

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, June 1, 1994**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 94/06/01

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

Our Father, we confidently ask for Your strength and encouragement in our service of You through our service of others.

We ask for Your gift of wisdom to guide us in making good laws and good decisions for the present and the future of Alberta.

Amen.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, it's indeed my pleasure today to introduce to you and to the members of the Assembly His Excellency Brindley Benn, high commissioner of Guyana. His Excellency is here on a familiarization visit of Alberta. Albertans are actively involved in Guyana through the University of Alberta's Students International Health Association, and some of our businesses are involved in projects in their country. For the past few years and again this year between 20 and 30 students from health-related faculties have conducted health clinics in Guyana. His Excellency is seated in the Speaker's gallery accompanied by his wife, Patricia, and I'd ask that they rise and receive the recognition and warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

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

MR. HENRY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have three petitions I'd like to present today all dealing with the issue of inclusion of sexual orientation in the Individual's Rights Protection Act. The first urges the government not to appeal the April 12 Court of Queen's Bench decision regarding the Individual's Rights Protection Act and reading sexual orientation into it. The second one urges the government to amend the Individual's Rights Protection Act to ensure that individuals are not discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation for housing, employment, and other necessities. As well, the last one urges the government of Alberta not to use the notwithstanding clause of the Constitution Act to avoid amending the Individual's Rights Protection Act.

Thank you.

MRS. SOETAERT: Well, Mr. Speaker, you'd never believe what this petition's about today. It is about the Sturgeon general hospital and the desire of the people who live around it for it to be in the same health region as their hospital. It seems like a simple request. I'd like to present this petition on behalf of those people.

AN HON. MEMBER: How many names?

MRS. SOETAERT: Two hundred.

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

MR. BRACKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I'm delighted to present a petition from St. Albert and surrounding area residents who request that the Sturgeon general hospital be removed from the Edmonton region so it can serve the residents better.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Bonnyville.

MR. VASSEUR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got a petition with 580 names on it from people from Cold Lake and Grand Centre about their concern on the restructuring of the education system and the delivery of the same in the classroom.

I also have eight letters addressed to the minister and to the Premier about education restructuring.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just in case the Minister of Health was relaxing, I thought I'd let her know that there's another petition pointing out one of the gigantic boo-boos of her tenure in office, and that is that the Sturgeon general hospital be put into the area just north.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I have the pleasure of tabling in the Assembly yet more signatures petitioning the Legislative Assembly to urge the government not to take kindergarten instruction away from children.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. DALLA-LONGA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have another petition. It's a bit of an unusual petition. It's got a picture of a bear on the front. I hope nobody shoots it. The petition is urging the Legislative Assembly of Alberta not to move the Children's hospital from its current location. Most of the signatures are from Red Deer.

Thank you.

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

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present a petition also concerning the Children's hospital. This is again from southern Alberta. It's got 2,078 signatures on it, bringing southern Alberta's concerns up to 18,642 people that would like to see the government commit to retaining the Children's hospital as it currently exists.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Pincher Creek-Macleod.

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I present a petition today from 313 concerned citizens from the Pincher Creek area asking the government to maintain the existing Children's hospital in Calgary.

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

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present two separate petitions regarding seniors' concerns. One contains 17 names and the other 14 names. Just little petitions.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Leduc.

MR. KIRKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Strathcona I'd like to present a

petition signed by 530 students from the University of Alberta expressing concerns about the teacher/pupil ratio in the classrooms.

head: **Reading and Receiving Petitions**

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

MR. DALLA-LONGA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request that the petition which I presented on May 17 concerning the Children's hospital be now read and received.

CLERK:

We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to urge the Government to maintain the Alberta Children's Hospital in Calgary on its current site and as it currently exists as a full service pediatric health care facility.

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Speaker, with your permission I ask that the petition which I tabled in this Assembly on May 18 concerning the attack on seniors' benefits now be read and received.

CLERK:

We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to urge the Government not to alter the level of support for all benefits for Alberta's seniors until seniors have been consulted and have agreed to any revisions.

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

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm requesting that the petition I presented on May 18 regarding cuts to kindergarten be now read and received.

CLERK:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative assembly to urge the Government to continue funding kindergarten at the current level, allowing each and every child in Alberta the opportunity to receive 400 hours of kindergarten instruction.

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

MS HANSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I ask that the petition I presented on May 19 be now read and received.

Thank you.

CLERK:

We the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to urge the Government to reinstate the cuts made to Social Assistance and in the future to consult broadly with clients, labour and professionals to determine where savings can be made that will not harm Alberta families.

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

MR. BRACKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request that the petition I presented on May 24 regarding the removal of the Sturgeon general hospital from the Edmonton region be read and received.

CLERK:

We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to urge the Government to reconsider the inclusion of the Sturgeon General Hospital within the Edmonton Region and to allow the Sturgeon General Hospital to serve its customers from the City of St.

Albert, the MD of Sturgeon, the Town of Morinville, the Village of Legal, the Alexander Reserve, the Counties of Athabasca, Barrhead, Lac Ste. Anne, Parkland and Westlock.

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

1:40

MR. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie I would ask that the petition she presented on May 18 regarding maintenance of the Grey Nuns hospital as a full care treatment facility be now read and received.

CLERK:

We the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to urge the Government to maintain the Grey Nuns Hospital in Mill Woods as a Full-Service, Active Hospital and continue to serve the south-east end of Edmonton and surrounding area.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to request that the petition I presented concerning the Sturgeon general hospital being taken out of the Edmonton region and left with the people it belongs to be now read and received.

CLERK:

We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to urge the Government to reconsider the inclusion of the Sturgeon General Hospital within the Edmonton Region and to allow the Sturgeon General Hospital to serve its customers from the City of St. Albert, the MD of Sturgeon, the Town of Morinville, the Village of Legal, the Alexander Reserve, the Counties of Athabasca, Barrhead, Lac Ste. Anne, Parkland and Westlock.

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

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request that the petition I presented on May 25 regarding kindergarten funding now be read and received.

CLERK:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative assembly to urge the Government to continue funding kindergarten at the current level, allowing each and every child in Alberta the opportunity to receive 400 hours of kindergarten instruction, without placing undue financial stress on Alberta families by the imposition of user fees.

head: **Notices of Motions**

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

MR. DICKSON: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I intend to seek immediately after the daily Routine pursuant to Standing Order 40 the unanimous consent of the Assembly to deal with a motion that the Assembly recognize May 30, 1994, to June 4, 1994, as National Access Awareness Week.

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

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I intend to move after question period under Standing Order 40 the following motion:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta urge the government to investigate the lockout at Lafarge Canada Inc.'s

cement plant at Exshaw regarding the number of workplace accidents, potential environmental damage, and the economic impact resulting from the employment of inexperienced replacement workers and to take appropriate action.

Thank you.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

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

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table four copies of the 1993 Students Finance Board annual report.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to table six copies of the financial and statistical report of Alberta school jurisdictions for September 1, 1991, to August 31, 1992, for divisions and districts and from January 1 to December 31, 1992, for counties. Additional copies can be arranged to be received through my office.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, I would like to table copies of replies to motions for returns 183, 190, and 199.

Further, Mr. Speaker, I would like to table six copies of the report on the achievement testing program dated June 1993.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I am filing with the Assembly today reports pursuant to the Legislative Assembly Act for the period '92-93.

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

DR. WEST: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to file with the Assembly the 20th annual report of the Alberta Educational Communications Corporation, April 1, 1992, to March 31, 1993, otherwise known as Access corporation.

MR. BRASSARD: Mr. Speaker, I wish to file the 1993 annual report of the Alberta Social Care Facilities Review Committee.

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

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table four copies of the lodge foundation seniors survey done by the Sturgeon Foundation, the Leduc Foundation, and the Greater Edmonton Foundation.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

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

MR. GERMAIN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Since the House is in such a good mood today, I won't mention that the road from Fort McMurray is still rough, but I will introduce a school group from Fort McMurray. It's my pleasure today to introduce 33 students and four adults accompanying them from the Timberlea public school. The adults accompanying them are their teachers Amgad Rushdy and Christine Dutnall and two parents Jim Regehr and Shelly Till. I wonder if that school group might rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The road to Calgary is smooth and short. I would like to recognize a guest in the members' gallery today. This young gentleman is a student at the University of Calgary, a member of my constituency, and a member of my board. Chris Walker is going to represent the province of Alberta in Prince Edward Island this summer as a delegate to their Legislative Assembly working in a student exchange program. Chris is bilingual and a very fine, remarkable young man. I'd ask him to stand and receive the very warm reception of this House.

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

MS HANSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to introduce today a group of 10 young people who are from my constituency. They are with the Inner City Youth Development Association, and they are students at the Inner City high school. They're accompanied by teacher Jeff Day. The students are, I believe, in the public gallery. Would you please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly two university students who are working as STEP students: Jeff Kupsch in the Member for St. Albert's constituency office and Stacy Byer in my office. I'd ask them to rise and please receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the Legislature a constituent from Edmonton-Whitemud: Mr. Ron Darbyshire. I'd ask him to stand and receive the warm welcome of the House.

head: **Ministerial Statements**

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

50th Anniversary of D Day

MR. THURBER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity before this session of the Legislature ends to make note of a very important anniversary that should be acknowledged and honoured by this House. I am referring to June 6, better known in the hearts and minds of Albertans as D Day. This June 6 marks the 50th anniversary of the allied forces invasion of Normandy in France, an invasion which marked the beginning of the end of the world war fought in Europe by many brave men and women, nearly 45,000 of whom made the supreme sacrifice before VE Day in May of 1945.

May I remind you that many of them left the relative peace and security of their homes here in Alberta to answer this call to defend freedom from the tyranny and oppression of Adolf Hitler.

Mr. Speaker, we only have to leave this Chamber and venture out into the rotunda of this very building to see war memorials listing names that bear witness to the honour of those brave sons of Alberta, they who selflessly gave everything they had, who

made the supreme sacrifices in battles such as D Day so that our generation and successive generations could live in peace, harmony, and freedom.

