

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, March 15, 1995**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 95/03/15

[The Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

THE SPEAKER: Let us pray.

O Lord, we give thanks for the bounty of our province: our land, our resources, and our people.

We pledge ourselves to act as good stewards on behalf of all Albertans.

Amen.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

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

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to present a petition on behalf of Albertans from Camrose. The petition is:

We the undersigned Residents of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to ensure all Alberta school boards provide the opportunity for each eligible child to receive a minimum of 400 hours of Early Childhood Services instruction per year.

And also

to allow Alberta School Boards to use money from the Alberta School Foundation Fund to fund 400 hours . . . of Early Childhood Services.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to submit a petition from 162 residents of Lethbridge asking the government to ensure that we have 400 hours of fully funded early childhood services for all students in Alberta.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to present a petition signed by 79 people from Hinton. The petition reads thusly:

We the undersigned Residents of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to ensure all Alberta school boards provide the opportunity for each eligible child to receive a minimum of 400 hours of Early Childhood Services instruction per year.

Actually, quite a few signatures of good PC citizens.

head: **Reading and Receiving Petitions**

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

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that the petition which I presented to this House on March 14 regarding the need for full funding of our ECS program, that being kindergarten, be now read and received.

CLERK:

We the undersigned Residents of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to ensure all Alberta school boards provide the opportunity for each eligible child to receive a minimum of 400 hours of Early Childhood Services instruction per year.

We also request the Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to allow Alberta School Boards to use money from the Alberta School Foundation Fund to fund 400 hours or more of Early Childhood Services, as determined by the local community, so that there are no ECS user fees for 400 hour programs and so that all Alberta children have an equal opportunity or "level playing field" to succeed and compete in life by having equal access to basic educational resources.

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

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I kindly request that the petition I introduced yesterday requesting the elimination of taxpayer funding for elective abortions now be read and received. Thank you.

CLERK:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government to:

1. De-insure the performance of induced abortion under the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan Act.
2. Use the community-based resources that are already in place that offer positive alternatives to abortion.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your permission I would request that the petition which I tabled in this Assembly on March 14 regarding the necessity of 400 hours of instruction for early childhood services now be read and received.

CLERK:

We the undersigned Residents of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to ensure all Alberta school boards provide the opportunity for each eligible child to receive a minimum of 400 hours of Early Childhood Services instruction per year.

We also request the Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to allow Alberta School Boards to use money from the Alberta School Foundation Fund to fund 400 hours or more of Early Childhood Services, as determined by the local community, so that there are no ECS user fees for 400 hour programs and so that all Alberta children have an equal opportunity or "level playing field" to succeed and compete in life by having equal access to basic educational resources.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Bill 20 Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 1995

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would request leave to introduce Bill 20, the Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 1995.

Following the recommendation of the Alberta Court of Appeal, this legislation provides for an early review of our electoral boundaries in Alberta by an Electoral Boundaries Commission.

[Leave granted; Bill 20 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table four copies of a very compelling statement made by Mr. Nick Juric, a nurse at the University of Alberta hospital. He delivered this statement to an emergency meeting of nursing staff held in the city of Edmonton last evening. In the statement he asks the question: who do I look to to protect this precious thing called medicare?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Leduc.

MR. KIRKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request permission to table seven letters that arrived in my constituency office in the last week, and they're signed by seven leaders of the arts community in Leduc. They are requesting the continuation of lottery-based funding of Alberta arts.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

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

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure this afternoon to introduce to you 21 students from Mount Royal College. They are accompanied by Ms Janet Alford. They joined us in the cafeteria for lunch today for a lively political debate and are looking forward to an equally lively question period. I ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

MR. DECORE: Thank you, sir. I would like to introduce to you, Mr. Speaker, and to members of this Assembly a student who is tracking me or shadowing me for the day. He started at 9 this morning and watched how our caucus prepares for question period and then attended our caucus meeting. He is a very bright student. He's in the French immersion course at Father Leo Green school. I'm delighted to welcome to this Assembly Daniel Novak, if he would stand. I think we would all agree that this is a fine young man.

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

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House an enterprising trucker, Neil Haliman, who comes to us from Strathmore. He's accompanied by a good friend and spirited business owner in the lovely riding of Edmonton-Avonmore, Frank Farberman. I would ask both of them to now rise and receive the warm welcome of our House.

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

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed with pride and a great deal of pleasure that I introduce through you to the Legislative Assembly 53 of the finest students in the province of Alberta – and that's based on what the teachers have been telling me – from the James Mowat school. With them they have their four teachers: Mrs. Dahl, Mrs. Bittner, Ms Marquardt, and Ms Tilley. I'd ask you to please extend the warm welcome of this House to these 53 fine students and their four teachers.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Taber-Warner.

MR. HIERATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and to members of this Assembly two constituents of mine that have traveled to Edmonton today from Barnwell. They are Don Johnson and Mitch Kano, and I would like them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you a longtime resident of the city of Edmonton, a woman that has been and still remains today a continuing inspiration to all volunteers in our city. She has completed a long history of service as an officer in the Salvation Army. She has most recently been a tireless volunteer for Edmonton's Food Bank. I'd like Mrs. Evelyn Landers to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

head: **Oral Question Period**

1:40 **Capital Regional Health Authority**

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, an 11-year-old girl can't get the surgery she needs to relieve her pain. Parents of a baby needing heart surgery have to travel back and forth between Calgary and Edmonton to find some way of getting the lifesaving operation she needs. An Edmonton man suffering a heart attack is sent to St. Albert because all the beds in Edmonton are full. People are now reeling over the announced cuts yesterday in this region. Everybody except the Premier somehow knows that our health care system is itself now on the critical list. To the Premier: when will he admit that it's the Premier and the Premier alone – not the regional health authority, not doctors, not nurses, not patients, not customers – who is responsible for the destruction of the health care system in this province?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, those are pretty strong words coming from someone who has the support of only 17 percent of Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, the destruction of the system, sir, will come about if we continue to do things the same old way. Health care costs over the past 20 years have gone up something like 220 percent. If they think that is okay, if they think that is wise, then we certainly know where the Liberals are coming from. The simple fact is that we have too many hospital beds. We have duplication of services. We have overlapping. We had too much administration in the system with 200 health jurisdictions. Now we have 17 regional boards that will be able to co-ordinate these health services to reduce the amount of institutionalization that we now have, to move into more of a community-based health care system. That's what it's all about.

Again, I'm so happy to learn that four or five Liberals did attend the public meeting last night of the Capital regional health authority. I am so happy, Mr. Speaker, that they did receive this document. This document outlines quite clearly the well-thought-out program and plan of the Capital regional health authority to reorganize, to consolidate, to rationalize, and to deliver quality health care at a lesser cost.

MR. MITCHELL: Why does the Premier continue to mislead Albertans by suggesting that somehow a meeting like the regional health authority meeting last night was an opportunity for public input when not one member of the public in that meeting was given any opportunity to have a question, to have a comment, to

have some kind of say in what's happening to their health care system at the hands of this Premier?

MR. KLEIN: Well, I'm quite sure, Mr. Speaker, that the Capital regional health authority would be very happy indeed to sit down with the Liberal caucus and answer all the questions this caucus might have of the regional health authority. On behalf of the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition, who seems somewhat shy or apprehensive about asking for such a meeting, I will phone Campbell Miller and make the request on his behalf.

MR. MITCHELL: I wonder when the Premier will stop with the smart comments and understand and admit that the restructuring of health care in this city and in this province is not a business plan; it's an experiment. And you know who the guinea pigs are? It's the people of Alberta.

