92 report. Maybe it's listed in their filing cabinet under "R" for report, but then it might be under "R" for reject. I don't know how they classify these things.

AN HON. MEMBER: Send it. Send it. Send it.

MR. DAY: Well, there they've got a member opposite, Mr. Speaker, saying, "Send it; send it; send it." They do not have the capability to look at a very simple report that's been distributed. So we'll do that. We'll take the extra time, energy, and money, send them a report that's been sitting in a pile of dust somewhere on their desk. It should be known that the Auditor General has reviewed the reports they're asking for. Because of the element of confidentiality, he's reviewed them. [interjections] They're upset to hear this. They're twisting in the wind when they hear the truth here, but the Auditor General has reviewed it, and he's even commented on it.

We're happy to send them that report, but we have to reject this particular motion.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can't help but reflect back on the bold and inspiring rhetoric we heard when the Speech from the Throne was delivered and the two themes that have been repeated time after time after time in this Chamber: openness and accountability, openness and accountability. What we see is a tremendous contrast if we look at that rhetoric we see in literature produced by the government when we read the text of the Speech from the Throne. Now when we get down to the work of the Assembly, now when we get down to looking for specific pieces of information, now when members in the opposition do what

we're expected to do by the electors in this province in terms of monitoring how provincial funds are spent or misspent, now we find a marked departure from the rhetoric. Now we see a government that takes a position of circle the wagons, pass off generalities, generalizations, and avoid providing concrete responses, specific information.

Mr. Speaker, it's insulting to have the Minister of Labour, the Member for Red Deer-North, refer members to the Auditor General's report. On this side of the House we take the time to read those reports; we read them carefully. What we find is that we are teased. The Auditor General goes through and lists reports and studies. A Coopers & Lybrand study: what does it tell us? It tells us that "the report defined five states of quality maturity". It says it found significant areas of improvement. It doesn't tell us what the areas of improvement were. It doesn't give us particulars. It summarizes in six or seven lines what these consultants found. Well, the consultants were working for the taxpayers of Alberta. That report belongs to the taxpayers of Alberta. It belongs in the public domain, and it's disingenuous for the Minister of Labour to stand here at a time when his words are recorded and suggest that this is the answer.

Well, I think it's clear to certainly everybody in this House and certainly, beyond us, to the taxpayers in this province, who have a keen and continuing interest in the NovAtel fiasco, that this isn't the information they want. It's not the information that we want. If openness and accountability are to mean anything other than simply words, if it's to mean anything other than empty, foolish rhetoric, this is the opportunity, in a forum like this on an issue like this, for the government to take charge and be responsive and come forward with the information we're asking for.

I think that we've seen a pattern develop. When specific information is sought by members of the opposition, the government traverses the request, and instead of coming forward with specific problems, with producing this concrete information, it resorts to generalities. Well, I don't think, Mr. Speaker, that those kinds of generalities are good enough. We've asked for specific information. If the government has a problem with producing that information, let's hear it, but it's got to be a much better explanation, a much better defence than what we've heard to this stage.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A couple of brief points. I listened with great interest to the hon. Deputy Government House Leader going on and on about how this was an inappropriate use of our time, an inappropriate use of the Order Paper. Although I'm not sure I followed all of his arguments, as a new member in this House I have to question: is this in order? Should this be appearing on the Order Paper? With respect, sir, I'd ask you to rule on that after I'm finished: indeed, is this question in order, or is it out of order? Does it belong on the Order Paper or not?

The second point I'd like to make, Mr. Speaker, is that frankly I'm quite shocked. I am very shocked. I'm almost even shocked and appalled. What shocks me, what makes me almost but not quite speechless is that I remember that on June 15, 40-odd, almost 50 new members came to this Legislature. I remember hearing many of them say: "We're going to change the way we operate. This is a new government; this is a new direction. We're going to find out what happened, and the secrecy is going to stop." I'm shocked that many members on the other side of the House and to our right on this side find themselves trying to continue in the old Getty mode, if I can say it that way, of hiding information,

of not laying out to the public what's been done with the public dollars.

I pose a question for members who do decide to vote against this motion. I pose a question to them, and I would ask them to go home over the next few days and think about it. If they are stopped in downtown Innisfail or Lacombe or Stettler or Medicine Hat and one of their constituents says, "Have you seen the reports; have you analyzed what happened to the NovAtel money, with all the taxpayers' money?" and they can confidently say yes, that as backbenchers they've actually been able to get copies of these reports and examine them, then I ask: what's the big secret? Why can't members of the opposition and the public have the same information?

Thank you, and I'd ask for a ruling on whether this is in order or not.

MR. SPEAKER: In due course.

The hon. Member for Calgary North.

MR. BRUSEKER: West.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-North West.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wouldn't want to get confused with a Member of Parliament there.

Just in closing debate on this particular Motion for a Return 168, I recall well that when the then Premier, the Hon. Don Getty, came into the House and announced the privatization of AGT and we on this side of the House asked for information, we were told: "Put it on the Order Paper. Put it on the Order Paper; we'll give you the information. We will provide you wheelbarrows full." The hon. leader of the Liberal opposition even provided the wheelbarrow. What we got back was more rhetoric, as we've had from the hon. Minister of Labour, the Deputy Government House Leader.

In reviewing the reports and studies referred to in appendix G, the minister says: all the information is there; everything you possibly need is there. Yet when you review and actually take the time to read it – and I don't know whether he has or not – some of those reports go back to dates prior to the privatization of AGT when AGT was a wholly-owned government corporation, when NovAtel was a wholly-owned government corporation. So the responsibility is clearly with the government.

