

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, October 6, 1993**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 93/10/06

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

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

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

Amen.

head: **Notices of Motions**

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I wish to give oral notice of the following government motion:

Be it resolved that when the Assembly adjourns at 5:30 p.m.

Thursday, October 7, 1993, it shall stand adjourned until 1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, October 13, 1993.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to table with the Assembly today a report entitled Removing Barriers, an action plan for aboriginal people with disabilities. This was released today by the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, I'm filing four copies of the 1991-92 report for the previous department of consumer and corporate affairs as required by statute.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I wish to file with the Assembly the audited financial statements of UniCare Integrated Software Inc. for the fiscal years ended March 31, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, and 1993.

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

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table three copies of the annual report for the Students Finance Board for the year 1992.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce to you and to the Assembly some 27 bright-eyed grade 6 students from the Grasmere school at Alberta Beach. They're accompanied by their teacher Mr. Jim Muir, parents Mrs. Shirley Norton, Mrs. Mary-Lou Spitz, and Mrs. Trudy Stromberg. They're seated in the members' gallery. I'd ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

MR. LANGEVIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly a dear friend of mine from St. Paul: Mr. Pat Gratton. Pat has served on the town council for the last 15 years. He is also presently the chairman of the hospital board, the chairman of the ambulance commission, the chairman of the senior citizen lodge commission, and he sits on the advisory council to Extendicare in St. Paul. Pat is also a very strong community person.

He's been involved in the chamber of commerce for a number of years, the Knights of Columbus, and many of the organizations and groups in our community. I'd like to ask Pat to rise and receive the usual applause from the Chamber.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development.

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to introduce to you and to the Assembly Mr. Fred Clarke, who is the acting chairman of the Students Finance Board, a board that does a lot of very important work for the students of Alberta. I'd like to ask Mr. Clarke to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is Mental Illness Awareness Week and Schizophrenia Awareness Week. Today it is my pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly four parents who unfortunately have to cope not only with the mental illness of a child but also with the insensitivity of this government when it comes to helping them cope. I would ask Gloria Smith, Susan Gardiner, Bobbie Nodden, and Joy Goddard to please rise and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

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

MR. WHITE: Thank you kindly, sir. It's my pleasure today to rise in my place to introduce to you and through you, Mr. Speaker, 23 students from Mayfield elementary school along with their teacher Mr. Kramar and Mrs. King, who is one of the parents who volunteered to drive them. They are doing something very special this week. They are having a provincial election in their school. There are at least some Liberals in the crowd, and I know there is at least one Progressive Conservative, because that Progressive Conservative happens to be the niece of your own Member for Lesser Slave Lake. Miss Kim Kish is in the audience and will rise with the rest of the class and please be welcomed by this House in the traditional way.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

MR. BRACKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege and honour to present to you and through you to this Assembly 32 visitors from St. Albert. They are a grade 6 class from Robert Rundle school. They tell me they are the smartest class in St. Albert. With them are two of Alberta's finest educators Pat Collins and John Savich. I'd ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry to introduce a group of very, very bright students from St. Anne school. They're accompanied today by their teacher Mr. Shawn Carson and a number of parents including Mr. Scheinbein, Mrs. LaFrance, Mrs. Pucci, and Mrs. Pysyk. If they could please stand in the gallery and receive the warm welcome of this House.

head: **Oral Question Period**

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. deputy Leader of the Opposition.

### Health Care Fees

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the midst of the daily litany that we get on the deterioration of health care in Alberta, services to the mentally ill remain indifferent, inconsistent, and inaccessible. As of October 1 the Red Deer regional hospital has begun to charge psychiatric patients for services. The charge varies from \$10 to \$75 depending on the patient's ability to pay and the discretion of the attending psychiatrist. My question is to the Minister of Health. Does the minister support the decision by a provincially funded hospital to charge patients for treatment?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I would respectfully request from the hon. member a little bit more detail on what the charges are for, because in this province we subscribe to the Canada Health Act, and medically required treatments are not charged for.

MRS. HEWES: Well, Mr. Speaker, that certainly gives rise to another question. Why on earth would a hospital be providing services of any kind that are not medically required?

MRS. McCLELLAN: I think the member knows full well that there are support supplies that are provided in hospitals and indeed out of hospitals. As I say, I would appreciate the hon. member giving me a bit more detail. Certainly I will subscribe myself and undertake to look into this and discuss it with the hon. member.

1:40

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that the minister should in fact know what one of the provincially funded hospitals is doing.

Mr. Speaker, just last week the Premier of this province said he supports the principles of the Canada Health Act. Will the minister now put a stop to this practice of a hospital charging for medical services since that directly contravenes that very Act?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I think in my second answer I did undertake to look into the situation for the hon. member. I also did give the commitment of this province to subscribing to the Canada Health Act. I believe our challenge is to provide medically required treatment to individuals in this province. I will also discuss this issue with the Red Deer hospital.

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

### Health Care Wage Rollbacks

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Wage rollbacks to health care workers are very, very questionable because they gloss over the need for real structural reform and they mean that health care workers alone are bearing the brunt of cuts to our health care system. If there is to be even the remote possibility of fairness in this process, then doctors must not be given special concessions or special treatment over other health care workers. My question is to the Minister of Health. Could the Minister of Health tell us what meaning other health care workers are to take from the fact that doctors did not attend the meeting between health care workers and the Minister of Labour to discuss these wage rollbacks earlier this week?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the member, I believe, probably read the communication on Monday that indicated that the 5 percent request for a voluntary rollback was to all sectors in the health sector, including physicians. I believe the hon. member

might also know that there is an association that the doctors have that they work through. I am sure he is aware that the Department of Health works through the administrative council of the Alberta Medical Association, and that is the vehicle that will be used for those discussions.

MR. MITCHELL: Given that there are clearly separate negotiations going on, one set with other health care workers and one set with doctors and the government, could the minister please tell us what assurances she can give health care workers that their wages won't be rolled back unless doctors' wages are rolled back as well and equally?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I believe I made it quite clear in my first response that physicians were included in the request. The physicians voluntarily took a reduction earlier this spring. I am confident that the physicians through their Medical Association will enter into those discussions with us in the appropriate way, which is through the administrative council, which deals directly with the Department of Health.

MR. MITCHELL: Will the minister indicate here and now her determination that rollbacks to doctors won't be accompanied by some form of special concession to doctors; for example, greater ease in opening private clinics, which among other things is yet another substantial step along the way to a two-tiered health care system?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, that is really quite a startling question. The communication on Monday said clearly that the request for a voluntary reduction was in salaries, fees, and benefits. Now, I am confident that the hon. member can read and hear and noted that. I just find it very, very startling that he would draw the other issue into this discussion. I have outlined very clearly that it will be salaries, fees, and benefits and that we will work with the physicians to achieve that objective through the administrative council as we have in the past in their voluntary reduction this spring.

### Hospital Construction

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm angry and very concerned that the mentally ill have been housed at Alberta Hospital Edmonton for the past number of decades in deplorable conditions: frost that accumulates on interior walls, unbearable heat in the summer, a dining room with no running water, one bathroom in the intensive care area that you have to access through a storage area, a strong odour of urine that permeates the rehabilitation facilities. That's why I'm angry. My question is to the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services. What criteria and assessment was done by your department and Alberta Health to determine what capital projects would be funded this fiscal year?

MR. THURBER: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad she didn't bring up Westlock. At least there were some projects stopped in a variety of constituencies, and I'm glad she noticed that one in her constituency had been held back along with the ones in the government constituencies.

Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, as I've said many times here in the House, we tried to deal with the recommendations coming out of the roundtables on health, and their main recommendation to date has been to hold all capital and any renovation to anything we could in the health care field. Now, we did a determination, and

we tried to stall off some of the projects in the best stage that we could. I'm sure that all of the other ones that are in the same stage have the same concerns as the hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan.

Having said that, there was never any intent on the government's part to stop any of these projects on a permanent basis. It's to hold them back, let us have a look at them, and let's see what comes out of the roundtables on health, because they may very well go ahead once those are done.

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Mr. Speaker, it is not within my constituency.

My second question is: how can this government continue to operate these facilities when they don't even meet the legal standards?

MR. THURBER: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what legal standards she's talking about. The hon. member may have a good point there, but I'm not sure what she means by legal standards. Does she mean Fire Code, safety, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera? Perhaps she could enlighten me on that.

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Public health standards.

My supplemental question is to the Deputy Premier. To depoliticize the process, Mr. Speaker, will this government immediately name an independent body to recommend what, if any, projects should proceed?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, the process in dealing with all projects that are funded by the province of Alberta, whether or not they be operating projects or capital projects, of course is this Legislative Assembly. The key process that we have is the evaluation of all department budgets that are brought before this particular Assembly. There are 83 individuals in this Assembly all elected in essence to be forthright and to bring issues to this Assembly. Just recently we dealt with the estimates of the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services, and there was ample opportunity for all members to advocate and bring forth projects with respect to this matter.

Secondly, there are approximately \$1 billion worth of capital projects going on in the province of Alberta in a fiscal year. That's down, and it has been down particularly in the last number of fiscal years, down from about 1 and a half billion dollars, almost a 35 percent decrease in that area. Mr. Speaker, if the intent of the question here is to have every project that is currently being done by all of the departments of government brought to an independent agency, I daresay that it would take some period of time.

Mr. Speaker, we have a Department of Health. We have health boards that are in the process of dealing with it. The hon. member who raised the question is a former member of a health board and knows full well the process of bringing projects that are needed to the attention of the government. It's a very, very clear process.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Medicine Hat, followed by Edmonton-Glenora.

1:50

### Apprenticeship Regulations

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Members of the pre-engineered building industry have expressed concerns to me regarding the new Apprenticeship and Industry Training Act. The trade of ironworker is specified as a compulsory certification. This means that no person can perform the work of this trade if

he's not a certified journeyman or a registered apprentice ironworker. Given current practices, virtually all contractors involved in the erection of pre-engineered metal buildings are acting in contravention of this regulation and subject to fines of up to \$15,000. My question is to the Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development. Is the minister aware of this very valid concern within the industry?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development.

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Act was brought into law, a lot of effort was spent at that time on the issue of exemptions from the legislation or authorizations to work outside the apprenticeship system. I am aware of the concerns within industry that the hon. member is referring to and the government's role through this Act to balance management's and labour's needs to ensure safety and worker mobility and job opportunities for workers and an environment for economic competitiveness. However, because no Act or law can cover every eventuality, an inclusion was made for the flexibility which industry often required in assigning the work.

MR. RENNER: What is the minister prepared to do when his Act is imposing true hardship on this very important segment of our construction industry in Alberta?

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, as situations arise where the government seems to be putting unnecessary blocks and hurdles in the way of industry, I'll examine those situations in consultation with the executive director of the apprenticeship board and the chairman of the board. It's not the intent of the government to get in the way of business. We do not want to put in cumbersome and unnecessary government requirements that do not fit a particular circumstance, rather we want to facilitate good business practice, not hinder it.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In light of the fact that our government has stated the need to get out of regulation and unnecessary regulatory activities, could the minister advise just what the process is for evaluating these exclusions from the Act, and could the minister perhaps advise this House how long this procedure could be expected to take for an applicant?

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, the process involves reporting to and making recommendations to the executive director for an authorization for exemption. Each application will be examined on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the minister. The Act and regulations provide the ability for the minister to grant an exemption, and all requests for authorization will be dealt with as quickly as possible on a case-by-case basis.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, followed by Calgary-East.

### Mental Health Services

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Parents of children with schizophrenia face many challenges. They must deal with a government which provides little or no help. Report after report after report has outlined the desperate lack of support for adolescents and their families, these adolescents who suffer from

schizophrenia in particular. Given the long wait for hospital admission, which can only be made worse as a result of all of the bed closures, what has the minister done to ensure that there are today sufficient resources and services available for Alberta's adolescents?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, certainly mental illness, as with other illness, puts strains, pressures not only on the individuals but on care givers as well. Certainly the issue of mental health services to children is one of great concern to us. The hon. member is quite aware that I met with the Schizophrenia Society about 10 days ago, and we discussed a number of those issues at that meeting. I am also quite certain that the hon. member is aware that we have a children's mental health co-ordinator in each of the six regions working to ensure that those needs are met. Also, I know that the hon. member is aware, because I have raised it before, that we have just received the report on the mental health strategic plan, and within that plan we'll be responding to ensure that we offer more co-ordinated services for mental health in this province.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. SAPERS: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Why hasn't the Minister of Health developed a plan in conjunction with the Department of Family and Social Services to implement the mental health recommendations from the departmental review for services to 16 and 17 year olds, from the FCSS review, and from the Children's Advocate review?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, one of the concerns that we have in mental health services in this province is co-ordination or the lack thereof. Earlier this year we had a team of people who visited all of the regions in this province to ensure that we would co-ordinate and use best our resources. That group worked very hard to ensure that we could co-ordinate services for mental health needs throughout the province and that we were using those very precious resources most efficiently. I think it would be most advisable for this minister to look carefully at the recommendations that group gave. I have just received that report, and I intend to deal with the recommendations in it very soon.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, to the Minister of Family and Social Services. Why are some adults, 18 year olds, who have been diagnosed with schizophrenia and are unable to work not receiving AISH benefits?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, the question before, the supplement, also talked about my department. I'd like to advise the hon. member and this Assembly and Albertans that this government does care. We are spending \$250 million on services for children. Under child welfare alone we're spending \$160 million with over 8,000 children in care. We do care.