MR. KLEIN: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, it's easy to understand why they're only at 17 percent, because it is this useless, absolutely useless, counterproductive, no-brained kind of criticism that has earned the Liberal Party exactly what they deserve. As a matter of fact, the way they're acting should even give them a lower mark. I challenge the Liberal caucus once again, most of whom come from Edmonton, to do something constructive for a change and get involved with the regional health authority to bring about rational and good health care in this city and to make sure that it happens.

Physicians' Billings

MR. MITCHELL: Once again the other day we see the Premier musing in the press about issues that are very, very serious to all Albertans. This time the Premier actually said, Mr. Speaker, that it's okay for every doctor in this province to charge Albertans directly for their health care services. People should understand that this means, of course, that Albertans will have to pay from their pockets before a doctor will see them. Does the Minister of Health support the Premier in this ridiculous statement, or is she properly embarrassed by it?

MR. KLEIN: Well, I'd like to have the hon. minister respond.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Give her a chance to respond.

MR. KLEIN: Yeah, I'll give her a chance, Nick; okay? You'll get the facts. I know you don't like to hear the facts.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, I made no such comment. No such comment was ever made. As a matter of fact, what I said . . .

MR. DAY: The Liberals are lying again.

MR. KLEIN: The hon. leader of the Liberal opposition . . .

MR. DAY: Is lying again.

MR. KLEIN: Well, what he has said – I can't say that he lied, but he told a big fib. I said nothing of the kind. What I did say was: I'm not going to comment on this; this is a matter for negotiation between the AMA and the hon. Minister of Health. I'll have the hon. minister supplement.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to clarify for the hon. member. It's really unfortunate that all of his questions

come from some piece of journalism. There is a process in this province for negotiations with the AMA. The fact that somebody chose to make a statement that purported that doctors might bill directly is a matter to be discussed in a process that we have entered into in good faith with the AMA. This minister is going to keep her part of that bargain, and I am not going to discuss AMA negotiations in this House or outside of the House.

MR. MITCHELL: I wonder whether the Treasurer could give us some idea of how much the Premier's harebrained direct billing scheme is actually going to cost Albertans when 2 and a half million Albertans begin to directly bill the Ministry of Health for their health care costs.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the statement just made by the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition . . .

MR. DAY: Is a lie.

MR. KLEIN: . . . is not right.

MR. DAY: It's a lie.

MR. KLEIN: It is wrong. It is false. It is untrue. It is a fib. [interjections] I know I can't say that it's a lie, but I can't describe it in any other way.

MRS. HEWES: A point of order.

MR. KLEIN: When this question was put to me, I simply said to the media: look; that is a matter that is under negotiation, and I'm sure the minister will continue to negotiate with the Alberta Medical Association.

1:50

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, again, I have to reiterate that the question was not raised by this government or this caucus. If the question comes on that issue, it should be dealt with in an AMA negotiation, for which we have a structure, which I'm sure the hon. member is aware of. It is called the Administrative Council, where we bargain in good faith with our partners in this, the Alberta Medical Association.

MR. MITCHELL: I don't know what's worse, Mr. Speaker, whether the Premier . . . [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order.

MR. MITCHELL: I just want to get something straight from the Premier, Mr. Speaker. Does the Premier understand and recognize that direct billing, if we inch our way along that course, will lead to a fully privatized health care system, or will he simply confirm that that's exactly where he wants to take this province anyway?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, again, I am not advocating that. I have simply said that the whole situation between Alberta Health and the Alberta Medical Association is under negotiation, and let the negotiations proceed. I believe that that was my exact quote: let the negotiations proceed.

Mr. Speaker, when you don't tell the truth, you know, sometimes your nose grows. When you don't tell the truth, you get 17 percent. As a matter of fact, people who don't tell the truth deserve less than 17 percent.

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

Health Care Layoffs

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. More than 2,000 health care employees will begin to receive their pink slips on April 1 because of this government's ill-planned cuts. With only two weeks to go prior to these layoffs, the only employees within the health care industry that are guaranteed severance are the administration. This is adding insult to injury to essential frontline health care workers. My questions are to the Minister of Health. Can the minister explain how it's possible that these latest health care cuts will not affect patient care when the actual layoffs of the people who provide that care is double her projections? Is this some kind of an April Fools Day joke?

MRS. McCLELLAN: First of all, Mr. Speaker, in response to the first part of this discussion, a statement that I believe I heard the hon. member make in that discussion was that I had laid out some projections. In fact, I think I've been criticized by this caucus for not doing that. What I have laid out are facts, and I've laid them out in two ways, the first one being in February of 1994, which was a three-year plan and which gives the budget figures for the reduction in Health, the second was just recently, which is an updated three-year plan. That gives the facts, exactly the dollars that the Health budget will be.

MRS. SOETAERT: No answer.

MRS. McCLELLAN: This is the answer. Mr. Speaker, I have not projected those numbers yesterday or at any other time that I can recall. If the hon. member has something that she would like to refer me to, I would be happy to respond.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's amazing how fluid facts can be sometimes.

How do you explain the inequity between managers who are getting severance packages, golden handshakes, and frontline workers, the majority of whom are women, who are getting nothing?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Two things, Mr. Speaker. I think one thing that I have laid out very clearly and been very up front about is that approximately 73 percent of the Health budget is made up of salaries, wages, and benefits, and we have clearly laid out the reductions. I think it's been very clear that, yes, there will be some job loss in this process. I think the other thing that we've laid out very clearly is that if we did nothing, if we stayed with the status quo, which is what I hear from over there, we would risk the whole system.

On the issue of contracts, Mr. Speaker, I deal with certain elements of those. The instructions certainly have been to honour contracts, to ensure, though, that those contracts are within industry standards. To ensure that, I have directed hospital boards that they will not put out any severances that have not been approved by the minister. I would invite the Minister of Labour, who has the responsibility for the area of health workers that are not in this minister's purview, to comment on those contracts.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I've been actively encouraging the nurses and other groups affected in the Capital region – and by

the way, of the number of layoffs that there are coming, somewhere in the region of 1,800, about 350 of those in fact are nurses or LPNs; other workers are from other areas – to look around the province and take some encouragement from how discussions are going. For instance, in the David Thompson region, which includes Red Deer, and the larger regions severance packages have been offered: one and a half weeks up to 10 years and two weeks per year after 10 years of service. In the Calgary regional health authority, which covers the Colonel Belcher, the Rockyview, and the Holy Cross, workers there are receiving two weeks per year of severance up to 52 weeks, and at age 55 they can immediately claim their pension if they have five years of service.

MRS. SOETAERT: Just answer the question.

MR. DAY: I'm answering the question very clearly, Mr. Speaker. They don't like the answer, but I'm answering it.

Then if you look at, for instance, the Palliser region, which includes Medicine Hat, in that particular area the severance packages negotiated have been four weeks for each year. So I encourage the representatives of the various workers to follow this pattern of negotiation and discussion.

MS LEIBOVICI: With only two weeks left and the Capital health authority potentially refusing to meet with the unions on Friday, will the minister direct the Capital health authority that no further layoffs are to occur to frontline health care workers until severance packages are negotiated?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I have directed the regional health authority to develop a business plan for delivery of health services. I have directed them in the area of severances which are in my purview. I would encourage the hon. member to have listened to what the Minister of Labour just said and act accordingly.

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

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following yesterday's budget announcement by the Capital regional health authority, many Albertans, specifically Edmontonians, have expressed concern with the direction of health care restructuring. Albertans want effective changes that will not impact the ability to deliver quality health care services. Nurses are essential to providing that care. My question is to the Minister of Labour. Why are nurses bearing the brunt of cuts resulting from the restructuring in the Capital health authority?

