

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, November 8, 1993**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 93/11/08

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
head: **Committee of the Whole**

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would the committee come to order. We're meeting in committee stage because we have not yet risen and reported. So the Chair would entertain a motion from the deputy House leader.

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, I move that the committee do rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Will hon. members take their places, please.

MR. TANNAS: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain Bills. The committee reports Bill 20. The committee reports progress on Bill 21.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

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

Bill 16 Appropriation (Lottery Fund) Act, 1993

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

MR. DINNING: Why, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a delight to move second reading of Bill 16, the Appropriation (Lottery Fund) Act, 1993.

This is the first time a Bill of this kind has been proposed to the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker. In keeping with Premier Klein's approach to an open, accountable, disclosing type government, the Premier has given us direction, and this government strongly supports the initiative to bring the expenditure from the Alberta lottery fund before this Assembly. The estimates of the lottery fund were before the Committee of Supply I believe on Thursday last, and a number of the questions were no doubt answered at that time.

So on this historic first occasion to move second reading of this Bill 16, I do so.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 16 read a second time]

Bill 15

Appropriation (Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, Capital Projects Division) Act, 1993

MR. DOERKSEN: It is indeed a pleasure for me to move second . . .

MR. DINNING: To echo the words of the Member for Red Deer-South, Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure for me to move second reading of Bill 15, the Appropriation (Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, Capital Projects Division) Act, 1993.

Mr. Speaker, this matter has been before the Committee of Supply, a rather extensive debate, among seven government departments and agencies to use some of the investment income of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund to invest in worthy capital projects.

I so move second reading.

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

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak against this appropriation Bill. I do so on a number of grounds. Let me begin.

First, the legislation which sets out expenditures under the heritage savings trust fund: these projects are to really be projects that yield social benefits to the province as a whole. Certainly we believe that many of these projects do. The applied cancer research, for example, is an outstanding example of a program that should be funded, and it should be funded out of the general revenue fund directly. The expenditures there are by and large operating expenditures, not capital expenditures. In fact when you look at the expenditures under this appropriation Bill, almost three-quarters of them are in fact operating as opposed to capital.

We would think that in light of the fact that the government has promised a thorough review of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund, it would be appropriate at this time to start thinking of how to hive these programs off, because certainly there is a variety of views out there as to the role of the heritage savings trust fund. Some would argue and certainly many of the people that we speak to suggest that at this stage, with the province being a net debtor, we should cut our losses and apply whatever tangible, marketable assets of the fund exist to our debt.

We would hope to see, then, that as such appropriation Bills come forward, there would be a debate over the role of the heritage savings trust fund, debate over the mechanisms by which programs that are currently funded under the capital projects division could be inserted into the general revenue fund and be dealt with there since so many of them in fact are operating expenditures. As I said, many of these programs in and of themselves – the applied cancer research, investment in the Pine Ridge seedling nursery – are worthy of support, but they are worthy of support through the standard mechanism: examination and financing through the general revenue fund. So we think the time has come to move such projects out of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund capital projects division and in fact put them in the mainstream.

The other area that we're concerned about, for example, in a period of significant financial restraint: urban parks development. There is a substantial amount of funds there. In fact, to refresh the memories of members on the other side of the amount that has been set aside for this particular project, urban parks development in this particular budget gets \$14 million. At a time when we're contemplating cutbacks, at a time when we're removing people from social assistance, a variety of these projects should be subject

to far greater scrutiny and ought not to be funded. It's somewhat surprising, in fact, that when you look at that particular item, it remains almost intact. To give you an idea, the 1992-93 estimates were \$14 million; the estimates this year are \$14 million. So although we are practising restraint, looking at areas to cut, here is a program that has remained unscathed, yet at the same time we're looking at a variety of hospitals that we're not going to fund the upgrading or construction of. We're looking at a variety of programs in social assistance that we're not going to fund, yet this one stands unscathed.

One can go through the listing. Let me see. Another example of a program: grazing reserve enhancement. It was \$3,712,000 in 1992-93. This year it remains \$3,712,000. This particular program, while it may yield benefits to those that graze, I don't think is anything that should be funded by taxpayers as a whole. It certainly should be subject to some form of user fees or some fees imposed on those that use that land, yet it remains in place, not being reduced.

So as we look at the array of programs that are being funded here, while some are very much worthy of support, there are others that in this period should be cut or eliminated. In light of the fact that in the throne speech and in the budget of May 6 and the September budget we had talked of a review of the function and role of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund, none has yet materialized, so we get again into this budget cycle. It is our view that although individual programs within this particular aggregate vote are worthy of support, we cannot support the appropriation Bill in its entirety.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I had put some questions to the minister responsible for at least a portion of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund on November 1, 1993. I had some questions with respect to the funding that had been set aside for the family foundation. I still haven't received responses from the hon. minister relative to my queries. That was November 1, and I would have expected or would have hoped that the minister in an open and accountable government would have made sure that all of those queries had been responded to. So for that reason I'm unable to support these estimates.

Furthermore, it strikes me, Mr. Speaker, that at a time when we're talking about massive cutbacks in core services for Albertans, specifically in terms of health care and education, it must be evident to all members in this Assembly that what we need to make any of those cuts work is broad-based public support. It seems to me that there's no faster way to diminish or to lose that kind of broad-based popular support than allowing taxpayers to see that we still have a pot of money over here which is going to be dedicated to projects which, as my colleague to my left pointed out a moment ago, may be worthy on their own merits yet in the overall scheme of things surely do not reflect the highest priorities that we have in this province.

8:10

It seems to me that if ever there was a time when we recognize that we can't justify any longer the heritage fund over on the side with its own little unique set of priorities independent of the priorities that we set for all of Alberta, this is the time. I think the only way we can make that point to Albertans and I suggest to all members that the only way we can build broad-based support for the kinds of cutbacks that may be necessary in core services is by taking these things which have huge symbolic importance and

showing Albertans that there aren't two sets of rules in operation here; there's one set of rules. That means that we're protecting core services. No matter how worth while a park system may be, no matter how worth while support for particular programs may be, is that more important than basic education; is it more important than basic health care? I think not, Mr. Speaker.

In more prosperous times, I would be happy to support the various projects that are encompassed and included in this Bill, but in 1993 with the kind of cutbacks we're witnessing I think this is irresponsible, and I'm unable to support it, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. GERMAIN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We've now heard from an hon. member of this Assembly from Edmonton, another from Calgary. I'd like to check in from northern Alberta, and perhaps by the end of the debate we'll also hear from someone from the far south of this province.

When we went through the capital debates on this particular topic, it was made clear time and time again, Mr. Speaker, that these votes, these economic accounting matters did not reflect the government's own concept of encouraging people to take a 5 percent cut in their various areas of endeavour. I do not know how much clearer that position has to be made and how much more forcefully it's possible to make that position in this Legislative Assembly.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this afternoon in question period we had a lecture from an hon. minister of the government. The lecture was: "Come forward. Come forward with constructive criticism. Come forward with ideas so that we can incorporate them." Well, you've heard several members come forward now, and it came forward in the committee stage that 50 percent of these items show no reflective decrease from last year, a year in which prior to the election the government went to the polls saying: we have to tighten our belts. Now by way of constructive criticism an opportunity presents itself for 5 percent, across-the-board cuts in these particular areas, and nobody wants to pick up that volleyball and lob it back over the net.

I urge all members of this Assembly, before you go back to your ridings, wherever you come from in Alberta, go back and say to the people in your ridings that you voted for belt tightening in this particular area. I don't want to repeat the debate on this not being capital expenditure. I don't want to point out that 75 percent of this is in fact expenditures that are not capital, but surely there is not one single program here that could not use a 5 percent belt tightening. If we're serious, Mr. Speaker, let it start right now. If we're not serious, then let's fold our tents and say that we're not serious.

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

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, want to rise just to flag a few concerns here that I have about the heritage savings trust fund in general and specifically as it applies here to Bill 15. I did a little bit of a survey with a few people who called in the last couple of weeks at my constituency office on this matter and, I guess, specifically with some of the areas that we're concerned with here that affect the parks and recreation side of the budget. Not too much to my surprise, Mr. Speaker, the things that I heard over and over again were relevant to what has happened to the heritage savings trust fund over the last number of years that it's been accumulating. So naturally we had to get into a little bit of a dialogue over what the purpose of this fund was to begin with. I don't need to remind people opposite because some of

them were here when that got set up. It was set up as a rainy day fund, as we commonly refer to it. I think that rainy day came rather quickly upon us, because a lot of the information we were looking for perhaps wasn't as readily available as we had hoped. When it did come upon us that suddenly we are in this rainy day situation, I think we went looking to this fund to help bail out that situation.

Unfortunately, nobody seems to be able to clearly point out exactly how much remains in that fund, exactly how much of it is liquidatable or accessible to us. I think Albertans if they were able to come here and speak to members opposite might flag some of those very concerns. I am a little bit concerned that I haven't yet seen a real accountability, Mr. Speaker, for how moneys that had previously been appropriated have been spent. Is this heritage savings trust fund something that is yielding a good investment, a good return? Would it be something that you would encourage us to pursue and vote for? Would it be something that Albertans would feel proud of, that they could say: "Yes, by gosh, we contributed to that heritage savings trust fund, and here's what it's yielded. Here's what we've been given in return for it." Quite frankly, I have yet to see that kind of thing, and I'm stuck for answers when constituents ask me these very questions.

So when I look at this, I say to myself, "Gee, I think it would be just lovely to fund some of these projects." They are all worthy projects. I don't think I want anybody opposite to understand that anybody here is against these projects. I don't think that's the issue, Mr. Speaker. What we're looking at here is: is this the right time for these projects; is this the best application of those dollars given our financial crisis on many other fronts? I have a number of constituents who are very, very concerned with the lack of attention being paid to areas of social services, health care, and education. Surely these areas must receive some priority over and above some of the ones spelled out here.

Perhaps it might be an appropriate gesture on the part of the government to take a look at which of these projects on the couple of pages provided can possibly be held in abeyance until such time as we have a little higher level of comfort about where we're going in terms of the roundtables that are taking place right now in the critical areas of education and health care, to mention two, and then at some point in the future maybe we can come back and address some of these very, very important projects. I don't want to see communities being penalized, Mr. Speaker, so I don't want my comments taken out of context, because I think there's room for this to happen. I think the government could do well to score some points by showing Albertans truly how serious they are in saying, "Yes, by gosh, I think there are some more needy areas right now that we should be looking at and should be paying some attention to."

Those are just a few comments that I would hope people might take to heart as we review these large expenditures. Number one, we must first account for where we're at now. Number two, given the financial crisis we're in, perhaps there could be a different set of priorities brought forward to help us through this financial crisis. I think that would be very much in keeping with some of the recommendations that I saw coming forward out of the Auditor General's report for some prudence in this area. I would encourage the members opposite to take a look at some of those very important points before we proceed any further.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would simply ask the members to please, if they can in their wisdom, find it appropriate to delay these expenditures until such time as we have completed some of the much more difficult decisions that are before us.

Thank you.

8:20

DR. NICOL: Mr. Speaker, after the introduction and the request for a voice from the south like we've had tonight, it's almost imperative that I get up and speak.

What we're really looking at are the issues that come about in terms of accountability of the way we treat the funds that are available for the legislative process in Alberta. We have to deal with equity in terms of how we treat the different programs. We're asking for major cutbacks in a lot of the programs that are administered through the legislative process. Now here we have a program where we're asking for just a continuation of the past practices.

There's a lot of things that can be done with this money. It's set aside under a capital projects fund allocation, but it basically is spending money that's earned through investments out of the heritage fund. This is a time when we're having to deal with problems in the social aspects of our society: our education, our health care. Possibly what we should be doing is looking at cutting back in the expenditure of these areas and putting them into the support of the mainline projects of the Legislature. This is what the heritage fund was created for in the first place: to be put aside for needs at a later date.

Well, you know, we heard a lot of people during the election campaign talk about, "Maybe this is the later date." The suggestions have gone all the way from the idea of complete elimination of the heritage fund and using that to pay down the debt to the diversion of the incomes earned by the investments of the heritage fund to support the needed programs of the province. So what we want to do is look at some method that we can deal with in terms of making our handling of the heritage fund more equitable in terms of how we cut back and control the expenditures of this program relative to the other programs and the other funding packages put forth by the Legislature.

We've got to deal with the equity issue, as I've said, and I think that's where the people of Alberta are looking for our leadership, for us taking initiative and saying that all parts of the expenditure patterns in our province have to be treated the same. I know that the people of southern Alberta during the campaign made a strong emphasis on the idea of equity. We have to be sure that we deal with the needed programs of the province first. In many ways a cutback in this would help us support the programs that are needed in other areas of the expenditure patterns.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Provincial Treasurer to close debate.

MR. DINNING: Well, I can't tell you how delighted I am to be able to respond to some of the bon mots from across the way. It is delightful to hear the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud talk about recognizing that these projects will, pursuant to section 6.1(a) of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act,

provide long term economic or social benefits to the people of Alberta but which may not necessarily by their nature yield a return to the . . . Fund.