To that specific question. Our doors are open to assist any people in Alberta that are eligible to receive AISH. Mr. Speaker, as time goes on, as the reforms move on in the next four years, I've always advised this Assembly that I will continue monitoring programs in the high-needs areas such as AISH. As dollars become available by putting young Albertans back to work, which you guys are opposed to, we'll have more dollars for the high-needs areas such as AISH, and that's what this minister intends to do.

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

### Beverage Container Depots

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government promised Albertans on June 15 that it would get out of the business of business. This government has lived up to this promise by implementing an aggressive and carefully planned program of deregulation and privatization. However, while liquor sales are being turned over to entrepreneurs, the system for collecting and recycling beverage containers is still regulated. Would the Minister of Environmental Protection explain why the government is regulating who can open bottle depots when the government is no longer regulating retailers of alcoholic beverages?

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

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is a very good question. I've heard that comment made on both sides of the House. We must remember that the beverage recycling initiative is just that. It's an initiative environmentally based to try to ensure that we have the cleanest land base that we can in the province. As result of that, bottle depots and bottle collection has been regulated since 1972. That was in essence at the beginning to ensure that we had an economically viable industry, and there were some separation distances set up at that time, about 40,000 population being the norm for distances. However, as that has gone along, there have been some other issues that have come into regulations, and those are really the standards for urban and for rural outlets. I think it's something that we should look at, particularly in relation to what the government is doing today in terms of deregulation and getting out of the business of doing business. Again, I think it's a very good question from the hon. member.

2:00

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the minister responsible for the Alberta Liquor Control Board whether liquor stores will be allowed to supplement their revenues by accepting bottle returns?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, you know, I've just listened intently to the answer by the hon. minister of the environment. I would say that we are in the process of creating many collection depots if they so wish. We are not making it compulsory that the class D licence must take back the empties, but indeed if they supplement their income with this function, so be it. I will talk with the minister to see if there's any conflict with what he has in legislation, but our intention is to allow all of these facilities the ability to take back and refund on the empty bottles and cans.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to go back to the Minister of Environmental Protection. Will the minister review the province's beverage container system and when many of its cumbersome regulations may be removed?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. EVANS: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In point of fact we are really working on that at present. We are looking at a way of

delegating authority for regulation to the industry, to be industry driven. We've been looking at that for the past year or so. I think that may address some of the issues the hon. member has brought up, and I think it's a co-operative effort that's working quite well at present. We'll be able to report on the progress of that effort in the near future.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

#### **Gainers Inc.**

MR. N. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister of agriculture. This morning Fletcher's and Burns announced a joint venture to fund the expansion of Fletcher's pork processing plant in Red Deer, doubling the daily throughput with a capacity now enough to handle almost all the pork that should be slaughtered in Alberta. Note, Mr. Speaker, a one sentence preamble, and I expect a one sentence answer too. With the expansion of the Fletcher's processing plant will the minister of agriculture now admit that Gainers cannot be sold into the private sector because nobody in their right mind would buy an obsolete Gainers plant to compete against a brand-new processing plant in Red Deer?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly a good question. The basic answer is that we are a province that is expanding its hog production. We are a province that's going to continue to expand its agricultural output. Agriculture is the future of this province, not its past. Fletcher's has always been there and so has Gainers, and the people that have been showing interest in Gainers up until now obviously will continue to show interest in Gainers because Fletcher's has been there in the past. This is an excellent growth potential. The industry has a tremendous growth potential. We're excited about the announcement today.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Indeed, Mr. Speaker, buying a pig in a poke. With that exuberance he could sell Kim Campbell.

Will the minister of agriculture now admit that the Richardson Greenshields' search for buyers for Gainers is just a delaying game so the government will not have to declare a huge loss in Gainers this fiscal year?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly this minister will not agree with that train of thought at all. We have an exciting hog industry in Alberta. The people themselves are enthusiastic. They're innovative and quite vigorous. Our industry has grown from slightly over a million hogs in 1985 to over 2 million hogs today. That's a pretty substantive growth, and continuing along that growth pattern, it's quite feasible that we will double our production within the next four years. Obviously, the numbers will warrant two major facilities within the province.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, the only one who has made money out of pigs in this province is Mr. Pocklington.

Could I ask the minister, then, what makes him confident that they would locate a hog plant up here in northern Alberta when under the free trade agreement it might make much more sense to put it in Lethbridge, where Pocklington wanted to put it 10 years ago anyhow?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, we are a free enterprise province. We are a free enterprise, business-oriented province.

Whoever purchases Gainers will make that decision, not the province of Alberta, not this minister or any other legislators. That decision will be made by the private enterprise.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Provincial Treasurer wishes to augment.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I like to supplement the hon. minister's answer by saying that we on the government side are astonished – astonished – at the glee with which the Edmonton members across the way face the prospect of Gainers going down. I'm astonished that the members will stand in . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order. [interjections] Order. [interjections] Order please. That was really not an augmentation or a supplementation to the answer. [interjections] Order please. We were making good progress on the question period.

The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake, followed by the West Yellowhead.

#### **Native People with Disabilities**

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The report Removing Barriers clarifies many solutions to overcoming barriers faced by aboriginal persons with disabilities. As an aboriginal person I've been going through report after report that has been done by many various groups, and many recommendations have come forward. I'm sure no group has been studied as much as we have. To the minister responsible for the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities: what is the minister's plan for implementation of the report so that it doesn't just gather dust?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, certainly this is a very significant report, one that should go a long way in identifying the issues that pertain to services to aboriginal people with disabilities. First of all, the government will move ahead with all possible speed in terms of reviewing all of the recommendations in this report. Secondly, we will be taking every opportunity to work with the other levels of government mentioned in the report as having joint responsibility in many of the areas of the recommendations. Thirdly, we already have under way an effort in the whole area of co-ordinating services among our own departments, which is an area that can certainly be improved and will, if accomplished, have its beneficial effect for the aboriginal people of this province.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question, then, is to the Minister of Family and Social Services. Given that you are responsible for AISH and the report suggests that the incidence of disabilities for Alberta aboriginal persons is higher than the Alberta average, what is your department doing to help disabled aboriginal people overcome the barriers they face?

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. Minister of Family and Social Services.

**2:10**

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. [interjections] I won't talk about the Liberals.

Mr. Speaker, I've mentioned in this Assembly before that we do have a budget of over \$150 million, \$58 million on AISH with over 15,000 clients under that program. Specifically in relation to the aboriginal issues mentioned in the report, I did advise the

chairman of the group that as the minister I will sit down immediately, because the report is very specific on the recommendations in relation to people with disabilities that may fall under my department's jurisdiction. The report also has specific recommendations on how the recommendations should be implemented. Therefore, this minister will move forward on that plan.

I'd just like to advise, though, for the record, Mr. Speaker, that we do have 882 people that are treaty Indians receiving the assured income for the severely handicapped under my department, and 491 of those reside on a reserve and 391 reside off the reserve. We are only recovering a portion from the federal government for the people that do live off the reserve. So I think this government does care.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you. To the Minister of Health: since the report identifies many problems associated with access to health services and delivery of health in aboriginal communities, what are you and your department doing to address these issues?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, certainly we are aware of the special concerns of Alberta's aboriginals regarding access to health services. I should say that our department has a native health team that is dedicated to working with the aboriginal communities. They have been involved in a very extensive consultation process to ensure that we provide access to services. Secondly, I know that the aboriginal groups have been very proactive in being involved and attending the health roundtables, which deal with restructuring and providing health services in the future. I had the opportunity to visit the community of Peerless Lake and meet with a number of aboriginal groups in that area to discuss those very issues, one of the issues being native training to provide services in their own communities. I will be working with my colleague the minister of advanced education on that issue.

Also, I should just finally say, I think very importantly, that at our federal/provincial/territorial ministers' meetings held here in Alberta about three weeks ago, this was raised by all provinces as a very important issue. We have committed to a meeting in December where aboriginal issues will be a priority discussion, as we do share jurisdictional authority in many of those areas.

I want to express my appreciation to the people who drafted that report. We will be working very seriously with them.

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

### Education Roundtables

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Minister of Education issued a workbook called Meeting the Challenge as a lead-in to the roundtable discussions. With the horrendous cuts of 30 percent over the next three years being a given, the minister suggests various programs that should not be funded by the provincial government because they are apparently not that important, I guess. Early childhood education, which involves about 90 percent of all five year olds, is considered to be one of those programs. To the Minister of Education: since the government's suggestions usually end up in the final report of those roundtables, will the minister release the criteria by which he determined that early childhood services could be chopped?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I must comment on the general tone of the question of the hon. member. The Liberal opposition is continually saying in this House that they want things

laid out, they want the information to be provided, they want the alternatives to be laid out. Now, in this workbook, which is a discussion base for the upcoming roundtables, we have been quite open about costing out the various factors, the various programs that are there in the K to 12 education system of this province. That's been done. There are all types of alternatives. We are also expecting that the many people that will be attending these roundtables will come up with other innovative ideas and suggestions, and those will be considered.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Mr. Speaker, since everything is wide open, will the minister table a list of early childhood services parent advisory councils that have been invited to send representatives to these roundtable discussions in order to discuss cutting ECS?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated previously, in the designing of the program of the roundtable, in developing the workbook, and in establishing the parameters for those people being invited, we have had an advisory committee with major stakeholder groups in education represented. In the body of people attending these roundtables will be people from many aspects of the education system, including the area of early childhood services.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How does the minister ensure that we do not end up with an early childhood services program only for the rich?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, the government has made it clear that they have an interest in equity funding of school boards across this province with respect to the provision of services. I do not know where the hon. member could possibly come up with that kind of a question. We are looking at all types of alternatives. We are looking at improving the quality of education in this province. We are looking at defining it. We are looking at the ways it can be best funded. We're looking at restructuring of the whole system, as long as that can take place in a constructive way.

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

### Gainers Inc.

(continued)

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister of agriculture, and it follows along the line of the questions from the Member for Redwater. Given the very positive news that came out of Red Deer this morning regarding the agreement in principle of the jointly funded expansion of the Fletcher's plant – and I'm sure that agreement was reached with the assumption that the government would not be directly competing against them with the ownership of Gainers – and given that Gainers does have a lot of very valuable processing ability and market value, could the minister confirm to this House that the disposition of these valuable assets will happen before the end of the year?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I had mentioned in the House some three or four weeks ago, we have

committed to the divestiture of Gainers. We have committed that we will not be participating in business that private enterprise can do, and it is our objective to indeed be out of Gainers in total by the end of the year. That still is our objective.

MR. FISCHER: Are there any government dollars involved in this new agreement with Fletcher's and Burns?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, it's certainly not our objective to be involved in any financial participation whatsoever within the industry. That, of course, is one of the reasons that we are going through the process we are going through today. It is our objective to see that the pork industry grows and grows as an independent industry. It's important. The pork industry participants have told us that. Industry processors have told us that. It is our objective to fulfill the arrangements that we displayed before the House some three or four weeks ago.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. FISCHER: That's fine.

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

#### **Fiscal Equity in Education**

MR. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know the problem of fiscal equity in education. We know the government would like the problem to go away, but it's not going to go away and we do have to deal with it. I've had some concern expressed to me from some stakeholders that, in fact, the decision has already been made. I'd like to ask the chair of the government's financial planning committee why, when groups such as the Alliance of Six, the Education Trust Equity Council, the Alberta School Boards Association, and others presented their views to his committee, they were only given seven minutes, yet when the Department of Education presented its one-sided, slanted view in support of corporate pooling, they got a whole meeting to discuss their point of view?

2:20

MR. MAGNUS: Mr. Speaker, as the Member for Edmonton-Centre should be aware, these committees through their very structure simply make recommendations to cabinet and to caucus. With that in mind, there was no decision that was made on fiscal equity, and perhaps the Minister of Education would like to supplement that.

MR. JONSON: Yes, I certainly would, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I believe the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre was in attendance, and if he recalls the meeting, he will realize that the proposal that is known as corporate pooling received equal time at that meeting with all the other presenters.

MR. HENRY: Mr. Speaker, we have a different recollection here.

I'd like to ask the minister: given that the roundtables next week are going to be talking about fiscal equity, among other issues, will the minister distribute at the roundtables copies of all the eight presentations that were made by the various stakeholder groups to the roundtable participants?

MR. JONSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it would be good to point out that copies of all the proposals that have been made were distributed at the financial planning committee meeting, the public

meeting that is being referred to here. Those proposals are readily available from the people that have been the sponsors of those particular proposals. I would have to take under consideration whether we would go into the printing of a large number of those proposals for the roundtables. Certainly that is a possibility, but that is not, in terms of those specific proposals, the focus of the roundtables. We have very important questions to discuss. We have to set priorities in terms of the overall foundation of basic education in this province, and a whole host of other things need to be discussed.