MR. N. TAYLOR: Good question.

MR. DAY: I agree with the member opposite; it was a good question. Questions from this side usually show that members are concerned about preserving the prosperity of people. I would like to take that question and indicate that for anybody who's losing a job or being displaced, that is a difficult time. That is not an easy time, Mr. Speaker. I would suggest that no particular group is being focused on more than another. As a matter of fact, there are about 350 nurses and LPNs who will be affected, as we understand, as the Capital region has told us. So it's not all nurses. Actually, there are 700 lab workers in that area, and there are about 500 nonclinical workers, and managers consist of about 160 of that particular number. So no group is being

focused on. It's not an easy time. We recognize that. But no group is being disproportionately focused on, as I understand it.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What has the government done in terms of workforce adjustment to assist affected employees?

MR. DAY: Well, Mr. Speaker, well in anticipation of layoffs in this and other regions around the province, myself and officials from my department, the Minister of Health, officials from her department met with union representatives, recognizing that a difficult time was coming. Rather than just screaming protest, like the Liberals do, we sat down to look in a proactive way at what could be done to assist people through a difficult time. One point five million dollars has been allocated to the Capital region for drawing up programs, various situations that can help people through this very difficult time. One and a half million dollars has been committed to the health workforce adjustment strategy.

2:00

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What services are actually available to affected employees in the Capital health region?

MR. DAY: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that last month, late in February, the workers' resource centre, just for health care workers who will be displaced, was set up. It's over on 112th Street, and certainly the union representatives have been made aware of that and have been active in asking that the centre be set up. The centre will either come right on-site and conduct programs for employees before they are actually moved from their place of employment, or if an employee prefers, they can take a more extensive program at the health workers' resource centre itself. That'll include a variety of training related to upgrading and job retraining. As a matter of fact, depending on the situation, they could be eligible for tuition assistance of up to \$1,500 per individual, depending on the circumstance, to help them move into another field. There is a variety of programs there, and certainly I appreciate the work done by union representatives, the Minister of Health and her officials, and our officials in making that available to help workers through a difficult time.

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

Food Banks

MS HANSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unbelievably, the Minister of Family and Social Services claims that only a small number of social assistance recipients are forced to use food banks, and the claim is even more suspicious now that the minister has directed welfare offices not to refer clients to those food banks that require a referral. Obviously, the increasing numbers at food banks are starting to embarrass this government, and the minister is trying to cover up his failures. My questions are to the Minister of Family and Social Services. Mr. Minister, why are you directing your staff to force those people to go hungry?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, the overall plan of this government and this minister, of course, when we worked on reforming

the welfare system was to make sure that in the long term people are employed and working, because no one wants to be on support systems. Of course, the Liberal way would be to provide more welfare. That is not what this government is doing. What we are doing is ensuring wherever possible that young healthy Albertans that should be working are out working. This allowed us last year alone to provide close to hundred million additional dollars to the high-needs area. The Liberals, of course, want more welfare. That's their answer. I cannot give them the answer that more welfare is the answer, because that is not the answer. That is not the answer. The answer is to provide better opportunities for people for training, for employment, and support systems.

MS HANSON: Mr. Minister, we're still talking about food; we're not talking about welfare.

Again, where are the hungry families and their children supposed to turn to in places like St. Albert, where they have to have a referral, if you won't give them one?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, out of the over \$1.5 billion budget, we continue to spend 30 percent of those dollars in the Edmonton area. So when you're talking about dollars and services to people around Edmonton, we are spending a lot of dollars. The welfare system, as it was no doubt supported by the Liberals, has been around for 40 years. It is not a productive system the way it is. That is why we are reforming the welfare system, so people in the future do not have to go to food banks. The hon. member is out there quietly consulting with Albertans to form the Liberal social policy. I would like to have their input, so we can provide a better system for our clients.

MS HANSON: We are not talking about government dollars. We're talking about volunteers that donated food, and you're withholding.

Mr. Minister, how do you think a single mother with a small child getting \$766 a month on assistance can survive without using the food bank? Can you tell me how you think this family's budget breaks down into enough money for food?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, the short-term solution would be the Liberal solution. More welfare: that is the short-term solution. Given the opportunity and the support systems, that single parent would go to work rather than depend on food banks, and that is exactly what our government is doing.

School Councils

MR. TANNAS: Mr. Speaker, my questions today are to the Minister of Education. The implementation team for Roles and Responsibilities in Education traveled the length if not the breadth of Alberta hearing from nearly 2,000 participants, which led to the development of the government's position paper. Many parents and professional educators as well as community members, while supportive of the general concepts of the position paper, have concerns with various particulars. To the minister: would the minister confirm whether or not school councils have final decision-making power over a school's budget and over the courses offered in the school?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, certainly the hon. member has identified a very, very important initiative with respect to our overall education plan, and there has been very, very extensive consultation, which he has also correctly identified. In terms of

the decision-making that the hon. member is referring to, those items are intended to be dealt with collaboratively among the various participants: the school board, the principal, and the school council with a very meaningful role. We're looking at collaborative decision-making on those particular items.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Education: will the minister confirm or deny that school councils have the power to hire and fire teachers?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I recognize that this particular question comes up because there has been in the consultation process quite a bit of information and irrelevant criticism of our roles and responsibilities paper, but the original position paper on this particular point has been well supported by people who have given thought to the roles and responsibilities paper. The final decisions with respect to hiring and firing teachers and the contract of employment is clearly with the school board. As I've said, the consultation process has affirmed that that should remain the case. However, a very important proposal in the roles and responsibilities paper which has also been supported in the consultation process is that school councils should be able to have representation in the selection process for staff and in the setting of criteria for the hiring of staff.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Education: Mr. Minister, will school councils be held accountable and responsible for the activities in their schools?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, the school board and the principal of the school are ultimately accountable for the operation of the school and its overall performance, but once again there is a role for a school council, for parents in advising and being listened to with respect to their concerns on the operation of the school.

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

2:10 Gun Control Legislation

MR. LANGEVIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 2 we saw 1,200 postcards being tabled in the Assembly by the hon. Member for Medicine Hat requesting that the government use all means at its disposal to oppose the federal government's implementation of further firearms controls. Certainly Albertans are in support of increased punishment for crimes in which guns are used, but the opposition comes to the registration of firearms used for recreation, hunting, competition, and for gun collection purposes. My question today is to the Minister of Justice. What steps have you taken since the tabling of these 1,200 postcards to defend Alberta's point of view on this issue?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Justice.

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for his question. There are many things in this House where the government and the opposition disagree, but this is one issue where the official position of both sides of this House is the same: we disagree with universal registration of firearms. We disagree with it and we're taking further action on it because there is no

causal connection, hon. member, between filling out paper and creating safer communities and reducing serious violent crime in the province of Alberta or elsewhere in Canada.

We are very carefully looking at Bill C-68, the federal legislation that incorporates some very good positions dealing with increased penalties for firearms offences and a crackdown on importation of illegal weapons into Alberta and elsewhere in Canada. We're also looking very carefully at the firearms registration particulars, trying to learn more about what the impacts would be on Alberta, trying to learn more about what the costs would be to Alberta, and trying to get a handle on whether the estimation by the federal government of an \$85 million program to initiate this registration process is anywhere close to correct.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. LANGEVIN: Yes. Again to the same minister: because the registration costs will be enormous, would you be prepared to tell the federal government that they should foot the bill for legislation which they pass?