That's what's in the Act. The hon. member is absolutely correct. He goes on to say: yeah but. It's sort of like Laurence and the yeah but gang, Mr. Speaker.

Here we are. The hon. members across the way have said that they're going to vote against this Bill. In voting against this Bill, they're voting against cancer research. I think that's deplorable, Mr. Speaker. They are voting against Farming for the Future, a research program sponsored and supported by the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. They're voting against

research in agriculture. They've also said they're going to vote against urban park development. It's fine for Edmonton-Avonmore and the other Edmonton gang to stand up and say, we're all right, Jack; to heck with the rest. We've got our Capital City park, but we're going to say to the people of Fort McMurray: no, you can't have a park; to the people of Fort Saskatchewan: no, you can't have a park; to the people of Leduc, Spruce Grove, St. Albert, Wetaskiwin, and the county of Strathcona: no, we're all right; we got Capital City park, but you guys don't get to have one. That's what the hon. members across the way are saying.

You know, the proof will be in the pudding. Perhaps I'm wrong. Perhaps I misheard them, Mr. Speaker. They said that they were going to stand and vote against this Bill. I think that's an absolute tragedy. I think about water management systems improvement. Especially for the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East to stand up and be against water management systems improvement: I can hardly wait to send *Hansard* to the people of Lethbridge-East. They will see that this is a gentlemen, that this is a member who is against the development of irrigation in southern Alberta. I can hardly wait to hear the response of his colleagues, of his constituents in southern Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, you know very well that I could go on at length on this subject, but suffice to say that I would ask hon. members across the way, the Edmonton yeah but gang, despite their earlier comments to rethink their position. Hopefully before the vote is called on second reading of Bill 15, they would see the light and join with the government and vote in support of Bill 15.

[Motion carried; Bill 15 read a second time]

Bill 14 Appropriation (Alberta Capital Fund) Act, 1993

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, in my low, dulcet tone I will happily move second reading of Bill 14, the Appropriation (Alberta Capital Fund) Act, 1993.

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

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After listening to the hon. Provincial Treasurer discuss the previous Bill, I thought I would start off by noting one of the comments I'd interjected during his sermon, and that was that this side of the House does not look at programs and votes in terms of whether or not they have a favourable political impact. The issue is: is it needed; is there a priority? We argued throughout the campaign that you needed a sense of priority, that you had to rank projects and choose those which met the criteria of need. You go through Bill 15, and when you come to Bill 13, the issue then again comes to the fore. You cannot see any discernible sense of priority in how the projects are in there or what mechanisms led them to be included in the first place other than the squeaky wheel phenomenon. So to hear a sermon about we are going to report you to your local newspaper because it's politically unpopular – I say, "Stuff it."

The issue is: do we need these projects? When we're shutting down hospital beds, when we're talking about closing schools, the priority should be in putting resources in the classroom; the priority should be putting resources to hospital beds that are there. To listen to that type of discussion basically misses the point. In a period of financial stringency you have to make hard decisions. It's easy, as they do, to spend, spend, spend. They changed us from having net assets of \$5 billion in 1986 to having over \$20 billion in debt today. How did they do it, Mr. Speaker? They did it by spending, spending, spending. Nobody over there had

a sense of priorities; nobody over there had a sense of control. Nobody felt that those tax dollars were important. We see exactly the same behaviour there tonight. It doesn't matter; what's popular is good. Well, we think what's right is good.

When you look at Bill 14, Mr. Speaker, you see again that they do what is expedient; they do what is easy. They talk a hard task when they're running at children on social assistance. They talk a hard job when they're running on nurses who work in the hospitals. They take a really hard line when they're talking about 5 percent rollbacks for health care workers. But when it comes to setting out a discernible set of priorities, you don't see it on that side. It's spend, spend, spend. Every hospital roundtable forum on health care said: put a moratorium on those expenditures till you have a plan in place. Do we see that here? No, we don't. No moratorium on those expenditures.

The education roundtable said: please, a moratorium; the resources belong in the classroom, not in the ground. Do we see a moratorium here? No, we don't. It's the easy way: spend, spend, spend. That's what got us to over \$20 billion in debt today. That's what's going to keep us in debt: that easy come, easy go attitude that typifies that side of the House.

8:30

When it comes to Bill 14, Mr. Speaker, let me just make three points. First, this government has not listened to any of the roundtables. There is no moratorium here on capital expenditures. It's the same old barrel of pork. Second, we do not see any mechanisms in place that tell us why certain projects are here and why others aren't. I won't mention the hospital in the hon. Deputy Premier's constituency, because that speaks for itself. We don't know under what set of criteria it got in there, but it's under examination, and by the time it's examined, I'm sure 60 or 70 percent of it will be built. The hon. Minister of Transportation and Utilities continually lectures us on this side that roads need overlay and they come forward on a very orderly progression. We ask: "Can you tell us what the grid looks like? Which roads are coming forward next week, next year so we can see the pattern?" "Oh, you don't need to know that, but I know," he says. Well, we don't know. We don't see it listed. We do know that certain ridings seem to have an ability to get roads through freezes.

So when we look at this capital budget, we cannot discern the set of priorities. We do not know whether it meets or reaches the needs of Albertans. We think in light of comments of many Albertans that now is the time for a moratorium on these types of capital expenditures. You'd think a government that says that it listens and cares would do that. Well, we see no evidence of that here.

That will conclude my comments, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

MR. GERMAIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to take issue with the Provincial Treasurer on the comments he made about sending *Hansard* back to the rural areas and telling them that you're going to freeze the urban parks. Well, I've got to tell you, we had the Fort McMurray extended health care facility, a vital, important piece of the health care system in northeast Alberta, put on hold. We had a mobile home, a stinky, measly mobile home in Fort Chipewyan, Alberta, put on hold. The Slave Lake hospital was put on hold. All those things were put on hold, and now the Provincial Treasurer worries about me taking a hit about some concerns about urban parks. What a shame. What an absolute shame. What a shame to those people in Slave Lake that were counting on the hospital, what a shame to those people in Fort

Chipewyan that were counting on a mobile home to provide essential care, and what a shame to the people in Fort McMurray growing old and separated from their loved ones because there is no extended care facility.

Yes, Mr. Provincial Treasurer, tell the people of Fort McMurray that I had a sense of priority, that I'm more interested in health and more interested in schools than any of the other issues. If some of the crowd there that refer to themselves as the Deep Six want to tell people I'm against cancer research, long-range cancer research goes forward year after year after year and a 5 percent symbolic cut there would make it a lot easier for people, working stiff in this province struggling for survival in this province, to sleep at night swallowing their 5 percent cut.

If the Provincial Treasurer wants to distort that debate, he does not further the cause of Albertans, and he does not do honour to this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, those are my comments on that.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The individual capital projects aggregated in Bill 14 for Advanced Education and Career Development need to be supported. There are a few of them, and they in no way are adequate for the needs of the postsecondary institutions in this province. Dollars for Grant MacEwan College allowed for completion at that strategically located campus. The Alberta Vocational College at Lesser Slave Lake, the professional building at the University of Calgary, and the animal facility at the University of Alberta are all sorely needed projects. However, one cannot help but be distressed and protest the manner in which this department plans, or rather doesn't plan, for capital projects.

Over the past several weeks we have learned there is no systematic preparation of accommodation plans that might involve capital funds by any of the institutions in the advanced education system. On the contrary, as one administrator put it, we prepare an annual wish list. How projects get from that wish list to the drawing boards and to the construction stage is anyone's guess. We have learned that there is no system response even in the face of information that by 2005 new high school graduates alone demanding university education could rise from 6,000 in 1991 to 15,000. Even the most conservative estimates indicate that there would be a need to accommodate another 5,000 students. These numbers do not include the growth in the number of 25-year-olds-plus who will also be seeking university access. Where are the capital projects that will accommodate these students? Does it mean that there will be no campus construction in the province over the next 10 years?

We have learned that there is no provincewide preparation of a master list of needed projects that might lead to some priorities being established. Ad hoc, year-to-year planning seems to be the order of the day. We have learned there are no public benchmarks to govern institutional construction costs. It's not surprising that there are no long-term financial plans for capital projects when there is no established floor for project support and wild variations in costs are the rule from project to project. We have learned that there is no master project list, hence no public consultation on the capital project priorities. There is no arm's-length, systematic involvement of the public in determining which projects should proceed and which should be deferred or even rejected. This is an unhealthy situation and leaves the government open to charges of political interference in the orderly development of the postsecondary system.

The individual projects in this Bill deserve support. This appropriation Bill doesn't. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. You know, I'm not sure what makes this Bill more horrifying, the fact that it reflects the total lack of a plan on the part of this government or that it does perhaps reflect their so-called plan. If this government were serious about making some priority decisions, if they were serious about things like funding cancer research, then of course what they'd do is fund it in an orderly way out of the general revenue fund. They wouldn't slide it into the budget as some government slush fund.

Mr. Speaker, in this Bill before us, where we're being asked to spend in the area of health, for example, in excess of \$166 million, we see an absolute lack of priorities and a lack of clear thinking about what the future of this province is going to hold for Albertans in the degree of services and the infrastructure that's going to support those services. I've asked many, many times in this Assembly for evidence of priorities, for evidence of how decisions are made about health care facilities, education facilities, and I get no answer. As recently as November 2 I asked: what was it that led to the decision of the Immaculata hospital going ahead but the Slave Lake hospital being closed? Still no answer, no reasonable response whatsoever.

We see, for example, in one of the subprogram votes money being budgeted, over \$2 million, for health facilities waste management. Why is there money, Mr. Speaker, for cold storage expansion, but we still don't have any kind of plan for handling that on a regional basis? Why would there be money for cold storage expansion but no money put aside in this budget to upgrade the incinerators that are already in place? Of course, that leads us to be all the more suspicious. We can see this government supporting another one of their friends who happens to hold a monopoly in that particular business.

What I'd ask all members to do is vote against this Bill and go back and have the cabinet actually sit down and articulate their priorities once and for all, make it clear not just to this Assembly but to all Albertans what it is they're going to do to make sure we can afford the quality of services all Albertans want for the future and stop playing politics with our hospitals and our schools and our other facilities. I think it's incumbent upon this government to stop treating these as just decisions that don't require scrutiny and instead come clean with all Albertans that we have to really open this process up and have to stop trying to pit one part of this province against another and one sector against another and one group of Albertans in need against another group of Albertans in need. I think the Treasurer in particular should carefully consider why he's brought to the level of making threats about who he's going to send *Hansard* to, as though he's going to tell tales out of school, when all we're trying to do is make sure the proper level of scrutiny and accountability is brought to bear on these very, very important decisions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

8:40

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

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't going to speak, but the Treasurer really has galvanized me into action tonight. Ever since he made his lamentable remarks, I've been girding myself for action. My loins are the best girded loins in the world, I think. At the risk of incurring the wrath of the member for deep throat on the other side, or deep something, I would like to continue.

I would like to speak to the Treasurer specifically. I felt deeply hurt, Mr. Speaker, when he in fact accused me of not serving my constituents very well and the same with my colleagues here on this side of the aisle. In fact, what the Treasurer has not realized is that this is a matter of principle for us. I have the sneaking hunch that the Treasurer wouldn't recognize a principle if he fell over it. We do object valiantly and vociferously against the fact that this capital fund is not based on any priority of needs; it is based on a priority of political expediency. That is what saddens us. That is why we object.

I can point out once again – and this is not the main reason – how in my very own riding there was an extended care facility planned in Hinton ever since 1982 with the regularity of clock-work before each election. It was announced it was going to happen. What happened after each election? It was shelved. This last time the Premier himself came to the shores of Hinton, and he announced that he would come forth with an extra payment of \$200,000 for the next stage, which would be the pretending stage. To this day we are still waiting for the \$200,000. In fact, the aged in my community are so upset that one of the ladies has promised to call forth a hex on the Premier if he doesn't come up with the \$200,000. I've passed this on to the Premier, and I've said to him that I wouldn't want any harm to befall him. However, this is going to happen, I'm afraid.

AN HON. MEMBER: By Mrs. Van Binsbergen?

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Mr. Speaker, I think the member for deep throat ought to refrain from those personal remarks. It really hurts me to the quick.

Getting back to the Treasurer, I'm afraid I have to oppose this Bill for the very reasons I've outlined, Mr. Treasurer, and I hope you will see the light of reason eventually. Thank you very much.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, I think I also have been galvanized. It's a wondrous talent that we see on the part of the Provincial Treasurer. He's able to take a number of quiet and seriously focused members and energize them in a way we haven't seen for at least several sessions.

I'm going to differ, Mr. Speaker, with some of my colleagues. I don't think Bill 14 is the product of some malevolent plan on the part of the Provincial Treasurer. He probably had the best of intentions in terms of introducing Bill 14 and putting it in front of us. I think for the most part it's not malevolence but a failure to listen to Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you that there was an alternate education roundtable at Lord Beaverbrook high school a couple of weeks ago, and I had the chance to sit in two or three different sessions. These people weren't Liberals. They weren't Conservatives. They were concerned parents, parents concerned about the future of education for their children. The Provincial Treasurer will be assured and take some comfort in knowing that I said very little. I was more interested in hearing what their comments were, what their observations were. The sort of thing they focused on was that it made no sense to them that we were talking about a 20 percent cut in education, that we were talking about cutbacks in essential medical services, that the government is talking about curtailing the kinds of programs that Albertans regard as the highest priority, yet the government still finds it appropriate to advance expensive capital works projects.