MR. HENRY: The number one issue is equity in education. That's the number one issue.

I'd like to ask the minister if he would stand up and guarantee that there will be no changes in the structure of the education tax system in our province until after the government's Tax Review Commission has reported and been able to provide us with an overall plan. Hold off until that happens.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in answer to a question yesterday, the topic of equity funding in education is a very important one. The hon. member is correct in identifying it as a matter that is being identified as a priority of the government in response to public demand in this particular area. As I indicated yesterday, when we're dealing with fiscal equity, every consideration will be given to meshing that with ultimate changes, if there are any, in our tax structure.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Three Hills-Airdrie, followed by Edmonton-Ellerslie if there's time.

#### **Provincial Tax Regime**

MS HALEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Canadian Tax Foundation study of tax load in Canada shows that Alberta has the lowest tax load as a percentage of GDP in Canada. Some of my constituents are asking why the province is cutting our health and education programs rather than raising taxes to pay for these priority programs. Could the Provincial Treasurer please respond to my constituents' concerns?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Tax Foundation is absolutely correct. They've shown that Alberta's total taxes as a percentage of gross domestic product in the province are some 30.4 percent, whereas the Canadian average is some 36.8 percent, a significant difference. The logic that we have low tax rates and that therefore we should raise them is sort of old think thinking that we'd expect from the Liberal Party across the way, but Premier Klein's government's approach is: let's ensure that we improve the quality of education and the quality of health care and reduce its cost. So we want to keep dollars in taxpayers' pockets, grow the economy by Albertans investing in Alberta, investors from outside of Alberta investing in Alberta, thereby creating the jobs. Higher taxes only say that the government knows how to spend taxpayers' money better or wiser than taxpayers. This government doesn't believe it, and thank goodness we've got people like the Canadian Tax Foundation, who will stand up and tell Canadians the facts.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MS HALEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents also agree that they know how to spend their dollars more wisely than the government.

Could the minister please tell my constituents how tax increases are driving more of our economy underground?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, that is a very important question in this country today. It is regrettably very difficult to quantify the growth in the underground economy, but it is happening, and I can only share some symptoms of why that's happening. I can think back to 10 provincial governments now having presented budgets in this country in the last six months. Canada's economic forecasting agencies, after all of those budgets came out, came out with a forecast saying that every province in this country except one will face a downgrade, a decrease in economic growth. Alberta was the only one that faced an increase in economic growth. Why? Because Alberta was the only province in this country that did not raise its taxes in their budget.

MS HALEY: Mr. Speaker, my final supplemental to the minister is: could the minister please assure Albertans that the government is not going to increase taxes?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, as I said in the Budget Address, a promise made is a promise kept. That is exactly what we did in our budget. I wish I could say that that was true of other governments who made election promises not to raise their taxes. May I point out for the benefit of all Albertans and all hon. members that the Liberal Party of Nova Scotia said in the last election that they were not going to raise taxes. What do they do four months into office? The sales tax last week went up one percentage point. They broadened the base of their sales tax, they increased gasoline and diesel fuel taxes, and they put a surtax on high income. It's a fact in the province of Nova Scotia that the Liberal Party did that. They made a promise. They broke their promise. This government will keep its promises.

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

#### **North Saskatchewan River Boat Ltd.**

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling four copies of the November 1990 business plan for the North Saskatchewan River Boat company. This government has played the role of sugar daddy with taxpayers' dollars, which over the years have financed a number of questionable business ventures. Magnesium plants, water ski companies, munition factories, and now a North Saskatchewan riverboat. This government just can't seem to find the will to reduce or eliminate. In fact, when the riverboat company asked for up to \$400,000, this government generously gave them \$947,000. To the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism: did you know that the company only asked for \$400,000?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I've had the privilege of being the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism only since the latter part of June of 1993. I had absolutely no access whatsoever to any discussions that were held in 1991.

MS CARLSON: You were in the government of the day at that time. How can you explain a hundred percent increase in the government exposure on this loan guarantee?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I have never, ever attended a meeting involved with the discussions of this particular matter. I've never had any correspondence with anybody. I've never

talked to any of the principals. I haven't talked to anybody in 1993 about this matter. I've had no correspondence from the North Saskatchewan River Boat company, and I certainly wasn't involved in it in 1990 or '91. So I don't know how I can respond to the question.

MS CARLSON: Then, let's talk about right now. What are you doing right now to ensure that our investment in this company is not going to become another mini NovAtel?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, did I hear the hon. member exercising herself by saying that this would become a mini NovAtel? I thought that's what I'd heard. There's quite an exaggeration there. First of all, the guarantee that had been put in place with respect to it: the outstanding number is not the \$947,000 quoted by the hon. member. As I'd indicated before, this matter currently is before one level of the courts. We're monitoring it, and we're going to make sure that the investment that had been committed to in times gone past will not be lost. I cannot say the same about the dollars put forward to North Saskatchewan River Boat Ltd. by the city of Edmonton or any other agency, but I will say that on behalf of the taxpayers of Alberta we're going to ensure that we protect our investment as much as we can.

MR. SPEAKER: The time for question period has expired, but before leaving this matter and moving on to the point of order, would there be unanimous consent to allow the Minister of Health to further supplement her answers to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar with regard to the Red Deer hospital?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

2:30

#### **Health Care Fees**

*(continued)*

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar raised what I consider a very serious concern on charges for mental health services by a hospital in Red Deer. I would want to assure the hon. member that the Red Deer hospital is not charging for any psychiatric services, which are insured services in this province. There is a fee for psychological counseling services, a sliding scale as I understand it. That is quite within their mandate. I would want the hon. member to further know that our department does have a regional mental health clinic in the city of Red Deer that does provide counseling services at no charge. I wanted to ensure and relieve the hon. member's mind that the Red Deer hospital was not charging for psychiatric services, which are insured under our health care program.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you to the minister for that answer.

Then may I ask the minister, Mr. Speaker: is this the new direction for mental health services, where coverage for treatment is only provided when physical health is in jeopardy? I think we need to have an explanation of this.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. minister, briefly.

MRS. McCLELLAN: As I indicated, psychiatric services are funded as an insured service, Mr. Speaker. This is a counseling service. I should say that other agencies, including our own,



including Catholic Social Services offer a counseling service, which I understand they charge a nominal fee for, but psychiatric services are not charged for when offered through Red Deer hospital. [interjection]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Perhaps this matter can be pursued in a subsequent question period.

MRS. HEWES: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

**Point of Order  
Brevity in Oral Question Period**

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

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise under *Beauchesne* 410(7), which refers to the need for brevity in both answers and questions. Over the last number of days there has been some discussion and certainly some ruling by you that steps need to be taken to enhance the efficiency of question period. I would note that I think we're about halfway there.

I hate to be this detailed about these things, but it does have important broader consequences. Today I was counting preambles. Every single questioner, those on both sides of the House, except one met the rule of having three or fewer preambles. In our caucus most people had even fewer than three sentences in the preamble. It was generally extremely good, and in fact from that side of the equation efforts have been made on both sides of the House to streamline question period. I will point out, however, that despite those steps forward in that regard, we actually got exactly the same number of questions on our side that we would normally get, and if I'm not mistaken, the Conservative caucus got one fewer question than it would normally get.

There can only be one reason for that delay, and that, of course, is answers by ministers. I'm not going to pick on any ministers in particular today, but it is obvious that some ministers are less precise in their ability to answer than other ministers. We believe that in fact that demonstrates rather a fuzziness of thinking that doesn't particularly behoove the minister who takes so long to answer. There are some ministers who are particularly good and for whom we express a great deal of appreciation for the preciseness, the conciseness, the quickness with which they answer. I wish, Mr. Speaker, we could say that about all ministers. I would hope that you would select those ministers out for some particular reprimand so we can get this question period even more efficient.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Opposition House Leader's point is well taken, and the Chair will consider some comments in the near future. For the remainder of this week, one more question period, he hopes that all members of the Assembly have heard those comments which, again, I think were in order.

Before calling Orders of the Day, perhaps we could end this portion of our workday with birthday greetings to the hon. members for Medicine Hat and Calgary-Varsity.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Written Questions**

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I move that the written questions appearing on today's Order Paper stand and retain their places with the exception of the following written questions: 149, 152, 153, 199, 206, and 207.

[Motion carried]

**Tire Disposal**

Q149. Mr. Collingwood asked the government the following question:

What is the formula used by the government and the Tire Recycling Management Board to determine the appropriate amount to pay Inland Cement Limited from the tire recycling fund towards the cost of marshaling, transporting, sorting, storing, and handling tires for its facility in Edmonton?

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

MR. EVANS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the government I accept this question.

**Timber Harvesting**

Q152. Mr. Langevin asked the government the following question:

What was the total acreage of timber in the province harvested between April 1, 1991, and March 31, 1992, under forest management agreements, coniferous timber quotas, deciduous timber allocations, coniferous licences, commercial timber permits, and local timber permits?

MR. EVANS: Mr. Speaker, I do want to get to the meat of the issue that the hon. member is asking for in Question 152. As a result of that, I have proposed an amendment. I've sent it around to the hon. member, and I believe all hon. members have it in front of them as well.

Moved by Mr. Evans that Written Question 152 be amended to ask the government the following question:

What was the total acreage of timber in the province harvested between May 1, 1991, and April 30, 1992, by forest management agreement holders, industry quota holders, government quota holders, and government nonquota holders?

So with the proposed amendment, I am certainly prepared on behalf of the government to accept the question as amended.

MR. HENRY: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul I thank the minister for circulating the amendment, and I believe the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul will be in agreement with that.

[Question as amended accepted]

**Action on Waste Program**

Q153. Mr. Collingwood asked the government the following question:

How much have each of the departments of Environmental Protection and economic development and trade spent on the Action on Waste program from inception until March 31, 1993; how many projects have been set up; by what percentage has waste in the province been reduced by this program; and by what percentage has waste been diverted from landfills to recycling as a result of this program?

MR. EVANS: Once again, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government I am pleased to accept this question.

**Interprovincial Trade Barriers**

Q199. Mr. N. Taylor asked the government the following question:

What are the terms and conditions of the contract between the government and Mr. Jim Horsman respecting Mr. Horsman's designation as the province's chief negotiator in the intergovernmental discussions leading to the reduction and/or elimination of interprovincial barriers to trade?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government I am pleased to accept Written Question 199.

### Child Protective Services

Q206. Mr. Sekulic asked the government the following question: How much money has the Department of Family and Social Services spent on hotels for children in protective services for the period April 1, 1992, to March 31, 1993, and from April 1, 1993, to September 15, 1993?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, I reject this question.

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

MR. SEKULIC: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I regret to hear that the request for information from this government is being denied. In this House I have heard on more than one occasion the government request good, specific questions for information. My Written Question 206 meets all the criteria, I feel, of a good question. It is specific and should not require a great deal of research by the department. As the opposition's co-critic for the Family and Social Services portfolio I need this information to continue my line of questioning, which is not intended to embarrass the government but rather to reveal the operations of government so that Albertans can also judge whether the utilization of their tax dollars is being maximized to maintain or better the quality of life in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, in speaking to the 1993-94 budget for the Department of Family and Social Services, I raised numerous concerns. There was, however, a theme to all of my concerns, and that was with respect to the department's successes and failures in their mandated responsibilities. Really what we are speaking to when we question the spending of taxpayers' dollars is outcome: are we getting the desired outcome? This is what I am trying to ascertain. I would suggest that by having to house children in crisis in hotel rooms, we are not fully achieving the outcome we would like to from our tax dollars.

### 2:40

This comment, however, must be taken in proper context. First and foremost, we must ensure that children are secure and in no threat of any danger. We must remove them from crisis into a safe environment. Having said this, Mr. Speaker, according to child welfare workers, as many as 30 children are living in hotel rooms at any given time. Children are being placed in hotel rooms because of an acute shortage of foster care beds. The government through the Department of Family and Social Services, however, pays both the hotel bill and also pays a worker to stay with the children 24 hours a day. A recent case in the media reported that five children from the same family, including an infant in diapers, stayed at an Edmonton hotel for 10 days while social workers attempted to secure foster homes for them. Many of these children are victims of sexual abuse and neglect, and they are in desperate need of intensive counseling and support. Surely a hotel is not an appropriate place for a child victim of abuse.

Mr. Speaker, this practice is even more reprehensible when you consider the example of the Yellowhead Youth Centre under the Family and Social Services Department which was forced to shut

down their 15-bed receiving unit two years ago and currently is threatened with the closure of another 10 beds in the Pyramid House. Not only does this policy not make sense on a human level; from an economic point of view it is completely irrational. Where are the savings? When a hotel room costs anywhere from \$60 and up and you add to that the cost of a worker who's usually brought in from a contracted agency at approximately \$125 a day plus meals, the costs quickly escalate while the outcome remains inadequate, terribly inadequate, perhaps even adding to the child's crisis.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, there are real concerns that children in hotel rooms are not receiving the support they need. At the Yellowhead Youth Centre a child has immediate access to qualified professionals providing both medical treatment and psychological counseling. In a hotel room the child is probably getting very little beyond a television set and a hired supervisor.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These were my reasons for requesting the information about the department's expenditures on hotels.