Mr. Speaker, as one who served in the Canadian navy in the early 1950s, it would be my honour to suggest that this House join me in honouring the memory of the 359 gallant young Canadians who died on the beaches and are buried at Bény-sur-Mer and specifically join me in acknowledging the 50th anniversary of D Day on June 6, 1994.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Yes, Mr. Speaker. This side of the House has given me the honour to put in our words on the commemoration of D Day. I think the hon. minister has done a most commendable job of highlighting what the action was for and bringing back our memory to the sacrifices made by those landing on the beaches. As one that's a little older than most, I wasn't a participant, but I remember it very clearly. It was a mixture of trepidation of what would happen to your loved ones and relatives – I had relatives in that – on the other hand, it came after a couple of years of waiting to prepare to land. We'd lost so many in Dieppe just shortly before that. It brings back very poignant memories to me. I remember particularly the idea that the assault was to bring back the idea of the brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God.

1:50

When you visit – I have – the graveyards to look over friends and others that have passed on and to see the Christian crosses row on row, sprinkled in amongst them is the Star of David and a little kind of turet type of thing for the Moslem markers on the graves. You wonder at the descendants or at some of the people today that would move that it was illegal or wrong to wear turbans or kepis or yarmulke, whatever you want to call it, in certain places when they fought with the steel helmets beside, on the right, on the left, and landing on the beaches.

I hope this maybe brings us all to be aware that we all worked together at one time, and maybe we can work together again in the future.

International Qualifications Assessment Service

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, it was a pleasure and an honour for me today to be able to cut the red tape at the opening of the office providing the service entitled the immigrant qualifications assessment service. It was identified about five years ago that new Canadians moving to Alberta with certain qualifications were in fact somewhat inhibited in terms of being able to have those qualifications assessed.

As a matter of fact, to give you an idea of the numbers, there were in 1991 approximately 17,000 new Canadians moving to Alberta, half or three-quarters of which were between the ages of 20 and 40, wanting to get into the work force. Half of those people had degrees, diplomas, or certificates of some kind. As a matter of fact, some 2,500 of them actually had university degrees, yet there's a great difficulty for employers wanting to assess those credentials to be able to do that in an effective way and, in fact, to be able to employ those people with the confidence that their credentials are as they say they are.

Because of that, the whole situation was looked at. A report was done and released called Bridging the Gap, and within that report was a recommendation that a service be set up to be able to effectively look at these credentials and qualifications and

provide the ability for new Albertans who want to get to work to be able to work with employers around the province. In fact, that has now happened. That service has been set up, the first of its kind, I might suggest, in Canada. The offices are right now in the Alberta Labour Building, just up the street from here, and it's being staffed by our staff who have been trained to accommodate that particular position.

The infrastructure, in terms of the computer infrastructure, can be accessed from around the province. Today as we cut the ribbon, there were already clients lining up to have their credentials assessed.

I want to thank all of those people who were involved in making that happen. It's going to mean that more and more new Canadians are going to be able to take part in the Alberta advantage.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. DECORE: Thank you. The initiative that is being taken by the government is a move in the right direction. Mr. Speaker, I think one of the first things that I experienced when I entered public life was a meeting with a delegation of Albertans who just happened to be trained as medical doctors in a number of countries that they had come from. Their complaint to me was that they couldn't get accredited, they couldn't get certified to practise medicine in Alberta. I have heard from them I think every year, as I've heard from other professionals and academics and tradespeople who have had difficulty moving into our system and being worth while in our system.

So there are two aspects to this issue. There is the human aspect and the tremendous anguish that goes with people who feel and know they're qualified but can't get to work, and this is particularly so for women. The other aspect is the economic aspect where people that should be productive aren't being allowed to be productive.

Mr. Speaker, we could use as our model the model that exists in Quebec where professions and trades and academics came together and hammered out a system whereby once a new Canadian comes in, their training and qualifications are assessed, and that assessment is so powerful, so strong that they can go into law or medicine or this trade or that profession or whatever. Mr. Minister, that's what I think we need for Alberta.

I would urge the government to take a few more steps to allow this anguish and this economic problem to be resolved so that new Canadians in Alberta can be effectively and properly put to work.

Thank you, sir.

head:

Oral Question Period

Restructuring Government

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, regrettably the experiment with the Klein government in restructuring society has not been for the better; it has been for the worse. In two sessions, mostly in the last three months, more than 160,000 Albertans have signed petitions expressing their displeasure with what's happening with education, what's happening with health care, what's happening with seniors' benefits. That's unprecedented. Thirty thousand telephone calls on the seniors issue. Today young children and students and seniors and sick people are worse off. My first question to the Premier, then, is this: explain how changes to education will make students better for the future – not quite yet, not quite yet; I know you're anxious – how these changes to

students, to families will make it better for students to compete in the global market, when you've cut back on kindergarten and when you've made it more difficult for students to get into postsecondary institutions.

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, none of that is true. It's going to be a much better Alberta, believe me, at the end of the day, much to the chagrin and the disappointment of the Liberals, who would like to see nothing more than this government fail in its objective to eliminate the deficit, provide an orderly schedule for the paydown of the debt, and create the climate for the private sector to create meaningful jobs in society.

To answer the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition's question as to how it's going to benefit Albertans, it's quite clear, Mr. Speaker. As we go through the very difficult time of restructuring, we will see the elimination of some 183 or more administrations in the hospital system so that those dollars can go not only to eliminating the deficit but can also go directly to the hospital beds and to the patients. They will see more community-based decisions being made relative to the delivery of health care; the same with education. If the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition thinks it's wrong to break down the fundamental administration and to reduce administration, then there is something drastically wrong with his thinking. In education we plan to take 140 school administrations and boil those down into 60 administrations, again taking the administrative savings and putting those dollars directly into the classroom.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like the Premier to explain to seniors, particularly a Premier who promised not to change their benefits, how he could allow seniors to live in dignity when he's taxed them, when he's ignored them, and he's taken away benefits from them in a very unproductive way. How can you justify that, Mr. Premier?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, if ever there was consultation, this was the perfect example: the exercise that was undertaken by the minister and the hon. chairman of the seniors advisory committee and all the members of this caucus who conducted something like 500 public consultations throughout the province, heard from over 35,000 seniors on this issue. What they heard from the seniors was that they wanted to contribute; they wanted to pay their fair share; they wanted to help the province with its financial difficulties. But they also said: please look after those who cannot fend for themselves. That's exactly what we have done: we have improved benefits to those seniors who most desperately need our help in society.

2:00

MR. DECORE: Mr. Premier, how can you provide quality health care when you've cut before you've allowed the regional health boards, who have been given the mandate of ensuring that there's quality health care, when they haven't been able to do their job yet as of today?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have said in the health care sector, as we have said as it relates to all sectors of the public service, everyone who earns a tax dollar: let's start by examining the amount of remuneration we get. The challenge was for everyone, including the members opposite, to take a 5 percent reduction, a very small sacrifice. I'm glad that they so readily accepted to participate in the program. That accounted for a lot, just that 5 percent reduction in payroll and benefits. That ought not to hurt services in any way, shape, or form. It means people

are getting a little bit less to do the same job. We have challenged the administration of these institutions to, as we say, think differently, to find new and more effective and more efficient ways of doing things.

Mr. Speaker, one of the most incredible things happened, and I'm sure the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition can verify this. I had the opportunity just the other evening of meeting with the outgoing chancellor of the University of Alberta, Sandy Mactaggart, along with the incoming chancellor, Lou Hyndman, along with the new chairman of the board of governors, Mr. Ferguson, and the outgoing president, Dr. Davenport. It was phenomenal. Just the five of us sitting around having dinner, and Dr. Davenport and Dr. Mactaggart both said: we are glad that you have done this, because we are now excited about the challenges that lay before us in how we can find new and better and more effective and more efficient ways of doing things.

MR. DECORE: Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, how excited 20,000 young Albertans are who can't get into those postsecondary institutions? You should have had dinner with them, Mr. Premier.

MR. N. TAYLOR: A sandwich is not champagne.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. DECORE: Twenty thousand students can't get . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order. It's now taken us eight minutes to get to the second question.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, key Bills in education, health care, and seniors should have given clear direction to Albertans; there should have been clear planning. Instead, closure was used, and instead of detailed planning what we get is policy made behind closed doors by ministers using regulations. The school Bill had 46 areas where regulations will set policy. That's unprecedented, and that's not democracy. Mr. Premier, why have you allowed powers to be taken away from this Assembly, powers that should set policy, and allowed instead for that policy to be set by ministerial regulation behind closed doors?

MR. KLEIN: Relative to the preamble that was, I presume, part of the question, that was so rudely interrupted by their own people, Mr. Speaker, that figure, 20,000, is absolutely wrong. As a matter of fact, the access fund will enhance opportunities for enrollment. I would like to point out that there are 180,000 students now receiving instruction in the universities of this province.

You know it's interesting to sort of muse out loud. Here we have the \$1.1 billion man, the man who said: I'm going to go out in this province and brutally cut programs. I would have to wonder, Mr. Speaker, had Albertans been unfortunate enough to have this party as a government, I'm sure that they would have made all their decisions in the open, that they would have opened up all their cabinet meetings for everyone to see, all their caucus meetings for everyone to see. Don't give me that gaff. Don't give us that gaff.

Our decisions were reasonable and responsible and fully and publicly debated in this Legislature.

MR. DECORE: Twenty thousand students.

Mr. Premier, how can you believe that these regulations are going to serve Albertans well when you refuse to allow for review and debate of those regulations, you ignore petitions, and you've ignored 160,000 names on the petitions that we've submitted, you ignore and dismiss rallies that take place in our province, and you selectively screen participation at roundtables? Sure, you have consultation; it's your own consultation, Mr. Premier.

MR. KLEIN: I take it that that was not a question, but I'll reply to the preamble anyway. [interjections] What was the question? First of all, I have to point out, Mr. Speaker, that his 20,000 figure is wrong, but I would point out again that 180,000 students are now receiving instruction in Alberta universities and other postsecondary institutions. If you asked this gentleman whether the glass is half empty or half full, he would say: it's not my glass.

They talk about 160,000 names on petitions, most of those petitions generated by these people over there, most of them generated by the Liberals actively perhaps even using their own telephones or perhaps using Legislature telephones to get their people out to collect those signatures. Mr. Speaker, that tells me that precisely 2,540,000 people in this province did not sign petitions because they like what we're doing.

MR. DECORE: Twenty thousand students.

Mr. Premier, will you agree to correct this mess; that is, establishing policy by ministerial regulation? Will you clean it up by allowing the standing committee that's supposed to do this work to do the work by reviewing and debating and passing on that ministerial regulation?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, it is all working perfectly fine. The standing policy committees have presented a wonderful forum for all Albertans, including members of the opposition, to participate and to become a very significant part of the decision-making process. The system is working quite well. It is working quite well for this caucus. It is working very, very well for Albertans. The only people it's not working well for, of course, are the Liberals, and that's understandable.