I think the government invites cynicism when we hear disclaimers from the government that they're not going to proceed

with all these projects. I'm sure we've all heard the Provincial Treasurer and other cabinet ministers saying, "Well, a number of these large projects have been delayed or frozen." If we take the Provincial Treasurer and his colleagues at their word, why then do we see in Bill 14 that there hasn't been anything left out of here? All of those delayed and frozen projects are carried forward. Now, what are Albertans to make of that, Mr. Speaker? Does that mean that there's going to be an early thaw? Does that mean that as soon as the session is over and the front bench is out from the scrutiny of the opposition and the media, suddenly these projects are taken down off the shelf and construction proceeds posthaste? I don't know. It's a curious thing. I assume that the Provincial Treasurer, being a man of principle, would realize that having made that kind of an undertaking and commitment to Albertans that these projects were delayed and frozen, those funds would be carved out of Bill 14. We wouldn't see them in the capital fund appropriation. We'd look at maybe seeing them next year, when hopefully the finances of Alberta are much stronger and more robust and we might be able to afford some of those projects.

That isn't the case. What we've got is this particular situation where we have to reconcile the Provincial Treasurer's observations and assurances to Albertans that the government isn't going to proceed to build a number of significant capital projects which are going to be more expensive to run, he's going to hold off on those things, yet he's asking for authorization to proceed. That's what Bill 14 means. All members should be cognizant that when and if they vote in favour of Bill 14, they're giving the Provincial Treasurer a kind of authority which he's already told Albertans in his various public representations that he doesn't need and he doesn't want. Now, what are we to make of that, Mr. Speaker?

I had started out by saying that my perspective comes largely from feedback I'm getting from Albertans, and I talked about the opportunity I had to talk to a number of parents in a number of Conservative constituencies in south Calgary. It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that Albertans have focused on a lot of these capital projects, and many parents, many Albertans that are relying on our health care system see these capital projects as being hugely symbolic of a lack of priority, a lack of planning, a response to political needs instead of basic core needs of Albertans.

I want to encourage all members and I want to encourage the Provincial Treasurer to recognize that by putting Bill 14 forward, speaking to it, urging others to vote to pass Bill 14 at second reading, what he's doing is creating more cynicism, a larger gap between electors and elected. It strikes me, Mr. Speaker, that an experienced elected representative like the Provincial Treasurer recognizes the problems that flow from that and wouldn't want that sort of thing to happen. One of the things that politicians have that seems easiest to lose and hardest to acquire is credibility. I think the same thing applies to governments. I think Bill 14 is going to be greeted with incredulity by a substantial number of Albertans, taxpayers and all citizens.

8:50

I think if we deal with the principles in Bill 14, what we find is that it's evident, as other speakers have said, that there's a lack of priority setting. Secondly, this Bill is inconsistent with a pay-as-you-go philosophy, and I think that's what Albertans want to see. I think that's what they want to see from this government. I think that's the kind of leadership they want to see from this Assembly. I respectfully suggest, Mr. Speaker, that it's time for the Provincial Treasurer and it's time for this government to recognize that in the minds of ordinary Albertans, Albertans right across the province, they don't see all government services on some kind of a flat line

analysis. They put education and health care much higher than they put bridges and new school buildings, new hospital buildings.

Why is it we can't find money for effective, low-cost community-based programs in terms of community corrections? Why is it we can't find funds for community health facilities like the Kerby Centre? Why is it we can't find money for people who are eligible for AISH, who have been certified by their physician that they're eligible for AISH? We can't find that money. Why is it we can't find money for public legal education so that every Albertan is able, without having to go and pay a lawyer, to get access to their own legal system? Those are basic kinds of things that Albertans want. The point is that we can't provide those services for them. The reason is that the government is not spending moneys in a way that reflects the priorities of Albertans; it reflects the priorities of a partisan agenda.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that if the government were going to embark on a course of conduct that would erode popular support for cutbacks in terms of services, that would erode support for finding creative ways of delivering core services, there's probably no faster and no more effective way of doing it than advancing Bill 14, which is an unreasonable, illogical, and completely unresponsive approach to capital funding.

Those are my comments, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Leduc.

MR. KIRKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to stand up and comment that the hon. Treasurer left me out of his threat to send *Hansard* home. I felt that he was remiss, and he hurt me by doing that because we are recipients of the urban parks program as well. I would like to kick off my next campaign by simply having him send that *Hansard* so they can see that I and the rest of these Liberals are sound, decision-making individuals that have some ability to make a good priority decision, whether it's health, whether it's education, whether it's social services, or whether it's a park we should prioritize.

If in fact we have a look at Bill 14, it's very clear that there isn't a plan. When we look at amortizing projects over 35 years, again we're continuing with that ongoing process of mortgaging our children's and our grandchildren's futures. That's simply what we're trying to get away with with this whole exercise. If we're even to compute the interest that we add up in these particular items, it is a monumental amount. If a similar or small pay-as-you-go concept was even adopted by the side opposite, we would find that we are in a far more efficient position. When we looked at the bottom line at the end of it all, we would be in a much, much healthier position for our future generations. Again it illustrates that there's a lack of a plan, there's a lack of priorities. It's been said before in this Legislature that certainly a road or a bridge can be deferred. Health, social services, and children's education cannot be deferred. Those are things that are extremely important. We have to deal with them today.

Calgary-Buffalo made an excellent point. In light of the fact of all the so-called cancellations of these projects in here, they still stand in the budget and still are included in the whole process. Is that in fact so we can have the money to build – and I hesitate to use the hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne's name – the bridge from nowhere to nowhere? Is that so we can slide that in when in fact the leaves come out and nobody can see what sort of activity is going on? I suspect that's the case. There's no credibility to this process if we have a look at it. In fact, if you keep those projects in that supposedly aren't going to go ahead, that's a great way to create confidence in the people and credibility in your process.

I think the points have been made fairly clearly here. What's lacking is some priority on projects, and I think it's about time that the hon. Treasurer and his cohorts really had a look at that. If we're serious about getting this under control, this is a good place to start. It doesn't matter, as we had a debate, about 5 percent on the others and that that was going to affect some long-term care. I don't have a problem with that. I'll carry that on my shoulders, and I think the voters next time around will be very, very thankful that I did.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Provincial Treasurer to close debate.

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member spoke of being galvanized by my comment, so I couldn't help but to ask one of the fine pages to go and seek out for me the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*. It struck me that I probably did just that. Not quite enough, though, because "galvanize" in here says to "coat . . . with zinc . . . to protect it from rust." Clearly, it wasn't enough, because I think the rust has set in across the way.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, for fear that a double galvanization may set it too much in stone, I will refrain from the provocative comments that would galvanize them even further and simply thank them for their interesting contribution and move second reading of Bill 14.

[Motion carried; Bill 14 read a second time]

Bill 13 Appropriation Act, 1993

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill 13, the Appropriation Act, 1993.

DR. PERCY: Mr. Speaker, I'm afraid I'm going to have to take the members of this House down memory road for a little bit. What I want to do is a little excursion through the Deficit Elimination Act, section 7 of it, and I want to suggest to the members on that side of the House that there are some serious concerns they should have with Bill 13.

If you look at Bill 13, it's an innocuous looking document. What is surprising about Bill 13 is that it looks so much like the supplementary requisition to the estimates in late August, early September in that what we see there for each department is a single line for operating expenditure, a single line for capital investment, and then there may be at some point another line for nonbudgetary disbursements. This format that you see for Bill 13 is really quite different than the format for the appropriations Bills for the GRF in other years, as the Provincial Treasurer will note. If you look, for example, at Bill 32, the Appropriation Act, 1992, you would see, for example, that for the department of agriculture there would be vote 2, Support for Primary Production; vote 3, Support for Marketing and Processing; vote 4, Field Services; vote 7, Crop Insurance Assistance. That is in marked contrast to the Bill that we have here, because in the previous appropriations Acts what the appropriation Act or Bill contained was the individual votes.

What this Bill does, then, is aggregate those into operating expenditure and capital investment. It does so as a requirement of section 7 of the Deficit Elimination Act, which requires that the estimates of the GRF in legislative form must not contain more than three votes – operating, capital, and nonbudgetary disbursements – "for each department of the Government . . . administered by a member of the Executive Council." Again, this

recommendation is consistent with the recommendations of the Financial Review Commission and of the Auditor General to distinguish between capital and operating expenditures. So at that level, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't appear unreasonable.

9:00

However, what has happened here is that a long-standing convention that has governed many parliaments really has been eroded. To walk you through memory lane – I was not going to bring this up as a point of order. I would have lost, because Standing Orders supersedes *Beauchesne* in this regard. Let me just take you through some of the elements of what *Beauchesne* says, because *Beauchesne* sets out, Mr. Speaker, the conventions that have really strengthened our parliamentary system, the conventions that have allowed us as legislators to have scrutiny of the estimates. If you would look at *Beauchesne* 933, it states:

The proposals with respect to items which the House may vote upon are conveyed formally in these Estimates in the wording and amount of the Votes which, when included in Appropriation Acts, become the governing conditions under which the expenditures may be made.

Now, let me emphasize that: “become the governing conditions under which the expenditures may be made.”

Now, many of you will remember the enjoyable evenings that we spent here going over the estimates department by department, program by program, and then voting upon each of those programs as individual votes which were then aggregated. In this Bill all we see is the aggregation of the operating and capital. We have now lost control, Mr. Speaker. They can move and shift these items within departments, across votes. Now, that does break a convention that does exist. You may think it's funny, Mr. Treasurer . . .

MR. DINNING: I do.

DR. PERCY: I know you do. You think the capital fund budget that you have is humorous too, as will many Albertans as they see that you continue to spend, spend, spend and build, build, build, when each and every roundtable says: put a moratorium on it, Mr. Treasurer. But you don't listen, and you don't give a damn. [interjections] I withdraw that. He doesn't care. I wouldn't want to hurt his feelings.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at *Beauchesne* 944, paragraph 2, it states:

The principle underlying the classification of Estimates is that each class of Estimates is designed to correspond to a separate programme; as far as possible, connected services appear together and all the Estimates for the services controlled by a particular department are mainly grouped in the same class.

Beauchesne 944(3):

Each class is divided into a number of Votes, on which the standing committees of the House may decide separately. Votes are units of appropriation and are usually drawn up on a departmental basis.

What has happened, Mr. Speaker, is that in Committee of Supply we voted on these programs vote by vote. Now the appropriation Bills give us this, an aggregation.

The hon. Provincial Treasurer thinks it's humorous, but it isn't. These funds may be allocated now across programs within the department. Certainly we voted in favour of the Deficit Elimination Act, yet I would draw the hon. Provincial Treasurer's attention to the fact that on May 10, 1993, page 2657, we spoke at length. The hon. Member for then Edmonton-Meadowlark, now Edmonton-McClung, spoke at length. Let me actually read what my hon. colleague said:

We're struck by the manner in which this changes the vote structure in the estimates as well. I think we all understand that government, until the Spending Control Act, was never allowed to

transfer money between votes because the vote of the Legislature was the final authority. They could transfer money within expenditure groupings under a single vote, but they could never transfer money between votes. Well, in the Spending Control Act they made short shrift of that, and they said that doesn't exist anymore. They're coming back a bit from that, which I guess is an improvement, but again in a highly cynical fashion they say, “We're not going to encumber ourselves by that restriction, because we're just going to make fewer votes.” So now there won't be the restriction of not being able to transfer money between and amongst seven or eight votes in a department. No, certainly not. Wouldn't want to limit the Treasurer in that regard.

That's actually cynicism.

They'll simply be able to now have much, much bigger groupings of expenditure, and so the transferring of money amongst and between these subgroups within a vote will be much, much more easily done.

What is the implication of that, Mr. Speaker? Well, if you get some area in a department that manages well and actually underexpend its budget, the Treasurer, unencumbered by any legislative requirement, will simply be able to scoop that money out and put it into . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Order please.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader is rising on a point of order.

Point of Order Quoting Documents

MR. EVANS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. While I'm duly impressed by the hon. member's reading ability, I would like to bring to his attention Standing Order 23(d), which refers to calling a member to order if he persists in reading at length debates of the current session or “reads unnecessarily from *Hansard*.” I would suggest that the hon. member is getting very close to persisting at great length and “in needless repetition” as is indicated in 23(c), and I would appreciate your review of this.

DR. PERCY: Mr. Speaker, might I reply to the hon. House leader's comments. Just as time is subjective, so too is length. I was nearing the end of my colleague's statements. I would have in fact almost sat down had you not interrupted.

Debate Continued

DR. PERCY: Let me just finish, Mr. Speaker. I have just two or three sentences left, with your indulgence.