3:40

It says further, Mr. Speaker, in a number of the reports that I'm referring to, that I'm requesting copies of, that copies were "presented to the AGT Commission," with respect to the Arthur D. Little, Inc. report; the Burns Fry Ltd. report was "provided to AGT Commission members." The Coopers & Lybrand report, 1989: the quality subcommittee of the NovAtel board got a copy of it. And so on. I won't quote them all, because I'm sure you're starting to get a sense of where my frustration lies. Obviously, the government had a bunch of studies commissioned, provided copies to some people that they decided should get copies, but to the taxpayers that shelled out the \$645 million the government is saying, "No, we're not going to give you that study," that we've already paid for.

We've already seen cases where the government has produced copies but not enough copies. The Liberal opposition is saying, "We'll make the additional copies," with respect to the Bernd Walter report, which is another one that they're not prepared to provide extra copies of. So we're saying: "Give us one. That's all we need. We'll make the copies for the 32 members." I'll

look after my fellow colleagues in the Liberal opposition and make sure that we get 32 copies and anybody else who wants them. I'm just asking for one. There's no additional cost. I'm sure, as the member suggests, that there are some sitting on some shelves, perhaps his own shelf in his own constituency or his minister's office, sitting there waiting to be dusted off. I'm telling you that I would love to have the opportunity to dust it off and give it a good read.

So I encourage all members to support Motion for a Return 168.

MR. SPEAKER: All those in favour of Motion for a Return 168 as moved by the hon. Member for Calgary-North West, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

MR. SPEAKER: No.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:43 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Abdurahman	Henry	Sapers
Bracko	Hewes	Sekulic
Bruseker	Kirkland	Soetaert
Carlson	Langevin	Vasseur
Chadi	Leibovici	White
Collingwood	Massey	Yankowsky
Decore	Mitchell	Zariwny
Dickson	Nicol	Zwozdesky
Hanson	Percy	

Against the motion:

Ady	Forsyth	McFarland
Amery	Friedel	Mirosh
Black	Fritz	Oberg
Brassard	Gordon	Paszkowski
Burgener	Haley	Pham
Calahasen	Havelock	Renner
Cardinal	Herard	Severtson
Clegg	Hierath	Smith
Coutts	Hlady	Sohal
Day	Jonson	Stelmach
Dinning	Laing	Tannas
Doerksen	Lund	Taylor, L.
Dunford	Magnus	Thurber
Evans	Mar	Woloshyn
Fischer	McClellan	

Totals: For - 26 Against - 44

[Motion lost]

Loans and Loan Guarantees

M169. Mr. Bruseker moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all documents, including any commitment letters with lenders, the loan agreements, and any Alberta guarantee and indemnity agreements, pertaining to the government's financial

involvement with the following entities: Magnesium Company of Canada, Gainers Properties Inc., Smoky River Coal Limited, Ribbon Creek alpine village, Gainers Inc., Golden Gate Fresh Foods Inc., Northern Steel Inc., Universal Industries, Atlas Lumber (Alberta) Ltd., North Saskatchewan River Boat Ltd., and Tycor International Inc.

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

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just speaking briefly to it again, these particular corporations referred to in Motion for a Return 169 are listed on page 56 in the 1993-94 budget documents provided by the hon. Treasurer as receiving loan guarantees from the provincial government, and the motion for a return asks for information regarding those particular corporations listed.

MR. DAY: Well, Mr. Speaker, again - and it's been raised by members opposite - what do we do when we talk to our constituents about certain information? I'll be talking very openly about the fact that we have the most open government that you can imagine and that the members of the opposition waste time and energy by deliberately crafting questions - and I'll point this out in this next one - which make it impossible in any legal sense for the government to bring forward certain information. They deliberately craft those questions. They will never, ever give credit to the Premier for his openness and how he addresses the issues. They'll never give credit for that. Instead, they waste their research time and money by crafting these questions in such a way.

Case in point here, Mr. Speaker: all these agreements and guarantees - and there's quite a little list here in Motion 169 - are issued by the Provincial Treasurer. The release of these documents - they don't require just clearance from the Treasury. What attempt have the members opposite made - there's not that long a list here - to go to all parties who are listed here and get their consent? That's all they have to do: get their consent. I don't know that they know how to use a phone directory to look up some of these. But even if they did that, just as one example, the members know full well, and I'm speaking for every member here who wants to clearly reflect the will of the people in getting out of the whole Gainers situation, that one of the things we've done, one of the things we're involved in is that we are in court with Gainers. We're in court, and the master agreement, details of which are being asked for here, has been filed in the court. It's been filed, Mr. Speaker. It is absolutely - I don't know if I can use "misleading." I forget if that's in the list of unparliamentary language that so shocks and mortifies the members opposite.

MR. DINNING: We got your drift.

MR. DAY: You got the drift? All right.

What they're doing here is they'll run out just as we sit down, just like after question period. They ask the question; they circulate their little press release with erroneous information; they'll run and say that the government wouldn't give information. Mr. Speaker, they'll leave out the fact that the entire Gainers master agreement has been filed in the court. Go down to the courthouse and see if they'll let you have it. It's sub judice, but to further the government's openness, there's a committee that's been set up to meet to even look at the rulings of sub judice. So we're even open to that.

Mr. Speaker, it would be absolutely wrong for them to continue this charade, suggesting we're not giving information. I'll repeat

it one more time slowly for the new members who haven't quite twigged onto the methods being used by some of the old-timers across the way: it's been filed with the court. It's been filed with the court. You can make a little song out of it. It's been filed with the court. Go and ask the judge.