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

MR. HENRY: Mr. Speaker, I can't believe that the government's not going to accept this question.

### Point of Order Concluding Debate

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

MR. DAY: Yes.

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

MR. DAY: Correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe the Member for Edmonton-Manning has summed up debate. The minister has already stood to reject the question. He chose not to be part of the debate, and these were the member's concluding comments.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion before the House is the motion by the hon. minister to reject, so therefore the hon. minister would be the one to close debate.

### Debate Continued

MR. HENRY: As I was saying before I was interrupted, Mr. Speaker, I can't believe the government's not going to accept this question. Having worked with child welfare for a number of years, I can tell you there are only two reasons that anybody would want to reject this question. I won't read the question back into the record; it's there for the record. We want to know how much is being spent on hotel services for children who have been apprehended or abandoned and who are at risk. There are only two reasons. Number one, maybe the government doesn't know. Maybe the government has absolutely no idea, in which case we've got a big management problem in this department. If we want to be able to get a handle on our expenditures and, as importantly, also get a handle on our effectiveness, then we've got to know what we're doing. If we're cutting back a service in one particular program, we need to know what sort of impact it has on another program. In fact, in my experience working in the field, it's not only less quality care putting a child into a hotel room; it's a heck of a lot more expensive than providing a per diem in a receiving home or in a foster home. We need to know. Decisions that were made to reduce the number of places available for children: did that in fact cost more in the long run for the

taxpayers of Alberta? The second reason you might want to reject this one is that you're trying to hide something, that maybe you've made a bad decision and you don't want people to know about it.

Mr. Speaker, in our parliamentary system it is the responsibility of the opposition, one of the many responsibilities, to try to bring to light things that can be done better, to try to suggest improvements to government in how can programs can be operated. If we can't get simple information about how much money we're spending stuffing children – children who have been abused, who have been abandoned, who have been neglected – into hotel rooms rather than providing adequate care in receiving homes and foster homes, then how are we expected to fulfill our responsibility and be able to point this out?

The government doesn't want us to know this information, doesn't want Albertans to know this information. The reality is this government talks about being open; this government talks about being caring. I'm going to send this to every social welfare person I know. More importantly, I'm going to send this to everybody I know who has worked in foster care and in receiving homes in this province. I'm going to ask them: why do you think the government's rejected this? One of three things: either you have to question their confidence, you have to question whether they care, or you have to question whether they're open at all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. CARDINAL: I'm glad I have the opportunity to make the closing remarks today, because it gives me an opportunity to advise Albertans what we have out there. Mr. Speaker, I just want to advise Albertans again, like I have in this Assembly before: we're spending \$250 million in child care services in this Alberta; \$160 million is in child welfare; 8,000 children in care; we have 2,300 foster homes out there.

**Point of Order  
Brevity**

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

MR. MITCHELL: Yeah. Section 410(7): brevity required in answers. Could we just have a rule in this Legislature, perhaps, that at the outset of every answer this minister just says "ditto" and then continues with the rest of his answer?

MR. SPEAKER: This is debate.

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, I believe this is a debate, not Oral Question Period.

**Debate Continued**

MR. CARDINAL: I have as minister the responsibility and the opportunity of a large portfolio that has a large responsibility for children. We have 2,300 children in foster care, and I'm not proud to say that 50 percent of those children are native. We have a problem when we are coming to deal with children in care. By the comments of their leader, the Liberal leader, when it comes to native people in Alberta – I will not repeat it. [interjections]

MR. HENRY: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. Just ask yourself if it's relevant to the debate. The question is . . .

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

The Chair would ask the hon. minister to keep very close to the question before the House.

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, in relation to 206, I advised this Assembly only a week ago that I will be filing within three weeks a major plan of action as to what the child welfare system will look like in Alberta in the future. I plan to do that.

2:50

In addition to that, they mentioned hotel rooms and how we're putting children in motel rooms. We are developing and supporting receiving homes. Recently the Alexander reserve, for an example, opened up a new receiving home with 17 spaces which we are supporting. We are looking at other spaces. The Metis children's services is providing. Heritage Consulting is providing another one. I would like to advise the hon. member that brought up this question that there are no children currently being cared for in motel rooms under supervision.

MR. SPEAKER: All those in favour of the motion to reject Question 206, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: Carried.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 2:51 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

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

Against the motion:

Abdurahman	Henry	Soetaert
Bracko	Hewes	Taylor, N.
Bruseker	Kirkland	Van Binsbergen
Carlson	Massey	Vasseur
Chadi	Mitchell	White
Collingwood	Percy	Wickman
Dalla-Longa	Sapers	Yankowsky
Dickson	Sekulic	Zwozdesky
Hanson		

Totals: For – 47 Against – 25

[Question rejected]

### Children's Advocate Report

Q207. Mr. Sekulic asked the government the following question: How many calls have been made to the minister's office requesting copies of the Children's Advocate report from August 12, 1993, to September 28, 1993?

MR. CARDINAL: We accept the motion.

head: **Motions for Returns**

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I move that motions for returns appearing on today's Order Paper stand and retain their places with the exception of the following motions for returns: 175, 176, 177, 180, 183, 188, 189, 190, 191, 193, 198, 202, and 210, even as they are written.

[Motion carried]

### NovAtel Communications Ltd.

M175. Mr. Bruseker moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of the management agreement concluded between the government and North West Trust in May 1992 pertaining to the management of the NovAtel systems loan portfolio.

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

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to compliment the deputy House leader on the government side. He must have bought some fresh Energizer batteries to get it out that quickly.

Mr. Speaker, Motion for a Return 176 again comes out of the report of the Auditor General on NovAtel Communications, in particular page 80, section 8, regarding the North West Trust Company. What we're looking for here is some indication of how much this is likely to cost Albertans. The government has been fairly forthcoming with some of the numbers, at least, with respect to NovAtel, but unfortunately there is still a substantial loan portfolio out there which North West Trust is being asked to administer. We're asking for the information on the details of that administrative cost.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, the government will accept Motion for a Return 175.

[Motion carried]

### NovAtel Communications Ltd.

M176. Mr. Bruseker moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all agreements between NovAtel Finance and various U.S. cellular companies pertaining to the collection of back-out fees by NovAtel Communications Ltd.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This comes out of the Auditor General's report once again. A number of corporations in the United States that were provided loans in fact subsequently decided not to purchase equipment from NovAtel, and there was a penalty clause. What we're looking for in this particular motion for a return is some indication as to how much of those penalty clauses, referred to as back-out fees, were in fact collected.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, it is important to notice some differences here between this particular motion and the immediately previous one. The prototype loan agreements require the borrower to take all reasonable precautions to maintain the confidentiality of the business terms of the loan agreement when they're taken in with one of these individual loan accounts. The previous motion, if it's looked at, talks about the government and North West Trust, the government's involvement there with North West Trust. There's no problem of confidentiality being disclosed because it's the government we're talking about. As an open government we want to disclose what we ourselves are the masters of, that particular destiny and what we have control of and what we can disclose. There's no problem with that. Here again you've got individual confidentiality provisions that are already in these loan agreements. This disclosure could amount to a breach of contract, which then imposes liability upon the lender and again jeopardizes some of the situations that can be related to, what we're doing before the courts. So I'm just trying to point out the difference. I'm not saying that the member was aware of those subtleties. Those are the differences, and that's why we must reject this particular one.

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

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I indeed was aware of the difference. I would have been quite prepared to chat for a long time on Motion 175, but the government had no difficulty with that one. This one, Mr. Speaker: I have heard this concern from government members many times regarding confidentiality of businesses. Well, let's put this into perspective here, if we may. NovAtel was wholly owned by the government and lost \$645 million.

MRS. HEWES: So far.

MR. BRUSEKER: So far. Then they go broke, and essentially all the bits and pieces have been apportioned out here and there. Essentially NovAtel doesn't continue to exist in the same fashion as it did at the time of many of these goings-on. The back-out fees that are referred to here, Mr. Speaker, are corporations in the United States, and the Auditor General's report, page 79, refers to "41 licence holders who agreed to purchase equipment from NovAtel, but did not do so and also did not pay the fees."

Now, Mr. Speaker, these are corporations that basically thumbed their noses at this government, at NovAtel, at the people of Alberta, and this minister stands up and says: I'm going to defend these people. That doesn't make any sense. This minister and this government have a responsibility to stand up and defend the people of Alberta, not United States cellular phone corporations. So quite frankly, the idea of defending confidential agreements is absolutely absurd.

Mr. Speaker, what I'm asking for in Motion for a Return 176 is a copy of the agreement "between NovAtel Finance and various U.S. cellular [corporations] pertaining to the collection of back-out fees." In other words, tell me who they were and how much money they had to pay if they backed out. The Auditor General says that there are 41 of them. The government clearly has the information. It's not as if it would be difficult to get, because the fact that the Auditor General says that there are 41 there suggests to me that he also has a list of the names. To suggest that Albertans should be denied information about where their money went to 41 United States cellular phone corporations who owe us money is absolutely ridiculous, and the government should really think twice about voting against this motion for a return, because

this is a responsible question that provides Albertans information about the boondoggle known as NovAgate.

3:10

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-North West has moved Motion for a Return 176. 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: Defeated.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:11 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Abdurahman	Hanson	Soetaert
Bracko	Henry	Taylor, N.
Bruseker	Hewes	Van Binsbergen
Carlson	Kirkland	Vasseur
Chadi	Massey	White
Collingwood	Percy	Zwozdesky
Dickson	Sekulic	

Against the motion:

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

Totals: For - 20 Against - 47

[Motion lost]

**Trade Delegations**

M177. Ms Carlson moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing all internal studies prepared by or on behalf of the government evaluating the feasibility of setting up trade delegations in New Delhi, Siberia, and Taiwan.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, there's nothing here that is sub judice. There's nothing here that would violate confidential agreements,

that would harm court proceedings, and so of course the government accepts this motion.

[Motion carried]

**Aboriginal Water Interests**

M180. Mr. N. Taylor moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing any documents and reports pertaining to the study of aboriginal water interests undertaken by the 1991-92 Water Resources Commission, as referred to on page 15 of the Water Resources Commission 1991-92 annual report.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure just what happened here. It was on the Order Paper last year, and it was agreed to last year. Either a foul-up in my communications . . . Maybe I might as well wait for the House leader. We put it back because something went foul. Now, it's possible that the bureaucracy in my own office fouled up rather than the bureaucracy in the House leader's office. I'd appreciate hearing what he has to say on it, because it's a fairly straightforward item. We just couldn't find it in the government library.

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

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Regrettably the government will be rejecting this motion for a return, the reason being that back in 1991 when this paper was commissioned it was to look into aboriginal water issues in Alberta and to make some recommendations to government. There are currently before the courts various issues related to water and unfortunately some pending issues related to water in particular with respect to aboriginal claims. I don't think it's appropriate at this point in time to have a paper presented to the public and to have the public coming away after reviewing that paper with a misguided view that that paper represents government policy. It's really a matter of making recommendations to government intended to be internal at this point in time. Until this litigation is completed, I don't believe it's appropriate to table the report.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I'd speak in favour of it. I'm sorry to hear they're rejecting it. It's sort of like reading a definition of a word in a dictionary, and then you go to look it up somewhere else in a dictionary and they say, "I'm sorry; we don't carry it." This is in the government's own report. They mention the aboriginal water studies that they did, and consequently they reached a conclusion. So I just wanted to know if two and two did equal four. It's very peculiar. I realize that the hon. minister's probably been warned by his lawyers, and knowing lawyers, they'll keep everything secret till the Second Coming.

AN HON. MEMBER: Lawyers?

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, they never have to worry because they'll never see it, Mr. Speaker.

Nevertheless, it does seem rather reasonable that something referred to in a document about aboriginal water rights - and if there's any government in Canada that has shafted the aboriginal people when it comes to water rights, it has to be this one. Whether it's ignoring them down on the dam or whether it's water rights in the Peace River country, they've continually gone about it. I can see they would probably be quite ashamed of it, and

they'd want to hide it. Nevertheless, it was referred to in a public report as a reference to come up with a conclusion. Consequently, I think the public should have it, and they would like to have it.