That doesn't sound to me like this vote-by-vote supply initiative, this reduction in the number of votes initiative of the Treasurer is going to further efficiency, further reduction of waste and mismanagement in this government at all. In fact, what it is is a backdoor release for the Treasurer to be able to squirrel money away and scoop it up without anybody ever seeing what's being done with it until it's far too late to see the consequences of it.

So although we supported the Deficit Elimination Act, Mr. Speaker, we had concerns at that time about this aggregation, and this was our first opportunity to bring it forward.

Now, occasionally the hon. Minister of Labour will say: trust us. It is not the role of the opposition to trust, Mr. Speaker. It is the role of opposition to scrutinize, to look carefully at each Bill. It is the role of the opposition to be positive when possible but critical as necessary. It is not a role that's built on trust. It is our responsibility to highlight what we think are weaknesses in government legislation or procedures. This shift now to aggregation, the breaking of this convention of providing vote-by-vote detail in the appropriation Bills I think is really a sad day for this House, because legislators in this House now have lost control of

how funds are allocated within a department. It's not, as I say, an issue of trust. That has nothing to do with it. It is not our role to trust them. It is our role to ensure that they do their job right. When we see these types of backdoor mechanisms for shifting funds within a department without them being subject to legislative scrutiny, we are concerned.

Thank you very much.

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

MR. GERMAIN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I so much enjoy speaking after my friend from Edmonton-Whitemud each time, but I'm starting to feel like the second elephant in a two-elephant parade: the view never changes.

I do want to say, Mr. Speaker, I want to return – ah, you know, the things that we have to do here to get some attention. It's frightening, frightening. I was told once that when people heckle the speaker, it shows that they're jealous of a great speaker, but I don't know that that's true.

Anyway, I want to point out that even in reading from the dictionary, the Provincial Treasurer has to seek and take instruction from the Assembly. Mr. Speaker, everybody knows that in a dictionary the definitions are lined up in order of precedence, with the predominant, most important definition first. Now, you've heard of all of those terminologies like the “terminator.” We may today have now coined the phrase: soon to be a hit movie coming to a theatre near you, *The Galvinator*. I want to say of the word “galvanize,” the first and the primary definition of that word is to “stimulate by or as by electricity,” and further to that they say: to rouse into action “by shock or excitement.” Well, this side of the House was shocked by the comments of the Provincial Treasurer, and we're beside ourselves with excitement to think that he's going to send this debate and this *Hansard* home to our ridings and to our newspapers everywhere. We're delighted, and we're excited.

9:10

I want to go back to the second day that I sat in this House. I sat in this House the second day, Mr. Speaker, quiet as a church mouse. I want to say that on that second day I didn't even talk to my learned friends on each side of me. I listened in rapt wonderment when three pieces of foolscap were waved in the air like kites floating down from the Empire State Building in New York, three pieces of foolscap on which \$9 billion was being spent. It reminds me almost of how in the boom people used to do million dollar real estate deals on the backs of cigarette packages, the problem being that they'd be driving down to their lawyers and they'd take the last cigarette and throw the package out the window and lose their million dollar deal. But I go back to the boom.

Now we've reached it all. We've gone full cycle, and on two pages of half-size foolscap we've now elevated our quality of debate to spending . . .

Point of Order Relevance

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek is rising on a point of order.

MRS. FORSYTH: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'm calling a point of order under Beauchesne 428(b). The hon. member, I feel, is being trivial, vague, and meaningless.

MR. GERMAIN: Well, I wonder if the member will speak more frankly when she gets to know me better. I was coming to my point, Mr. Speaker.

Debate Continued

MR. GERMAIN: My point, Mr. Speaker, is that we have now gone full circle, and all we've accomplished is that instead of three pieces of foolscap, we're down to a page and a half.

Thank you.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now that the Treasurer has enjoyed the levity of the House, I wish he would give his due attention to the comments I have regarding this Bill. I've got two very real concerns that I think demand your attention.

By reducing the amount of information in the Appropriation Act and by presenting a global figure in this Bill as opposed to some detail, the government have the potential to shift money between programs at their convenience. What this does is undermine the authority of the Legislative Assembly in their role of approving supply and undermine their ability to hold the government responsible for expenditures on programs within departments. So once again we decrease the degree of accountability of this government, and we decrease the chances of this government ever, ever living up to their alleged mandate of being open and honest.

Being open means having available at the very least to the members of this Legislative Assembly detailed information on how and where the money is spent. Open government does not mean that the amount of detail provided on program expenditures is decreased and access to that information is limited. In fact, by moving in this direction, the government is moving away from the Auditor General's recommendation 5 on effectiveness reporting. This recommendation states:

It is recommended that the government establish a system for promoting effectiveness measurement. The system should be designed to support ministers' attempts to encourage effectiveness measurement within their departments and assist program managers in providing the Legislative Assembly at appropriate intervals with suitable information on program effectiveness. Effectiveness measurements should be as simple as possible to identify potential program improvements.

Now, establishing a system for promoting effectiveness measurements and providing the Legislative Assembly at appropriate intervals with suitable information on program effectiveness are really worthy goals. They are goals which are a direct shift towards greater accountability. Having criteria for measuring how effective a program is and providing the Legislative Assembly with this information is exactly what I expected this government to do. When you can measure spending against effectiveness, you have a basis on which sound decisions can be made. Unfortunately, that has never been the case with this government. In fact, with this Bill they are moving to the opposite goal of a closed and secretive government. If the government had a well-organized and responsible budget, they would be able to live within the estimates they have provided to this House. By separating operating and capital expenditures, the government had the perfect opportunity to measure the true costs of programs by strengthening managerial accountability. Instead, what has developed is a means to withhold information from Albertans.

The level of disclosure on a program-by-program basis has been reduced. I use as an example schedule B, under Economic Development and Tourism: Financing – Economic Development Projects, \$25 million. For what? Business and trade development,

nearly \$25 million. Again, for what? Western Economic Partnership Agreements, \$21 million. Financial Assistance to Alberta Opportunity Company, more than \$20 million, an additional \$20 million to a company that by this time should be operating in the black if it was a properly run company. We have to wonder what the mandate of the government is in this regard. Is the minister looking to add to his fleet of riverboats with these dollars? We don't know by looking at this stuff.

What assurance do we have that these dollars will ever be measured against the effectiveness of the program? We simply don't have any. What assurances do we have that the proper dollars as set out in the GRF estimates are being allocated to each program within a department? Again, we don't. What we do know, actually, is that while this government talks legislative reforms, it practises smoke screen accounting at every available opportunity. There is no commitment in this Bill by this government to improving accountability and disclosure within the budgetary process. What we see is a commitment to simply playing politics with budgetary reform.

My second concern here is with the budget itself. If this budget was in fact on track, the government wouldn't need to reduce the amount of information in the Appropriation Act, but what we see is that their budget is rooted in arbitrary across-the-board cuts and continued midterm corrections.

Let's look at some of the actions which have been taken by this government since June 15 to support its crumbling budget foundation. The first one: two midcourse corrections directed against the poor, the disadvantaged, and the sick to deal with \$279 million in program overspending. Number two, a sudden decision to privatize the ALCB retail operation without consulting the employees affected or Albertans in general. Number three, plans to cut 20 percent across the board in health care and education without any clear indication of which programs may be affected. Number four, a 5 percent voluntary wage reduction for public-sector employees with the threat of legislated rollbacks by November 23. Number five, the promise to use quarterly budget updates to make further midcourse corrections. These are all the actions of a government in a panic mode with no sense of direction.

This once again reinforces the questionable accounting practices and lack of specificity within the budget of 1993. This government is projecting an \$818 million reduction in the operating deficit during the 1993-94 year. This will be achieved by a \$1 billion reduction in program expenditures. This \$1 billion program expenditure reduction includes the termination of the \$200 million local employment transfer, a one-time cash payment to municipalities to fill commitments under AMPLE after the government scooped up a \$300 million surplus. This isn't an actual program reduction but an accounting trick.

The \$1 billion spending reduction also includes a \$514 million reduction in valuation adjustments from the previous year. This reduction is projected to occur despite the fact that valuation adjustments have averaged \$408 million over the past three years, and we still have Gainers and MagCan on the books. Three hundred and forty-five million dollars, or 43 percent of expenditure reductions, have been targeted at vulnerable Albertans: in the area of health care, \$191 million, and social services, \$154 million. These reductions have been arbitrarily applied without any real consultation by those who are affected.

Cutting indiscriminately rather than evaluating the need for programs is this government's method for a quick fix. These are simply more examples of this government putting accounting tricks and loan guarantees before the needs of the people.

9:20

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Provincial Treasurer may be committed to marginalizing legislative debate and in fact marginalizing and ignoring the wishes of all Albertans for increased government accountability, but I can assure you the opposition is not. I can remember a point earlier in this session when the hon. Premier asked members on this side of the Assembly to just close their eyes. Well, you can bet that he's asking us to close our eyes now so the Treasurer can sneak this insult to accountability right by. I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. Treasurer look up another word in his dictionary, "accountability." Maybe we can all help him spell it.

MR. GERMAIN: I did it backwards.

MR. SAPERS: Well, that's great.

Mr. Speaker, by providing a global operating figure under each supply for each department without a breakdown by program, this government is showing its contempt for the role of the Legislative Assembly in approving supply. If we pass this Bill as presented, the Legislative Assembly will no longer have the means to hold this government accountable or responsible for expenditures within programs. The government will be able to transfer money between programs and within departments at whim, and the Legislative Assembly will never have any further say in the matter.

You know, just two months ago this government and the Alberta Liberal opposition concluded an historic package of legislative reforms with the intent of improving accountability and disclosure and transparency within the budgetary process. Subcommittees of supply for designated departments and greater scrutiny of departmental budgets within the full Committee of Supply were positive steps in improving the budgetary process. But, Mr. Speaker, Bill 13 moves us a giant step backwards and shows that this government was simply playing politics with budgetary reform. The estimates have been rendered meaningless by this so-called open and accountable government. This government is now asking us to approve \$11.4 billion in spending authority from Albertans, and it doesn't even have the courage to tell Albertans where this money is ultimately going.

The Treasurer speaks of a plan, but no such thing exists. After all, what kind of a plan would commit dollars to new hospital construction while at the same time threatening to close existing facilities? What kind of planning eliminates jobs for public-sector employees but at the same time brags about job creation? What kind of a plan trumpets the importance of education and then reduces the level of support that welfare families can receive for school fees? No plan, Mr. Speaker; that's what we have, and I cannot support this appropriation.

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

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I cannot support Bill 13 because of three major keynote shortfalls.

The first keynote is that the government is using yet another loophole within the Deficit Elimination Act to support the Legislative Assembly's role in approving supply and holding the government responsible for expenditures on programs within departments. This renders the presentation of the estimates meaningless, since the government now has the ability to change

the level of expenditure between government programs through the Appropriation Act.

I would support the move to separate operating expenditures and capital investment. In previous years the full expensing of capital expenditures within the GRF has made it difficult to measure the true costs of programs. However, the move to separate operating expenditures and capital investments was designed as a means to strengthen managerial accountability, not as a mechanism to withhold information from Albertans. I am disturbed that the government has used the recommendation to separate operating and capital expenditures as a means to reduce the level of disclosure on a program-by-program basis within the Appropriation Act itself. Before the passage of the Deficit Elimination Act in May 1993, the practice in appropriating supply was to include a program-by-program breakdown under each supply vote. This gave the Legislative Assembly the assurance that the proper amount of money as set out in the GRF estimates was being allocated to each program within a department.

The Deficit Elimination Act, section 7, was presented as a means to streamline the budget approval process and to provide departments with more flexibility to manage the budgets and meet budget targets. However, it has also served to weaken accountability for expenditures approved under supply by the Legislative Assembly. Section 7 states that an Act which appropriates money from the GRF by supply vote in a fiscal year must have not more than three supply votes – one supply vote for operating expenditures, one supply vote for capital investments, and one supply vote for nonbudgetary disbursements – from each department of government administered by a member of the Executive Council.

By providing a global operating figure under each supply vote for each department without a breakdown by program, the government is showing its contempt for the role of the Legislative Assembly in approving supply. With the passing of this Bill, the Legislative Assembly will no longer have the means to hold the government accountable or responsible for expenditures in various programs. The Treasurer will be able to transfer money between programs within departments at whim, and the Legislative Assembly will never have any say in the matter.

Just two months ago the government and the Alberta Liberal opposition concluded an historic package of legislative reforms with the intent of improving accountability and disclosure within the budgetary process. Subcommittees of supply for designated departments and a greater scrutiny of departmental budgets within full Committee of Supply were positive steps in improving the budgetary process.

Using the Deficit Elimination Act to reduce the amount of detail within the Appropriation Act shows a lack of confidence in the government's own budget plan. If the government is confident that the budget is on track and is a workable blueprint toward the balanced budget in four years, why didn't they have the courage to present the expenditure programs within the Appropriation Act for legislative scrutiny rather than hiding behind global operating expenditures for individual departments?