Mr. Speaker, one more point. If we were to give out this information, those involved in the legal community across the way know full well that we wouldn't have a chance in court of regaining taxpayers' dollars on the issue. We would throw that out the window, any opportunity at all. They know that full well. They'd love to see us lose even there. That's how irresponsible they're being.

We have to reject this motion.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I noticed the hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House laughing and thinking that this is all very funny to him. It's not funny at all, hon. member. It's very serious.

4:00

Hon. member and Mr. Speaker, we have stood in this House day after day, question period after question period. Let me just take a few examples. Magnesium Company of Canada: we have asked for the information that pertains to the \$100 million-plus that Albertans have lost or are going to lose in that fiasco, and we haven't been given any information. We've stood in this Assembly and asked for information that pertains to some kind of technology problem that exists between the government and Magnesium incorporated out of the United States and haven't been able to get the information. We get all kinds of sidetracks and slippage: "This isn't so important," and then somebody will stand and say, "The Auditor General has dealt with this." Baloney. People have lost money, hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House. They're entitled to know why they've lost these moneys. I can't believe you would laugh and think this is so funny, because it isn't funny.

If the hon. deputy House leader says there's a problem with sub judice – and he's right that the matter is being dealt with by a standing committee of this Legislature – then put a motion that excludes those matters that deal with sub judice. We'll agree to go over those, Mr. Speaker, but give us the information on everything else. Give us the information on Magnesium, deputy House leader, where we've lost \$100 million.

Mr. Speaker, even after the government said they weren't going to give more loan guarantees, even after they had the whole process of listening to the business community in Alberta that said don't get involved in the marketplace, they gave almost a million dollar loan guarantee to a company called North Saskatchewan River Boat Ltd. Show us what happened there, deputy House leader. Albertans are entitled to know why a million dollars was lost.

Today much of question period dealt with the issue of not picking up dirt and blood on the floors in hospitals because there's no money available. You haven't got the kind of courage it takes to provide Albertans with information on these things. Shame on you, hon. deputy House leader.

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

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I would like to speak briefly to Motion for a Return 169. You know, the hon. Deputy Government House Leader finds a word he doesn't like and says, "Gee, we can't accept it; we've got to change the whole

thing." Well, just to bring it to his attention – I know he's been here a while, but he's a kind of slow learner – there's a section in 'Bowchesnee,' the pronunciation according to the hon. Treasurer, called Amendments. Lo and behold, we see an amendment to one motion for a return today by the Hon. Ken Kowalski, moving to amend . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. BRUSEKER: Oh, sorry, Mr. Speaker. I was just reading it and quoting the Government House Leader.

The hon. Treasurer proposed an amendment. Fine job. I don't necessarily agree with the amendment, but he learned how to do an amendment, because he said, "Gee, there's something in there I don't quite like, so I'm going to propose a change." Well, it can be done. So to the Deputy Government House Leader: read *Beauchesne*.

Mr. Speaker, why are these on here? Let me just review the guarantees, and these are from the Treasurer's own documents: Magnesium Company of Canada, \$103.8 million; Gainers Properties Inc., \$53 million; Smoky River Coal, \$10.6 million; Ribbon Creek alpine village, \$10.1 million; Gainers Inc., \$10 million; Fletcher's Fine Foods, \$6.2 million. We're not sure if Golden Gate is in there or not; that's another motion for a return. Northern Steel corporation, \$3.8 million; Atlas Lumber company, \$653,000; Universal Industries, \$600,000. According to the document, North Saskatchewan River Boat is \$569,000, but I think the Treasurer has informed the House it went up since this document was published. Tycor International limited, \$300,000. If I do a quick addition of the sums, nearly \$200 million is being risked here, \$200 million on top of the three-quarters of a billion we've already lost in NovAtel.

So, Mr. Speaker, \$200 million is being put out here in a guarantee. I'm saying let's have some accountability. Tell us and tell Albertans the state of all these loan guarantees that have been provided. That's what the motion for a return asks for. There is a responsibility on behalf of this government under freedom of information, under openness and accountability. Mr. Premier, we care; we are listening. I hope you care and are listening and will provide the information.

MR. SPEAKER: All those in favour of Motion for a Return 169 as moved by the hon. Member for Calgary-North West, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion fails.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:08 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Abdurahman	Henry	Sapers
Bracko	Hewes	Sekulic
Bruseker	Kirkland	Soetaert
Carlson	Langevin	Van Binsbergen
Chadi	Leibovici	Vasseur

Collingwood	Massey	Yankowsky
Decore	Mitchell	Zariwny
Dickson	Nicol	Zwozdesky
Hanson	Percy	

Against the motion:

Ady	Forsyth	McFarland
Amery	Friedel	Mirosh
Black	Fritz	Oberg
Brassard	Gordon	Paszkowski
Burgener	Haley	Pham
Calahasen	Havelock	Renner
Cardinal	Herard	Severtson
Clegg	Hierath	Smith
Coutts	Hlady	Sohal
Day	Jonson	Stelmach
Dinning	Laing	Tannas
Doerksen	Lund	Taylor, L.
Dunford	Magnus	Thurber
Evans	Mar	West
Fischer	McClellan	Woloshyn
Totals:	For - 26	Against - 45

[Motion lost]

4:20

Loan Agreements

M171. Mr. Bruseker moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of the loan agreements between the government and the following entities: Pratt & Whitney Canada Inc., Centennial Food Corp., Gainers Properties Inc., Engineered Profiles (1989) Limited, and Ryckman Financial Corporation.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I rise to move an amendment to Motion 171, to add the words "for which all parties to these agreements allow release" so that the motion as amended would read

that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of the loan agreements between the government and the following entities: Pratt & Whitney Canada Inc., Centennial Food Corp., Gainers Properties Inc., Engineered Profiles (1989) Limited, and Ryckman Financial Corporation for which all parties to these agreements allow release.