[Motion lost]

### Federal/Provincial Negotiations

M183. Mr. N. Taylor moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all documents prepared by or on behalf of the government since January 1, 1993, with respect to negotiations to remove federal/provincial overlap and duplication, reduce interprovincial trade barriers, and overhaul federal/provincial fiscal arrangements.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, this is something very near and dear, I think, to the Premier's heart and my own. In order to free up interprovincial trade – it hasn't been a cornerstone of this government up until the new Premier came in, and I'll give him credit for anything. He's trying to get Alberta to join the rest of Canada in trade agreements. The old governments had a tendency to try to form sort of like a giant religious colony, where we minded our own oil and heated our own coal and did our own clothes and so on and so forth. The interprovincial trade seems to be in the order now, so I would like to see just what they've done in the federal/provincial overlap and duplications with regard to interprovincial trade.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, just a word of advice. Obviously the member opposite being as learned as he is doesn't have to take the advice. In a motion for a return when you use the word "all" – that's the third word there, "copies of all documents" – one of the problems is that if an attempt was made to show all documents, I mean, that would cover memos, that would cover everything. At some later date if some obscure memo turned up somewhere, then the opposition or the member can stand up and say, "Aha, they didn't give all; look at this," and they find that it's not all. A number of the motions here are much better worded by other members, no disrespect intended to my learned colleague. For instance, in Motion for a Return 191 it says "details." It doesn't say: every single, teeny-weeny, little detail and don't dare forget one or we'll slap you a good one. It just says "details" of this, copies of this. So there's much more credible intent when that is the approach rather than the word "all." I'm not saying that's the only reason for rejecting this. The Minister of Economic Development and Tourism would probably have other reasons, but just as a word of advice.

The government rejects this particular motion.

3:30

MR. DICKSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of the minister, but it seems to me that he might do with a spell on the opposition side to understand the frustration with trying to unearth legitimate information, information that Alberta taxpayers want to see. It's fine for the minister to stand up and say: the question is too broad, and in some of the things being sought, there may be good reasons why that information shouldn't be shared. Surely the constructive thing to do would be for the government to do as they have done on a number of other questions and motions for returns: seek to amend them. Say, "Look, we have some specific difficulties and some technical, legal objections, whatever, to disclosing documents A, B, C, and

D, but we're prepared to release and share the other information or the other documents."

That's one of the reasons why I feel strongly that in Alberta we need, in any access to information law we have, a provision like they have in British Columbia that says that if a citizen asks for information from government, it's not good enough for the department head, the minister, to say, "Sorry; you've asked for the wrong kind of information," or "We don't have any information in exactly the same form." There's a positive obligation in the B.C. statute that the minister has to provide some assistance to the applicant, to the citizen, to try and reformat the request in a way so it makes sense.

The purpose of this kind of a question isn't simply to tie up a lot of time of this body; it's not to simply put onerous demands and requirements on the members opposite. It's simply to get at information. If there are specific cogent reasons why some of this information cannot be revealed, let's hear them, but simply to say that it's too encompassing, too comprehensive is just, I think, a hopelessly inadequate response.

The point is that interprovincial trade is a matter of tremendous importance to Albertans. It seems to me that one of the things that a lot of my constituents were interested in in the Charlotte-town accord negotiations was the prospect that finally governments would show some leadership and some courage and start dismantling interprovincial trade barriers. Whether it has to do with the licensing of trades and professions or whether it has to do with the free flow of goods and merchandise from one province to another, Albertans have a strong interest in this. I'm exceedingly disappointed that the only response we have to this is the single complaint or objection that's been mentioned, and I simply invite ministers: if there are ministers that have specific problems with what's being sought, legitimate reasons, legal reasons, or other reasons why the information can't be shared, let's hear them. If not, I encourage all members to allow Albertans to access information that they're vitally interested in.

Thank you.

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

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Motion for a Return 183 moved by the Member for Redwater deals with a very costly item, an item that is even more costly than NovAtel, if you can believe that.

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Manufacturers' Association has looked into the issue of interprovincial trade barriers. Probably about a year and a half or so ago, maybe two years now, they came to the conclusion that interprovincial trade barriers, which is what's referred to in this Motion for a Return 183, cost the Alberta taxpayers \$6 billion. Now, with approximately 10 percent of the population of Canada residing in the province of Alberta, if we just do arithmetic – and I'm not sure that this is 100 percent correct, but just for argument's sake, if we say that 10 percent of the population is here – then probably 10 percent of that cost is also attributed to the Alberta taxpayer. In fact, they did a little further analysis. So if we say that out of the \$6 billion, that's \$600 million, then when we start looking at it, part of it deals with purchasing and government procurement, and they came to the conclusion that \$5 billion out of the \$6 billion was just in government procurement policies. Now, this issue is one that has not resolved itself as recently as a couple of months ago, when I last met with members of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association. It is an issue that continues to stymie business, to stonewall the movement of people and goods in this country, and it is an

issue that continues to cost the Alberta taxpayer substantial amounts of money.

The government says, "We want to get our budget under control; we want to eliminate our deficit." They then impose things like rollbacks on health care, rollbacks on wages, rollbacks on welfare that is being provided and is now no longer to be provided. They apparently refuse to deal with the issue of interprovincial trade barriers. This is something that with the stroke of a pen on a year-by-year basis could potentially save Alberta taxpayers half a billion dollars that we're not spending, not by cutting back on the needy, cutting back on education, cutting back on hospitals, cutting back on nurses and health care and doctors and so on and so forth, but simply by spending what we do have to spend more wisely.

What we are charged with as representatives of the people is to look after our constituents, to look after the government expenditure. So what the hon. Member for Redwater is attempting to find out here is: what have they done to do that? Because this is in and of itself a very large issue. The only conclusion I can come up with, because the hon. deputy House leader says: well, the word "all" in here makes it difficult; gee, gosh, we really don't want to give you all of the stuff we might have - the bottom line is that if we look in the bag, there's probably nothing in it. Maybe the word we should have used instead of "all" is "any." Or, "Do you have any?" and "Gee, could you give us a copy of them?" The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, from what I hear from the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, is that nothing has happened. What I hear from the hon. Deputy Government House Leader, by implication, is that nothing has happened. Quite frankly, for that inaction the government should be ashamed.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater, to close debate.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My colleagues the members for Calgary-Buffalo and Calgary-North West have outlined very well the importance to the province of Alberta. I know that there's a number of people on both sides of the House here for their first session, but the practice has been for some number of years now, even back before the two deputy House leaders managed to get in the House - I'm giving away my gray hairs here now - to ask a question and then the government amends it. They come back with an amendment giving you what agreements they wish to release. This is a very accepted method. So I just mention that while it's not going to do much today because I know the Whip is on and you're going to have to vote against it, all of those on both sides of the House will have questions in the future. So don't let them get by with that load of . . .

MRS. HEWES: What?

AN HON. MEMBER: Be careful.

MR. N. TAYLOR: . . . hay when the minister comes back and tells you, and it doesn't matter who you are, on either side, "No, it's too big; it's too all-encompassing," because the parliamentary practice is to come back and say, "We'll amend it to give you this agreement and that agreement and that agreement." That gives you a start anyhow on the thing. I think, also, that parliamentary practice is that when they have nothing but they want to convince you that they've done something, they'll say: sorry; "all" is just too big and all-encompassing. So, really, if I may be an interpreter of parliamentary language, that means that it's a hollow, clanging cymbal over there when the government comes back and

says that they cannot give it because it's too common or it covers too big a system. It's a big vacuum, as the engineers would say, a zero, or whatever you wanted to use. Nevertheless, they're going to get away with it I guess.

I'm just sorry that they have done so little. That was really all I wanted to establish. I was fairly confident that nothing had been done. Now it's confirmed in my mind that nothing has been done on interprovincial trade. That bothers me, because that is, as many members know, the most important economic issue in Canada today: to take down our interprovincial trade barriers. Now we get the barefaced admission from the government that they've done nothing. They've done nothing at all. A barefaced admission they've done nothing, yet we know it's one of the most important issues.

3:40

MR. SPEAKER: All those in favour of Motion for a Return 183, as proposed by the hon. Member for Redwater, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: It's defeated.

[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	Soetaert
Bracko	Hewes	Taylor, N.
Bruseker	Kirkland	Van Binsbergen
Carlson	Leibovici	Vasseur
Chadi	Massey	White
Collingwood	Percy	Yankowsky
Dickson	Sekulic	Zwozdesky
Hanson		

Against the motion:

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

Totals: For - 22 Against - 48

[Motion lost]

### Pension Plan Valuations

M188. Mr. Chadi moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of the most recent actuarial valuations carried out on the following pension plans: the public service plan, the public service management plan, the Local Authorities plan, the universities academic plan, the special forces plan, the Members of the Legislative Assembly plan, the teachers' retirement fund, and the provincial judges and masters in chambers plan.

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

MR. EVANS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the government we are pleased to accept Motion for a Return 188.

### Financial Review Commission

M189. Dr. Percy moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all supporting and background documents produced by the government for use by the Alberta Financial Review Commission in the course of their review of the province's financial position as of August 31, 1993.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

MR. DINNING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your indulgence and that of the Deputy Government House Leader. I'm sorry. I was leaving the Chamber, but I couldn't resist the temptation to come back and speak to this motion, which had come up this morning at the Public Accounts Committee, where it was rather thoroughly and exhaustively debated, to a successful conclusion I might add, when the hon. member was asking about material like that which is created for the Financial Review Commission.

Mr. Speaker, if I may give my perception, or my view, and I think held by my colleagues on this side of the House, of the role and the purpose of this Chamber and of all of those who are honoured to be elected to serve Albertans and to serve in this very important Chamber in this province. Our purpose, I believe, is to be legislators, to be principle setters, and to build good legislation and good government on the basis of good principles. It is my view that the government as ministers of the Crown, ministers of Her Majesty's Executive Council, members of the government caucus, have a responsibility, then, to implement that legislation, those principles, and build good policy.

### Point of Order Relevance

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

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre is rising on a point of order.

MR. HENRY: Under Standing Order 23(b)(i), and I quote:

A member will be called to order by the Speaker if, in the Speaker's opinion, that member speaks to matters other than the question under discussion.

Perhaps I missed something, but I thought we were doing Motion 189, not a debate on the rules of the Legislature or procedures in the Legislature or the role of the Legislature.

I'd ask that you order that the hon. Treasurer stick to Motion 189.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I won't ask you to ask the hon. member to cork it, but just let me have a minute to . . . [interjections] I won't ask you to do that. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: At this stage the Chair will ask the hon. Provincial Treasurer . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: To cork it.

MR. SPEAKER: Not to cork it but to explain the relevancy to the motion of what he's saying.

### Debate Continued

MR. DINNING: Then, Mr. Speaker, it is the role of the government's public servants to take the legislation, the principles, and the policy and to implement. What the hon. member is seeking is the minutia of the implementation of policy and the implementation of principles and legislation. I would suggest that looking for the i's dotted and the t's crossed is of far greater importance for those in our valuable professional public service to be focused on, and that we as legislators should be focused on the Financial Review Commission's report and the implementation of that report, the report based on good principle, the report built on establishing better legislation. That's what we've done – the Financial Administration Act is ready for Royal Assent, an important Bill that comes out of the Financial Review Commission – rather than getting so bogged down in the minutia and focusing on things not less important but less relevant to the purpose we were elected, to serve Albertans here in this Chamber.

So I would encourage all hon. members to reject this motion. We instead should stick to our knitting, stick to our job, and let's get on with it.

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

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Treasurer apparently is eager to get out from under the dome, both of them, so I'll just make a few comments regarding the comments that I suppose were more or less supposed to deal with Motion for a Return 189.

Mr. Speaker, I didn't rise on a point of order because obviously the Treasurer isn't interested in any rules or whatever in this Legislature. It says that the purpose of motions for returns is "to enable Members . . . to secure factual information about the operations of Government." That's what the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud is attempting to do.

4:00

Mr. Speaker, the government here, you know, talks about fiscal responsibility, talks about constraints and restraints and all this sort of thing, about trying to get our budget under control and so on, so they go out and hire the Alberta Financial Review Commission. Why? Because the Treasurer's department didn't know what was going on, they had to hire a review commission – nobody in Treasury, least of all the Treasurer himself, as he admitted here this morning in the Public Accounts Committee, because he's often confused, I think were the words he used this morning. So they went out and hired the Alberta Financial Review Commission.

On one hand, they say, "Well, we'd like to give you all the information and share this information with you" and so on, and we say, "We'd like the background documents that you gave to the Alberta Financial Review Commission," that supposedly you had and you didn't understand in the first place. What we're saying



is: we can accept the fact, because it's abundantly clear, given a \$28 billion deficit, that the members on that side of the House don't understand the documents. But, Mr. Speaker, there are some people on this side of the House that do have some understanding of those documents. That's why the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud asked for them. He said: you know, the record of this government is pretty abysmal, and we know they've blown it badly. The moves they've made since they had the Financial Review Commission earlier this year are questionable at best.

So as a responsible opposition member, looking for information from the government to try and hold the government accountable, which is really what the role of opposition members is in the first place, is the purpose of this motion for a return. In order to allow us to help the government provide those good ideas, those suggestions that the Premier and the Treasurer and many of those hon. members on the front bench that are serving as members of Executive Council have asked for, we're saying: "Give us the information. We will analyze it; we will give you our suggestions." What they're saying now is, "We really don't care about your opinions; we're not going to give you the information."

Mr. Speaker, what we're hearing from this government is very much akin to that old, old song by Simon and Garfunkel, *The Sounds of Silence*, and it's absolutely absurd.