2:10

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, if I could supplement. It is not bona fide information: 20,000 students not getting access to our system. As a matter of fact, ACAT is probably the most authentic body to develop those numbers, and they tell us that every student who registers, registers 2.1 times on average either in other programs or in other institutions. By far and away, 20,000 students is not in the realm, not close.

Certainly we have an access problem, but the access fund will admit an additional 10,000 students into our system over the next three years. As a matter of fact, the institutions are telling me, as they move towards next fall, that they will in fact be increasing access in the coming year.

Child Welfare

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, while the Klein government decides what to do with child welfare in Alberta, Alberta children continue to suffer. [interjections] I'm surprised that this particular question will bring laughter from the opposition. We've learned – and let's see if you laugh after the question is put, hon. members – our caucus has learned that in Edmonton a child welfare worker refused to remove a three-year-old child from an

abusive, squalid, and unsafe environment. The child in question showed signs of being beaten and had lice crawling over its body. We know that the home environment was so terrible that the SPCA apprehended a dog, the pet dog, from the residence two weeks later. Mr. Premier, how can you justify a system where dogs are treated better than children in this province?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, that was just probably the saddest and most despicable way of presenting a case of human tragedy. I really thought that the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition would have more sensitivity, would have more compassion than to raise an issue in that very insidious, terrible, terrible fashion.

Mr. Speaker, all caring people – all caring people – would do all in their power to make sure that that kind of a situation did not exist or was not allowed to persist in society. I don't know the details of this particular circumstance. Certainly it would not be the policy – it would be ridiculous even to suggest that that kind of behaviour would be the policy of this government or the policy of any government in a civilized or even an uncivilized nation of the world. Relative to the details of the case – and I don't know what they are – of course the minister is limited as to how much he can talk about it anyway, but I will have the minister supplement.

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

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's truly sad that an issue of this nature, a complicated issue no doubt, would come up in the House in that form. As many of the opposition members and critics in that particular area know, my doors are always open for any issues of this nature to be brought to my attention, and I do resolve and discuss a number of issues with those particular members. Those people did not advise me if they knew of a situation of this nature. We try very hard as a government. It's a very sensitive area. It's a very sensitive area, and this government and my department in particular have a high priority in that particular area. In the next three years we're going to spend \$600 million in relation to services to children. We continue. The second phase of our welfare reforms is in fact Reshaping Child Welfare. That report will come forward to this Assembly in the very near future along with implementation time lines and costing.

In this specific case, Mr. Speaker, I would ask the members: if they know of this particular case and if I don't know of it, then they should advise me. I am willing to deal with the issue.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, here's the sad part, particularly when the Premier talks about me having a lack of sensitivity. Our caucus informed the senior members of the minister's department of this tragedy more than a week ago and asked that action be taken. In fact, to this date no action has been taken. Mr. Premier, how can you justify saying that your government has sensitivity and that your government is a government of action when you allow this to continue to go on and on and on?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I don't know the details of the case, but I can commit right now that the hon. minister will review the situation, will look into it. I trust that you will provide to him directly, meet the minister, talk directly to the minister. My gosh, there used to be a time in the Liberal caucus when good, honourable people in that caucus with legitimate concerns would

sort of meet in the back room and say: lookit; I have a problem. One was the late Sheldon Chumir, one of the most respected Members of this Legislative Assembly. I can recall that when he had cases like this, whether it dealt with the environment or dealt with social services, he would have the decency to go to the back room and say: lookit; this is something that is hurting in society. He wouldn't use it for outright political purposes the way that the Liberal opposition is doing today.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Premier, don't put this back on us. It's your government that's sloppy, and it's your government that's insensitive here.

I'd like the Premier to tell Albertans, because your government and the government before that and the government before that have studied this issue of child welfare over and over and over and over again: when are you going to do something that ensures that this sort of tragedy and other tragedies do not happen again?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, you can do everything humanly possible to create as much preventive action as one can, but you cannot completely prevent these terrible tragedies from occurring. Yes, you can do what is humanly possible. That is why the minister has said that some \$600 million will be dedicated not to study it but to take direct action and to put in programs that will provide the safeguards that children so desperately need.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House.

Health Care Fees

MR. LUND: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta Health has an expenditure in excess of \$900 million for medical services. Alberta's physicians have been asked along with other Albertans to help in reducing the expenditure of government. The results of a vote conducted by the Alberta Medical Association of its membership on a proposed agreement is being made public today. To the Minister of Health: what are the results of that vote?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, today the AMA membership did ratify a one-year agreement between Alberta Health and the Alberta Medical Association. Certainly it's a very important agreement for us. I certainly appreciate the very co-operative way that the AMA and their membership have worked with us, recognizing that they want to contribute to a resolution of the fiscal difficulties of this province. So it is a very important agreement for us. I believe it shows that the Alberta physicians and the Alberta government can work co-operatively together to ensure we have quality services within sound fiscal management.

2:20

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My supplemental is to the same minister, who, incidentally, has been working tirelessly on behalf of Albertans to make sure that we continue to have the best health care system in the world. What are the savings that are achieved by this agreement?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, in this year the agreement shows a reduction of \$6.6 million in medical expenditures and a total of \$60.3 million out of a \$907 million budget, so certainly this is a very important step fiscally. It also lays out steps to achieve a further 3.3 percent savings over the next two years. This does call for the 5 percent compensation reduction

that the physicians agreed to, and I think that's very important: that the physicians in this province have shown leadership in agreeing to that reduction. So the savings in this agreement are very significant.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is very impressive, and I want to thank the physicians for their leadership.

There are media reports that indicate that the restructuring of laboratory services will in fact mean hundreds of layoffs and a reduction of services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: No preamble now.

MR. LUND: Well, I just listened to five of them in one question.

Anyway, to the same minister: what steps is the minister taking to ensure that the services will be maintained?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the lab restructuring is a part of the AMA agreement. I believe that it is very possible to work together with the AMA and the laboratory sector, including the . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Hon. Member for Redwater, will you be quiet.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, it's extremely important that we work with the laboratory sector including the public and the private labs in this province. There is, I believe, an agreement that there are significant savings that can be realized by efficiencies in those two sectors. We have within the AMA agreement a framework for setting out a structure to resolve those areas. So the lab restructuring, again, is a very important part of the AMA agreement.

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

Essential Health Services

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Speaker, this government can't quite seem to understand how desperately Albertans want to be consulted for real about what is going to happen to their health care. We now learn that without consultation the government is going to redefine basic, core health services and restrict access to some primary services for some Albertans. To the Minister of Health: what health services which are now available freely to Albertans will no longer be available after your Task Force on Core Health Services makes its arbitrary choices?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, that is a very typical question from across the way: to ask a minister to tell him ahead of a working group's results what's going to happen. Well, that may be the way the Liberal caucus works. It is not the way this government works. It is not the way this minister works. When I receive a report on recommendations on core services and basic services, they will be brought through the process here, and a decision will be made in that way.

MR. SAPERS: So the Minister of Health doesn't know, or she won't tell us.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Health at the very least confirm that individual Albertans will no longer have the choice of hospital to go to for primary care, that they'll have to go in the health region where they reside, that they won't be able to go anywhere else?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the questions get more preposterous by the day. It has been clearly laid out. Clearly laid out. It is in writing in news releases that in no way do regional health authorities eliminate or limit choice in access of facility, in access of services by any physician. However, what it does do is ensure that as many services as possible are available in an area. Again on the preamble, Mr. Speaker, how can one possibly accept that the minister should know the answer ahead of the committee's report? That is certainly a Liberal caucus way of thinking, not this one. We ask a committee to do a job. We wait and hear from them and make our decisions from that.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seeing as each regional health authority will determine the specific type and amount of acute care hospital-based care that will be available in every region, will the minister confirm that primary care levels will differ by their definition from region to region?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, it is entirely incomprehensible to me that this hon. member could have sat through a budget process where we had four hours of debate, where the chairman very kindly gave the latitude to discuss the Department of Health's business plan. He sat through all of the debate on Bill 20 and still does not understand in any way the concept of regional health authorities. One of the main principles of a regional health authority is that the regions will decide on delivery of health services according to need – according to need – not just that you put it out there whether you need it or not. Let's use our dollars the best way. That's the principle. Secondly, there will be provincial standards and guidelines for health in this province. [interjections] Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry. The member asked the question. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Kindergarten Programs

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've received a number of calls following the passing of Bill 19, the School Amendment Act, and the sweeping changes which include governance, ECS, and site-based management must now be implemented. Parents are frustrated with the lack of information with respect to who is now responsible for their school. They have been told to call their MLAs to respond to concerns about their children's education, and as one parent expressed it to me about Bill 19: "Jocelyn, you passed Bill 19. Now you live with it." My question is to the Minister of Education. Who is responsible for determining what level of ECS program may be offered? Is it the parents, the school boards, or this government?

MR. JONSON: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I think it is very important to note that at this point in time, until the end of the current school year, the various levels of the education system are responsible for their respective areas. School boards are responsible

for what they've always been responsible for. School principals are responsible for what they've been responsible for. I think that is very important to keep in mind. In other words, there is considerable lead time being allowed prior to the actual implementation of such matters as the amendments in Bill 19 with respect to school councils.

Along with that, I would like to indicate, Mr. Speaker, that there is a consultation process going on right now which involves open meetings, which involves workshops and focus groups to deal with this whole area of achieving a site-based, student-focused, parent-involved system of education, and the roles pertaining to that are being examined very carefully through the consultation process so that we will have a good, well-developed outline of this for the next school year and beyond.

Now, secondly, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the specific question. The responsibility for setting the parameters of an early childhood services program rests, in terms of hours and so forth, with the school boards.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Education then: is it illegal for a board or in the future for a school council to allocate any of its funding for any additional portion of ECS beyond the provincially funded 200 hours?

2:30

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, school boards have augmented early childhood services programs in a variety of ways for a number of years, and they will, I'm sure, continue to do that. It's very commendable that school boards are looking within their administrative costs, their governance costs, and their other costs that do not directly affect instructional programs to fund various priority items, including, if they so judge, additional features for early childhood services, and that is quite within their prerogative.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can school councils direct their school boards to hire non-ATA teachers in order to handle the programming of ECS in the fall as a way of saving costs?