MR. EVANS: Well, it's something that I've indeed considered threatening the federal government with, hon. member, but I'm only considering it, because, quite frankly, if this were to be implemented as a user pay, then all of those law-abiding Albertans who would feel compelled by criminal law which is going to be instituted to fill out these forms would be responsible for the costs. So regardless of whether the province of Alberta through taxation of our citizens or Canadians generally through the federal taxation system or the users were to pick up the tab, someone has to pick up the tab for this. I'd prefer, rather than threatening not to pick up the tab, which we estimate to be somewhere in the neighbourhood of half a million dollars a year, that we look very carefully at why on earth we'd want to incur those kinds of costs in the first place.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. LANGEVIN: Yes. My last question to the same minister: are you prepared to impose the notwithstanding clause of the Constitution to opt out of this federal law?

MR. EVANS: Well, my preliminary review of the law on this is that it would be extremely difficult to utilize the Charter with respect to this federal legislation. However, that notwithstanding, I do not wish to get into a legal challenge or a legal issue at this point in time. I think, hon. member, that it's preferable that we deal with this issue out there in the realm of public opinion in Canada. So people should be discussing this issue in relation to the bigger picture issues that we should be facing in the country at the coffee shops, at the post office, at the grocery store, and at meetings. I hope that that will happen, and I hope that Albertans will contact their Members of Parliament, describe their concerns with this legislative package and that Canadians elsewhere will do the same and that we'll see some major changes and backing off by the federal government.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Grain Transportation

MR. FRIEDEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Recently there have been a number of occurrences that could have some drastic effects on the movement of farm commodities to market, notably the fact that the Crow benefit will be dismantled, and now we're facing another rail strike. These things could have quite a devastating effect on agriculture in this province. I know that we have approved a plebiscite that will question the need for a mandatory Canadian Wheat Board, and I hope that we will proceed with this measure soon, but is there anything else that we as a province can do to mitigate these hindrances to the movement of our commodities? For example, could we put more pressure on for the opening of the Canada/U.S. border so we can keep our products moving?

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

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. Member for Peace River for addressing a very, very urgent topic. Indeed, we're going through what appears to be our yearly work stoppage as it affects agriculture. This seems to be becoming a yearly problem. It was only last year that we had a work stoppage that was costing the agricultural community something like \$50 million a day. We have one group in Alberta alone that uses the Vancouver port every day that it's costing \$1.3 million when we have work stoppages.

It's very unfortunate, because the Alberta Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development had made a very strong recommendation to our federal counterparts when they were changing the method of payment to do so in a holistic approach, to make all the regulatory changes that would be necessary to deal with work stoppages, to deal with proposed changes to the Wheat Board, to deal with the method of payment so that our agricultural community could adjust their management tools and their management skills to deal with this issue. Unfortunately, we weren't heard, and unfortunately we're now into a situation where the process is breaking down again. This has happened, Mr. Speaker, year after year after year, and it's time that we had a look at the whole process.

Mr. Speaker, I've just written to the hon. federal minister of agriculture as well as to the Minister of Human Resources Development, our federal counterparts in Ottawa, with some additional suggestions. Perhaps it's time that we considered the whole concept of making those who are responsible for the work stoppage responsible for the hurt and the cost that's there. It seems to me that the farmers have been held at ransom for far too long, and it's time that the farmers have an opportunity. That's why we have to look at the use of American ports. We have to look at alternatives that will allow the farmer access to that market.

MR. FRIEDEL: To the same minister, Mr. Speaker: has there ever been any real discussion about connecting the rail lines between Hines Creek in the northwest part of this province with Dawson Creek in the province of B.C. so we can enhance the options of shipping produce to the western ports possibly through that connection?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Obviously, Mr. Speaker, with the change of method of payment this is now going to become a situation that we're going to have to review and look at again. The situation that we have is that we have a private company operating at one end and, of course, CN operating at the other, and the two really have had no reason to come together and sit down and negotiate

an opportunity for Peace River country farmers to have closer access to the ports of Prince Rupert and Vancouver. So, indeed, with the change of method of payment, I see an immediate need for sitting down and negotiating again.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table with the House four copies of the letters that were sent to the federal ministers.

MR. FRIEDEL: My final supplementary, Mr. Speaker, is to the Minister of Transportation and Utilities. Could the minister tell us if there is any possibility that Highway 58 west of Rainbow Lake might be extended to Fort Nelson, B.C., to allow for more options again for shipping products to market?

2:20

DR. WEST: Well, Mr. Speaker, this question of course is going to have to come to the forefront very soon in light of what the minister of agriculture has said on what's going on in this country. Alberta in the future will have to look seriously, when the Crow benefit goes, to its transportation network in order to accommodate the Alberta advantage and our position to get our products to port.

Now, I don't know at the present time if the extension of Highway 58 is cost-effective. We're going to have to sit down and do some analysis on what it will cost to transport grain by that route by truck to Prince Rupert or to port to see at what level cost-effectiveness comes about. At the present time there is a good highway. You can access the coast from High Level by way of Highway 35 south and then go on through Highway 49 to Dawson Creek and Prince Rupert. It's paved to a good standard at this time, but of course it means traveling a longer distance. In the future that highway you mentioned will have to go in line with that railway line, and we should have a discussion not only on our grain getting to port at the west coast but maybe another discussion on what we do going south to the border and on through to the Burlington railway system and on to the Mississippi.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Seniors' Boardinghouses

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Service organizations and seniors' groups and the government's own Seniors Advisory Council have called for standards and regulations and monitoring of boardinghouses for seniors and the disabled to prevent potential neglect and abuse of these citizens. The proliferation of these boardinghouses is a direct result of the government's actions. Problems have appeared now in Lethbridge, and recently in Calgary we have allegations such as the withholding of prescription medications as punishment, substandard food and personal care, thefts from bank accounts, residents lying in soiled sheets. The group home owner's response to the allegations was: "I put a lot of work into this. Where would these people be; eating out of dumpsters?" That's the response. My first question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, this is a provincial responsibility. Will you now direct the Minister of Family and Social Services to develop and monitor provincial standards for boarding homes for these vulnerable Albertans? Your council is asking for it, Mr. Premier.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, those indeed are very, very serious allegations and really need to be checked through. I'm astounded that a person charged with the care of elderly would make that kind of a statement. I'm sure that this particular matter will be investigated, and I'll make sure that the hon. Minister of Family and Social Services conducts a review of these particular allega-

tions. I would be very happy to have the hon. minister supplement.

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

MR. CARDINAL: Yeah, Mr. Speaker. It's a very sensitive issue. It's a complicated issue. In relation to the regulations it may come to the point where if you wanted to keep your parents, for an example, you would have to be licensed. So it's a very, very sensitive issue. We have to make sure that when we move with a policy in this area, we are sensitive to the needs of the clientele out there, the needs of the clientele wanting to be independent in some cases. So it is very sensitive. It's not as easy as people may think it is.

I believe the Minister of Community Development would also like to supplement as to some of the things we are doing.

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, this is not a new issue. The issue of senior abuse is a serious one. Certainly we would want operators of such facilities to understand the guidelines that would be expected of them. I would be frankly surprised if very many people would have the type of response that the hon. member has suggested: we're just doing the best we can.

The Seniors Advisory Council in August of 1993 did prepare a guide to private care homes for prospective residents and also a guide for private home care operators. I'll file four copies of each of those. We would simply ask any senior citizen who is contemplating entering into such an arrangement to obtain a copy of this and have an understanding and do some homework and be cautious as far as the type of place they choose to live in.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, the point is that there are no standards. And this business about parents is just a red herring.