The third keynote is the plan that Alberta opposition Liberals presented to deal with the fiscal crisis. Rather than arbitrarily making 20 percent across-the-board cuts, our plan calls for the measurement of the effectiveness of government programs in order to eliminate waste and duplication. Another term for this form of measurement is efficiency audits, and efficiency audits do work, Mr. Speaker. As an example, the state of Texas set out to cut \$2 billion out of their deficit using efficiency audits and actually ended up cutting \$4 billion, double their goal, without hurting too many people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

9:30

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're all still galvanized, I guess. We just still keep jumping up out of our seats. I want to thank the hon. Minister of Education for listening so intently.

Mr. Speaker, I think perhaps the Provincial Treasurer might want to in this process write his own dictionary. The first word in his dictionary might be accountability. He might want, in his perspective and in his terms of accountability, to define that as a good word to use just before an election but a bit of a nuisance when it comes time to pass the budget. That might be a good definition for him to use. The provision in the Deficit Elimination Act where we can now have presented to us an appropriation Bill such as Bill 13 does just that; it removes accountability from the legislative process. It is not surprising, however, that we are moving in that direction because we have consistently seen in this session a move in that direction by this government. When you want to remove accountability, you set up corporations. When you want to remove accountability, you set up boards. When you want to remove accountability, you set up commissions. When you want to remove accountability, you simply put some intervening factor in place, some intervening structure, and say, "Don't talk to me; talk to the entity that is now accountable."

We cannot stand by and allow that kind of process to continue in this Legislative Assembly. The accountability is with this body. The debate must be in this Assembly, and we must be provided with adequate and appropriate Bills to debate that deal with those issues. To be provided with appropriation Bills as we are seeing this evening is entirely inappropriate, and Albertans are not impressed with the way this government is going in terms of its accountability. We have to again emphasize that it is imperative that the foundation of this Assembly is accountability for the way taxpayers' dollars are spent, and that's not the way we're going.

I wholeheartedly suggest to all members who campaigned on accountability when it was a nice word to use but a bit of a nuisance now: stick by that, use the definition of accountability that was important before the election, stick by it, vote for accountability, and defeat this appropriation Bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was going to attempt to get your attention earlier, but I was waiting for the dictionary to make its way back to my side of the Chamber. I think after this evening, sir, I'm going to suggest that we see if we can't get additional dictionaries in the Chamber. Either that or I'm sure each member is going to want to have a dictionary with them as well as their Standing Orders and *Beauchesne*.

Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with \$11.4 billion in spending authority, and I've got two specific concerns. The first one relates to what I'll call an issue in terms of freedom of information. The second one has to do with a diminution in the role of the Legislative Assembly. It's a curious thing that while we're dealing with Bill 13 this evening, I look around and I see my esteemed colleagues from the all-party panel on freedom of information. I see the Member for Peace River over there, who has been studiously examining Bill 13, and my colleague from Calgary-Shaw, who has been following the debate intensely. I see the esteemed chairman down here from Rocky Mountain House, and, yes, I see the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek in the back. Each of these members has had the singular opportunity, as I have

had, to go through 14 sessions in large cities and small centres. We've heard Albertans tell us over and over again what they want in terms of accountable and open government. I know from my discussions with each of these hardworking legislators that they've taken to heart the message that they received from those Albertans who came out and either made verbal presentations or written presentations. If I can sum it up, what we've been told is that people take some ownership when they give tax dollars to the government. When they give to the care and management of provincial resources by the government, they expect that government to be accountable to them, and they are not prepared to give a blind cheque to any government, Mr. Speaker.

It seems to me that one of the things we've also been told in our tour, the freedom of information panel, is that a piece of legislation is not your first line of defence; it's really the fall-back position. We've had people come in front of our panel, Mr. Speaker, and tell us: "Why should there be such a compelling need for this legislation? Why doesn't government volunteer the information? Why don't they share this information, at least with legislators?"

The thing that I found interesting is that many people who came and made presentations to our all-party panel were surprised because they didn't realize how secretive this government is. I see the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek is galvanized, and I expect that if I don't speak too long, she may join and, I'm sure, buttress some of the points I'm trying to make now. Freedom of information isn't about a statute. It's not about a legal requirement as much as it is an attitude. Freedom of information ought to be principally a government that's anxious to share with the citizens of the province, the taxpayers of the province, how their funds are being managed. Bill 13 does not serve that kind of freedom of information regime. Bill 13 does not involve Albertans, encourage them to be involved in how their tax dollars are spent. What we see instead are disingenuous efforts to make it more difficult for Albertans to find out where their tax dollars are going, and I think that's reprehensible.

Mr. Speaker, the second thing I wanted to address is something that I thought was outlined very effectively by my colleague for Sherwood Park. What that member pointed out was the diminution in the role of the Legislative Assembly when we look at legislation like Bill 13. To me this is consistent with a theme, and we've seen the theme manifested in other ways. Bill 10 is a good example. Bill 10 is a situation where the government says: we're going to take this responsibility, we're going to create a corporation, we're going to move it as far away from the Legislative Assembly as possible, and we'll have a single minister who will be chairman of this corporation. That's the only link that we as legislators will have with this whole gamut of Alberta registries.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it has to be said. This Provincial Treasurer and this government have to be reminded that accountability means accountability in this Chamber. It also means accountability to the taxpayers. To support Bill 13 is a retrograde step. It's a step backwards. It's not a step in terms of making the Legislative Assembly fulfill the important constitutional role it has. I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that Bill 13, consistent as it is with Bill 10, consistent with other legislative initiatives in this Chamber from this government – we can see that this government does not have respect for the importance of this Chamber and by inference does not have respect for those Albertans that elected members to sit here and act on their behalf, to represent their interests, and most importantly, to be vigilant in watching how their tax dollars are being spent.

I just conclude, Mr. Speaker, by saying that I think Bill 13 is an insult. It's an affront to the citizens of this province, and I encourage all members to vote against Bill 13.

Thank you.

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

9:40

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to stand and speak on Bill 13, as well. This will complete the galvanization of all of the people on this side from around the province, right from the far south to the far north. We'll get out and basically look at specific issues that are going to be put forth while we deal with the issues of promoting the legitimacy of this budget to the people of Alberta.

My responsibility deals with the department of agriculture. We've spent many hours over two or three days debating each of the items in the budget for agriculture. We covered a total of 28 different votes in the department of agriculture's budget. We included five capital expenditure votes in this department also. Now we're basically being asked to accept a vote on one total expenditure for operating funds and one total expenditure for capital investment and then to go out and convince the people of Alberta that within the agriculture sector I can stand and legitimately defend the actions of this government on two numbers, after we spent all that time debating the individual expenditure patterns that varied all the way from research to the field services that are put in place by the local representatives of the department, all the way to the administration of the department here in Edmonton.

What we've got now is a program where essentially no justification can be given to the people of Alberta in terms of the rationale for the breakdown of that budget and the justification in terms of a legitimate vote by the members of this Assembly. We're being asked to debate it in detail, aggregate it all back together, and then say: it doesn't matter; go ahead, take your dollars and put them into whatever programs you want, and spend it.

Well I think that when we go out and deal with the people in rural Alberta, a degree of accountability has to be presented. They have to know that the expenditure patterns of their Legislature are the same patterns that were debated, the same patterns that were approved in terms of the individual dollar amounts that were allocated for each of their functional areas. To ask the people of Alberta to believe that we can justify an expenditure in the ministry of agriculture of \$393 million without some kind of a breakdown, without some kind of a vote that legitimizes how those are spent among the different programs that the department offers is a basic backing out of the way that we have committed ourselves in the process of this legislation. We all agreed to openness. We all ran on a platform of openness. We debated the budget on a spirit of openness, and now when the time comes to present it to the people of Alberta, we aggregate it to two numbers, Mr. Speaker, and we're asking the people of Alberta to believe in us. I think this is just really not the correct image that we need to put out to the people. We need to be able to provide them with 28 numbers at least to let them know in a major way how we plan on spending their dollars.

This breaks down the idea of accountability. I think it would be much more appropriate if we could provide them with all of their numbers and go out – "This is open; this is how we plan on doing it," – and let the people of Alberta judge us on that basis.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Leduc.

MR. KIRKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DINNING: He's already spoken, Mr. Speaker.

MR. KIRKLAND: Not on this particular issue I haven't. We had to fill in central Alberta here to make the map complete.

When we look at Bill 13, it may surprise the side opposite, but I'm not going to support it either. When we look at the two, the capital investment and the operating expenditures, I think the operating expenditures bring to mind to everyone in this Legislature the fact that it's a perfect and grand opportunity to introduce the efficiency audits that so many members spoke of for so many weeks and months around here. I don't quite understand why we're afraid of actually looking at efficiency audits to save dollars. It would seem to me that that is the step forward that we should take in this particular province. When we look at the fact that you can take dollars from one particular vote and move them to the other without any accountability, that of course is just a simple further yag of accountability and no substance to it. It's similar to the sleight of hand that we saw in Bill 14, whereby in fact you can hang on to a bunch of projects that are no longer going ahead and associate the dollar value with them. That, of course, doesn't speak for anything credible at all.

The hon. minister of social services often asks us over here for our plan and what we would like to do. We have given it to him many times, but unfortunately it falls on deaf ears. You know the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs certainly doesn't hear anything that comes from this side, so we won't waste our time with him here tonight. But for the first one and the hon. Treasurer here: of course, we have all chatted about the value-for-money audits. Those, as I spoke in the opening comments, certainly are going to save us dollars. Let's not be afraid of them. Let's actually do it. I really can't believe that you think this government is so efficient that there's not room to be gained there in looking at that particular aspect.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

DR. WEST: A point of order.

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

DR. WEST: Yes. As the evening wanes and we have to listen to some diatribe from the other side, I get concerned under 23(j) that some of the members are using "abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." I am one that doesn't react very lightly. The hon. member took the name of the Minister of Municipal Affairs in vain. I would ask that the hon. member stand corrected for disrupting this Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Leduc.

MR. KIRKLAND: Obviously, Mr. Speaker, on this particular occasion the Minister of Municipal Affairs was listening, so in fact he proves me wrong in this case.

Debate Continued

MR. KIRKLAND: Going on to this particular aspect here of ending on a positive note and offering a few suggestions, we've also chatted about selling the heritage trust fund in an orderly way. Certainly there are efficiencies to be gained there. Efficiencies are something we seem to struggle with on the side opposite, and unfortunately I think it's just about time to wake up to that.

We also have known of and read many news clips and releases in the past about some of the leases the government has negotiated for space within which they house their offices. In today's world we're cutting back, we're downsizing, and we're rightsizing in those things. I think it's also wise that we have a look at the renegotiation of some of those leases.

The Deficit Elimination Act. We on this side support one. We support it with a little bit of teeth in it and some accountability so that in fact there's something to give to the people when it's all in and done.

With those, Mr. Speaker, I'll conclude the comments. Though they may not have been perceived as positive, it's part of our plan, and if they want to follow it, we'll get to where we have to be.

Thank you.

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

MR. BRACKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It would not be appropriate to go through the evening without some words of wisdom from the deep north, St. Albert. I know that it's only appropriate that we share this with the rest of the Leg. As the Member for Calgary-Montrose liked a little story, I will begin with a story to illustrate the point. Two young hikers decided to take a shortcut across a field where they weren't supposed to. As they were going across the field, they noticed a bull in the distance. They decided, whoops, this isn't looking too good, so they started to move faster. This brought the attention of the bull, and the bull started to move towards them. The race was on. They needed to hit the fence before they were charged by the bull. As they were making their way across, they realized they wouldn't make it in time, so one of the young lads said to the other, "Say a prayer." The other one said, "I've never prayed in my life." The other fellow said, "Pray anyway." He said, "Well, I remember one prayer my father used to say at the meal table: Lord, for what we are about to receive, make us truly thankful." Ladies and gentleman, with this Bill the same chaos can take place. You can get run over by a bull, and we pay the consequences as time goes on.

MR. DUNFORD: Mr. Speaker, a point of order.

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

MR. DUNFORD: He has not told the true punch line to that joke. It's not that way at all.

9:50

MR. BRACKO: As my grandmother used to say, "You want to keep them interested, so you don't give them the punch line till later on." I'll leave that. [interjection] Thank you. I may have even forgotten the punch line. I'll give it to you tomorrow.

Ladies and gentlemen, getting back to Bill 13, we're looking at priorities. The residents of this province and of my constituency, St. Albert, want priorities. For too long there haven't been priorities. They want to know exactly how they've been selected and chosen. When they go to buy a new vehicle or a new house, they prioritize. They see not only the initial cost but what the cost will be one year down the road, five years down the road, and so on. With this budget we can't tell that. We don't know what it's going to cost us five years from now with the projects, the operating costs, the expenses needed. This way we cannot avoid extra expenses in the future that we cannot afford. Like we see today, the debt we have at this time should have been picked up

years ago. In a proper budget with proper accounting this would have been picked out. This is done in several states in the United States as well as many cities. They project before they pass a budget what it's going to cost down the road. They would say that without this information, the projection down the road, it's like flying a 747 through the fog at a thousand feet without any controls in it. So accountability and costs are needed.