MR. JONSON: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the hon. member that currently there have been no particular or specific changes to the mandate of school councils. We are working towards changes, as I said, which will focus on parental involvement and students and site-based management.

Mr. Speaker, the responsibility for staffing schools rests with school boards. They are required to use certificated teachers, as per guidelines and regulations and legislation, and that continues.

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

Senior Citizens' Housing

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government's get-the-seniors fight continues. Round 1 announced the contentious Alberta seniors' benefit. Round 2 introduced Bill 35, an unspecific shell which allows the government to continue to cut seniors' programs at will. Now round 3: get their last loony by skyrocketing seniors' housing rents. To the Minister of Municipal

Affairs: are you withdrawing subsidies to seniors' lodges as a directive, forcing them to balance their budgets?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, the answer to that question is no.

MR. YANKOWSKY: I can't believe this minister.

How much are lodge rents going to increase as a result?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, right now in the province there is a huge variation in lodge rents. With the passage of Bill 34, in consultation with lodge boards and management agencies throughout the province we will bring forth what we call deregulated rents and choices. At the same time, we shall have a report back in July that looks at following the individual in need with cash to pay rents. As I said, in the province today there are many deregulated rents.

I just had this brought up before the question period. I got an article out of the paper, "Poorest seniors face stiff rent increases," which is totally erroneous. The standard lodge rate is \$561, a lodge room over 200 square feet is \$657, and a double room is \$1,010. If you go through the various lodges throughout the province, a resident in a St. Albert lodge could pay as low as \$604 or as high as \$900. That exists right today. A resident in a regenerated lodge over 200 square feet in areas around the province is paying \$657, yet the standard lodge rate is \$561.

Some of them use a formula where they take their income times 25 percent, which was set up with the federal government, and they also give a room and board charge. These are existing lodges today. The room and board charge at one lodge I looked at was \$400. Therefore, a person with \$1,000 a month income times 25 percent of their income gets a rent charge of \$250, plus \$400 for their lodge charge gave them a rent of \$650. Now, in that same lodge somebody with \$2,000 a month income times 25 percent pays \$500, plus the room and board charge of \$400 pays \$900.

There is not an absolute fixed rent amount in this province today.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that seniors' rents are going up. How are seniors going to cope with these rent increases? What are they going to have to give up?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, they're not giving up anything. With what I had just demonstrated here, the variance today, along with the same principle that was based in the seniors' benefits package, an income test, we will, as I said, following a review follow those at the low end that can't afford certain rents because they're on basic pension income with cash to supplement their rents and let the lodges run their places like businesses.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Quebec Separatism

MR. JACQUES: Mr. Speaker, thank you. My constituents are offended and they're outraged. They're outraged by the loquacious nonsense that is spouted in every question period by this poor excuse for an opposition. More importantly, my constituents and indeed all Albertans are concerned with the economic fallout from that mushrooming cloud of Quebec separatism. Our commitment and our pledge to rid this province of the shackles of annual deficits is threatened by the inability of the federal

government to foster confidence within the international investment community. My first question is to the hon. Premier. Mr. Premier, given the statements you made at the Western Premiers' Conference and during your recent trip to British Columbia, would you please advise Albertans of this government's plans to stay the fiscal course regardless of the potential actions of Quebec separatists?

MR. KLEIN: That was sort of a quick trip around the country, starting with the Liberals across the way, and on that I totally concur with the hon. member relative to his observations in the preamble, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I've said that it would probably be premature at this particular time to speculate on what might or might not happen in Quebec. I've said that, if anything, the Prime Minister and maybe all Canadians should perhaps concentrate, as much as I hate to say it, on getting a Liberal elected in Quebec, Mr. Johnson, who is very strong in his federalist stand. I've said that our agenda in this province is simply as the hon. member outlined, and that is to address the very serious problem of eliminating our deficit and paying down our debt and creating the climate in this province for job creation by the private sector.

Mr. Speaker, that's not to say that we aren't watching the situation. Indeed, my department, the Department of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs, is monitoring the situation quite closely. Mr. Olsen will be going to Ottawa very, very soon and will have much more of a presence and will be highly visible in the province of Quebec and will be monitoring the situation and will be reporting to us. I think in due course and as this situation evolves, then this government, this caucus collectively, not singularly, not just the Premier, will develop a position relative to this province's role in Confederation and our position relative to Quebec.

2:40

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplementary question is to the Provincial Treasurer. What risk assessment have you performed on the impact to our deficit reduction plan if the separatists gain political control in Quebec?

MR. DINNING: No, Mr. Speaker. I think the Premier has responded for the most part that this is somewhat premature to speculate. The Prime Minister himself has said that it is hypothetical. I am aware of some research that the hon. professor from Edmonton-Whitemud has done at the government's expense, government funded through the Western Centre for Economic Research, some interesting research. It is a little early to speculate, and I don't think that contributes to the agenda that the Premier spoke of in tackling the deficit, the debt, and getting on with creating the climate to create jobs in this province.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is again to the Provincial Treasurer. What actions will you take to ensure investor confidence is maintained in our province?

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, the best plan of attack to get the economy back on track and get investment strong and continuing to be as strong as it was in 1993 through to the end of the decade is to stay on the very track we're on. We're going to do that. That's what we were elected to do, and that's what we're

going to do. Because when I look at the go-slow approach that the Liberals have taken, the mañana approach, I see that our dollar has declined by 2 cents since February 24 and I see that interest rates have gone up by 250 basis points. That's not because of any question or a cloud of doubt or uncertainty about Quebec. It's because of a lack of action by a government that knows it's got a problem and won't get on with it. We know the problem. We've helped define it. Now we're tackling it, and Albertans are with us in getting on with the job.

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

Charter Schools

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has rammed Bill 19, amendments to the School Act, through the House by invoking closure three times. The first draft of this Bill was so inept that the minister himself had to introduce nine pages of amendments to plug up some of the holes. There are lots of holes left, as the Member for Calgary-Currie indicated. Now we find that charter schools cannot start up this fall because the necessary regulations aren't yet in place. I intended to ask the Premier a question here because he's boned up on this subject, I think, since earlier, but I'll give him a break. I'll go to the minister instead. Why would the minister lead Albertans to believe that charter schools could open this fall when he knew that his department could not get the regulations done?

MR. JONSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know where the hon. member gets his information, but we are currently working on the regulations pertaining to charter schools. We are going to consult on them with some experts in that particular area, and we have a goal of being able to authorize a limited number of charter schools by the fall of 1994. I have been quite clear that we would only be able to consider a limited number of applications this fall and that we would be looking at a limited number of pilot projects for the school year following that. The hon. member across the way I'm sure would like us to proceed in that methodical manner.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted to hear that, but since the minister wasn't able to bring these regulations to the House, will he give us a copy when he's finished drafting them?

MR. JONSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, certainly in due course they will have all the copies they need.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplemental.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the minister then: why did he not appoint an implementation team to consult with Albertans on this particular subject when he has five others?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member across the way has been complaining or at least his colleagues have been complaining about the number of regulations that need to be developed. In terms of the basic parameters of a charter school, those are clearly outlined in the legislation, and I would hope that the hon. member across the way would be happy about that. There will be some further regulations that have to be developed, and we are working on that.

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

Public Consultation

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Premier. Change is often feared, and I've seen more fear in members opposite since February 15 than all the people in my constituency have conveyed in that same period of time. Over the past year Albertans have seen a very positive and substantive change in the role of government. Mr. Premier, you and your government have spoken with Albertans in many forums and consultations in the past 351 days. Can you substantiate that you or your government have been able to adopt and maintain a caring and listening attitude to the people? [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, as the Liberals across the way have been shouting and yelling and acting like a bunch of banshees and as they have been out in the communities of Alberta stirring up protest and creating unrest and driving petitions, members of my caucus have been out with the communities. They've been out in the community halls, in the church basements, in the coffee shops. They've been meeting meaningfully with groups of seniors and educators and health caregivers and municipal leaders in a meaningful way, conducting productive and meaningful public consultation programs and bringing back to the table the real honest thoughts of those constituents and how those concerns could be addressed in a meaningful and caring way.

MR. McFARLAND: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Premier if he would rather feel like the Leader of the Opposition must feel, like a nudist in Antarctica at this point of time, but I won't. [interjections] We're wasting time; aren't we? It's the first day of June, and we've got another 29 to go.

Is there a point during this three-year business plan, Mr. Premier, where consultation becomes redundant and ineffective?

MR. KLEIN: Those are pretty strong words, "where consultation becomes redundant and ineffective." In some cases yes. In some cases all that can be said has been said. There have been some public consultation processes that have been far more extensive than others. There comes a time when you start to hear the same things over and over again and often from the same people. But, Mr. Speaker, we have always said during this program, as we follow the road maps set out through the three-year business plans, that if Albertans can find us a better way and show us a better way and we still reach the same destination on time, then we're willing to listen and to respond.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

2:50

MR. McFARLAND: Final, Mr. Speaker. Will the Premier explain to my constituents his response to opposition allegations that this government has moved too quickly in establishing and implementing its plans for deficit reduction and delivery of government services?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's not a matter of moving too quickly. It's a matter of simply having to take the action that we have taken. If we add to our debt by 2 and a half billion dollars each and every year, I would suspect that by the year 1998 we

would hit the wall with a bang that would certainly be heard throughout this country and perhaps the world. We would be absolutely forced to take dramatic – dramatic – action, even more dramatic than the brutal cuts that were promised, the \$1.1 billion in brutal cuts, by the hon. Leader of the Liberal Opposition.

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

We have on the agenda from yesterday a notice of a purported point of privilege by the hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan, followed by the hon. Member for Redwater.

Privilege

Confidentiality of Telephone Records

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My point of privilege under Standing Order 15 is as follows. The fact that the Deputy Premier, the Member for Barrhead-Westlock, received a confidential document is not the issue here. The concern lies in the subsequent actions of the Deputy Premier in that he did not return this information nor did he file it with the Speaker of the House. I'm horrified that the Deputy Premier would violate the integrity of his office and the Legislative Assembly in this way. My rights as a Member of the Legislative Assembly and those of all members have been violated by the Deputy Premier in that he had access to a list of telephone calls made by and to the Liberal opposition, a "Liberal telephone list" he called it. It was clearly a list of telephone calls because he made reference to the locations called.

Mr. Speaker, this has interfered with my ability as a parliamentarian to fulfill my functions and obligations as a member of this Assembly. I will cite *Beauchesne* 92, page 25, and I quote:

A valid claim of privilege in respect to interference with a Member must relate to the Member's parliamentary duties and not to the work the Member does in relation to that Member's constituency.