I want to ask a question directly to the Minister of Family and Social Services. What actions has the minister taken to address those specific incidences of abuse and neglect in Calgary? Your officials are aware of the problem. What have you done about it?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, of course it is a priority of our department to make sure that the high-needs areas of the department are looked after. In fact, I met with my departmental officials this morning to review that specific issue. It's a very sensitive issue. I would ask the hon. Liberal opposition: with their social policy what is their recommendation in relation to this complicated issue?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Regulations. Regulations.

MR. CARDINAL: Yes, regulations. What are your specific recommendations? Give them to me.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, your own council has told you exactly what to do, and I agree with them. This is something that needs to be addressed now, and I resent this sort of cavalier attitude over here.

Mr. Speaker, my second supplementary is to the minister responsible for seniors. Mr. Minister, with deregulated lodges, evictions, and reduced incomes, is the only choice left to seniors to eat out of dumpsters or risk abandonment or abuse in an unregulated boardinghouse? Please earn your title and be responsible.

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, it's an absurd suggestion that people are going to be eating out of dumpsters in this province. There are almost a quarter of a million seniors in the province of Alberta, and there are many ways in which they choose to live. The fact is that many of them, we're thankful, are healthy and live at home on their own, leading independent lives either in homes that they own or places that they rent.

One of the things that seniors also want is some options as far as places where they would want to live, and this is one of those options. They want the option of living with other people for the security associated with living with a group of other people and the safety concerns there. As a result, this is an option that seniors would want. The only point is that just like when a person wishes to be a roommate with someone else, they must be cautious about whom they live with.

There are guidelines established by the Seniors Advisory Council on what the operators of such private facilities have, and there are guidelines and advice that residents, seniors who are contemplating this type of living arrangement should be certainly made aware of. That is the reason why we publish these guidelines, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Order please. Hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, the Chair would advise that we've now spent a great deal of time on this question. There are still members who want to ask questions. There will be . . . [interjections] Hon. member, the Chair is not going to recognize you. We're going to move on to the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Capital Regional Health Authority

(continued)

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Capital health authority announced significant budget reductions. My constituents and I think all constituents throughout northern Alberta are very concerned and worried about the future availability to them of referral services, of secondary care, and of tertiary care in Edmonton. Those services are critical to northern Albertans. My question is to the Minister of Health. Of the people served by the Capital health authority, what percentage do northern Albertans – that is, people who, say, reside in the Northern Alberta Development Council area – represent of the total?

2:30

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the member has asked for a rather precise number. I would give him an approximation and certainly see if I can get a closer number for him. I would suggest that of the referrals Edmonton does receive from outside the city of Edmonton, the area that he describes might be about 20 percent of their referral area. I will clarify that, and if I can get you a more precise percentage, I will.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member. Supplemental question.

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Health: given that, what would be the specific funding that you have directed your department to provide to the Capital health authority to ensure that those services are available to northern Albertans?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the capital region has been funded on an historic basis to recognize the services that they provide to citizens from outside of their area. So that funding has

been incorporated in an historic way into the funding base that they have today.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Health: then, could you advise those northern Albertans of what direction you have given to the Capital health authority to ensure that those services will be available in the future?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the Capital health authority is keenly aware of its responsibility to patients from outside their region. I should point out that they have developed a cluster of what they call their referral hospitals so that people who are referred in would be referred to that area. That consolidates those services and ensures that they can meet those needs.

The other thing that I would like to assure the hon. member – and I think this is most important – is that the Capital health authority has met and has consulted with regions 11 to 17 to discuss their needs, their future needs. I should also point out that in many ways, Mr. Speaker, those needs have diminished somewhat because of the very good work that has been done in that region, particularly in the QE II hospital, where they are assuming more of the responsibility and the ability to serve their residents. That's another important part of regionalization, and I think that will continue.

THE SPEAKER: Order please. The time for question period has expired. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has given the Chair indication that she has a point of order.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes. I rise on *Beauchesne* 489 and Standing Orders 23(h) and (j). Something occurred today during questions from the Leader of the Opposition to the Premier that I thought required some comment and raising a point of order. What did happen was that the hon. Government House Leader, during an answer from the Premier to the questions, in fact kept calling across to this side of the House: lying; you're lying; you're lying; liar. He did it not just once but on a number of occasions.

I suggest to you that this is not the first time this kind of thing has happened, and I believe that it occurs when the individual is speaking not within your view, not within your eye line, and possibly not within your earshot, but I can tell you that the comments were heard audibly on radio today.

Mr. Speaker, there are appropriate remedies if some member of this House believes another member is deliberately misleading or giving incorrect information, and I suggest that this kind of behaviour is not one of them. I believe this is unparliamentary. It is devious in how it is done, and I believe it is totally unacceptable. I think that it's certainly beneath the ethical behaviour that is expected and in fact, in my view, demanded of a minister of the Crown.

I regret to repeat that this is not the first time it's happened. I hope, Mr. Speaker, that you will deal with this issue.

MR. DAY: Well, Mr. Speaker, let me address that on a couple of different fronts. First of all, there have been points of order in the Assembly of late regarding the unparliamentary language which uses the phrase "misleading," and it's clearly stated that

that's an unparliamentary phrase. You have ruled, and I think with wisdom, that it depends on the intent of the particular information that's coming forward. If there indeed was an intent to mislead, that is one thing, and in fact in such a case it would not be ruled out of order to say that. I think there was wisdom in your ruling there.

In this particular case, the member of the opposition, as I recall it – and the Blues will show if I am being accurate – made a statement that the Premier was endorsing and in fact encouraging all Albertans to send in their medical invoices. Now, he directly said that was a statement.

MR. DECORE: That's not what he said. [interjections]

MR. DAY: I listened quietly, Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, if you drag your son-in-law into tow and a few others to be quiet here.

Mr. Speaker, I would go on to say that the Leader of the Opposition did not ask if the Premier was doing that. He indeed said that the Premier was doing that. The Premier stood up in this Assembly before all members and emphatically and clearly said that he was absolutely not in any way encouraging all Albertans to send in invoices. Now, the rule of this House and propriety of the House is that when a member makes that statement, he or she needs to be taken at their word. Then the hon. opposition leader stood up and continued not to question but to say that in fact the Premier was conducting that course of action.

At that point, Mr. Speaker, I said: that is a lie. Applying that to your rulings on misleading, I think the question has to be: was it a lie? Was it in fact a deliberate lie that the Leader of the Opposition was perpetrating? In my estimation it was a deliberate lie, and that's why I used the word. [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order please. The Chair would remind the hon. Government House Leader that no matter what his estimation is, it is unparliamentary to use the words "lying" or "deliberately lying." The hon. Government House Leader should know that, and the Chair would ask the hon. Government House Leader to withdraw those words.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, regretfully and without reservation I will accept your ruling, and I will withdraw "lie" or using words that had the word lie in them. I withdraw that statement.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. The Chair appreciates that.

The Chair is at a disadvantage because with the sound system and the general high level of noise in the Chamber, the Chair doesn't hear these things. It isn't proper to be using those kinds of words when the people who are using them know their light isn't on so they don't get picked up in the record. That is not the way we should carry on business, but the Chair appreciates the clarifications that have been made by the hon. Government House Leader.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Written Questions**

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

[Motion carried]

head: **Motions for Returns**

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, I move that motions for returns appearing on today's Order Paper stand and retain their places with the exception of motions for returns 159, 162, 174, 176, 177, 178, 179, 182, 183, and 184.