We look at a simple example, seniors' housing. Instead of doing the wise thing, they put it on 35-year mortgages. A \$2 million lodge cost \$8 million; a \$50 million hospital cost three or four times as much on 15- to 20-year mortgages. This hasn't been taken into account. The number of years on the debentures for the building programs: as I understood it, some of them go on 15-year debentures. Is that not correct? [interjection] Okay; thank you. I have no answer. What we see is a tremendous waste, and the citizens of this province want waste eliminated.

I know in earlier discussions the minister for health care said that what happened in hospitals before was appropriate. We look at some of the things that happened. They built hospitals across this province without a plan. I talked to the person who was deputy minister at the time, and I asked what the rationale was for hospitals springing up across this great province. He said: we thought that if we built a hospital, we could attract doctors to that hospital. So my question was: when it didn't work, why didn't you stop? Well, the obvious answer was political expediency. This is what people, residents are upset with, political decisions that cost a fortune down the road, cost our children their future, a legacy of debt.

This is the question that came up most often in the last few days as I went to different schools in my constituency and in Edmonton to talk to parents, to teachers, to students. The students' main question was: why should we pay for this government's mismanagement; why did they do this to us? I couldn't honestly say. It was mismanagement. There wasn't a proper budget. There weren't consequences down the road for their actions. It's a shame that we leave them this legacy. The citizens told me as I came to the Leg. here: "You make sure you keep a good eye on what the government is doing. If you don't, we're going to kick your butt when you get back to St. Albert." That's true, and I expect them to do that. We're elected to do that and to make sure the government is accountable. We want you to be accountable. We want there to be a freedom, a flow of information so everyone can see, so they will know where we're at, where we're going, so they can also add their input into the budget process and Bill 13. Bill 13 takes us away. Instead of improving the process, it makes it more secretive. It needs to change. The question we have to ask: can we afford it? We don't know from Bill 13 here, where there's no details, no information. We need more information. We need to know and vote on the different areas.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'll conclude.

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

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've spent considerable time going through this Bill trying to come to grips with what it is exactly that we've been asked to do here. The more I got into reviewing it, the more I realized that what we've really been asked to do here in approving Bill 13 is to give the government opposite a *carte blanche* cheque to appropriate \$11 billion on very, very sketchy and scanty information. Being a person of conscience, I can't do that. There is no way that I can stand here as an elected representative of the people and say that this is acting in their best interests. So I would have to ask that

we call a halt to this, because I think we risk not getting the entire story here.

I've gone through this several times to make sure I didn't miss anything, but quite frankly there's just not that much here. I know we've been through some of the other debates, and I am still waiting for a few answers to some questions that I posed in the community development area. I'm not unduly worried, because I think we have a capable young man looking after that area, so he'll get back to me on them. But as I look at this and I say, "This is the whole ball of wax," Mr. Speaker, it surely must cause some great concerns. Therefore, I wonder. As an analogy here, would we be expected to approve this the same way that a banker might be asked to approve an \$11 billion mortgage or an \$11 billion loan without a real detailed business plan? Now, we all know that no such plan exists. I guess that's been made quite clear in a number of the roundtables. I recall having been at the roundtable at the Mayfield Trades Centre a month or so ago. We heard from a number of people who were concerned about health care. The chairman of that particular session himself – I think it was Dr. Norm Wagner; if the name stands properly in my mind, at least, it was that – got up and said that he was very proud that there was no plan and that a plan was simply being developed on an ad hoc basis, rather willy-nilly. Surely that caused a great deal of concern among the second and third rows on the other side. I know that that might be how the front row likes to operate on occasion, but I would sincerely doubt that the back two rows are in agreement with that.

I get very concerned when I look at this because it looks to me like there might be – and I'm not suggesting there is, Mr. Speaker, but there just might be – some examples here of some clever accounting taking place and something being rushed through in a bit of haste with the lack of detail being provided. I get concerned when I see examples of some of this clever accounting, where I see debts of the present being charged against the past so as to make a budget today look a little better or a little different. It reminds me of getting a Visa bill and looking at it and saying, "Oh, gee, I know I incurred this debt back then, so I'm going to ignore it now." I think we've seen a couple of examples of that happening. I wouldn't want that to be perpetuated, and that's why, quite frankly, I rise to speak against this.

I fear that somewhere in this – and Lord knows we have good reason for that fear – there might even be more of these loans or loan guarantees or who knows what hiding there somewhere, and at some point they're going to come back out. If I were to vote for this now, I might be accused of voting for something which I couldn't in all conscience do, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure you realize that. I would be very careful of those kinds of lurkings that may exist. I think the taxpayers who helped elect me and others of conscience to this Assembly would want us to speak this way, would want us to stand up and speak up about this. At least we should record it in the precious *Hansard* so that we can have something to send back to the constituents that are really interested in seeing how the process works and let them know that we tried to do something about this, that we tried to forewarn them before it got too late, that there should be something said. Somebody should stand up and say that. So since I'm standing, I'll say that.

10:00

MR. SAPERS: You can say that again.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Do you think they missed it?

The other thing that I'm concerned about here is that frequently, you know, we only get half the picture. Nobody is against hospitals, as an example, but you surely have to question some of

the thinking that goes on when we look at funding a new hospital in the Westlock area. We keep hearing on the one hand that this hospital was built I think in 1927. Is that correct? I think that's correct. Here they want an injection of \$10 million to build a new one, but nobody ever tells you the other half of the story, where in fact there were several million dollars over the last few years put into renovations there. So it's not that that hospital stands as an inattentive health care facility, from the budgetary standpoint at least. There have been moneys put towards it. Yet the priorities seem to be a little bit altered here. There are other hospitals to the north of that that could and should be built and were promised, and they're being put on hold. I think only half the story so frequently comes across, and that contradicts open government.

Now, I have some pamphlets that some of the Conservative candidates distributed in my riding where they promised open government, where they promised accessible government, and where they promised some accountability. I like those words because they came right out of the Liberal platform. [interjections] Well, no, it's true, and I had a good discussion with the candidate who stood clearly alone, perhaps apart from some of the other members on the other side. I'm worried that having publicized that kind of openness and frankness and honesty and so on and having gotten in on that ticket, we don't see the credence for it. We don't see the delivery of it here where it's most important, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not sure who it is that the government is listening to and who it is they supposedly care about when they're not blinking at any of these things. We've seen that they're not listening to the health care professionals. We've seen that through the numerous roundtables and the secret process that some of that has taken. Some of it has been good. We know that, but clearly it hasn't all been good because again there is no due process there. There is no real plan there. So they're not listening to that aspect of society.

We've seen the same thing happen with students. I'm going out into the constituency frequently, as I'm sure other members are, and I'm listening to what the students are saying. I'm going there because they are learning what parliamentary process is all about, Mr. Speaker. They have it in their curriculum, and they ask me questions. Quite frankly, when I go there and I wave a couple of little flimsy pieces in front of them and I say, "This is \$11 billion," I have to write it on the chalkboard for them because that's a staggering amount for them to try and comprehend. Then I say to them how much we're in debt and I compare the two, and I try and make some sense out of it on behalf of the government and try to make them understand how the process works. I simply run out of words because you can't explain that kind of action easily. These are the young minds that we are trying to train to be scrutinous, to be caring, and to take charge in the future, and I wonder: what are we turning out here? That's why I can't be in favour of this. Just on principle, if nothing else, I have to oppose what is being pushed at us here, if not rammed at us.

So we know they're not listening to health care professionals, and we know they're not listening to the students. We know they're not listening to people involved in social services. So I wonder: do they just sort of go on through this exercise listening only to themselves? Because it seems very self-serving. Quite frankly, sometimes I wonder what it is that they would have us do here. Would they just have us close the books and approve \$11 billion on two or three sheets of paper? Is that what this is supposed to be all about? It surely can't be that way, and I really don't think the second and third rows over there would like to see that continued.

So, Mr. Speaker, with that bit of fear about not getting the whole story on the one hand and with them not really listening on the other hand, I have to register my resentment and my opposition to this particular Bill 13. Thank you.

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

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I oppose this Bill, and I will therefore speak against it and vote against it, but first I would like to respond to the hon. Treasurer, if I might, on the matter of galvanization. Before I could respond earlier, my learned friend from Fort McMurray in his youthful exuberance and ebullience jumped into the breach, for which I'm profoundly grateful.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to react to the Treasurer, primarily to his misinterpretation of the dictionary. What I really find appalling is that the truth stared him in the face and he chose to ignore it. That bothers me greatly. At first I was disappointed that the minister in fact needed to consult a dictionary – I didn't think that was necessary – to discover the meaning of the word "galvanize." Then I realized I should not lament his lack of knowledge; rather I should commend him for wanting to enlighten himself. I think that's a laudable objective. I want to caution him, however, that he has a long way to go.

Mr. Speaker, having said that, I want to return to the Bill. There's another word for the Treasurer. I think it's a nincompoopian Bill. Therefore I'll oppose it. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, being a new MLA you will have to appreciate what I might have to say. I distinctly remember sitting in this House when the estimates were passed. I also remember that my colleagues on the other side were also here, at least in body and maybe not in mind. I fail to understand why we are again discussing this Bill when all the figures have been passed. I think we could spend our time on getting the job done. That's what the majority of the electors put us here to do, and that was to balance the budget. I fully support Bill 13.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Provincial Treasurer to close debate.

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, it has been a most entertaining evening. I couldn't help but take up the challenge of the hon. Member for Fort McMurray when he said that I had been perhaps less than diligent in my duty in reading the first primary meaning of the word "galvanize." It was because the definition contained such words as "stimulate," "rouse," and "excitement" that I didn't want to galvanize the Assembly in that way. So that was the main reason – and then especially when the hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo* started talking about buttressing, I knew I would stop there.

Mr. Speaker, I also appreciate that the Member for Fort McMurray acknowledged – and I caught a glimmer of praise for the parsimony of my paper with respect to this Bill.

I would simply refer hon. members – I've asked the Clerk, and I know he's diligently seeking the answer for me – to at least some 25 days, possibly as much as 75 hours of debate on the general revenue fund estimates, and some 11 volumes that are before me associated with the '93-94 material, including the '92-93 actuals: a very relevant but a very, very, I'd say, not so compact amount of information that has been the subject of debate in at least 75 hours. Plus, as I recall, having gone through the pleasure of sitting in a committee with the standing policy

committee chairman from financial planning and being probed – [interjections] Well, there you are, galvanization one more time – by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, the Member for Edmonton-Roper, the member for wherever she's from, from Scotland, and a few other members that brought me to that committee. We went through 20 hours or more of subcommittee of supply. So, Mr. Speaker, we've had over a hundred hours of debate on these estimates. I think it's been a most enjoyable experience. I know for all of my colleagues it's been an experience of a lifetime.

10:10

The interesting thing, however, Mr. Speaker, is that all of those votes in Committee of Supply then come to this one Bill. If the hon. members wanted us to repeat all seven volumes in this Bill, well, I think that's a less than parsimonious way to spend people's money. We chose, as is custom, as is spelled out in the Deficit Elimination Act, to bring this kind of an appropriation Act before the Assembly. I might remember that wayward group of nine who sat over there on their left-hand side, very much in their own mind, in mid-May 1993 and voted in unison, voted unanimously in support of the Deficit Elimination Act. They voted for it. They knew in voting for it that that Act called for an Act appropriating money from the general revenue fund for each department that would have no more than one supply vote for operating expenditures, no more than one supply vote for capital purposes, and possibly one additional vote for nonbudgetary disbursements. They voted in favour of this Bill, and now they're saying, "We don't have enough information." After more than 100 hours and nearly 11 volumes associated with the '93-94 budget – and how many votes, Mr. Clerk? I'm sure you'll tell me – they're now saying they don't have enough information. I'm surprised.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member started to take us down memory lane. He started the debate by walking down memory lane, and he described the role of the opposition. I hope and I believe he will have several years to perfect his role of opposition. I remind the hon. member of a great cowboy poet who I heard in September 1991 who spoke of experience. The hon. members across the way will get plenty of experience. That cowboy poet said: experience is what you get when you don't get what you want. They're getting plenty of it.

I was also reminded during their comments about the plan, their plan. I could go on at length, and I'll avoid it. During the debate they talked about their plan. Well, I recall their plan, Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign when they proposed that the Liberals would in year one cut their capital spending by \$800 million, \$800 million out of \$1.1 billion. What I find so fascinating about that is that they never, thank goodness, did have to have to answer: which project would they not fund? Would they not fund the completion of Grant MacEwan college here in this city? Would they not fund the completion of various other hospital projects or housing projects? Would they not pay the grants to school boards for those school boards to repay the debenture repayments that are due and payable by those boards? The hon. members across the way effectively said that they would not. They would renege. They would have school boards renege on those payments.

Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, as I've said before, I could go on at length about all of the promises they made. Thank goodness for Albertans they haven't had and won't have an opportunity to implement those promises.

Mr. Speaker, recognizing that the spirit – I feel the spirit in this Assembly. It's moving almost all of them over there. It moved almost all of them, and I know that spirit will prevail when I ask

all members of this Assembly to join with me in giving second reading to this important Bill.