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

DR. PERCY: Yes. I brought forward this motion for a return for several reasons, two fundamental principles. The Financial Review Commission is composed of very capable, very competent people but unelected officials. It strikes me as not appropriate when unelected officials will have access to information that elected officials are denied. It's a very simple principle: we are entitled to that information. It's part of our responsibility for carrying out our duties as elected officials. If the Financial Review Commission can receive these documents but opposition members cannot, how can we perform our job of keeping the government on task? We're not asking for more. We're not asking for anything that the Financial Review Commission did not get. We're just asking for what they did receive. So, first, there is the principle that unelected officials should not receive more information than elected officials. It's that simple.

The second point is that, to the extent this was touched on by my colleague for Calgary-North West, there's an issue here of the role of the Treasury Department. The issues with regard to Alberta's mounting debt problem – the issues with regard to our deficit and the sources of how that deficit emerged, the consistent underestimating of revenue projections – were well known, and it's clear that the Treasury Department ought to have known. So we would like to know exactly what material Treasury had on hand as this problem emerged, and why it then took an arm's-length commission to tell them the economics of the obvious: that they were underestimating their revenue. I think there's an issue here of capability and competence as well.

So I think on two grounds: first, we as elected officials are entitled to this information that has been prepared at taxpayers' expense. If unelected officials can get it, we deserve it as well. The second deals with what Treasury knew and what their documents said about how this fiscal crisis emerged through time. That we are entitled to as well, because there's an issue here of accountability since 1986.

The third point I would make sort of captures the other two. We are not an executive government. This is a Legislature where all members on that side and this side should have a say based on a common data base as to the nature of the problems. It is the Executive Council that seems to be hoarding the data, but they'll parcel it out to their friends in the private sector, who will then tell them what to do. Well, that is our job, here on that side and this side, to provide advice, to try and remedy problems that emerge, and to work on a common data set. So I am very disappointed that the government has chosen to reject this request for information.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: All those in favour of Motion for a Return 189, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion fails. Call in the members.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:07 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Abdurahman	Henry	Soetaert
Bracko	Hewes	Taylor, N.
Bruseker	Kirkland	Van Binsbergen
Chadi	Leibovici	Vasseur
Collingwood	Massey	White
Dickson	Percy	Yankowsky
Hanson	Sekulic	Zwozdesky

Against the motion:

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

Totals: For – 21 Against – 47

[Motion lost]

### Financial Statements of Crown Corporations

M190. Dr. Percy moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of the 1992-93 audited financial statements of the following Crown entities: 473654 Alberta Ltd.; 475342 Alberta Ltd.; 496072 Alberta Ltd.; NFI Finance Inc., Cellular Systems Management Inc.; Cellular Finance Inc.; Systems Finance Inc.; and NovAtel Finance Inc.

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

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. An amendment to this motion for a return has been circulated, and with that amendment the government is pleased to accept the motion for a return.

On behalf of Mr. Dinning, Mr. Evans moved that Motion for a Return 190 be amended to read that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of the 1992-93 audited financial statements of the following Crown entities or combinations or consolidations of: 473654 Alberta Ltd.; 475342 Alberta Ltd.; 496072 Alberta Ltd.; NFI Finance Inc., Cellular Systems Management Inc.; Cellular Finance Inc.; Systems Finance Inc.; and NovAtel Finance Inc.

[Motion on amendment carried]

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

4:20

DR. PERCY: Mr. Speaker, I'm speaking to the amended motion because I've agreed to accept the amendment to, in a sense, see what we get. The amendment provides us with "combinations or consolidations of," so it's in our interest to see how forthcoming the government's going to be. Or are they going to combine this in such a way that in fact we have virtually no information? So in the spirit of not prejudging what we're going to get – we would like to see – certainly we are supporting the amended motion as it stands.

[Motion as amended carried]

### General Revenue Fund

M191. Dr. Percy moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing details of the \$25 million in valuation adjustments provided for in the Treasury Department's general revenue fund estimates for the 1993-94 fiscal year by entity, and the provisional adjustment for each entity.

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

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government accepts Motion for a Return 191.

[Motion carried]

### 354713 Alberta Ltd.

M193. Dr. Percy moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of the 1992-93 audited financial statements for 354713 Alberta Ltd., Softco.

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

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hate to be repetitive, but once again the government is pleased to accept Motion for a Return 193.

[Motion carried]

### Corporate Tax

M198. Mr. N. Taylor moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all documents prepared by or on behalf of the government since January 1, 1993, pertaining to the transfer of corporate tax administration and collection from the government to the federal government.

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

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Regrettably the government must reject this motion for a return. There are negotiations ongoing with the federal government, and the release of this information could have a detrimental effect on those negotiations.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I'm a little surprised at this, Mr. Speaker, because it was a cornerstone of the previous Premier's government. Really, what I was after – I guess maybe I've got the answer already if they say negotiations are going on, although I suspect they might have to change in another month or so as to who's in the government down there. I think the fact that they say it's ongoing is probably my own answer in itself. I had wondered whether the transfer would be going ahead. It didn't look to me like it was an economical way of running our tax collection. I would like to kick the government, but if they're in a negotiating phase and there's a general election on, I'm not too sure what I would have gained anyhow.

Thank you.

[Motion lost]

### Student Achievement

M202. Mr. Henry moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of all studies and reports prepared by the Department of Education with respect to any correlation between the level of local education funding and student achievement on standardized tests.

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

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government is prepared to accept Motion for a Return 202.

[Motion carried]

### Children's Advocate

M210. Mr. Sekulic moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a list of all meetings held between the Children's Advocate and the Minister of Family and Social Services for the period July 1, 1993, to September 27, 1993.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Family and Social Services.

MR. CARDINAL: We accept the motion.

[Motion carried]

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

**Bill 205**  
**Agricultural Resources Conservation Board Act**

[Debate adjourned October 5: Mr. Stelmach speaking]

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Vegreville-Viking.

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday we adjourned debate on Bill 205, which seeks to establish an agricultural resource conservation board. I was beginning to describe the process that we follow in the province of Alberta in terms of planning. I wish to continue with that.

Throughout the process – we're talking about the 10 regional planning commissions – opportunities are provided for citizen involvement via the public hearings that are mandatory under the Planning Act. These processes are designed to ensure that the regional plans reflect public wishes to the fullest extent possible. In fact, we have had some development in the county of Lamont. I had the pleasure of serving as the reeve and also as the chairman of the development appeal board. It's quite encouraging to find that the two companies that were applying for a permit at the county of Lamont were quite concerned about the loss of good farmland soil, and their development proposals assured the county that they would use as little as possible of the good arable land. As a result, the development was supported by the ratepayers of the county, and it went ahead.

Now, if the process sounds a mite complicated, M. Speaker, it is actually quite clear to the people that are involved once they become familiar with the process. The system that is currently in place for monitoring agricultural land use has proven itself effective. Essentially you have elected officials of this government setting the general parameters, while at the other end you have elected officials of the various municipal governments – that's at the local level – establishing specific rules for their respective areas within the guidelines that have been increasingly approved by the planning board and the regional planning commissions. Again, the planning board is the day-to-day governing body that oversees this activity and carries out effective dispute resolution.

Mr. Speaker, this system has streamlined itself nicely while at the same time proving its worth since its inception in 1980. It may sound a bit complicated, but I believe the fragmentation is necessary to ensure that all groups have input without any one of them seizing too much power. I can almost guarantee that the proposed agricultural resources conservation board would, but I'll speak further to that later on.

It is a smooth, efficient system that blends the insight and expertise of both practising farmers and bureaucratic experts very well. You also have elected representatives from both the provincial and municipal governments to ensure that there is a balance between the demands of the agricultural sector and the demands of other components of the economy. Factored into that, Alberta must carefully accommodate the demands of an increasing population that is causing cities, villages, and towns alike to look outwards and expand.

You see, Mr. Speaker, that is the trick. The balance that is so important requires the intricate mix of farmers, politicians, and PhD wielding experts that currently exists under the Planning Act. The very fact that the jurisdiction of this matter falls under two different departments in what is a very streamlined provincial cabinet illustrates that that is no easy task.

Mr. Speaker, it is not easy. That is why I look at the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East's Bill and I worry. The way it is structured suggests that the current system must be flawed, so in its place will arise the agricultural resources conservation board. Now, does this nine-member appointed board merely substitute itself for the planning board, or does it take the place of the whole system? I tend to interpret it the latter way, for surely the hon. member, given his background, recognizes that this prospective board and the Planning Board would have a similar mandate. So it must be, then, that this Bill seeks to dismantle the entire system in all its complexity.

4:30

Mr. Speaker, I'm confident that Albertans appreciate common sense. I was raised in a commonsense household by commonsense farmers, and around my house we subscribed to the commonsense motto, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." So, again, I look at this Bill and I worry. While its objectives, outlined in section 4, are very good, the evidence is conclusive that these objectives are already being accounted for.

Another aspect of this Bill that I find unsatisfactory is found in the definition in section 1(c), where it defines "prime agricultural land" as that which falls under "Class 1, Class 2 or Class 3 of the Canada Land Inventory." In section 6 it is spelled out that these classes are to be protected from being used for pursuits other than agriculture. The problem is that this Bill protects only these three. What about the lower capability classes 4 to 6 lands that are so crucial to the livestock industry? Or is the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East catering only to crop farmers when he speaks of agriculture? If that's true, it is a shame, because the livestock sector currently produces more than 50 percent of Alberta's annual farm cash receipts. What does Bill 205 say to the conservation of these lands? It says nothing, but the plan that is currently in place doesn't ignore the utility of lower class lands.

As I described earlier, the province is divided into 10 regions. As you would logically expect, not all these regions are equal. That is why the autonomy that exists in the current decentralized system of land use monitoring is more desirable than the centralist board the hon. member is pushing at us. You see, each region has the autonomy to determine which classes of lands they will be careful with. In one region it may very well be classes 1 to 3, but in another region the best lands might be classes 2 to 4 or even 3 to 5, and they are classes that are considered prime agricultural land by the regional planning commissions and the Planning Board.

Bill 205 does not take into account these discrepancies. It protects the best land, while the current system allows for the regions to protect their best land. Again, this Bill ignores the current and future needs of livestock ranchers by excluding its guidance over lower capability lands.

The second stated purpose of the Agricultural Resources Conservation Board Act is

to provide advice, education, co-ordination and assessment with respect to the use, conservation, enhancement and expansion of agricultural land.

Again, Mr. Speaker, this Bill shows its redundancy and duplication of the structures that are already in operation. The stated function is carried out in two ways. The first is a continual service that is provided by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development either on a referral basis or it's an extension role. The government has committed itself to taking on a proactive role in the long-term sustainability of the province's agricultural resources. The data available proves that the department is doing a very fine job. They're making their expertise and advice

available to the farmers so the farmers can reap the benefits for themselves, and eventually all Albertans.

The second group that "provides advice, education, co-ordination and assessment with respect to the use, conservation, enhancement and expansion of agricultural land" may come as a bit of a surprise to the hon. member sponsoring this Bill as well as his other colleagues. The group that takes the responsibility is the farmers themselves. Mr. Speaker, this Bill seems to suggest that its nine-member board would possess superior wisdom that would enable it to guide an uneducated lot of farmers. I don't buy that for one minute. The farmers of Alberta are not dummies when it comes to the careful husbandry of their land. Those in this House who have farmed will know their land is the crucial agent in their very livelihood. Farmers have very real ties to this lifeline that they live off, and most of them are not about to plunder it away for short-term interests. Many of these farms have passed through multiple generations of family farming, and to suggest that they will not carry on this tradition is presumptuous. Perhaps I'm being a little too harsh, or it could be that the insinuations this Bill makes about the farmers' ability to manage their own affairs are somewhat intentional. However, reading over this Bill leaves me with a rather bad taste, because that insinuation keeps popping up at me.

I am confident that the players involved at the municipal and regional levels of our current land-monitoring system are quite capable of taking care of our agricultural resources while allowing for necessary development of land for other components of industry. Agricultural interests must be balanced against those of other economic development opportunities. Alberta's interests will be best served by planning guidelines which attempt to maximize the benefits of these alternative land uses to rural communities while at the same time minimizing any adverse effects to the existing agricultural activities.

Mr. Speaker, we already have devices in place to accomplish these goals, and they are working very well. It is for these reasons that I cannot support the Agricultural Resources Conservation Board Act.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising to support Bill 205. I have to say I'm a little disappointed by the Member for Vegreville-Viking, because at one point - when was it? - on Tuesday he said, "At this point I would like to go on record as an earnest supporter of these goals." The goal of setting up this board is to conserve agricultural land, and then we proceed to hear why he won't support it, though he likes those ideals. It makes me feel like, "Okay, this is a good Bill, but it was brought up by the opposition, so we have to figure out a way to knock it down." That disappoints me, because it's obvious that we do need this agricultural conservation board.

I'd like to point out a few reasons why. We're just dealing with agricultural land use. If you don't like some of the things in here, you know, we can go to the next step and amend it. Add classes 4, 5, and 6 land if you'd like. This can be changed, this can be amended, but the ideal of this Bill is good.