[Motion carried]

Seniors' Telephone Hot Lines

M159. Mrs. Hewes moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all written documents and electronic databases and summaries thereof collected and compiled through the 1-800-642-3853 and 427-7876 budget/seniors' telephone hot lines from the period of February 25, 1994, through January 31, 1995, tracking the comments of seniors and any areas of concern expressed by seniors as documented via these taxpayer-funded hot lines.

2:40

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, I have read this motion, and I find it necessary to amend it. I would move that the motion be amended by striking out the words "copies of all written documents and electronic databases and summaries thereof" and substituting it with the words "a copy of a summary document." Accordingly, the motion would then read

that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of a summary document, collected and compiled through the 1-800-642-3853 and 427-7876 budget/seniors' telephone hot lines from the period of February 25, 1994, through January 31, 1995, tracking the comments of seniors and any areas of concern expressed by seniors as documented via these taxpayer-funded hot lines.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that the minister only wants to give me a summary, but with respect I want the entire report.

This telephone hot line was set in place to deal with the calls that were coming from seniors when the Alberta seniors' benefit was first created. It caused a great deal of consternation among seniors because they were totally unsure and uncertain, with good reason, about what was going to happen to them. The demand was immense on the hot line. It was so overwhelming, Mr. Speaker, that it had to be extended over a number of months. Staff had to be seconded from, of all places, the Provincial Museum to try to answer questions about seniors. I sympathize with the staff having to switch their career paths in that fashion. I'm sure it can't have been easy for them or for other seniors who needed help.

We do understand that what happened on that hot line, the information that people needed and they got, will serve us very well. This will tell us a real story, and it should tell us a story in depth. The minister and the Premier have commented – and even in the throne speech His Honour the Lieutenant Governor speaks to being "mindful of the effects of change on the people it serves, such as Alberta's seniors." Mr. Speaker, we need to see that to have a full understanding of what is happening in seniors' lives that occasion them or force them to need to use that hot line.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, there are many, many seniors' organizations and service organizations and agencies who serve

seniors throughout our province, and they want and asked for that information. I've asked in the House on a number of occasions about what has happened to that, because it seems to me to that that would serve as an excellent analysis and ability to program what we need to do. The Premier has talked about sending out the advisory council to research some more about what seniors need: have they been hit too hard? I appreciate that, but I'm sure the analysis of what happened on the hot line would provide us with a great deal of that.

All agencies in our province who deal day to day with seniors need to know this information. They need to know what the seniors are concerned about with health care, with housing, with extended care. They have a right to this, and I want the minister to give all of us, not just me and the opposition but seniors' organizations throughout the province, the information that he got off that line.

With respect, Mr. Speaker, a summary would not serve my needs nor do I believe it would serve the needs of those seniors' organizations throughout Alberta.

[Motion on amendment carried]

Point of Order Amendments to Motions for Returns

MR. BRUSEKER: A point of order, Mr. Speaker. Standing Order 42 says that this should be in writing. Could I see a copy of it now?

THE SPEAKER: The Chair was unaware that they had not been distributed. Then before calling for the vote on the motion for a return, we'll see that the documents are circulated.

The hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

Debate Continued

MR. BRUSEKER: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now that we've received a copy of the amendment and the motion as amended, I just want to echo the concerns that were raised by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, that indeed this significantly changes and reduces the amount of information that the member was initially requesting in her Motion 159 and therefore really doesn't provide much information at all, which I guess really is the goal of the government in this particular case.

[Motion as amended carried]

Biprovincial Upgrader

M162. Moved by Mr. N. Taylor on behalf of Mr. Dalla-Longa that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing any studies or reports prepared by or on behalf of the province of Alberta since January 1993 assessing the future economic viability of the Lloydminster biprovincial upgrader and projections for annual upside interest payments to Alberta over a 20-year period commencing in January 1995.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, we've dealt with this motion in various forms over the last couple of years, and again I must say that I cannot file this information. So I must reject the motion. However, I will say that very soon I will be able to file the term sheets and agreements that have been signed by the partners insofar as the closing of our interest in the upgrader, and I'm hoping to do that very quickly. That was one of the things that

we asked for. But we did not get agreement from the partners to file this information. The information has commercial sensitivities to it, and we cannot release that without their permission. So we must reject the motion.

2:50

MR. N. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I want to question that very strongly. Although the government has sold out of the upgrader, they obviously had a set of statistics, decisions upon which they based their getting out of the upgrader. They didn't sell out; they just reneged. They just walked off and left the partnership to take over.

Mr. Speaker, to argue that the partners are involved and to be giving away anything is not only a red herring, it's a blue and orange herring, because it smells a mile away. The question here has nothing to do with what the partners think the biprovincial upgrader will return in funds through the years. I'm interested in knowing what the government did. The biprovincial upgrader was making a profit, so something went wrong pretty badly somewhere. The government obviously had some sort of information that said they should get out, cut their losses and run. Yet the thing is now making money.

MRS. BLACK: No, it's not.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, all I have to do is go by Husky, a lot of tradesmen. If indeed there is an argument – the minister by shaking her head obviously is disagreeing with one of the press reports, so it's all the more important that the public of Alberta know why this government got out of the upgrader.

DR. WEST: Ask the Saskatchewan government how busy they are.

MR. N. TAYLOR: If it was, as the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster would try to imply, a bottomless pit, like some of the minister's rhetoric, it would indeed be a good reason to get out. But if indeed it has made money, it would be very interesting to know what consultants, what kind of a report they had. To say that the partners were involved is absolute nonsense, because stop and think about this, Mr. Speaker. If indeed the report was done by all the partners and this province pulled out and the other partners stayed in, obviously they weren't reading the same report, because why would two partners stay in and the other one take off? So obviously the report that this minister has is something prepared by herself and her reporters and her backers and has nothing to do with the partners. I defy and I challenge the minister to get up and say that the partners forbid this report to be filed. Just say that they did that, because I would like to talk to them.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, just for clarification. I wanted to clarify that the hon. member was dealing with Motion for a Return 162, which talks about studies from January of 1993 onward. I will remind the hon. member that the agreement was reached in the summer of 1994.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, this is so fantastic. I've never run into this before. It almost leaves you speechless. It says from 1993 for 20 years. Well, that was only two years ago, and now she has the nerve, the audacity, the gall to get up and say: well, it says 1993; I can't give you what it is. Holy smoke. I'm trying to say something in parliamentary language. I don't know

where she possibly could be looking to say that because it says 1993 for 20 years on that now in dear old ripe 1995 it doesn't apply. That's exactly what the thing was trying to get at. It was trying to find out the economic reasons this government had for reneging, for walking away from the upgrader. Now, that's all we want. As I say, I challenge her once again to get up and tell this House that the partners wouldn't allow this study to be released. I challenge her.

THE SPEAKER: Well, even if the minister wanted to do that, the debate is closed.

Point of Order Concluding Debate

MR. N. TAYLOR: Wait a minute. I'm sorry. Point of order, Mr. Speaker. How can you say that the debate is closed? See; I sat down for her to ask a question. I was still on the first speech. Don't get me wrong; I don't know of anybody who wants to speak.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. member, the hon. member rose, moved the motion, had an opportunity of speaking on moving the motion . . .

MR. N. TAYLOR: But you made me sit down so she could ask a question.

THE SPEAKER: The Chair never made you sit down. You were just such a polite person.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, you should know that that's the only reason I'd stop.

THE SPEAKER: When the hon. member speaks the second time on a motion, the debate is closed and therefore the Chair must call the question.