[Motion carried; Bill 13 read a second time]

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
head: **Committee of the Whole**
(continued)

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I would call the committee to order.

Bill 16 **Appropriation (Lottery Fund) Act, 1993**

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Chairman, it is a pleasure to once again rise from my chair and address my fellow MLAs across the other side of the Assembly. I think this Bill 16, Appropriation (Lottery Fund) Act, 1993, is one that is based on the principle of accountability, of disclosure, of openness, quite in keeping with the Premier's commitment to lead a government with those kinds of important attributes.

Calgary-Buffalo and West Yellowhead spoke during their debate about principle and about standing on principle and the importance of principle. I spoke in an earlier Bill, Mr. Chairman, about that \$800 million cut from capital, and this is important under lotteries, because it's somewhat affiliated. Would they cut the Grant MacEwan project? Would they cut the Royal Alex project? Would they be cutting the University of Calgary professional building? Probably. Would they cut the Cross Cancer Institute? Would they cut senior citizen facilities and numerous municipal transportation projects?

Was it also principle, Mr. Chairman, when the Leader of the Opposition blew into Medicine Hat during the election campaign? Was it also principle that when he blew into town, he promised to cut \$800 million? He said: now that I'm here, we're going to build you a nursing home here in Medicine Hat. Was it principle that he was sticking to that very day? Was it principle that he was sticking to when he went to the Whitecourt-St. Anne constituency and promised a hospital in Whitecourt while at the same time promising to cut capital spending by \$800 million?

Mr. Chairman, if that's principle, then the performance that I saw across the way this evening would put those principals who taught these young men and women to shame. I think it's tragic that in the hon. member's trip down memory lane, he did trip once or twice too often, and the Assembly is regrettably no better off for it.

10:20

Specifically to this important lottery fund Bill, Mr. Chairman, we have discussed and debated at length on at least one occasion and possibly others when my colleague the Deputy Premier responsible for lotteries was before this Assembly, when we spoke of the agricultural initiatives spelled out on page 7 of the lottery fund estimates, the cultural initiatives, recreation, tourism, community facility enhancement program, which all members in this Assembly are banging quietly on the door of the Deputy Premier saying: we're opposed to your spending, but will you give us a little money for our project in our constituency? That's where they are. And also some 17 and a half million dollars for

the important fiscal inequities that are in this province that so badly need to be solved by sound thinking, fair Alberta-minded solutions. I can only think of that important initiative known as the education trust fund that will nicely supplement the educational equity that's spelled out in the lottery fund estimates.

I know that I've still got a lot of work to do on my colleague the Member for Rocky Mountain House, but we will persist, Mr. Chairman.

Other important initiatives such as the Wild Rose Foundation, the acquisition of advanced medical equipment, the Science Alberta Foundation, and a number of worthy projects, Mr. Chairman, I would commend to all hon. members.

Hopefully we would have their support in voting here at committee study in favour of Bill 16. I would commend it to all members of committee.

DR. PERCY: Mr. Chairman, I want to correct some of the meanderings of the hon. Provincial Treasurer. Rather than take a trip down memory lane, he kind of went this way and that way. I want to first draw his attention to the fact that as he has a stack of documents on his desk, he should remember that we did debate those. We debated them program by program, vote by vote. Yet what is the number that comes before this House? It is the aggregation of operating; it is the aggregation of capital. That is what legally binds this government in the appropriation Bill. It is not the votes that we had in each of the sessions. All that binds the government is the expenditures set out in the appropriation Act, and the Provincial Treasurer well knows that to be the truth.

So he can talk about the 25 days that we spent, long days, not necessarily very interesting days, sometimes maybe a little interesting, going over these estimates vote by vote, program by program and assessing whether or not those dollars were required. Now what do we see? We see that those votes have been aggregated into two single figures, operating and capital. He says: well, hon. members, you had all that time to assess and to debate. For what purpose I would ask you, Mr. Chairman, since it's now collapsed into nothing and we have lost control? The control now rests with Executive Council, and they can allocate those funds within a department as they choose. The legislators spent the time assessing whether or not each of those programs in a department should have received those funds. That's all for naught. It's gone. It was fiction that absorbed time.

Mr. Chairman, this is a decay of our parliamentary tradition. It breaks the convention that exists in the British House of Commons and in the House of Commons in Ottawa, where the appropriation Bill represents the individual votes. That is a real step away from parliamentary tradition, and it's a further step to executive government.

As my hon. colleague for Sherwood Park mentioned, what we're seeing here is a loss of accountability, a plethora of boards that are set up, where somebody other than someone in this government is in charge. Now we see that within government departments the funds can be allocated. They'll be shifted between programs within the department. Yet will anybody be responsible? We look over the history of this government from 1986 on. We see loss after loss after loss. We see NovAtel. Was anybody responsible for NovAtel? There were no resignations on the front bench. It was \$640 million down the tubes, but nobody's responsible. We can't get the information on it.

Now, Mr. Chairman, we're to trust that they know best, that they can aggregate these numbers, and they'll just spend that money whichever way they like within the department, and we shouldn't worry about it. Well, we do worry about it, because that is a loss of parliamentary control by the members of this Legisla-

ture, whether on this side of the House, whether on that side of the House. We are losing control over how those funds are being spent. We have the single figures before us. That is the appropriation Bill. The hon. Treasurer can say that 25 days were spent on these estimates, but we do not see the votes in the appropriation Bill. As an example, if we look at the lottery fund estimates, we'll see there six programs, which add up to \$142,670,000. We can then look at Bill 16. Bill 16 is a very short Bill. By gosh, look at that: one number, \$142,670,000. We don't see the detail that was in the individual programs. It's not there. Yet the hon. Provincial Treasurer would have us believe that he in fact is locked into those expenditures. He is not. All that constrains him is that which is in the appropriation Bill. That's not much of a constraint, Mr. Chairman, not much of a constraint at all.

I thank you for your time. That ends my comments on Bill 16. I would rise to adjourn debate on this Bill.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has moved that we adjourn debate on the Bill at this time. All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Those opposed, please say no. Carried.

Bill 21 Agriculture Financial Services Act

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll take an eleven and a half second adjournment here.

To bring the members up to date, you'll remember that we are considering the eight-point amendment as presented by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East. Hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, according to our records, you were speaking when time ran out. Would you care to continue your comments?

DR. NICOL: Okay, Mr. Chairman. Could we move adjournment on the debate on that as well?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, you may move adjournment.

DR. NICOL: Can we move another adjournment on it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: You may, and then the committee has to rule on it. Yes.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East has moved adjournment of the debate on Bill 21. All those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Those opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Defeated.

The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Mr. Chairman, as I recall, earlier in the day a series of eight amendments was presented, and I would like to continue debate by speaking on these same amendments. As I recall, it was agreed earlier by this committee, this Assembly that we would in fact consider all eight amendments together. I think it is very, very obvious by the desire of the mover of the amendments to adjourn debate - I could only conclude that he is in

favour of the Bill as it stands. If we go through the sections one through eight – and I won't go through them in a very definite manner – I think that all the members of the committee should be aware that these amendments were not established to enhance the Bill in any fashion. As a matter of fact, I think it should be made quite clear to the member opposite that the Lieutenant Governor in Council – namely, the government – has got a very important role to play in any legislation. This is a standard procedure. By taking any Bill and substituting “Legislative Assembly,” in effect, everywhere you fine “the cabinet” or “government,” if you will, you would hamstring all the processes of government.

10:30

So although I wouldn't question the intentions of the member in presenting these amendments, I would certainly like to point out to the members of the committee in general terms that if we considered these amendments, we would in fact make the Bill totally ineffective. I'm sure that's not what the hon. member who presented this wanted to happen.

Chairman's Ruling Decorum

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. members of the committee, we had at one moment here nine different members standing, many of them talking at the same time. The courtesy of the House is that one member stands and talks; the others members sit or retreat from the Chamber. I just want to draw to all hon. members' attention, then, that we would prefer one member standing. When we have so many standing and talking, it is hard to hear.

Hon. Member for Stony Plain, would you continue.

Debate Continued

MR. WOLOSHYN: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. In conclusion on the proposed amendments to Bill 21, I would respectfully submit that although the intent may be honourable, the end result wasn't thoroughly considered. In view of that, I would like to pose the question on the amendments.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In response to the comments from the hon. Member for Stony Plain, I'd suggest that to have the hon. member suggest that the motion by the Member for Lethbridge-East to adjourn debate on the amendments is approving implicitly the Bill as it stands is a totally preposterous proposition. [interjection] In fact, Mr. Chairman, I didn't even have to wipe off the paper.

The other comment made by the hon. Member for Stony Plain was that the amendments as presented, all eight of them – and it's unfortunate that the committee chose to deal with all the amendments collectively rather than individually. It suggests to me, Mr. Chairman, that there must be some concern on the part of members opposite that they don't want to enter into the debate on all these proposed constructive amendments, which members opposite continue to ask us for and we continue to provide, and then they continue to throw them back in our face. We should have dealt with each of these individually so we could enter into some debate about whether or not any particular amendment has some merit to this Bill.

The conclusion drawn by the hon. Member for Stony Plain that to substitute “Legislative Assembly” in place of “Lieutenant Governor in Council” would render the legislation totally ineffective, Mr. Chairman, again illustrates that they still haven't got it. It's a question of accountability. Once again, we are simply

making an attempt to show Albertans that what we need in this Legislative Assembly with new legislation that's proposed, with old legislation, and with existing legislation we are amending is to bring accountability into the Legislative Assembly and into the Acts this Legislative Assembly passes. Specifically, the amendments at 6, 7, and 8 dealing with section 28 of the proposed Bill are the provisions that ask for substitution of “Legislative Assembly” where it reads “Lieutenant Governor in Council.” Without some further cogent argument from the hon. Member for Stony Plain or other members opposite, I'm not satisfied that that renders the Bill inoperable. I'd certainly like to hear some argument to that effect.

The provision in 2 dealing with an amendment to section 20(3) of the proposed Bill simply asks for “the prior consent of the Legislative Assembly,” once again giving opportunity for members of this Assembly to participate in the debate about those various aspects.

I suggest, Mr. Chairman, that in view of the extent of the amendments put forward, we now must vote en bloc. I would encourage all hon. members to vote in favour of this amendment.

Thank you. Those were my comments.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

[Motion on amendments lost]

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Mr. Chairman, I call the question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister, as long as a member is prepared to speak in committee, the debate continues.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

DR. NICOL: I have submitted another amendment to the Bill. Could I have that distributed, please?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I would call the committee back to order. Many of you now have the amendment or you'll be getting it in a moment from the pages as they circulate. We'd invite comments on the amendment now from the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

10:40

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have learned something about the legislative process in the submission of our amendments. It now becomes very obvious that as we proceed with proposing amendment changes in the Bills, what we want to do is deal with them one at a time because we don't have the option to deal with philosophical differences in amendments when we submit them at the convenience of the Legislature in a group to be dealt with one at a time. They get lumped together and handled, when the philosophical difference of each of them is different, as though they were all one amendment.

I'd now like to deal with the amendment that is proposed. We've got a proposal to delete part 2, division 3 of Local Opportunity Bonds, including 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, and 59 of Bill 21. Mr. Chairman, we propose to delete the local opportunity bond section of this Bill. What we're seeing here is a continuation of this government's program of providing irresponsible loans to communities. It's inconceivable that in a time of financial restraint we could see a government that would still provide loans, even if they're in the form of a bonding system, to the point where they're a hundred percent covered by government guarantees. It's

a position where effectively we're going to open ourselves up to exploitation at the community level. We're going to be provided with an opportunity for the community to develop a bond system or to propose through a business organization an activity that then gets funded by a financial institution and backed through the local community bond program, and the government then becomes liable for a hundred percent of the principal of that function.

I would think that if we were going to deal with this in a reasonable manner, we would be dealing with it where the risk is shared proportionately between people that are involved. But for a government to take on a hundred percent of the risk and the guarantee associated with this program I think is totally unacceptable, given today's fiscal environment that we're trying to change and the way we handle our government expenditures. The proposal we have here basically would eliminate from the mandate of the agricultural financial services corporation the opportunity to provide such irresponsible loans to the community in the form of this hundred percent guarantee. I think the focus of the whole Bill is reduced and the merits of the Bill are reduced when we look at how this program is being put in place with this kind of loan guarantee behind it.

I call on all members of this Legislature basically to look at this, to evaluate it in terms of what their community is saying. Can we as a government afford a hundred percent guarantee loan program in this period? Mr. Chairman, I think the answer is no, and I ask for all the members to support this amendment.

DR. PERCY: Mr. Chairman, I'll speak briefly to this amendment to Bill 21. I'll echo my colleague from Lethbridge-East that in this period of financial stringency, having a hundred percent guarantee of the principal makes no sense. It sends out absolutely the wrong set of incentives. It's not at all clear that this will in fact promote rural development. Again, if the issue is rural development, then that's a small business development strategy, a rural development strategy. It's not pumping money into loan guarantees, however well intentioned, to the rural sector or to the urban sector. So it's a principal that's equally applied across both.