I do come from a rural area where we have all types of farmland. Some of it is being eaten away by urban development, by gravel pits. How can a farmer compete with the price that he can get from a gravel company? I mean, it makes practical sense for him to sell out sometimes, because the money is there. So we've got to create something that preserves this land without

punishing the farmer. Admittedly, local boards do deal with it, and Lamont was a good example. However, they are often subject to local pressure groups that they are closer to. They find it harder to argue with them and debate it, because they could be neighbours of them. It's difficult to deal with those things when you have close ties. That's why this board wouldn't have those pressures your local government people do.

This board will look at land coming out of agriculture and how it will be used. Large tracts can't be just turned over to commercial use without considering all the ramifications of the loss of the agricultural land in question. This board forces municipalities, businesses, companies, et cetera, to look carefully at the use of the land coming out of agriculture. This is not a ban on rural development, but it's a positive approach to weighing the appropriate use of agricultural land.

I'm in favour of Bill 205. If you don't like everything in it, we can amend it. Certainly with the votes the way they are, you'd probably get your amendment. I am in favour of it. We have to realize that good farmland in Alberta is not without limits, and we must do our best to preserve it.

Thank you.

4:40

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

DR. L. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have this opportunity to join the debate on Bill 205. I must say that unfortunately I have to disagree with my hon. colleague from Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert. I'm always appreciative to see that agricultural concerns are brought forward in this Assembly, and I think we owe it to our heritage to look at these concerns very seriously. So it's with this in mind that I address the agricultural resources conservation board.

I must say that it's a very delicate matter, this business of keeping pace in an increasingly competitive environment, and if these GATT talks go through and the agreements are signed, it will become even more delicate. However, and I'm sure the opposition members may not be surprised to hear me say this, I believe we should allow supply and demand forces of the market and not government to dictate what sectors of all industry will flourish and which sectors of industry will be left behind. However, one of the roles that government must play in agriculture is addressed in Bill 205. The government that is wise will appreciate the fact that it must monitor the subdivision and development of fertile land, agricultural land.

Now, I must applaud the members of the opposition for recognizing this. The Liberals are indeed improving in both number and quality of ideas, Mr. Speaker, although some might not agree with me on that. However, they are a mere 13 years off the pace in introducing this Bill. This Bill and this concept were first introduced by our government in 1980. The Bill before us today in the form of the Agricultural Resources Conservation Board Act is in fact in existence today under the Planning Act.

We just went through a provincial election, and as the ebb and flow of politics goes, election time is when people tend to express their opinions. Allow me to highlight one of the things we heard from the people of Alberta. What we heard, Mr. Speaker - and it's obvious that the Liberals were too busy to hear the same thing; just look at the numbers there - was that people want government off their backs and out of their hair. I'm particularly concerned about keeping the government out of people's hair. They want a lessening of government overregulation, and the people of Alberta want to see government streamlined as much as possible. Now, this is not to say that Albertans are pledging anarchy. What they

do want is an end to the overbureaucratization, overlegislation, and government duplication. They want this to stop, and that's what Albertans said on June 15. As far as any person looking at this Bill, I think no matter how you look at the Bill, it is pushing for duplication of service that is already provided in the land conservation monitoring system. Not only does Bill 205 represent a duplication; its tone seems to indicate that it would also entail more unnecessary regulation and more infringement into the lives of landowners and farmers.

The statistics over the years, Mr. Speaker, reveal that the average net loss of agricultural land on an annual basis is about 20,000 acres. Now, that number might seem high at first glance, but it's dwarfed in comparison to the 52 million acres of agricultural land base that we have in Alberta.

I would also like to point out that it's not as though this land is being purged into ruin. In fact, the whole province is benefiting by allowing some of this land to be developed. Some of this land goes into improving Alberta's infrastructure. Some allows the cities and towns to expand. Some is used by energy companies, which brings a return back to the producer. Diverting four one-hundredths of 1 percent – I'll repeat that, four one-hundredths of 1 percent – of our agricultural land base to promote a diversified economy is a small price to pay. So suggesting in the form of the agricultural resources conservation board that Alberta landowners and elected representatives are not safeguarding our long-term agricultural interests is simply not accurate. In fact, it's false.

The system we currently have to supervise the conservation of agricultural land is very similar to the roundtable processes that the public has overwhelmingly endorsed, Mr. Speaker. So by introducing this Bill that apparently revokes the consultative process in favour of a centralized government board, it shows us once again how members of the opposition caucus have missed the boat. This government is listening to the people and moving forward. Well, the members opposite are moving, it appears to me, in the other direction.

One final point I would like to make in opposition to the Agricultural Resources Conservation Board Act deals with the matter that I think the Bill gravely underestimates the cost. There is a large volume of applications for subdivision. There's a large volume of development permits. Now, how is it possible that nine members of the board can deliberate on all these? There will be a large cost in running this board, and not only will there be a large cost, but there will also be a long and burdensome delay placed on landowners. I want to see that Albertans have less government and less red tape, not more.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker, I want it on record that I recognize the importance of protecting Alberta's agricultural resources, but we need to balance that with industry and expansion. This Bill is flawed because it provides a duplication of the process. It's a step in the wrong direction. People want to be allowed to make decisions that affect their future for themselves without having the government intervene. We do not want to be on the backs of Albertans. We've had far too much of that in the past.

I would just conclude with a comment from Mr. A.R. Grover, chairman of the Alberta Planning Board. His quote is:

In reviewing existing Regional Plans, it is my opinion that the reasons behind establishing another Board are insufficient because the Alberta Planning Board already controls the use of Agricultural Land through existing legislation and statutory plans. This is from people that are involved.

I would encourage the opposition members to voluntarily withdraw this Bill and listen to what Albertans are saying. Please show us, opposition, that you can listen.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Point of Order Tabling a Cited Document**

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Point of order. Could we ask our hon. colleague from Cypress-Medicine Hat to table the document that he's referenced, please?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are you prepared to, hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat? Okay.

#### **Debate Continued**

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan.

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Thank you. I rise to speak in favour of Bill 205. I take this Bill very seriously, and coming from a strong agricultural background, I certainly firmly believe that every Albertan, indeed every citizen of Canada, has a responsibility to ensure the stewardship of our prime agricultural land. If indeed our hon. colleagues the private members on the government side are serious about the preservation of this land and see a shortfall, as my colleague has stated, a simple amendment would correct that deficiency.

I do not accept the premise that the legislative authorities dealing with land use planning and zoning have done an effective job for the past decade. In fact, I would suggest the very opposite. We can start at our local planning authorities in the municipality and move to the regional planning boards, where I sat for six years as a member. We can then look at the other bodies that are in place, whether it be the Alberta Planning Board, whether it be the Local Authorities Board, or whether indeed it can be cabinet. What I'd like to suggest to you today is that indeed that whole process is flawed. Why do I suggest that? Because when we're looking at urban expansion, particularly in the metro areas, we see our prime agricultural land being threatened by urban development. Certainly I don't think my parents or my grandparents were any different than the farming community here in Alberta today. If they see a potential for a significant financial reward from the sale of their grade 1, 2, or 3 soil, they're not going to resist it. Certainly they did not resist it in my community.

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

How the land came to be preserved was because a downturn in the economy happened. It certainly wasn't through the Alberta Planning Board, it certainly wasn't through a regional planning commission, and it certainly wasn't through the Local Authorities Board. If we'd had an agricultural resources conservation board in place, that body could have examined whether indeed that land should be taken out of agricultural production and made recommendations to the Local Authorities Board, which is the body that decides whether annexations will take place and whether rezoning will take place for urban development.

#### **4:50**

What we've seen by this present and past government is that indeed they don't even respect their own Local Authorities Board decisions. If it was not politically expedient in the past for that Local Authorities Board decision fitting in with cabinet's wishes, cabinet has the authority to override that board's decision.

Instead of inferring through this Bill that you'd have more interference, I would suggest to you the exact opposite, because what we have seen is a bureaucracy created from the municipal level to the regional level to the Local Authorities Board, the Planning Board, and then cabinet. That is the process that everyone who wants rezoning annexation has had to go through. So to suggest that we're going to have more government interference by this Bill – it's the exact opposite. History is clearly documented showing that in many, many instances. If indeed the government members are serious about ensuring that we protect our heritage for future generations, they wouldn't be mimicking me across the way, Mr. Speaker. They would indeed be agreeing with me.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

Just to put it into the record, from 1986 to 1990 we've seen a loss of 190,000 acres of agricultural land, and we've gained 90,000 acres of agricultural land. Indeed, that's something that we should be proud of in Alberta: we do see gains. But what we've seen is a net loss of 100,000 acres, so I would suggest to you that we can't allow that to continue every four years within the province of Alberta. I want to reiterate once again that we are only stewards. The agricultural land is in trust with us, and we should do everything in our power to ensure that it's preserved, as I've stated prior, for future generations.

I think the most effective thing we as a Legislature can do is to ensure that we have the appropriate legislation and the appropriate bodies that will make nonpolitical decisions. As yet, I haven't heard anything from the government side that would suggest that other than political decisions have been made. The document that was tabled – the former Deputy Minister of Municipal Affairs and I believe chairman of the Planning Board certainly would know that in the past many, many decisions have been purely political when it's come to annexations which result in rezoning and urban development.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to close by saying: government members, if you're serious about getting out of the business of interference in the marketplace, you would indeed be removing all those layers under the Planning Act; you would indeed make Local Authorities Board decisions final, that the cabinet cannot overturn. You would make this very government acknowledge and recognize joint general municipal plans. If that's not what they're saying, Mr. Speaker, then I would suggest they're not serious about conservation of prime agricultural land.

Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Little Bow.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a good deal of pleasure to enter the debate at this point, because every once in a while a farmer gets his hackles up, and somebody who insinuates that farmers aren't concerned about conservation of land is dead wrong. I rise today to comment further on Bill 205, and many of the comments I will make have been addressed substantively by colleagues of mine on the government side of the House. And yes, there are a number of comments that each of us have, because we have a lot of them in common. Whether we on the government side are in the rural part of Alberta or the urban part of Alberta, at least we've listened to some of the comments that the people themselves have had to say.

I've read the proposed Bill over and over many times, but I cannot honestly see how a board such as the board proposed in Bill 205 is going to provide the provisions the Planning Act

doesn't already currently provide. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the Member for Lethbridge-East who is sponsoring this Bill may not have made his intentions clear enough as to whether he simply wanted to create a new board or to replace the roles of the Alberta Planning Board, the local municipal planning commissions, the regional planning commissions, and so on. Very like my colleague from Vegreville-Viking, I too served on a local council and served on municipal planning commissions. As a person elected to those boards, serving with people who were locally appointed, I believe that we served the interests of the general public far better than a provincially appointed board who is remote to the area, who in all likelihood is centred out of Edmonton, and who cannot appreciate the troubles that the local areas have in dealing with some of the subdivision applications and different uses for land that have been requested.

If the Member for Lethbridge-East simply was trying to create another board, I think he and his fellow supporters have already proven the substantial shortcomings of this board, if you've listened to the members from the government side who pointed out the good points we have with the local planning commissions, the regional boards, and the Alberta Planning Board. There are numerous areas of appeal that are already available. If a board rules on a certain subdivision or a land use proposal at the local level, the applicant has an immediate right of appeal to another local board. If that applicant is not happy with that decision, then they also have an appeal to the Alberta Planning Board, so in effect they've got three different hearings on one application. From what I can tell by this brief two-page document, there would be an appointed body of nine members who, as the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat indicated, would be inundated, overworked, and couldn't possibly look after all the applications, let alone a total lack, as I read in the Bill, of any means of appeal.

So, Mr. Speaker, I can't in all honesty support that, and I, along with many, many others, am totally in support of proper management of agricultural land.

I would like to point out a couple of things from my understanding of the Planning Act as it is presently written. Perhaps it would be in answer to the Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan, who mentioned that there hadn't been any changes and that we were going along the same way as we have in the past 10 years. Well, with respect, I would like to differ, because it's my understanding that within the last 10 years we have put in provisions that prevent more than one subdivision per quarter section of land. I know that didn't correct past wrongs in some people's eyes, where we had many small subdivisions out of a quarter section, but I think it's gone a long way to addressing the conservation of prime agricultural land.

5:00

I know that some of the members opposite, probably most of the members opposite, appreciate and respect the Individual's Rights Protection Act. I believe that's been paramount. People have the right to do with their land as they see fit. Now, I say that in the context of proper stewardship but also of the right to dispose of that land. I'm not speaking of disposing it to an economic developer to build a high-rise on it. I'm speaking of the inter-generational transfer of family farms from one farmer to a son or a daughter. In some cases, Mr. Speaker, that's been impossible because of financial climates. In fact, I know of instances where many farm couples have subdivided out the home quarter into a farm site so that the son or the daughter could finance the balance of the quarter, farm on it, and the parents still had a place to reside without going to the expense of purchasing another farm or another home location. In that vein, they were able to help

finance the young couple, the young family, people that wanted to stay on the farm and continue on in a very admirable fashion.

Mr. Speaker, in light of the comment I just made about the Individual's Rights Protection Act, I refer back to the previous day's arguments from the Member for Redwater. I know that he has a rightful respect for conservation of prime agricultural land as well, and I know that his intentions are good. I don't really think it would be fair to paint all farmers or all agricultural landowners as people who are willing to sell out land at a thousand dollars an acre to a developer or some other body who would turn around and immediately build high-rises on it for \$10,000 an acre. I think there are a good number of people on agricultural land today who have got the brains and the willpower to become their own developers, if that's what they want to do, and there would be nothing to prohibit from doing that with their own land.