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

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Speaking to the amendment, which adds the words "for which all parties to these agreements allow release," these corporations are all corporations which have received public funding. In fact, many of them are listed in our budget documents that were produced in the House earlier this session. The philosophy of the Alberta Liberal Party is that all parties which get public dollars should be prepared to make knowledge of those public dollars available to Albertans. In other words, again the issue is accountability.

So I have a little bit of difficulty with this amendment, because the feeling of the Liberal caucus is that all parties that are getting public money should be prepared to give that notice to the public. Adding a caveat at the end of it seems to me to be a substantial escape clause that may allow these corporations to not release the information. Mr. Speaker, I believe the release of the information

is incumbent upon the government, not just the corporations listed in this particular agreement.

With respect, Mr. Speaker, I have a concern with this amendment because of the reasons I've mentioned.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, according to the Financial Review Commission, \$2.1 billion has been lost in loans and loan guarantees by the Conservative government.

MRS. HEWES: Squandered.

MR. DECORE: "Squandered" is a better word. A few people sitting in a back room secretly determine to commit the province of Alberta to loan guarantees. The security they're committing in these backroom secret meetings is the taxpayers of Alberta. The taxpayers are the ones who have to ante up if something goes wrong, and there's been a lot of anteing up. Mr. Speaker, I think taxpayers who have provided this security through their elected representatives, through these secret meetings, secret backroom decisions, are entitled to know all the details: how much has been committed, the terms and conditions of that commitment. To wiggle out, to sidestep and sideslip and try to put the argument forward that we first must get the permission of the third parties is ridiculous. It's the Alberta taxpayer that's put up the security.

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

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in favour of the amendment. The reason I took this opportunity to stand up, having listened to the previous motions, is that it would seem to me that the only parties here that have been asked to present documents are those that are presently before a court.

I am not sure if the Liberal opposition is being all that consistent. The Leader of the Opposition has stood up and taken advantage of a situation in pointing fingers at a colleague and saying he's laughing about a situation. I, too, am laughing about a situation, but not for the reason the Leader of the Opposition pointed out. Mr. Speaker, I think I'm laughing because I have many constituents - as does the Member for Rocky Mountain House, as do many members in this House - who have government-backed loans. The Liberal philosophy, if I heard the Member for Calgary-North West correctly, is that all parties who obtain public funds should be willing, in so many words, to have their names and the amounts of the loans publicized. Well, I would like to assure the Leader of the Opposition and the Member for Calgary-North West that it might be selfishness, it might be a lot of different things, but there are a good number of small businesses, farmers, homeowners, student loan holders - in other words, Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation loans that are backed by the Alberta government - who are represented by people in the opposition and in the government that might not like to have their names and the dollar amounts. [interjection] There are many, I believe \$359 million worth of farm loans . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: What about Centennial Food?

MR. McFARLAND: Have I got something ringing in my ear, Mr. Speaker? Sorry.

We have got something like \$359 million worth of farm loan guarantees, and I would almost challenge anyone to go to a farmer tomorrow and say, "We're going to take your name and put it in a newsletter throughout the province indicating how much money you owe the Alberta government." Really, that's what the opposition is saying. They feel that any time anyone takes an

Alberta guaranteed loan, they should have their secret document, whether it's current or not, subjected to public scrutiny. For that matter, maybe we should also be careful that we're not casting stones when we, who are members of this Assembly, have relations in tourist businesses that also have received grants and loans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, I take grave exception to the comments of the Member for Little Bow. I look at Motion 171 and it speaks to loan agreements with Pratt & Whitney, Centennial Food, Gainers Properties, Engineered Profiles, Ryckman Financial Corporation. There isn't a single farmer listed there. There isn't a single student listed there. It seems to me that this is making very light of what is a very serious question. These are specific requests, that have been asked in good faith, about loan agreements this government has with private companies. This is public business and it should be made public. It's absurd to compare it to loans and loan arrangements to students and farmers. I resent that.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm a kind of kindred spirit with the Member for Little Bow, since we both arrived in the Legislature in 1992. I think he often presents a sensible perspective and shows some good judgment. But on this point I think the hon. member – and I say this with respect – has missed the point altogether. When a farmer borrows money from a provincial government agency and puts up his land as security, there's a mortgage that's registered. The mortgage tells us what the principal amount of the loan is. It tells us the particulars in terms of repayment, the repayment schedule. That's not what we're talking about here. We're not talking about farmers. We're not talking about small businesspeople that have debentures that are registered in a public registry service where any of us can inspect them and access them. What we're talking about are public funds given to large, large corporations. As my colleague said a moment ago, let's stick to the facts in front of us; let's deal with what's requested. We don't have to get into flights of rhetoric and draw strained comparisons in analogies with things that aren't in front of us. Let's focus on the specific request here. I think it's not at all a question of talking about small businesspeople and farmers. What we're talking about are large, in many cases international, corporations.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak in favour of this motion of course. In doing so, I'd like to address the comments by the Member for Little Bow. In fact, I think he has it exactly reversed. It isn't that we are asking to have all farmers' mortgage information made public and therefore are somehow creating consistency by asking that these corporations' loans be made public. Quite the contrary. Farmers' information is already all public. It is already at land titles offices across this province. Every last detail of the money they have borrowed from this government is very public, so the question that arises is quite the reverse of the point that member was making. The question is: why would that member not expect Ryckman Financial Corporation to provide exactly the same kind of information that is now required of every last farmer in this province to provide? Why would that member expect farmers in this province to provide all kinds of information which he does not expect Pratt & Whitney Canada Inc., Centennial Food Corp., Gainers Properties Inc.,

Engineered Profiles, and the Ryckman Financial Corporation to provide?