Beauchesne 96, and I quote:

The privacy which surrounds Members' office files also extends to computer-based data in the equipment used by Members. That confidentiality must be respected.

I further cite *Erskine May*, 21st edition, page 69, and I quote "What Constitutes Privilege."

Each House also claims the right to punish as contempts actions which, while not breaches of any specific privilege, obstruct or impede it in the performance of its functions, or are offences against its authority or dignity, such as disobedience to its legitimate commands or libels upon itself, its Members or its officers.

Mr. Speaker, one, the basis of democracy is the undisputed right of individuals to speak with their elected officials without fear of retribution or documentation by other parties. That conversations can be held without fear or intrusion or loss of confidentiality and, two, trust between constituents and elected officials is comparable to a lawyer/client relationship or a physician/patient relationship. Therefore, what the Deputy Premier thinks is his political gain violated my parliamentary integrity and, for that matter, the integrity of every other MLA in this House regardless of what party, because, after all, what other list, as he calls it, lurks in his computer?

Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Premier stated during question period on May 31, 1994, and I quote:

Oh, by the way, Mr. Speaker, they want telephone lists. I even got the Liberal telephone list, and it arrived in a brown bag to me. Really interesting. Talk about fishing trips: Guadeloupe; Anacortes, Washington, where you can rent nice pleasure boats. Please.

Mr. Speaker, I submit to you that the rights of every member of this Legislature were violated when the Deputy Premier

presented this Liberal telephone list in this House during question period in a blatant attempt to make political gain. He has clearly demonstrated the contempt in which he holds this House and has without doubt lowered the perception of this House as an unfettered Assembly in the eyes of Albertans as well as clearly demonstrating a woeful lack of ethics. To protect the effectiveness and the integrity of the members of this House and indeed this House itself and not violate the rights of Albertans to contact their MLA at any time without fear, the member, as Deputy Premier, as custodian of confidential information, should have upon receipt of the telephone list delivered it immediately to the Speaker to determine how this confidential information found its way to him. One must assume that the Deputy Premier is a man of principle and would have done the right thing. I'm extremely dismayed that he did not.

I would enter *Erskine May* once again, page 134 in the chapter titled Contempt. I quote: "Administrative action has also been taken to preserve the liberty of the electorate in communicating with Members of Parliament." Mr. Speaker, this section on protection of petitioners and others is relevant when the issue of contempt is being addressed. Democracy has indeed been threatened when constituents or the media, for that matter, cannot have the confidence to know that when they phone a Member of the Legislative Assembly or a member contacts them, shared information will not become public.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt in my mind that this affects the ability of members of this Assembly to perform their duties in representing the people of Alberta. I wish to make reference to *Alberta Hansard*, May 4, 1994, page 1695. I quote a statement by the Deputy Premier, the Member for Barrhead-Westlock.

I would like to point out at the outset that a point of privilege is the most serious point that can be raised by a member in the Legislative Assembly at any time and is certainly not one that should be viewed as anything less than that at this point in time.

I wish to assure this House that I take very seriously the point of privilege that I have made, that indeed the actions of the Deputy Premier have impaired my ability as a member of this Legislature to effectively represent my constituents.

3:00

I will make a further reference to *Alberta Hansard*, May 11, 1994, where I quote reference made by you, Mr. Speaker, to Standing Orders 15(6) and 15(7). "Maingot at page 188 states," and I quote:

A prima facie case of privilege in the parliamentary sense is one where the evidence on its face as outlined by the member is sufficiently strong for the House to be asked to send it to a committee to investigate whether the privileges of the House have been breached or a contempt has occurred and report to the House.

I further quote on the same date and page. "The Chair would also cite Maingot at page 213 as follows:"

Abraham and Hawtrey's Parliamentary Dictionary points out that "to constitute a breach of privilege a statement reflecting on the conduct of a Member in his capacity as a Member need not be true, but it must tend to lower the House in the eyes of the public."

There are actions which, while not physically obstructing the House of Commons or the member, nevertheless obstruct the House in the performance of its functions by diminishing the respect due it. As in the case of a court of law, the House of Commons is entitled to the utmost respect; thus, when someone publishes libellous reflections on the House, they will be treated as contempt of the House. Furthermore, reflections upon members, the particular individuals not being named or otherwise indicated, are equivalent to reflections on the House.

A further quote, Mr. Speaker:

To reiterate Maingot, the truth of the statement is not at issue; the issue is the impact of the statement on the member's and the House's status in the eyes of the public.

Mr. Speaker, at all times Albertans must know that they can access the elected members of this Assembly with confidence and that contact will indeed remain confidential until they desire otherwise. I would remind members that on May 18, 1994, in Alberta *Hansard* on page 2053, the hon. House leader, the Member for Red Deer-North – and I quote:

Whenever a member, in this case two members, has raised a point of privilege which in essence is saying that their ability to operate has been impaired somewhat by comments made by another . . . that is a serious matter. It doesn't affect just members of one party. In fact, it affects members of the whole House, and it affects how they are seen by the public and the perception that's created in the climate in which they [have] to work.

There is properly allowed for provision within Standing Orders and certainly within *Beauchesne* and within parliamentary procedure and precedent for people to address that.

The Deputy Premier's actions indeed have negatively impacted the effectiveness of this House and how this House and members are perceived by Albertans.

I wish to make reference to Alberta *Hansard* on May 18, 1994, page 2064, the Provincial Treasurer and Member for Calgary-Lougheed. I quote:

The matter that is before the Assembly is your ruling where you've provided advice to the Assembly, where there is a potential of improper obstruction to the member in performing his parliamentary duty. This is about obstruction of parliamentary duty. That's what this Chamber can deal with.

My point of privilege is indeed that of obstruction of my parliamentary duty. It arose from the time the Deputy Premier received the list and did not immediately return it to its rightful owner or file it with you, Mr. Speaker. That action violated the integrity of all members of this House and of the House itself and directly affected the public's perception of this House.

Mr. Speaker, one must ask the question: if Liberal telephone lists can be accessed by this minister, what else can be accessed? The spectre arises of further abuses of power being perpetrated by this minister. The Orwellian scenario is truly frightening, and Albertans must be aware that Big Brother may indeed be watching. I reiterate: Albertans, whether constituents or media, must always be fully confident that the sacred trust of the confidentiality will be constantly honoured. I expect the hon. Deputy Premier to recognize and acknowledge the truth.

Mr. Speaker, that's my point of privilege.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes that the hon. member has raised a subject that is very important to all Members of this Legislative Assembly, and that's the privacy and confidentiality of all forms of records relating to their dealings with constituents and the people that they represent. In the present situation the hon. the Deputy Premier is unavoidably away, and therefore the Chair proposes to defer further consideration of this matter until the next sitting of the House.

Hon. Member for Redwater, did you wish to pursue the point that you . . .

Privilege

Allegations against a Member

MR. N. TAYLOR: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After perusing the Blues and *Hansard* today and after listening to the submission by my colleague from Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan, I don't think there's any purpose served in mining that anymore. I found later that in the file that the Deputy Premier filed on the

use of my office, whoever filed the affidavit or the statement said that no way I knew anything about it, that I was clear. As a matter of fact, they painted a better image of myself than I had of myself, so I let it go.

Point of Order

Imputing Motives

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie indicated that she had a point of order arising from question period.

MRS. BURGNER: Under 23(i). Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I wanted just to confirm the statements that were made by myself during question period. At no time did my discussion on Bill 19 and with respect to ECS suggest the option or the consideration for holes in the legislation. If the hon. member had clearly heard and perhaps can check the Blues, my concern was for the lack of information at the community level about the implementation process of ECS. I just want to ask the Speaker to recognize the fact that for the hon. member to suggest that I found flaws – and "holes" is the word he used – with the Bill and to state that publicly as part of his question was inappropriate. That was certainly not the comment that I made. I am outraged.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Mr. Speaker, I'm terribly sorry, and I hope the Member for Calgary-Currie will accept my apology. I simply credited her with greater powers of observation than she apparently has.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, perhaps this will set the record straight.

Before proceeding to the Standing Order 40s, the Chair has received a note indicating that we have now been joined by 24 students from the Iihakuit school, Cambridge Bay, Northwest Territories. They are accompanied by their teacher Dawn Wilson, and they are in the members' gallery. The Assembly would like you to rise and receive the normal cordial welcome from the Assembly.

head: Motions under Standing Order 40

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo* has given notice under Standing Order 40 that he wishes to ask the Assembly for consent to present a motion. On the matter of urgency, hon. member.

3:10 National Access Awareness Week

MR. DICKSON: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I think the notice of motion has now been distributed to all members. Speaking specifically to the requisite urgent and pressing necessity under Standing Order 40(1), this is the last day that this House will be sitting during National Access Awareness Week. The host city this year, I'm proud to say, is Calgary. I urge all members to give the requisite unanimous consent so that we can speak to this important event in Alberta.

MR. SPEAKER: Is the Assembly prepared to give this consent?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed?

The hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo*.

Moved by Mr. Dickson:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly recognize May 30, 1994, to June 4, 1994, as National Access Awareness Week and

strive to ensure all government buildings are fully accessible to all Albertans.

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to all members for allowing this matter to be addressed this afternoon. In speaking to the motion, I advise you, sir, that each year a different Canadian city is selected to host the National Access Awareness Week. This year it's in my home city of Calgary.

On Monday Calgarians showed their famous enthusiasm and organizational skills in what was by all reports the biggest and most comprehensive kickoff ever to this important week in Canada. I want to congratulate the chairperson, Mrs. Cheryl O'Brien,* for this mammoth undertaking, an undertaking that was discharged so well.

The National Access Awareness Week involves a number of activities. These include symposia on communications and disabilities, the largest trade fair to be seen in Calgary for a very long time, to showcase an array of devices to ensure equal access for all Canadians with disabilities. There's a focus on a number of access issues. These include access in the areas of transportation, housing, employment, recreation, and education. I encourage all members to attend the Northland Village mall in Calgary where there are elements of a fully accessible house which are available to view and will be throughout this immediate weekend.