[Motion lost]

Unlawful Forestry Practices

M174. Mr. N. Taylor moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the names of companies or operators that were charged with unlawful forestry practices, including breaches of forest management agreements and operating ground rules, with details of the charge and the nature and size of the penalty imposed from January 1, 1991, until December 31, 1994.

Moved by Mr. Lund that Motion for a Return 174 be amended to read that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing an annual summary of penalties assessed against commercial timber operators for breaches of the Forests Act and regulations or of the Alberta timber harvest planning and operating ground rules, showing the number of operators against whom penalties were assessed, the number of penalties assessed, the total amount assessed, and the average penalty size for the period January 1, 1991, to December 31, 1994.

[Debate adjourned March 8]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater to close debate on this.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Actually, Mr. Speaker, it makes a bit of a point of order. I was going to mention it earlier, but I didn't dare cut in on the member for Goldwater. She would have hammered me.

MRS. HEWES: Gold Bar.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Goldwater is on the other side.

I thought the Clerk should have called Motion 174 because it was the one where debate was adjourned, Mr. Speaker. The other ones were new motions. It doesn't matter. I mean, it allowed me to warm up on Motion 162 and get into it.

If one reads *Hansard*, there's very little to add here. We had the rather peculiar thing of the government amending the motion to say "an . . . summary," but one of the problems here, Mr. Speaker, is that when you say "an annual summary of penalties assessed," which is the way that we're speaking to the amendment now that the environmental minister did, it doesn't show how often a breach might have been made by one company. He's just saying an annual summary of penalties. In other words, we have no idea if there's one recalcitrant logger out there that's causing a lot of problems or if it's evenly scattered.

Secondly, we have no idea of size. Have we got a logger or an operator getting 10 minor fines, or do we have one with a huge fine? It says "an annual summary of penalties assessed against commercial timber operators." Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm not a lawyer, but I know that you can go – and you're one of that august profession – and examine the court records and find out who's been fined and who's been convicted. Here we have a court of the Star Chamber right in front of the hon. minister of the environment, who's never met a tree that didn't look better if it was dead or cut, the minister of the environment coming out there, operating ground rules and forest management agreements, fining them and not having the courage to say who he's fined and for how much.

Mr. Speaker, if there's anything that we've learned as democracies have developed it's that justice to be done not only has to be done but it has to be seen to be done. Yet we in the dark confines of the minister of the environment, where hardly any light ever penetrates, have people that get convicted, fined, and no way of knowing. It's not a case of just fining the ones that have done wrong. What we'd like to know – if there was a list there, we might fine people that've done right, that have been unfairly picked upon and are afraid to say anything because their FMA will be shortened or cut or their timber permit will be monkeyed around with or they will have forestry experts looking at every truckload. What we get here is a fundamental breach of justice, where somebody can be prosecuted by this person, by this government, and we have no way of finding out – we have no way of finding out – and that is one of the most basic tenets of any democracy. When any democracy is established, whether it's in Russia or anywhere else, the court shows who was charged, what they were charged with, whether they were convicted and what they were fined, not in order to punish the people but in order to protect the innocent. So they can't get away with it.

This government is running a court of the Star Chamber. You'd have to go all the way back to the Inquisition to find the same type of thing put on that said: "No. We'll give an annual summary." That's like the old Bishop of Seville telling how many witches he burned rather than saying who they were or what. This is all he's doing; he's just giving a list of the people that have been fined. Rightly or wrongly, they'll be afraid to

come and question him. Now, Mr. Speaker, I don't see how they can get away with this like that.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The Member for Calgary-Buffalo on the amendment.

MR. DICKSON: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to join with my colleague from Redwater, and the reason is this. The reason why I think all members would be anxious to join in resisting this amendment is that I've always apprehended in this Chamber a certain amount of suspicion about closed courts and about allowing judges in a judicial or a quasi-judicial system to operate somehow autonomously from those of us who have been democratically elected, and I think the amendment clearly misses the point. What is proposed here is a means to be able to determine whether the system is working, not to see some kind of a distilled, sanitized statement at the end of the process but to be able to find out who's been charged, then to be able to track it through to the end point, when a penalty or a sanction's imposed. That's the only way you can determine whether your enforcement system is effective, whether it's working.

3:00

The amendment would have us accept that the system always works and it works in every case and it works perfectly. Well, we know the judicial system doesn't work perfectly every time. Why would we think the system of penalties that's contemplated in terms of forest management agreements is on any higher basis than the Court of Queen's Bench or the Alberta Court of Appeal or the Provincial Court of Alberta? I think all members realize that it's not. So, Mr. Speaker, for that reason we have to find out not the end product, but we have to be able to determine whether the system works, and that means we have to be able to take a snapshot at the front point of the investigation, when somebody is suspected of having committed an offence. We then have to be able to monitor the prosecutorial process right through to the end, whether there's a disposition or not.

Knowing the Minister of Environmental Protection as somebody who wants to be open and somebody who wants to assure Albertans – people in Rocky Mountain House have the same concerns that people in downtown Calgary have. They want to know that the enforcement procedures worked. I think the hon. minister is probably going to want to, on reflection, withdraw this amendment, because I think he will recognize and his constituents in Rocky Mountain House will recognize as well as anyone that we want to find out how the system works. We want to be able to make sure that it's effective and efficient and we're not wasting money on a whole lot of bureaucrats and administrators that aren't getting the job done. We want to open it up.

It's consistent with the stated promise of this government to more disclosure, more openness. Isn't that what we hear from the government all the time? Well, here's a good opportunity to create a check of the whole prosecution system in this area, the enforcement system. You know what, Mr. Speaker? It should result in a more efficient department, and maybe we can find some ways we can even reduce the resources. That's a way we can check it.

If we're simply content with this amendment – and I can't believe the hon. minister is serious with this amendment – what we've simply done, all of us, is we've sat back and said: "We have so much confidence in the bureaucrats that we might make them nervous if we were looking over their shoulder. We have

so much confidence in the bureaucracy of this province that we're just going to let them do whatever they tell us is right." Well, we know it doesn't work at the municipal level. It doesn't work at the provincial level. It doesn't work at any level of government. We're here to make sure that there's full disclosure, and that's members on both sides of the House.

MR. LUND: It's the little guy we're protecting here.

MR. DICKSON: Somebody has suggested, Mr. Speaker, a concern about the little guy. Well, I can say that any member that supports this amendment has effectively turned their back on the little guy. Anybody who supports this amendment in effect says that bureaucracy and bureaucratic decisions are more important than full disclosure and decisions made in openness.

This is the province that created the Ombudsman 20 years ago because we realized that bureaucrats sometimes make poor decisions. They sometimes don't do the job. That's why we have checks and balances. The best check, the best balance is openness. You know, nobody should know that better than the Minister of Environmental Protection. He in fact chaired the freedom of information panel set up by our Premier. I would have thought after the huge volume of submissions we heard and impassioned arguments from Albertans and interest groups that this minister more than any other person in this House would want, wherever it's possible, to make some disclosure.

Some members may mistakenly think they're protecting the privacy. Privacy of whom? The only privacy that's being protected here are people that have a for-profit interest in the forest resources of this province. Those are the people who will be supporting this. It's no little guy. The people who would support this and the people who benefit from it are companies with bad forestry practices, and one other group would support it: government employees that aren't effectively, aggressively doing the policing function that they're paid to do. Those two groups would support this but surely no member in this Chamber, no member that believes in open government, no member that believes that checks and balances make for a better kind of system. People who believe that can't support this amendment.