I would say that he has been hoisted on his own petard, Mr. Speaker, because he's trying to say that we're asking farmers to do something they shouldn't be expected to do when in fact he, his government, has already asked them. It is already very clear that they do it. These people who get special deals and special privileges because of special relationships with government he is afraid to ask to do exactly what he expects and his government expects and has required every single farmer who has a loan with this government to have already done. Think about it again, Little Bow.

4:30

MR. DAY: Well, whenever I hear the Member for Edmonton-McClung talk about disclosure, I'm at first moved to laughter, but then I have to say I'm moved to tears as I reflect on the picture of elderly widows, life's savings clutched in hand, running in through the doors of Principal trust to invest while he was vice-president. Where was the disclosure then? Where was the disclosure then? On this point, picture a résumé, Mr. Speaker. Picture being asked to disclose your recent past. Picture being involved in a company like Principal trust as vice-president and not including it on your résumé. Think of that. That's why I say that when I hear the Member for Edmonton-McClung talk about disclosure, first I'm moved to laughter, but when I think of widows with life's savings in hand, I'm moved to tears.

On the amendment, we have the Treasurer very clearly saying he's accepting and amending this. What's the problem? Let's get on with it.

MR. SPEAKER: Is the Assembly ready for the question on the amendment?

[Motion on amendment carried]

MR. SPEAKER: On the motion as amended, are there any further comments?

The hon. Member for Calgary-North West to close debate.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just briefly, in closing debate on the motion now as amended, that being Motion 171, what we're looking at here are specific corporations: Pratt & Whitney, Centennial Food.

Pratt & Whitney, by the way – if I could just back up to that. This is phase one, as I understand it, of a multiphased loan guarantee from the government, some of which has already been advanced, some of which is yet to be advanced. In fact, Pratt & Whitney again is referred to in the budget documents of this year; more money on the hook. We see in the lists of dollars that have been exposed so far \$25 million, and more yet to go.

Mr. Speaker, what we're looking for is information on five specific corporations, specific corporations that have taken a good amount of taxpayers' dollars and put the taxpayer on the hook as the second signer on a bank loan. Individual members may choose to do that with their spouses or with their sons or daughters or whomever and co-sign a loan, but the difficulty the Alberta taxpayer faces is that they were never asked. They were never asked. This happened on their behalf without consultation of the taxpayer. They were put on the hook for a variety of loan guarantees to these particular corporations. The end result, of course, is that we now see that we have loan guarantees, according to the public documents in the Treasury, of \$3.4 billion still outstanding. Now, I haven't asked about all the whole long list.

This motion for a return speaks about five particular corporations, saying: please tell us what's going on with your corporation. I think these corporations and the government have a responsibility to provide that information.

[Motion as amended carried]

Telexel Holding Limited

M173. Mr. Bruseker moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all agreements signed between the government's Telexel Holding Limited with respect to the acquisition of NovAtel Communications Ltd.'s subscriber equipment division by Telexel Holding in May 1992.

MR. DAY: Well, Mr. Speaker, in my constant effort to keep the temperature down, I just have to make a few comments. I'm trying to be generous here. I guess the member opposite is not aware that the Auditor General has reviewed all – that's a-l-l, all – documentation related to the agreements with Telexel being referred to in this particular motion. He's reviewed all the documentation.

Again, we find ourselves in some ongoing litigation related to this whole matter. The reason we're in litigation is because we the members on this side and the people of Alberta want to get to the bottom of all this. We want to, as far as possible, retrieve what can be retrieved for Albertans. That's why we're in litigation. That's a longer word for court. If we again look at releasing information that is sub judice, the lawyers, who would not like us to proceed and not like us to get what we can get for Albertans, would be delighted. They would love to get up in court and say: "Look what the government did. They released certain information that was sub judice. Look what they did." We would lose that opportunity to retrieve for Albertans what we can get for them.

I say again that the Auditor General has reviewed all the documentation – all documentation. It has not been hidden. As a matter of fact, he's reported on the major components of these agreements. So we'll dig out that report. It's not hidden anywhere. We'll send that over to the member opposite here who's requested it. We'll send that over.

We've been requested now to do the research. I just about fell off my chair; the opposition leader asked that we actually write the motions for them. We'll try and show up at feeding time to get the spoon into their mouths. We're trying to do what we can here, Mr. Speaker. We'll send that information. Nothing has been hidden here. The Auditor General has reviewed it. It's before the court.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I take it from that rambling that the minister says he's going to reject this. It was difficult to follow his rationale. I would like to compliment the minister, though, because I think it's really good when we see a minister of the Crown learn a new word for the day. I guess his word for the day is "litigation." So I'd like to compliment him on adding a new word to his vocabulary.

Just to bring members up to date, because I know that certainly members on this side of the House are curious about what this is all about, Telexel is a corporation that offered to purchase some

subscriber value – this is of NovAtel, of course – valued at \$28.8 million. Now, that part sounds okay, but you know, when you look at a little bit of the deal – \$28 million, a little bit more than 10 percent down, \$3 million in cash, \$20 million in deferred payment. There's the crunch, Mr. Speaker: \$20 million in deferred payment. What does that mean? When are we going to get it? How much are we actually going to get? What are the terms of the deal? And so on and so on. Just like when I go to my bank and take out a loan for a new car or to buy a house and take out a mortgage or whatever, all those details are available. Then \$5.8 million, in quotes: other revenue transferred to government. Now, this is from the government's documentation itself.