As part of the National Access Awareness Week this Member for Calgary-Buffalo and seven other Calgarians have agreed to spend this day from 8 a.m. until 8 p.m. living their normal routine but doing so as if they had a disability. The disability wasn't chosen by us, as exists in the real world. Albertans with disabilities can't choose their disability. The disability was drawn. So the challenge is for each of us to attempt to live as normal a day as possible but also as if we had a disability. I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, and the Sergeant-at-Arms for being able to accommodate the wheelchair I'm in this afternoon. At the windup banquet on Friday evening I and a number of the other Calgarians will have an opportunity to share our experiences in terms of the challenges and difficulties that we encountered on this particular day. But at 8 this evening I climb out of my wheelchair and walk home. There are many, many disabled Canadians and Albertans who don't have that option.

I urge all Albertans and particularly the 82 other members in this Assembly to work harder to, firstly, recognize barriers to equal access wherever they exist, inside this area where we function and in the larger community, and then to work tenaciously to dismantle those barriers.

Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the hon. Minister of Education, under whose responsibility falls the persons with disabilities jurisdiction, I'd like to just make a few brief comments. It should be noted – obviously it's already been pointed out – that this year's theme centres around accessible transportation. The Canadian kickoff for National Access Awareness Week actually took place in Calgary, right here in our province. Alberta was chosen due to the many efforts made locally and provincially to assist persons with disabilities. Just as an example, our government has donated or dedicated moneys to the cities of Edmonton and Calgary so that they can purchase the low-floor technology buses. If anybody hasn't seen those in operation, it's quite an engineering feat and actually quite an accomplishment, and they're to be commended for that. It allows individuals to move freely about those two respective cities. I actually under-

stand that there's also under way in the cities of Medicine Hat and Edmonton an accessible taxi demonstration project for wheelchair users.

We recognize, Mr. Speaker, that it's not enough to be able to travel just within one's own city, but steps have also been taken by the private sector – and that should be recognized – in terms of increasing accessibility between cities. Greyhound bus lines, for instance, have modified 10 of their fleet to be wheelchair accessible, and these buses will be making runs between Canadian cities. These are just a few examples of some of the projects that government has worked on to enhance the ability of individuals to be able to move more freely about our cities and our province.

We'd be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if we didn't mention the hard work of our own Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. Under the chairmanship of Mr. Gary McPherson the council continues to advocate on behalf of individuals with disabilities and their challenges in terms of transportation, housing, education, employment, and recreation. I guess we need to ask ourselves: have we done enough to ensure that the people of Alberta who have disabilities have total access where they would like to go? The answer to that question, in all honesty, is no. There still is work to be done. Gary McPherson would be one of the first to indicate that, as he does on a regular basis when he puts out the report card in terms of how the government is doing in this particular area. So we must work together.

I acknowledge the attention brought to this by the Member for Calgary-Buffalo and his willingness to actually, even for a short period of time, sense what those challenges are in a personal way. We appreciate that.

We have much to celebrate in the province in terms of some of the progress that's been made for persons with disabilities, and we have much left to do, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. WICKMAN: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I wish to speak on the motion that's in front of us. First of all, I want to commend the Member for Calgary-Buffalo for his initiative in co-operating with the group in Calgary and spending a day in a wheelchair. He's what we refer to as a knockoff, a replica of the real thing. As he says, at 8 o'clock this evening he'll get out of his chair and he'll have learnt by it. The member is not the first to attempt it. We did it years and years ago with the mayor and the aldermen in the city of Edmonton. I can remember Alderman Julian Kiniski taking us up on it. It was quite an experience for him.

In the period of time that I've been involved in activities that have related to persons with disabilities, I've seen tremendous change. There's no question about it. When I came out of the hospital in 1964, one of the first things I did was get involved with groups. We formed the groups, and we pressed for a lot of change. Even within this building: when I used to lobby back in those days, I had to come down the loading ramp. That is awfully steep. I can recall that one of the committees we were successful in getting was chaired by Neil Crawford, who was then Minister of Labour and responsible for the building code. The first meeting for this subcommittee on accessibility was scheduled at Government House, which at that time was not accessible. We canceled that meeting when we got to the building in view of that, but it was changed within 48 hours. So there have been a lot of positive experiences as time has gone on.

Twenty years ago there was no such thing as curb cuts. When somebody first mentioned to me, "Do you think there's a need for

*This spelling could not be verified at the time of publication.

curb cuts?" – back then you just grabbed a parking meter and pulled yourself up – I didn't know what a curb cut was. It wasn't uncommon to be hauled up four flights of stairs. I can recall an agency I dealt with that represented persons with disabilities, yet it was located in a building that was inaccessible for a person that used a wheelchair. I can remember squawking about that, and they said, "Well, we'll pull you up the stairs." I said, "That's not acceptable." They said, "Well, what makes you so special that you can't be hauled upstairs like everybody else?" The point was missed.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on and on, but as each year goes by and as new activities like the National Access Awareness Week come on board, we see great strides made, and we'll see greater strides made. It has improved tremendously. There is room for improvement, and we'll continue to see that improvement as long as we have organizations like the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities and various other grassroots groups that are out there.

Again, in conclusion I want to commend the member for the experience he's going through. He'll be enlightened by the whole day by the time it's over.

Thank you.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: All those in favour of the motion proposed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Carried, let the record show unanimously.

Lafarge Canada Inc.

Ms Leibovici:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta urge the government to investigate the lockout at Lafarge Canada Inc.'s cement plant at Exshaw regarding the number of workplace accidents, potential environmental damage, and the economic impact resulting from the employment of inexperienced replacement workers and to take appropriate action.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark on the question of urgency.

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm requesting that the Legislative Assembly provide unanimous consent to debate a motion under Standing Order 40. The lockout at Lafarge Canada's cement plant occurred on January 10, 1994, after only two months of negotiations, thereby locking out 112 employees. Since that time about 200 replacement workers have been operating the plant. Now, four and a half months later, the situation has become urgent as replacement workers are being injured, air quality is of concern, and the economic impact in Exshaw, Canmore, and the area is being felt by local businesses.

3:20

It is our information with regards to replacement workers being injured that the lack of experience of these workers has resulted in at least two serious injuries in the last four months. In one case an individual lost three fingers. In another an individual is reported to have been paralysed after falling into a rock crusher.

These are serious injuries, and it is urgent to ensure that further similar incidences do not occur.

There are concerns that air quality is being compromised as there are questions about the adjustment of the monitoring equipment within the smokestack. It's urgent that this be investigated immediately due to the potential health effects to the surrounding communities of high emissions. Additionally, we have been informed that explosions in the blasting quarry have caused structural damage to at least one building in Exshaw and that this is perhaps directly as a result of inexperienced replacement workers. As the potential environmental damages of this lockout are unknown, it is imperative to investigate this at once.

The situation is also urgent to businesses operating in the Exshaw, Canmore, and surrounding areas. The locked-out workers are to date not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits, and the replacement workers, as they are being bused in and out, do not shop in the vicinity. Businesses are becoming desperate as the locked-out workers, their customers, no longer have steady income.

Tensions are also increasing due to the adversarial atmosphere created by company guard surveillance of union members picketing and the inexperience of local RCMP regarding the handling of a labour relations dispute.

It is urgent for the government to investigate these issues, take appropriate action, including, if required, work stoppage orders, and work towards a resolution of this lockout with the company and the union.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: On the question of urgency, the hon. Government House Leader.

MR. DAY: As related specifically to the question of urgency, Mr. Speaker, work stoppages are always trying times. One positive aspect, I guess, would be that in Alberta we consistently have the lowest number of days lost for work stoppages compared to other provinces. However, when you're involved in a work stoppage, either as an employer or investor or as an employee, those statistics mean nothing, because it's you as the individual or the group that's being affected. Whenever there is a work stoppage, negotiations are in place. Sometimes they stop; sometimes they go.

In terms of urgency here, at any time somebody working at the plant who is sensing that there are some safety factors to be dealt with can anonymously make a phone call and deal with occupational health and safety. It can be dealt with quite quickly.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. The Chair regrets to interrupt the hon. Government House Leader, but Standing Orders just permit the proponent of the motion to give the reasons for the urgency, and then it's up to the Assembly to decide whether those reasons are sufficient enough. Therefore, the Chair is required to inquire of the Assembly whether it is prepared to grant permission to the hon. member to put forward the motion requested.

All those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

head: **Orders of the Day**

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

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the spirit of cooperation I would like to request the unanimous consent of the Assembly to waive for this afternoon Standing Order 8(3) so that we may deal with government business that remains on the Order Paper, Motion 27 and government Bills, and clear off the agenda this afternoon.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Carried.

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

Bill 31
Municipal Government Act

MRS. GORDON: Mr. Speaker, I would move third reading of Bill 31.

MR. SPEAKER: Is the Assembly ready for the question?
The hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo*.

MR. DICKSON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to address one particular concern I've got with this Bill as we now have our last opportunity as a Legislature to address it. What I'm referring to is the freedom of information portion of Bill 31. That would be sections 216 through 218 inclusive and then the transitional provision at section 643.

Just before dealing with that, to put this in what I take to be the context, Mr. Speaker, of freedom of information – we're not at the point of Royal Assent, but we've now passed the Bill to the extent that we do in this Chamber. We don't know when the Act is going to be proclaimed, and we certainly don't know when section 1(1) is going to be proclaimed. You will notice that until section 1(1) is proclaimed in the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, we are going to be under the provisions in part 7 of Bill 31. Now, how long could that be? Months, years? Hopefully, not decades.

What we do know is this: we're looking at one year at least, perhaps longer, before what we've known as Bill 18 is proclaimed. Now, it's possible it may go longer, because this Assembly has really no control over that. That's an executive function, in terms of when that statute's proclaimed. In the meantime, what we have in sections 216 through 218 inclusive is all there is. That's the only protection that ratepayers, that citizens have in a municipality in terms of accessing information. So we're looking at one or perhaps two years when Calgarians, in the case that's of particular interest to me, are able to get whatever freedom of information they're going to have under what we've described as Bill 18.

In the meantime – and I want to be really clear – what we have provided for in part 7 of Bill 31 is a clearly deficient, clearly inadequate set of rules. So what that means is that Calgarians, people who live in Calgary-*Buffalo* who want to get information that's of concern to them that relates to municipal government, are going to take absolutely no comfort from these provisions. The attempt to amend this, to address this gap, this lacuna, has been unsuccessful, but I just want to express my disappointment again that this area hasn't been properly dealt with.

I understand that the city of Edmonton has recognized that this doesn't go far enough and is looking at in fact putting in place interim regulations, an interim bylaw that would ensure that

Edmontonians are not going to be shortchanged. In the interim period, whether it's one year or two years, they're going to have a freedom of information regime that's going to empower Edmontonians and provide them the protection that I think all citizens want.