I believe one of my colleagues had already mentioned that there is in fact 20,000 acres of land a year that's lost under our current conditions, and it is quite a chunk of land to lose out of the agricultural production in Alberta. However, in terms of percentage, I believe it's less than one-quarter of 1 percent. Now, one-quarter of 1 percent of prime agricultural land is significant, but at the same time I would like to draw the comparison to 1971 when the Communal Property Act was repealed. In that very year in excess of 160 acres a day were purchased by one communal property. Mr. Speaker, that would translate to 90,000 acres a year. So in comparison, 20,000 acres that go into urban sprawl, into subdivisions for retiring farm couples, into intensive farm operations that have diversified into poultry production and so on, I think you have to take with a grain of salt.

There's another factor that has to be taken into account, and that's historical development of settlement of our cities and towns in days of old. I know the Member for Redwater teases about being one of the oldest members around here. I don't think he's quite that old. I don't think he was around quite at the turn of the century. Well, perhaps, Mr. Speaker, if I could, he's not quite as old as the back of God's head. He probably has grandparents or parents who were in small towns in Alberta who settled near sources of water. I believe in those days, when we didn't have water lines and power lines to transfer water, that a lot of the towns and the cities to be did in fact settle on some of our best agricultural land. I know that the Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert has a concern as well about prime agricultural land.

My suggestion to the member would be that rather than creating another Act, perhaps an amendment be proposed to the Planning Act, or perhaps the cities themselves and the large towns should take a responsible role and limit their own expansion onto prime agricultural land. My suggestion, Mr. Speaker, would be that it should be well within a local municipality's jurisdiction to say: rather than going out with our area, we'll tell our people that we're going to go up. Rather than misconstruing the right to own a home in the city, it should be deemed a privilege. As people get older, perhaps they, in long-term planning, would realize that by going up into a town house, it makes it that much easier in their retirement years to take care of a town house within a city or a town rather than worrying about having an acreage or a large lot on the urban fringes.

One point that I think can't be stressed enough, Mr. Speaker, is in relation to the local municipal planning commissions. We have numbers of regulations and rules, and not everyone likes them, as the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat indicated, but there are methods of appeal. The other thing people tend to forget is that you can be more restrictive as a local municipal council, but you

can't be less restrictive than the rules and regulations laid out in the Planning Act. So in essence what I'm saying is that if a local jurisdiction finds itself in trouble, feels that they have too many subdivisions, too many small acreage holders, then they themselves can impose more restrictive regulation and even reduce the number and the size of acreages that are allowed.

Mr. Speaker, the only real criticism of the Alberta Planning Board that I've heard is that it's an appointed body and why would it be given the prerogative to overrule decisions and bylaws of locally elected officials. I can't buy into that argument. It's not my position to concur with our hon. colleagues who praise the benefits of having experts with bureaucratic backgrounds and elected officials to make decisions on some things that I feel are better made at the local level through locally elected or appointed municipal planning commissions. I've just been pointing out some of the things that have criticized the fact that the ultimate judicial authority in agricultural land disputes rests with an appointed body. Since the proposed agricultural resources conservation board would also be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor, this Bill doesn't even address the only real concern that people have had with the Alberta Planning Board.

Mr. Speaker, if I might make a couple of comments in relation to the soil classification part of Bill 205 that addresses only classes 1, 2, and 3. Perhaps for the education or the benefit of a lot of people who don't understand or appreciate the types of soil that we have in Alberta, we also have classes 4, 5, and 6. On these so-called poor lands are raised some of the things that we put in our bellies every day: the beef and the sheep and the other meats that are raised in rural Alberta. It makes far more sense to raise them on the poorer types of land, but some of these poorer classifications also reside around some of our rural towns and villages. I think it's worth pointing out that in many people's opinion it is just as important to protect classes 4, 5, and 6 soils as it is classes 1, 2, and 3. The fact of the matter is that once you get south of Calgary, into the area that some of us southern MLAs are from, we have a predominance of classes 4, 5, and 6 soils. In fact, these soils are producing almost 50 percent of the net farm receipts for all agricultural production in Alberta.

#### 5:10

Mr. Speaker, I know the issues of the subdivision applications and land use changes are dealt with by a provincial board, but I can't help but reiterate that I feel it would be an undue burden put on one board of nine people to deal with the numbers of applications. The area that I came from was far enough away from two large urban areas that there wasn't the appeal for small subdivisions for the commuters who wanted to travel to Calgary or to Lethbridge every day to work, but some of our neighbouring jurisdictions were within 20 or 40 miles. It was a welcome sight to see small acreage owners, if you didn't live there, from the point of view that we in the lesser populated areas often admired the fact that sometimes those subdivisions meant more kids for our small schools, more possible clients for our small hospitals.

The other side effect was that these small acreage holders demanded the same services that they had been used to in the cities. So the local residents found themselves fighting at times with local community groups, small acreage owners who complained about local assessments. They felt that they weren't getting the same services as they got in the cities. The fact of the matter is that they didn't understand that when many, many, most all people in rural Alberta today buy a piece of property, the first thing they look for is a source of water, and if they don't have water, they don't buy. When you've come from a second or third generation urban background, it's easy to think that all you do is

turn a tap on and the water comes from nowhere, that you flip a switch and the light comes on. All these are costs that are incurred by the local residents. That is part and parcel of the pride of owning a farm, part of the pride of trying to preserve, Mr. Speaker, this prime agricultural land that I believe parties from both sides so dearly want to preserve, but I don't think this Bill is the means to preserve it.

Moving on to a different avenue of debate – I've talked about a number of issues. The one dealt with in section 4(b) and 5 talks about the proper

advice, education, co-ordination and assessment with respect to use, conservation, enhancement and expansion of agricultural land.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development has done a great deal of this in extension courses, in working with the farmers, with the agricultural community, and with small business already. I think this thing does nothing more than to reiterate something that has been done for a number of years.

Each regional plan in Alberta, Mr. Speaker, provides subdivision of land consisting of classes 1, 2, and 3, but this proposed Bill, as I indicated, makes no reference to classifications 4, 5, and 6. I believe it's in the interests of the agricultural land base, conservation anyways, that we are currently under the Planning Act. The Planning Act is intended to achieve an orderly development without infringing on the rights of the individual except to the extent that it'll be in the interests of the greater public good.

Mr. Speaker, it must be recognized that all of these competing land uses benefit the province. Because a piece of land is not growing a crop or raising cattle doesn't mean that it isn't contributing to the overall economy of Alberta. In the past number of years we've had a severe drought, an economic disaster in the south and southeast part of Alberta. Now, we may have wanted to be more restrictive and preserve more prime agricultural land in the southern part of the province. I do know that economic times have forced some philosophical changes on many of the people. Ten or 12 years ago people would not have given a second thought to selling any part of their land or their farm simply to be subdivided, but the cold, hard fact remains right now that with falling world grain prices, with 10 years of losses on farms many, and I say many, of the farmers are encouraged to try to subdivide to maintain the family farm.

I realize my time's up, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Edmonton-Whitemud.

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise to speak to the Bill. I have listened to the debate. I must say that with regards to various features of the Bill, I do have some concerns still, I would just say, on the margin as to how I would vote. Some of the issues that were brought up with regards to the planning councils I think are interesting. Again, if the purpose of debate at this stage is to discuss the principles, I think there are fundamental principles that ought to be addressed and might be addressed, then, in Committee of the Whole. I would like just to discuss some of them at this point in time.

I think that in Alberta we've been extraordinarily fortunate that we have not run into the land use problems that, for example, British Columbia or Ontario have. We've had the luxury of having a relatively small population and a population distributed so that it hasn't been in those areas that have undergone very rapid development. You need only look at British Columbia and some of the disputes over land use between agriculture, forestry, recreation to see that when you reach that stage of competing pressures on the use of land, every issue becomes politically

charged and nothing is assessed in terms of its merits: is it a good development; is it a good use of land?

So in one sense I find some elements of this Bill appealing, because what it does is set out that we have to consider land use problems. In many cases it would be best to consider land use issues prior to development arising. I think that if you look at our history, for example, of focusing on these issues in a very narrow context, the Energy Resources Conservation Board is a model that has been emulated in a variety of jurisdictions. It is an entity that uses relatively sophisticated analysis to assess the benefits and costs to both individuals and society of individual projects being undertaken. I think it has proved its worth. It has assessed a variety of projects and turned some down because they were not economic from the perspective of Albertans and approved others. I think the Natural Resources Conservation Board has a similar potential in that it will evaluate individual projects and assess on the margin if this project is good for Albertans, not good only for those that would invest in these projects.

Underlying the role of these boards, the ERCB and the NRCB, though, is a fundamental issue: how do we use our land, and how do we allocate it among competing ends? It may surprise my hon. colleague from Cypress-Medicine Hat that I agree with him that, in fact, supply and demand should determine the allocation of land among competing uses, but I would draw his attention to the fact that in some instances, as horrible as it is to consider the fact, markets don't work. To the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs: occasionally markets don't work.

If you look, for example, at forestry, occasionally we tend to underestimate the real value of the forest base in terms of providing amenity value, in terms of providing wildlife shelter, in terms of watershed protection. If we only looked at the market-determined value of the forest, we would tend to estimate its real contribution to society as a whole and we might undertake decisions to harvest faster than we would otherwise like and certainly faster than it would be in society's interest to do. In some instances where there are a variety of non market value attributes to the resource base, you do sometimes need an arm's-length mechanism for assessing whether or not the projects under consideration are good not only from a private perspective but also from a social perspective. That's really the role that the ERCB performs, that the NRCB performs. This is, in theory at least, a role that some agency that would look at competing uses for the allocation of land would assess, and it would look at these margins when land use comes into conflict. In one sense one could look at this Bill as trying to emulate this principle of how we allocate land among competing uses so that its best use is determined.

5:20

Now, having spent a lot of time as a private-sector consultant internationally in Indonesia, Malaysia, and other countries, I have seen what has happened when in fact you do not have mechanisms in place that lead you to make right decisions about land use. You only have to look at the devastation caused by tropical deforestation to see that in some instances people can be driven by cash flow considerations and will neglect the longer term uses of that resource base. In some instances the decision to harvest now or to shift it from one use to another use is permanent. It cannot be turned back; it's irreversible.

Having said that, this is not to argue that farmers in fact are any less better stewards of the land base than any other group in society. You need only look at Dome Petroleum as an entity that was driven by cash flow considerations and undertook a number of investments that were not profitable certainly from society's perspective and even in the medium-term sense were not profitable



from the perspective of the investors in Dome, but from the immediate need of cash flow they undertook decisions that were in everybody's worst interest. So I don't think it is fair to argue that in all instances markets work.

So to an extent a Bill such as this says, "Let's look at land use issues, and let's try and settle these in advance of development so that we can determine how we want to bring land into production, how we want to allocate it among competing uses before it reaches the fever pitch that it does in British Columbia." There any issue with regards to land development is a blood sport, and everybody loses because you have delay after delay after delay.

The mechanisms that we have in place in this province now are not perfect, but they're pretty good. One of the problems is that, for example, in forestry again we may undertake environmental impact studies, we may assess projects and send them to the Natural Resources Conservation Board, but we don't consider land use decisions in an overall context.

To be charitable in assessing this Bill, what it does is try and provide a vehicle so that we can set out the rules of the game well in advance. I would assert, probably to the objection of the hon. minister of environment, that part of the problem we ran into with the northern forestry development is that we made up the rules as we went along. What we ought to have is a set of rules or at least land use decisions that are in place well in advance of development so that business knows the rules of the game. There's nothing worse than being whipsawed by public opinion or political expediency. One mechanism that such a board, if properly conceived, could do is set out land use decisions in advance of demands so that we would have a clear idea of what is socially acceptable for the use of that land, socially acceptable in the economic sense for Albertans collectively. Is that the best use of that land?

The principle that I think is embodied in this Bill is worthy of discussion in Committee of the Whole, though I do have serious misgivings about some elements of the Bill. At this stage, as I say, I'm still on the margin, because I've listened to some of the arguments that have been brought forward by the Member for Little Bow and the Member for Vegreville-Viking, and I think there is merit to some of the issues that they have raised. I also

think there is some merit to assessing land use from a broader perspective by an agency that has the mandate to draw in expertise.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Dunvegan.

MR. CLEGG: Well, thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's certainly a pleasure to join in debate on this agriculture resources conservation board Act, and I want to thank the Member for Lethbridge-East. I do want to make a few minutes of comments, so I will adjourn debate on Bill 205.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Dunvegan has moved that we now adjourn debate on this Bill. All those in agreement, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say no. Carried.

Hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. EVANS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would move that when we reconvene this evening at 8 p.m., we do so as Committee of Supply to consider the estimates of the Department of Community Development.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader has moved that we adjourn until 8 o'clock this evening, when we are in Committee of Supply. All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say no. Carried.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:27 p.m.]