So it seems like on a deal that's supposedly worth 28 million bucks, we've got \$3 million in cash and the rest in something else, somewhere else, sometime else, somewhere, somehow, maybe sometime. It almost sounds like the title of a song, Mr. Speaker. Somewhere, somehow. I hear the Treasurer starting to break out in song on the other side. I don't know that that would necessarily be a correct career move for him, so he might want to consider where he's at right now. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

4:40

MR. BRUSEKER: Mr. Speaker, the government has a responsibility to tell Albertans. For the Deputy Government House Leader to stand up and say, "Well, Albertans want to get to the bottom of this," and then turn around and in the next breath say, "And to help you get to the bottom of this, we're not giving you the information," doesn't make a whole lot of sense. I would encourage all members, particularly those on the back bench who are equally concerned about NovAtel, to support Motion for a Return 173.

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the debate on Motion for a Return 173, all those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion fails.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:41 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Bracko	Hewes	Sekulic
Bruseker	Kirkland	Soetaert
Carlson	Langevin	Van Binsbergen
Chadi	Leibovici	Vasseur
Collingwood	Massey	White
Decore	Mitchell	Yankowsky
Dickson	Nicol	Zariwny
Hanson	Percy	Zwozdesky
Henry	Sapers	

Against the motion:

Ady	Forsyth	McFarland
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Amery	Friedel	Mirosh
Black	Fritz	Oberg
Brassard	Gordon	Paszkowski
Burgener	Haley	Pham
Calahasen	Havelock	Renner
Cardinal	Herard	Rostad
Clegg	Hierath	Severtson
Coutts	Hlady	Smith
Day	Jonson	Sohal
Dinning	Laing	Stelmach
Doerksen	Lund	Tannas
Dunford	Magnus	Taylor, L.
Evans	Mar	Thurber
Fischer	McClellan	Woloshyn
Totals:	For - 26	Against - 45

[Motion lost]

NovAtel Communications Ltd.

M174. Mr. Bruseker moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all documents and correspondence pertaining to the system of loan financing arrangements between the government and the following entities: General Cellular Corporation, S & P Cellular Holding Inc., Cellular Information Systems, General Cellular International, Telemovil SA of Peru, and GMD Partnership.

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

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, these corporations listed here - General Cellular Corporation, S & P Cellular Holding Inc., Cellular Information Systems, General Cellular International, Telemovil SA of Peru, and GMD Partnership - are corporations that all receive funding through NovAtel and of course through the government of Alberta.

AN HON. MEMBER: Did you say Peru?

MR. BRUSEKER: Yes, Peru indeed. We got involved with a corporation in Peru, Mr. Speaker, as difficult as that may be to believe.

This motion for a return says that we would like information on the system of loans financing between the government and those corporations, because although the report on NovAtel does cover some information on these corporations, the Auditor General's report does not provide all the information. I'm perhaps anticipating to a certain extent what the Deputy Government House Leader may say, Mr. Speaker. Although someone else perhaps has reviewed it, Albertans are saying that that's not good enough. It's kind of like watching someone else win the lottery, or perhaps in this case it's kind of like watching someone else lose the lottery big time. I think Albertans have a right to see firsthand - not filtered, not diluted, not interpreted, but firsthand - the information that's being requested.

MR. DAY: Well, again, and this time speaking for the Provincial Treasurer on behalf of the government, Mr. Speaker, as opposed to before speaking for the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism on behalf of the government, for many of the reasons previously enunciated, the government will reject this motion.

MR. DECORE: Well, I still see the hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House thinking this is a big joke, Mr. Speaker, and I can't believe this. I can't believe this. [interjections]

Point of Order Imputing Motives

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

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House is rising on a point of order.

MR. LUND: I am not laughing at the matter, as the hon. member said.

MR. MITCHELL: What's the citation?

MR. LUND: Standing Order 23(i). It's simply a case that the very childish way they're acting today - I'm really laughing at the way his mother dressed him.

MR. DECORE: I don't even want to respond to that one; it's so foolish.

Debate Continued

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, this is a very interesting motion because it relates to matters that were debated, that were brought forward in question period many, many times when the NovAtel fiasco broke. The NDP Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues and the Liberal Party and all the members of the Liberal caucus stood in this Assembly day after day asking for information on the Peru fiasco or scam, asked for information on GMD, asked for information on General Cellular Corporation, S & P Cellular Holding Inc. Each time that we asked for information on how NovAtel was dealing with those American companies, we got no information.

Mr. Speaker, were it not for freedom of information legislation in California and in Washington, the whole NovAtel fiasco would have been a long time unravelling. Those jurisdictions allowed us to get a little bit of information. We were able to discover, for example, that the GMD Partnership was a corporation that Alberta taxpayers had given money to, and the minister responsible for NovAtel thought that the moneys were used for product financing. We discovered through freedom of information in California that in fact Alberta taxpayers' moneys were being used to repay moneys owing as interest to NovAtel, that Alberta taxpayers' moneys were being used to provide directors with fees, that Alberta taxpayers' moneys were being used to buy buildings, that Alberta taxpayers' moneys were being used to buy capital assets for GMD Partnership. These are the horror stories that we had to discover, that we did discover only partially by freedom of information legislation in California, in Washington. I remember and I think of the point my colleague from Calgary-North West made about how the Premier of the day said that you can just come into this Assembly and ask us a question and we'll give you wheelbarrows full of information. Not one piece of information was ever, ever volunteered and was never given when questions were put in question period. Never.