Mr. Speaker, I just express that concern. We're not able to change this legislation at this point, but I think it's important that we recognize and that Albertans recognize that when this thing is passed, this is not providing freedom of information. In fact, it's a step backwards for people in many municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, those are my comments. Thank you very much.

3:30

MR. N. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I just want to make a couple of short notes, because somehow or another as the calendar of events has evolved, I didn't get a chance to speak on it through the different stages. I feel that although there are very many good things in this Act, there are a number of bad ones, enough so that taken with what I think is the government's thrust behind it, they caused me to want to vote against it.

I'm very concerned that although the municipalities say they are much in favour of it, Mr. Speaker, as the old Biblical saying goes, they know not what they do. I think they've strived for many of these favours in the past, but what they do not seem to realize is that now that they are getting a lot of the rights to borrow and tax and set fees, the parent government is going to unload costs onto them. The parent government is going to unload a great deal of the health care costs onto them; hence the right for the new health board to requisition. The parent government is going to pass on a great deal more of the social and cultural amenities to them. In fact, I think a great deal of the environmental costs of cleaning up the environment are going to come to the municipalities. They're now saying to the municipalities after all these years, "Oh, you can tax a little here, and you can borrow a little there." And the municipalities, I'm afraid, like many of us in society with a purported gift from up above, are running off with great glee at the thought that they're going to get something they've always wanted, not realizing that the other side, the responsibilities they've been saddled with by the other legislation going forward, is indeed going to hit them with a great deal of cost. These municipalities will be expected to collect user fees, to put on toll fees for roads and many other areas that the municipalities aren't envisaging now, because this Act gives them the power.

Add to that the fact that the municipalities have always thought that property, and rightfully so, should carry a great deal of municipal costs such as roads, sewers, lights, and so on. We have a Big Daddy government reaching in and making a fantastic grab for the property education taxes, whereas the municipalities in the past were able to deal with the school trustees. In fact, in some areas they had county systems where they set up and controlled school taxing. They're going to have little or no control on the taxing now because it will be done out of the Legislature by the government. So a great source of their taxation, property, is going to disappear.

Worse than that, Mr. Speaker – there again I'm going to paint a black cloud on the horizon. We've already seen it with the government's intention to get rid of M and E taxes. It means that this government will also be passing regulations that the municipalities will not be able to move into the field of property taxes and corporations. If corporations are going to be successful – you know, a couple of rides in the corporate jet to Calgary, a couple of tickets to a Stanley Cup final or a baseball game to watch the Jays will convince nearly any minister in any government that maybe the corporation's properties shouldn't be taxed. We'll get

what we have seen in B.C., where property taxes will shift from corporate-owned property because that interferes with the corporation's 'competitiveness' – not compatibility – in the North American market. So less taxes. M and E taxes first, of course. Then, naturally, why should they pay the same property taxes as residential has? Their corporate owners will say: "Well, if you need money, Mr. and Mrs. Municipality, don't bother us. Go get it from the residences because they can't get away. They can't run away."

So what I see set in motion here is a fantastic attack on the homeowners of this province, because the municipalities, whose only source that will be left for taxation is a park property, will be going after the homeowners. They won't be allowed to go after the corporation property taxes because the corporations will be declared noncompetitive. They won't be able to go after the education taxes because the Alberta government's already on that. They're going to get painted into a corner of doing user fees, amusement taxes, and all the rest.

So I look at this Bill as being a siren song, much like Ulysses when he went out to explore the unknown islands of Greece, as the sirens sitting there and the mermaids playing their song lured the sailors onto the rocks. This is the same thing that's happened to the Good Ship Municipality. It's going to be lured onto the rocks of bankruptcy and financial straitening by going through with this Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Bonnyville.

MR. VASSEUR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's no question that there's certainly a need for new legislation in municipal government. Those concerns have been expressed going back to the mid-80s. In the late '80s, I believe in '89, Mr. R. Speaker, who was then Minister of Municipal Affairs, had started a consulting process by touching base with all the stakeholders at the municipal level: the town managers, administrators, the councillors right across the board. The message at that time did come out loud and clear that the municipalities and the local governments did want local autonomy. There's no question that my experience at the local level, at the municipal level, indicated just that, that we wanted to control our affairs a little bit more directly. Unfortunately, with this Bill – I mean, it was going in the right direction. There's no argument about some 18, I believe, Acts being repealed by this Act and that it was necessary to look at it. Unfortunately, under the pretence of enhancing local autonomy, we're centralizing the powers considerably in the office of the minister and under the regulations that we find in the proposed Act on numerous occasions.

I just want to go through a few examples of this control that I think is too excessive in the minister's office. If we look at section 83 of the Act, which talks about specialized municipalities, I believe this is the area where we're going to take the present IDs and try to make municipalities out of them. There's no question that in the last 30 or 40-some years since this Act has been looked at to any great extent, there are some areas in the province that have developed considerably, for whatever reason, that could very well have the assessment required to run their own affairs. But in that particular section it's left totally to the discretion of the minister to come up with the rules and regulations that are going to specify what this specialized municipality is going to be. Nowhere does it say in there that the local people will have any say in the matter, and I'm just questioning: why wouldn't we want the people to tell us if that's what they want or have part of it?

If we go to section 286(3) of the Act, where we deal with assessment, we're talking about – and the Member for Redwater alluded to it – additional costs here at the municipal level. We're talking about the assessment being totally the responsibility of the municipalities and that it has to be done every two years. Now, we used to do a general assessment every eight or 10 years and at quite an extensive cost. If we have to do that every two years, there's definitely an increment in cost at the municipal level. Besides that, we used to pay, I believe, around \$20, \$23 an hour for the services of Municipal Affairs. We'll now have to pay almost double that amount. [interjection]

So there is some . . . Pardon?

MR. DINNING: It's on the record. Just remember that.

MR. VASSEUR: You're saying that the regulations are going to fix that?

MR. DINNING: What you're saying is on the record. [interjections]

3:40

MR. VASSEUR: Never mind.

In section 286 again, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't define what the extra circumstances are that are required for the minister to cut in and say, "We'll help you out." If I can go back to some of the statements the Minister of Municipal Affairs has made in the House here previously, when he talked about the costs of some of the grants that are going to be eliminated not having too, too much effect on the municipal government, I beg to differ somewhat because he was using the extra costs as to the overall budget of the municipality. If you take that cost to the overall budget, it's not a big number. But if you take that specific cost and you put a percentage to the amount of requisition from the property tax payers for municipal operations only, then the number changes drastically. You'll take that 3 percent or 4 percent figure the minister had come up with and you'll turn it into a 13 percent figure in many instances. We're not even talking about the extra costs of assessment or the extra costs of losing programs or a reduction in programs that looked after the parks program, which are now a municipal responsibility. So there are some considerable additional costs in this Bill that are going to have to be absorbed by the municipalities.

Now, I understand by the Act that it's not to be implemented before January 1, '95. I'm wondering: why the rush? A lot of the comments are just starting to come back from the municipalities. The Bill has just been put forward to the municipalities barely two weeks ago.

MR. TRYNCHY: Eight years.

MR. VASSEUR: It's been in the works for maybe eight years, but the Bill has just been back to the municipalities for a couple of weeks. We're just starting to get some replies from the municipal governments now that are saying, "We have some concerns."

DR. WEST: Don't forget they won last time.

MR. VASSEUR: Yes, I know. This Bill here is not a duplication of Bill 51 at all, not at all.

We've left too much of the power in a minister's office in our opinion. I think that we should allow the municipalities and the people to get back to the department. If we're saying that the

implementation of this Bill is not required until January 1, '95, why don't you allow proper debate in the fall session?

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler to conclude debate.

Oh, sorry. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

MR. WICKMAN: I see that there are others after me too, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DAY: Speak for yourself, Percy. Have you spoken?

MR. WICKMAN: No, but I'm going to speak right now.

MR. DAY: Go ahead and speak.

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

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Member for Red Deer-North, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is no question that this is an extremely significant Bill. It's a revolution amongst the municipalities in terms of their taxing abilities, in terms of their degree of responsibility for various issues, in terms of streamlining, the whole bit. Yes, there was a lot of preparation work done in terms of the number of years the public hearings had gone on previous to the actual Bill itself being formed, being put together and then being shown as the final product. The Member for Lacombe-Stettler has pointed out that there is support for it from the municipalities, including the mayor of Edmonton, Jan Reimer. And, yes, I cannot now dispute the statements that she has made.

Nevertheless, I myself still feel that come two or three years down the road, when municipalities see for themselves the impact that this particular Bill is going to have on their operations, on their operations in the sense that it passes on a great deal of the responsibility but doesn't pass on the dollars that go along with it, there's going to be some second thought. It passes on taxing ability, but then when municipalities try to increase taxes, they run into the same resistance that we run into here. There are going to be municipalities that are going to be saying: "Maybe we agreed in a bit too much haste. Maybe there should have been some more thought given to it. Maybe there should have been some more consultation. Maybe those Liberals were right when they said to hold that Bill over till the fall."

Even beyond that, Mr. Speaker, is the requirement that the number of names required on a petition for a plebiscite will go up from 5 percent to 10 percent. I don't think that has really filtered throughout the municipalities, particularly the larger ones where the impact is going to be extremely significant. I would venture to say that there are all kinds of groups in Calgary and Edmonton that the next time they go to fight an issue – for example, the possibility of a petition calling for a plebiscite on the possible sale of Ed Tel. Now, they are one group that are aware of it because they are very, very politically astute. They're keeping tabs as to what's happening, but that's because it's current in their minds right now. They're already out there getting people organized to get names on the petition. There are others that are not faced with an issue today, but six months down the road they may be faced with an issue, and they'll say: "Well, we're going to take this to a vote. We want a plebiscite on this." They go out and they get 5 percent of the names or whatever, and then they're told, when they submit that, that 5 percent is no longer sufficient

to gather in that 60-day period, that they are going to need 10 percent. To try and get 10 percent of the total population of the city of Edmonton or the city of Calgary is going to be tremendously difficult.