I know the hon. minister has spoken of the success rate or the low default rate of the Agricultural Development Corporation, but again it's not at all clear that that default rate would be indicative of these types of local opportunity bonds. It's a different kettle of fish, and the default rate may be much more similar to those for loans and guarantees made by the Department of Economic Development and Tourism. Those default rates have been high, have been very costly. I would really question whether or not we could look at those default rates and view them as being indicative of what might emerge for these local opportunity bonds, particularly since there's no mechanism to spread the risk for these small entities. Given the high degree of economic instability in these areas, risk-sharing is very, very important. I think that for local communities to have a significant portion of their local equity tied up in projects that are very specific to a region might be very risky. On the other hand, they're backstopped by a 100 percent guarantee, but on the other hand taxpayers in the province as a whole should not really be locked into backstopping those specific types of investments. Again that's an argument that holds for the urban sector as well as the rural. I think that if we're going to get out of the business of being in business, let's do it across the board rather than opening the door here slightly or opening the door there slightly.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food . . . Do you wish to defer?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: I'll defer.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray.

MR. GERMAIN: Mr. Chairman, if we go back to *Beauchesne* – and I've already received one lecture this evening on the merit of *Beauchesne*. I want to point out to all members of this Assembly that although we've had a good time tonight and there have been some very serious issues in which the tongues could have been very sharp, they were instead coated with a bit of kindness and a bit of humour, and as a result the evening – by golly, who would believe that it's a quarter to 11? It just seems like a moment ago that we started in this debate this afternoon.

I want to talk, though – and I take us back to *Beauchesne*. It is very clear, based on *Beauchesne*, that the title of the Act, which is the Agriculture Financial Services Act, is intended to be the sort of governing principle of the legislation where there is no other governing principle before it. That is found on page 205 of *Beauchesne*, which deals with the functions of a committee on a Bill. Now, the minister very ably explained that this particular piece of legislation covered the amalgamation of certain safety nets that apply to our agricultural participants in this province. But it goes much beyond that. It introduces a concept that has to be thought out very carefully; that is, the concept of further government guarantees to some businesses. We do not know yet which businesses will come under the definition because of course they are all referred to by regulation. Now one would assume, found in this legislation, that it is only farm and agriculture-related businesses that apply, but we have no knowledge or guarantee of that.

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

In addition, Mr. Chairman, we are going to be put in a position where one of the great protections of investors in this province, the Securities Act of the province of Alberta, will not apply to these particular loan offerings and this particular fund-raising. One of the things that the Securities Commission has done very well over the years is ensure that there is proper disclosure and information so that people can invest with full knowledge of the risks that they are taking in that investment. The government guarantee coupled with the lack of requirement to disclose risks can only lead the province into trouble. As a result, I, too, would like to speak in favour of this amendment proposed by my friend, and that is that we remove this section from the legislation and stick around to debate this section another day when we are fresher and more eager for that debate.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. minister of agriculture.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd just like to share a few words regarding this amendment with the caucus members as well as all the members of the House.

First of all, I'm very disappointed that the opposition, the Liberal Party, would oppose community bonds. I think that's a very, very unfortunate development for rural Alberta, because community bonds indeed are something that the rural communities have been looking forward to. About three years ago the then Hon. Ray Speaker set up the local initiatives program that toured the province, talked to rural Albertans from north to south, from east to west. At that time one of the primary recommendations from that committee was the development of community bonds.

Today we have an opposition that says: "No, the people are wrong. No, they shouldn't want community bonds, and therefore we'll deny them that opportunity." It's unfortunate, because the community bond concept is that the community itself buys into the concept; the community itself puts money into this, puts a lot of equity into it.

10:50

The process that was established for the pilot project that was developed – and I hope you're listening to this. There would be three pilot projects. On that pilot project which I had mentioned earlier in discussions, for equity that met 25 percent, the government would guarantee 90 percent; for equity that was 30 percent of the project, the government would guarantee 95 percent; for equity that was 35 percent, where the community has come together and raised 35 percent of the equity, then the government would guarantee it 100 percent. Now, 35 percent of any project that a community has come together and raised is a very substantive portion of that funding, and it's the community itself that's going to support this project. I find it very discouraging and very disappointing for rural Alberta today that indeed we have an opposition that says: "No, 35 percent isn't enough. We can't allow that. We don't want the rural communities to keep going." The projects we have done, the three pilots, are going to be 25, 90 percent; 30, 95 percent; and 35, 100 percent. We've already indicated and I've indicated in my presentation that indeed once we've done that, we will then put in regulation how we're going to operate.

I would urge all my colleagues to vote against this amendment.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question on the amendment?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: All in favour of the amendment proposed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Opposed, if any?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The amendment is lost.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:53 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Bracko	Kirkland	Sekulic
Carlson	Massey	Van Binsbergen
Collingwood	Nicol	Yankowsky
Dickson	Percy	Zwozdesky
Germain	Sapers	

Against the motion:

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

Calahasen	Havelock	Rostad
Cardinal	Herard	Severtson
Coutts	Hlady	Smith
Day	Jacques	Sohal
Dinning	Laing	Stelmach
Doerksen	Lund	Tannas
Dunford	Mar	Taylor, L.
Evans	McClellan	West
Fischer	McFarland	Woloshyn

Totals: For – 14 Against – 42

[Motion on amendment lost]

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now back to Bill 21.

Excuse me, hon. minister. If we can't have order, I can't hear what is said, please.

[Title and preamble agreed to]

[The sections of Bill 21 as amended agreed to]

Bill 13
Appropriation Act, 1993

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Chairman, having pretty well exhausted our debate during a hundred hours or more, I would certainly encourage all members to agree to this Bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Question?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Also I would like to thank the House leader for allowing us to speak on Bill 13. Our concern about Bill 13, which is the GRF appropriation Bill, is really that of the principle of disclosure and accountability. We have, as the hon. Provincial Treasurer has suggested, spoken at length about the individual votes, day in, day out. As the Provincial Treasurer knows, it is the appropriation Bill itself, which only defines the operating and the capital, which is operative in terms of constraining expenditures. There is no link between the votes that we took in the debates on estimates and that which is in the appropriation Bill. So in that sense our discussions of this very large document, in fact all of the large documents that the Provincial Treasurer had on his desk, were really just discussions in generalities because there is no mechanism now to ensure that within each department those funds will be allocated program by program as we had voted upon.

11:10

That, I think, is a real erosion of legislative authority. It also sends out, I think, the wrong signals in terms of operations within departments, because when you do pull together a business plan, the object is to ensure that each of the functions within the entity, the department, has clearly identified its targets, what it's to achieve. What this Bill does, then, is turn that into mush. One entity may underexpend its funds; those funds can now be extracted and put elsewhere within that department. So this ability to cross-subsidize inefficiency I think detracts from the ability of any business plan to ensure a cost-efficient and cost-effective delivery of services.

At the microlevel I think it sends out the wrong signals. At the macrolevel, in terms of what a Legislature is supposed to do, we

are supposed to evaluate programs, then in the estimates we vote on those programs, and we have a collection of votes that constitute the departmental estimates. That is common to the House of Westminster. It is common to the House of Commons, and now we have eroded that here. We have done so under the context of the Deficit Elimination Act. As the hon. Provincial Treasurer noted, we supported the Deficit Elimination Act because on this side of the House we are against spending. We are against spending for programs that aren't prioritized. We are against spending on capital projects when Albertans at roundtables on education, roundtables on health care have said: please, a moratorium; please, no more expenditures of capital that lock us into operating that we don't have.

Mr. Chairman, we do have very serious concerns about appropriation Bill 13, particularly the format. We think it sends out the wrong set of signals in terms of any conceivable business plan. We think it erodes the authority of the Legislature, private members on that side, private members on this side. It basically turns us into executive government.

With those comments, Mr. Chairman, I will end. Thank you.

Point of Order Stages of Bills

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Chairman, I wanted to raise a point of order. The point of order, of course, relates to . . . I'm prepared to wait until the Chairman changes places.

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

Mr. Chairman, the point of order I raise has to do with Standing Order 61(2) that provides, "No appropriation Bill shall be advanced more than one stage on each day." Now, there's no definition of day, and there's no definition of stage in the Alberta Standing Orders, but it's clear from Standing Order 2 that we look at "usages and precedents of the Assembly and on parliamentary tradition." I've also had regard to *Beauchesne* 640, which sets out, "The purpose of each stage is as follows," and clearly delineates "In Committee" as the third stage. Now, I'm advised by the Clerk that there has been some past precedent for treating committee as something other than a stage in the history of a Bill. Without having that precedent and having nothing to go on other than the Clerk's advice, I would raise the matter and challenge the precedent and ask for some evidence that the practice in fact is that Committee of the Whole is not a stage in the passage of a Bill.

It may be, Mr. Chairman, that you'd prefer to defer this, to have it addressed by the Speaker tomorrow, but I wanted to raise it now before we proceed any further with appropriation Bill 13.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On the point of order, hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. DAY: Clearly, Mr. Chairman, there has been past precedent. If the member opposite wants to have that researched and brought to his attention at some later date, I mean, that's fine. That can be done. Also, this notice was given under order of government business. So with the precedent and also notice being given, I would suggest that though there's been a request for information, which certainly can be forthcoming, there should be no interruption in what we are doing here tonight as far as bringing forward these appropriation Bills.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On the point of order.

MR. GERMAIN: On the point of order. Thank you indeed, Mr. Chairman. My understanding of the precedents of previous Speakers is that they are not binding on this Assembly, and, with respect, the wording of that standing order is clear and unambiguous. There is a valid, fundamental, public policy reason for that, and that is to ensure that the most serious quality of appropriation Bills are given the opportunity to have sober second thought.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair has heard the arguments. Certainly in the Chair's experience, Committee of the Whole has gone on on the same day and is not considered a separate part. However, I will take it under notice and confer subsequent to this. It's always been my experience as Chair and before I was Chair that it was, and Counsel advises me of the same, but we can take that as a question to be referred later. So we'll take it as given now, and we'll proceed.

Debate Continued

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay; we're on a new topic.
Calgary-*Buffalo*.

MR. DICKSON: A new topic, Mr. Chairman. I'm moving on from the point of order.

I just wanted to speak to Bill 13. I think, Mr. Chairman, that we heard the Provincial Treasurer earlier talk about the information he'd provided to members in this Assembly. You recall that with his usual bent for histrionics he put the stack of material on the corner of his desk. Well, the short answer to that is that I still have, and I expect there are other members in this Assembly that still have, unanswered questions. You know, it doesn't matter how many pages, how many questions have been asked in the process of estimates leading up to dealing with the appropriation Bill. The reality is that many of the questions raised have not been responded to. Specific questions have been dealt with not directly but by oblique generalities. It's just, with respect, misleading to respond to requests for information by throwing a volume of material around and trying to market that as full disclosure. The reality is that that doesn't fit the bill. That doesn't address many of the questions that have been asked.

I think when we're dealing with Bill 13, as has been pointed out before, we still have a situation where the government is providing insufficient information. We still have a situation where there is no adequate explanation, there's no adequate plan put in front of us. We still have the fact that the government ignores very concrete, specific suggestions from my colleagues on this side which would deal with the debt and deficit situation in Alberta but in a responsible, constructive way and in a way, most importantly, that would build popular support in a way that we don't currently see in this jurisdiction. So instead of eroding popular support, what we should be doing is trying to build it. Bill 13, Mr. Chairman, does not achieve that in any sense.

As had been pointed out before in Committee of Supply, there have been all kinds of suggestions from members on this side in terms of how we could be fiscally responsible. I regret that the Provincial Treasurer, from his comments, is not prepared to heed those suggestions; he's not prepared to take those constructive suggestions. I say with regret, Mr. Chairman, that the taxpayers of Alberta are the losers.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Yes.

11:20

[Title and preamble agreed to]

[The sections of Bill 13 agreed to]

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, I move that the vote be reported when the committee rises and reports.

[Motion carried]

Bill 14
Appropriation (Alberta Capital Fund) Act, 1993

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

[Title and preamble agreed to]

[The sections of Bill 14 agreed to]

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, I move that the Bill be reported when the committee rises and reports.

[Motion carried]

Bill 15
**Appropriation (Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund,
Capital Projects Division) Act, 1993**

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

[Title and preamble agreed to]

[The sections of Bill 15 agreed to]

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, I move that Bill 15 be reported when the committee rises and reports.

[Motion carried]

Bill 16

Appropriation (Lottery Fund) Act, 1993

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

[Title and preamble agreed to]

[The sections of Bill 16 agreed to]

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, I move that Bill 16 be reported when the committee rises and reports.

[Motion carried]

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, I move that the committee do rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

MR. TANNAS: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain Bills. The committee reports the following Bills: 13, 14, 15, 16. The committee reports the following Bill with some amendments: Bill 21.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. All in favour of the report?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed, if any? Carried. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, the government would now like to move to committee reading of Bill 8, but considering the hour I would move that we adjourn to meet again tomorrow at 1330 hours.

[At 11:26 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]