Here's a specific case where Alberta taxpayers took a bath of some \$700 million, and there's much more to learn than has been told in the Auditor General's report. I want to know the scam that occurred with the Peru deal. I want to know who walked away with money. I want to know why heads didn't roll. I want to know the details of that arrangement. Mr. Speaker, for the government to say no to this one is just to tell us that they're

going to do the same old stuff, and that is to hide information from Albertans.

5:00

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

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the principle at stake here is very simple. We lost hundreds of millions of dollars on a scam. The money went somewhere. People signed those forms. Some of them still remain on boards today signing more forms. We should know who signed what, what were the nature of the agreements. In the case of Peru, that country didn't even have enough money to get a credit rating, and the international community viewed it as a write-off, yet there were individuals in Alberta, NovAtel, who were willing to loan money to a company located there for cellular phones. It makes no sense. What we do need is a dissection of how this happened so it will never happen again. We lost three-quarters of a billion dollars. Many of the people who were involved in that loss remain in positions of authority. So we ought to find out who signed, where the money went, and try and rectify the situation. It's that simple, and I don't see why it should be hidden.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. WHITE: Mr. Speaker, as a private member in this House speaking to other private members – the front bench don't seem to have their attention focused today. Ladies and gentlemen . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Through the Chair, please.

MR. WHITE: Sorry, sir.

Members, you were elected to represent people in the House. There is a principle involved here: simple information. Now, you both heard when we were out in the hustings that there is something wrong in Denmark when \$650 million goes the way of the dodo bird, and you cannot just close your eyes to it. You're responsible to some people. You were asked to report these things; you were asked to find out. I'm not sure that anybody should be hung, drawn, and quartered, but certainly you can't lose \$650 million out of any bank and not find it. [interjections] It may be funny to some, but I'll tell you that \$650 million goes an awfully long way in this province to providing the things that we're losing daily. In social services, in health care, in virtually every one of the portfolios there are jobs being lost. I for one don't think it's funny, and I think it behooves every single one in this House to find out how that occurred and find out so that we cannot repeat this same situation again, ever.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I was elected in a by-election in July of 1992, it was a by-election I sometimes characterize as the NovAtel by-election, because if there was one issue that came up at door after door after door when I went to talk to constituents, like the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie and her neighbours, the thing that I was told repeatedly was that we want to find out what happened, we want to get to the bottom of it, and we expect you as our elected representative to do everything you possibly can to unearth what went wrong. I suspect that every other member in this Assembly has got a similar message. I certainly know the minister and the Provincial Treasurer got the same message, because when I went door to door in June and July of 1992, I would look across the street in Scarboro and see the hon. Provincial Treasurer and the hon. Premier industriously going

door to door. They were talking to the same people I was, and I know what those people told the hon. Premier and the hon. Provincial Treasurer.

I think it's a shame and it's disappointing in a province that came up with the first Ombudsman Act in Canada; a province that decided there were secrets that could best be exposed by scrutiny and bringing things out into the open; a province that produced an individual like the hon. Mr. Baldwin, Member of Parliament for Peace River, who recognized that government secrets are damaging things, that public exposure is the only way of ensuring that we get the best possible kinds of laws, the best possible kind of management of provincial resources, provincial tax dollars. What must these people, the people that pioneered the Ombudsman Act, the people that pioneered the federal freedom of information Act now think when they see members in this Assembly opposing the disclosure of really very basic kinds of information? I can only say, Mr. Speaker, that I think Albertans are going to be interested in the way people vote on this kind of a motion. I think Albertans want to know which members of this House support initiatives to keep these matters still secret.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, NovAtel, with its upwards of \$700 million in losses – and I say upwards of \$700 million because we haven't got complete information on exactly how much the people of Alberta actually lost in NovAtel. What we've learned is how much the people of Alberta lost from 1989 on until the death of NovAtel. What we were never able to find out was how much this government invested in NovAtel between 1983 and 1989 through AGT that's still lost. So I use the term “upwards of \$700 million”: \$700 million of losses due to incompetence, due to bad management, due to whatever else that we can't really tell is a significant and substantial loss for which the government that did it and the people involved in it should, of course, be held accountable. What's very ironical is that it is impossible to hold this government accountable unless we can get information, and the government is in a position to protect itself by withholding that information.

Who's been held accountable for that \$700 million loss? Well, single mothers on social assistance. They are amongst those people who have lost \$52 million annually in benefits. Fifty-two million dollars is about 14 years' worth of what the NovAtel loss adds up to. So these people on this front bench and in that back bench of that government haven't been held accountable. Single mothers on social assistance have been held accountable.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, we discover that charities are being held accountable. Charities that have been stretched and stretched and stretched already are now being asked to be stretched even further. In fact, the Premier stood up today and emphasized that point. So it's not the people in this government that are being held accountable. Most recently it's charities.

Who else is being held accountable for the losses? Well, nurses. How many nurses have been laid off, Mr. Speaker, in the last several months because of this government having to somehow recoup losses like the losses that its members incurred themselves due to incompetence through the management of NovAtel?

What's very, very disconcerting is that by withholding this information, we cannot find out what exactly happened at NovAtel, and it isn't inconceivable, therefore, that it could occur again. It is no coincidence, Mr. Speaker, that the Premier sat at the table that made a lot of decisions about NovAtel from 1989 on, and five of his other front-bench colleagues sat at that table as well. If six of those people are still in this cabinet – and I will point out that they are in some of the most powerful positions in

this cabinet: the Treasurer, the Premier, the Deputy Premier, for example – and we can't find out what thought processes, what approaches, what decisions, what judgments, poor as they might have been, were made and how they were made, then there is literally no hope of guaranteeing that that kind of mistake will not be made again by this government.