Now, there are certain issues – and the Minister of Municipal Affairs pointed out how in Mill Woods 80,000 names were gathered in no time on the question of the young offenders, where there was a real tragedy involved. Yes, there are those types of issues that do come along periodically, and people do get swept up in the emotionalism that may be attached. We saw a similar situation in Calgary where we saw a youth stabbed in a school yard. But those, Mr. Speaker, are not typical of the types of issues that are normally forced to a plebiscite. I would venture to say that two or three years down the road there are going to be groups that are going to be saying: "Boy, that government made a mistake. Democracy is that much tougher to accomplish now. Our voice has been significantly diminished. We no longer have that clout to force a citywide plebiscite on certain issues."

The comfort this caucus will have is that we'll be able to point to *Hansard* and say: "We tried the amendments. We debated the Bill. We tried our very best." We shot off the warning: let's move with some caution on this. We attempted to postpone the Bill until the fall. We've done everything in our power, Mr. Speaker, I believe, to minimize the impact of the Bill, to allow for democracy to work, but to no avail. Like I say, the comfort we'll have two or three years down the road is knowing we were right, not only knowing we were right but also being told by groups and municipalities out there, "My lord, you people were right."

On that note, I'm going to conclude and let our guiding member on this Bill wrap up the debate from our particular caucus.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Leduc.

MR. KIRKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to offer my final comments. I will start by commending the Member for Lacombe-Stettler for bringing the Bill forth and also for the co-operation I've received as we've discussed it. Some of these discussions can often be adversarial. We have risen above that, I would suggest, and when it's all in and done, our differences of opinion, I would like to think, will not stand in the way of the professionalism here.

I'm aware that the Bill is supported by the municipalities; I've been aware of that for many years. I would echo the comments of the Member for Bonnyville that it has changed somewhat since Bill 51. That raises some concerns to us. I embrace the principle of autonomy that is supposed to be handed to the municipalities in this Bill. I'll support the Bill, but I would hasten to add that it'll be somewhat reluctantly.

Just for the record, I'd like to recap exactly why there's reluctance in my support for the Bill. I do believe there are some shortcomings. I do believe and I have confidence they will be overcome. They'll be overcome because the municipalities, I would like to think, will ensure they're overcome.

First of all – the hon. Member for Bonnyville indicated it – the effective date of January 1, '95, suggests to me that the urgency to rush it through this session is not there, though I'm willing to be part of that. Many municipalities have not had a good opportunity to review this Bill. The comments are still trickling in today. As of today I've received comments from IPSCO, Interprovincial Pipe Line, and also from Nova Corporation expressing a concern that the Bill is not as clear as it should be as far as their properties and facilities are concerned, specifically the linear properties.

3:50

I spoke at length, Mr. Speaker, about the fact that the Act is riddled with permissiveness in the direction of the minister, often

giving the option to consult or not consult. The amendments I put forth to ensure that Albertans' voices were heard were defeated. I think that's unfortunate. The government's claim that we are providing municipalities with the autonomy and the powers, I would suggest, does ring somewhat hollow. When I say that, I look at the many, many interventions of the minister in all aspects of the Bill. I've used the term: he retains the final hammer. I think that if we have confidence in municipal politicians in this province and the Bill is well written, there is no need to have the dollar stopped at the minister's desk.

The fourth point that I had a large concern with was the further entrenchment of the minister's power with the municipal government board. I think it's extremely important that that board be nonpartisan or nonpolitical. We could have achieved that by electing those members. There are quality individuals in this province that can fill those particular positions very nicely. So I am dissatisfied with the fact that we couldn't arrive at that in the amendment form.

I think one of the most disconcerting aspects that I've run into in this Bill, which again has only landed on my desk in the last two or three days, is when Alberta's largest municipality, Calgary, identifies very sound concerns that have a large financial impact on their community and urges the minister to amend the Bill accordingly and the minister rejects that request. It has a tendency, in my estimation, to taint the confidence of the following regulations that will supposedly complete this Bill. I would have to ask: what comfort level would that give other municipalities in this province when the largest municipality cannot get the minister's ear?

The last item that I want to go on record as being opposed to is that the Bill, again, is driven by regulation. We have termed it legislation by regulation. Other terms I would use are government by lobby or government by minister or cabinet whim. When Alberta's largest municipality cannot capture the minister's attention or the minister's ear, Mr. Speaker, I have great concerns for the other municipalities in this constituency. I have to ask whether they would be confident knowing full well that their task is going to be very difficult when it comes to amending this particular Bill.

The legislation by regulation or the intervention of the minister or the cabinet by regulation surfaces in over 100 different clauses in this Bill, Mr. Speaker, so it does cause me a large concern. In the Bills that have come down in this session, whether they be health, whether they be education, whether they be the MGA or the seniors Bill, we have an unprecedented number of government by regulation situations. We have an unprecedented collection of power at the bureaucratic or the minister's desk. To me, this belies and contradicts the claim that we're searching for efficiency. The bureaucracy has to grow to deal with the extra workload that's coming their way, where these regulations will undoubtedly arrive at. I would suggest that this Bill, like the others I have mentioned, is an unprecedented move away from the democratic process. We have removed Albertans from the democratic process by having most of the ultimate decisions being made at the bureaucratic or the minister's desk, and I think that's unfortunate.

So with those, I will conclude my comments and look forward to the comments of the Member for Lacombe-Stettler.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler to close debate on Bill 31.

MRS. GORDON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A number of items that the members opposite brought up today I have dealt with in previous debate, and I would ask them to refer to *Hansard*.

Something I do want to leave you with is that in this Bill 31, the new Municipal Government Act, there is no increased taxation authority. It remains as it was in the current legislation, and that is this government's commitment to no further tax increases.

I would first off like to thank the Member for Leduc for his kind remarks. I, too, thank them for the co-operation and the debate that took place on the other side. I know that there is a commitment on both sides of this House to municipal government.

I also would like to thank the minister for asking me to sponsor this Bill. For the last six and a half years prior to coming to the Legislature, I've been involved in municipal government, and I know and understand the importance of local governance and elected officials and the responsibility to the taxpayer. Some time ago when I served as the representative for central towns on the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, the theme for the annual convention was rhetoric to reality. Today, members of this Assembly, I believe that with the passage of Bill 31 we have gone from rhetoric to reality.

Bill 31, the Municipal Government Act, is a large and significant piece of legislation: some 266 pages, written from a different perspective, enabling rather than restricting. It will allow municipal governments greater flexibility and autonomy in managing their affairs. The future role of the Department of Municipal Affairs will change. They will facilitate rather than regulate. This legislation reflects this government's commitment to put more decision-making in the hands of local authorities.

This government does listen and does care. This Act reflects it. This was one of the most intensive and credible consultation processes ever, a process that involved municipalities, stakeholders, and the public. Developed over a period of some seven years, the Municipal Statutes Review Committee began its work in 1987. Aably chaired by the hon. Member for Dunvegan and assisted by the hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House, the committee issued its report in 1991. In 1992 Bill 51, based on that report, was tabled for first reading and then went back out to the public one more time.

The municipal associations, namely the AAMDC and the AUMA, have commended this government for its commitment to consultation and bringing forth a Bill that recognizes that the nature of provincial/municipal relations has changed and local governments need less restrictive laws, rules, and regulations if they are going to assume greater responsibility over their day-to-day operations. Municipalities are supportive of the philosophy of this legislation. They recognize that the major changes represented in this Act will pose significant new challenges for them as local governments but are also convinced that the Act provides tremendous new opportunities for municipalities to meet the challenges of the years to come in a manner which is effective and responsive to the concerns of their local taxpayers.

There will be a transition period. The Act will be proclaimed January 1 of 1995. This is to allow municipal elected officials and administrators time to become familiar with the legislation and time for the associations in conjunction with Municipal Affairs to hold workshops so that on January 1, when the implementation period begins, they all know what is involved.

The consultation process on Bill 31 will continue. This government, as I stated earlier, does listen and care and will work hand in hand with the AUMA, the AAMDC, local municipalities, their administrators, and the public. On a continuing basis we will look to make sure that this legislation is working for those municipalities.

I wish to express this government's appreciation to all those who played an active and vital role in providing the basis for solid policy advice: the thousands of municipal and provincial officials,

association representatives, and interested individuals, all of whom greatly assisted in the drafting of this legislation.

This new legislation will enable municipalities to respond to the changing conditions of today and well into the future. I am confident that the new Municipal Government Act will assist local governments to serve their communities efficiently and effectively well into the 21st century. Mr. Speaker, I firmly believe the people are best served by the level of government closest to them.

[Motion carried; Bill 31 read a third time]

4:00 Bill 40
Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 1994

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move third reading of Bill 40, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 1994.

In doing that, I'd like to recognize the co-operation and the consultation that went on with the Liberal caucus and, most specifically, with the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, who has gone through each of the amendments and has had input into them such that there had been corrections and alterations made before the Bill came through. I'd like to make that recognition.

[Motion carried; Bill 40 read a third time]

head: **Royal Assent**

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

[The Premier and the Sergeant-at-Arms left the Chamber to attend the Lieutenant Governor]

[The Mace was draped]

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

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise, please. Mr. Speaker, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor awaits.

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

[Mr. Speaker left the Chair]

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

HIS HONOUR: Please be seated.

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

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

No.	Title
18	Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
20	Regional Health Authorities Act
22	Maintenance Enforcement Amendment Act, 1994
30	Environmental Protection and Enhancement Amendment Act, 1994
31	Municipal Government Act
33	Fatal Accidents Amendment Act, 1994
34	Alberta Housing Act
35	Seniors Benefit Act
36	Teachers' Retirement Fund Amendment Act, 1994
37	Credit Union Amendment Act, 1994
38	Professional Statutes Amendment Act, 1994
39	Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 1994
40	Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 1994

[The Lieutenant Governor indicated his assent]

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

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise, please.

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, the Lieutenant Governor and the Premier left the Chamber]

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

head: **Government Motions**

4:10

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, only two short sentences and two quick votes are required to deliver us all from the much more onerous sentence of having experienced 21,000 minutes of debate in this Assembly, the longest ever.

Summer Recess

27. Moved by Mr. Day:
Be it resolved that when the Assembly adjourns to recess the spring sitting of the Second Session of the 23rd Legislature, it shall stand adjourned until a time and date for the fall sitting of the Second Session of the 23rd Legislature as determined by the Speaker after consultation with the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

[Motion carried]

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, the final motion of adjournment. I am too overwhelmed with sadness at the thought of adjourning. I must defer to the Deputy Government House Leader for the final motion.

MRS. BLACK: Lacking the same sadness, Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased, pursuant to Government Motion 27, to move that the Assembly now stand adjourned.

[The Assembly adjourned at 4:15 p.m.]