A final point, Mr. Speaker, is that it is almost impossible to comprehend why there would be any other reason for this government to be withholding this information except to protect itself. What does it owe the owners of General Cellular Corporation, S & P Cellular Holding, Cellular Information Systems, Telemovil SA of Peru? What does it owe these people? Many of these companies don't exist anymore. Why would we believe for an instant they would have made an agreement with these companies when they gave them money that they wouldn't reveal the information? Of course they wouldn't have, and of course they didn't. There can only be one reason why they do not want to reveal this information. It's because six of them who were actively involved in the decisions that led to the failure of NovAtel, \$700 million, are still in very powerful positions in this cabinet, and they want to protect themselves.

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

5:10

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm struggling a little bit with this process, because what I see here is motion after motion after motion asking questions on an item-by-item basis. Basically at the root of it all is a serious issue of disclosure and lack of information. I guess what I'm struggling with is the productive use of my time as an MLA and, I think, the House's time as an Assembly all together. My suggestion as we go through these item by item is that we concentrate on a specific, strengthened, freedom of and access to information Act and get on with it.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Calgary-North West to close debate.

MR. BRUSEKER: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'm very much pleased with the comments from the Member for Calgary-Currie. I think that's exactly what this province needs.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member who just previously spoke expressing concerns about the process. I, too, am very concerned about this, but there's a reason why this motion for a return is on the Order Paper. I'd like to just delve into that a little bit if I may.

General Cellular Corporation – and this is all taken from the Auditor General's report, starting on page 72 – got a loan from NovAtel. NovAtel felt that it had to provide a loan to General Cellular to provide the opportunity to purchase municipal and rural service areas provided they bought Motorola equipment. They didn't even buy NovAtel equipment; they bought Motorola equipment. So NovAtel provided a loan to buy licences so somebody else could buy competing equipment. That's not the worst of it. That's General Cellular Corporation.

The next one is S & P Holdings. S & P Holdings decided they wanted to buy out another corporation called Petroleum Communications Inc., the owner of a licence that covered the Gulf of Mexico, which I referred to earlier on. Not many people live in the Gulf of Mexico, yet according to the Auditor General's report – and this is a direct quote from page 74 – “the NovAtel Board approved a loan of up to U.S. \$39 million to S & P to acquire

PCI.” In other words, to cover the Gulf of Mexico, they were prepared to spend \$39 million.

Cellular Information Systems. Now, this one's really interesting. NovAtel was working so hard to give the money away that they said, “We'll give you a loan for \$108 million U.S.,” went to the bank, and the bank said: gee, we can't even give you that much. So NovAtel had to roll back the amount of money they were trying to give away, and we already know that they lost \$645 million. If they had been successful, I can only assume that the loss would have been an additional \$48 million, because they tried to give more away.

Mr. Speaker, you've heard my colleague from Edmonton-McClung refer to Telemovil. An interesting quote: “General Cellular International (GCI) had an opportunity” – boy, that's an interesting word – “to get into the cellular market in Peru and Mexico.” That's from page 75 of the Auditor General's report. NovAtel was prepared to put \$4 million into that particular loan.

Then he uses a heading – and this is the Auditor General's wording – called “Unusual Loans,” as if the first ones that I've mentioned weren't unusual enough. Then he says: now we'll get into the unusual loans. He says that, gee, “the government approved a U.S. \$10 million commitment to Telemovil.” Now, here's the next part which is really interesting, Mr. Speaker. This is from page 76: “The loan is secured by all assets of Telemovil . . .” I wish that were the end of the sentence, but you know, it's not the end of the sentence because there's an extra word that really is a little bit serious. It says: “. . . except the cellular license, and 40% of the shares.” So they give away \$10 million, and they don't even get security to cover the loan. Who knows what's happened with Telemovil?

The only good news in this is that the last one that's mentioned in my motion for a return, GMD Partnership, has in fact paid off the loan since it entered its place on the Order Paper. Mr. Speaker, even allowing for GMD's paying off the loan, when I look at the loans made by NovAtel, section 8, page 79 of the Auditor General's report, and I add up the totals of the loans outstanding to those corporations mentioned in Motion for a Return 174, the total is \$140.9 million U.S. At May 29, 1992, that value was \$169.8 million Canadian that we're on the hook for with these loans.

The member stands up opposite and says: gee, we can't provide information; this is confidential. We've gone down the tubes for \$645 million. The government says that there's maybe a chance, maybe not a chance of getting some of this money back. One of the corporations has paid off. What about the rest of them? The government has an obligation to tell us.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-North West has moved Motion for a Return 174. All those in favour of this motion, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: Call in the members.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:16 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Beniuk	Hewes	Sekulic	Calahasen	Havelock	Renner
Bracko	Kirkland	Soetaert	Cardinal	Herard	Severtson
Bruseker	Langevin	Van Binsbergen	Clegg	Hierath	Smith
Carlson	Leibovici	Vasseur	Coutts	Hlady	Sohal
Chadi	Massey	White	Day	Jonson	Stelmach
Collingwood	Nicol	Yankowsky	Dinning	Laing	Tannas
Decore	Percy	Zariwny	Doerksen	Lund	Taylor, L.
Hanson	Sapers	Zwozdesky	Dunford	Magnus	Thurber
Henry			Evans	McClellan	Woloshyn
			Fischer		

Against the motion:

Ady	Forsyth	McFarland
Amery	Friedel	Mirosh
Black	Fritz	Oberg
Brassard	Gordon	Paszkowski
Burgener	Haley	Pham

Totals:

For - 25

Against - 43

[Motion lost]

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:29 p.m.]