So I encourage all members to follow the lead of my colleague from Redwater and oppose this amendment, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Leduc.

MR. KIRKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also stand and oppose the amendment. It is my philosophy that a government that operates in the open is a government with integrity and honesty. I look at this particular amendment, and I look at the original proposed motion, and the minister knows full well that if in fact somebody wanted to take the time and the opportunity and go to the courthouses of this province, we could find out exactly who was charged and convicted. So the opportunity and the information is there. It would strike me that all we're attempting to do at this point is put a roadblock in the way of open government, and I have some difficulty understanding why we would want to do that.

When I look at what is being proposed in the amendment and then the intent of the original motion itself, I have to ask in the back of my mind: is this government attempting to hide somebody from public disclosure because they've been there several times, maybe five or six charges, and obviously they aren't

conforming and maybe the charges or penalties aren't adequate enough to deter them from practising poor logging practices? I would suggest that if there's a company that is not abiding by the rules and the laws of this particular province publication of their company or their name, public disclosure, would be very much a deterrent for them to not continue contravening the laws. As I indicated in an earlier statement, if in fact there's a company that's been charged five times but continues to contravene because the penalties associated with it are not a deterrent, then that in fact will tell us that we have to revisit that aspect of it.

So, Mr. Speaker, this amendment, I would suggest, is a contravention of the many claims that I've heard from the Conservative government that they're into an open, honest government movement. Clearly that's not the case when we look at what's being proposed here. It's very much like the information that was asked of one other department in the energy sector here. What are we afraid of? We've indicated that was then and this is now. We've made some mistakes. Let's profit from those mistakes, let's not continue to hide them, and let's not continue to bury our head in the sand. The environment today in this province is a very large concern, and I think it's particularly alarming that we would attempt to hide information like this when we in Alberta are clearing our forests at a quicker pace than they're clearing the rain forest in Brazil.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that all members of the House should oppose this, based on openness and honesty. There's a need to improve the penalties. There's a need to improve the application of enforcing the laws in this matter. Let's find out where the deficiencies are and move forward from that particular point.

Thank you.

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

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak against this amendment. Quite frankly, I'm appalled by it. Like the Member for Leduc I see the same signs happening once again that would suggest what previous Conservative governments clearly showed, and that is that there is no openness. There's a total lack of trust to Albertans through this amendment. It's distasteful at the least inasmuch as to suggest that we want the stats but we don't want the true essence of what the motion was about, and that is to know: who are these individuals who've indeed been found guilty of a violation? Albertans have the right to know that. They have the right to know whether they're repeat offenders. I don't see how people can hide behind this Legislature. When other members of society are charged and found guilty, that information is shared widely. I don't see any difference with this.

3:10

That this government should use this amendment to protect the little guy, a suggestion by the minister of the environment, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, is a joke. It's a cruel joke, because it certainly is not protecting the little guy. In fact, what I see is the little guy more and more finding the very negative side of this government's actions.

Silence indeed is condoning the actions of your government. We saw that same silence create the fiscal mess that this government is in. We saw that same silence creating favouritism within the political process in Alberta. You would hope, Mr. Speaker, when you try to teach your children the right from wrong, that

eventually they learn. What I have seen through these motions and amendments is anything but a learning from past mistakes. I see a whole democratic process indeed continuing to be threatened. The one way you threaten a democratic process is by hiding behind legislation and not allowing a democratic process to be fully demonstrated within this Legislative Assembly.

I wish Albertans realized that nothing really has changed and that we're being hoodwinked once again. You know, we look at polls, Mr. Speaker, and I can remember when Albertans believed every time a Provincial Treasurer stood up there and told us we had a balanced budget. I'm likening this amendment to that same hoodwinking, and I find it so sad that Albertans don't realize that this government continues to hide behind the political rhetoric that we hear in this Assembly.

So for everyone who supports this, I want to take you back a few years and say: you're no different than the Conservative government of that time. You're still hiding behind it in silence.

DR. L. TAYLOR: We're 73 percent.

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: You know, we keep hearing about this 73 percent. Do you know something? I look at world history, and we had the same thing, the popular vote. What did it take us to? Nineteen thirty-nine. What did it take us to in this province? An incredible debt that my children and my grandchildren are going to have to pay off.

I hear the arrogance when you try to say be open. Stop hiding behind amendments because you don't want to share people's names, because they might be your friends and it might affect their business and not make as much profit. That's what we're talking about here. If you want to be party to that, I invite you to be party to that. Because I guarantee you that 10 years from now or five years from now I'll be able to go back and show you what exactly this government has done to the province of Alberta.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I say let's not support this amendment. It undermines the democratic process. For this minister of the environment to say that it's protecting the little guy is a sad, sad joke.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to add a few comments to those already made by my colleagues regarding this particular motion as amended. The striking out in the amendment of the names of companies or operators in order to protect the little guy is absolutely ridiculous. We have a situation in this province right now where logs are fleeing this province in record numbers. I had the opportunity, this morning in fact, driving back from Jasper, between Jasper and Hinton of seeing 10 logging trucks heading westbound from Hinton with loads of lumber. Now, we've seen the government get out of all kinds of business. They got out of the business of elevator inspections, and they privatized this inspection and that inspection. It leaves one to ask the question: is anybody paying attention to what's going on out there at all? Is the minister and his department really doing the job that they're supposed to be doing?

Now, by simply saying, "Let's just publish a summary of penalties showing the number of operators, number of penalties, and total amount assessed" without getting into the detail of who is doing it, perhaps on a repeat, repeat, and repeat again kind of nature, suggests to me that either the government isn't doing the job or, alternately, they don't care, that they're not even inter-

ested in providing that information, either of which, Mr. Speaker, should be unacceptable. When you see the nature of the logging, the increased volume of logs that are leaving this province going elsewhere, you have to ask the questions: what's going on, and does the minister really know what's going on? The amendment that he's introduced, before us today, suggests that he really doesn't know what's going on and he wants to ensure that that continues.

Therefore, I would urge all members to vote against the amendment.

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

MR. CHADI: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't going to speak to this, but after listening to the debate, I started to look at the amendment, and I thought I couldn't just sit silent as well.

The minister gets up in the Assembly today and says that he is changing the motion, amending it in order to protect the little guy. Well, the change, Mr. Speaker, in the amendment itself from the original motion was that when the motion asked for "companies or operators that were charged with unlawful forestry practices, including breaches of forest management agreements and operating ground rules" – all of a sudden I look at this, and it's changed from "forest management agreements" to "Alberta timber harvest planning and operating ground rules." Well, unless there was a change of name . . .

MR. LUND: That's included in the FMAs.

MR. CHADI: Well, I'm not sure, but if it is included in the FMAs, as the minister says it is, then I hardly suspect it's the little guy that he's protecting. So come clean, Mr. Minister. Provide the information.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Order please. As the Chair understands, the question before the Assembly is on Motion for a Return 174 as amended. [interjections] It's on the amendment to the motion. All right. We have that clear. Then the question before the Assembly is on the amendment proposed to Motion for a Return 174 as proposed by the hon. Minister of Environmental Protection.

[Motion on amendment carried]

THE SPEAKER: Does the hon. member wish to speak on the motion as amended?

MR. N. TAYLOR: I think I'm allowed to close off the debate on the amended motion, not on the amendment.

I just wanted to make an appeal to the members who are not members of the cabinet. They must be getting numbers of phone calls and letters on the whole practice of forestry in this province and the whole practice of logging.

DR. L. TAYLOR: Not one, Nick. Not one.

MR. N. TAYLOR: The gentleman representing Cypress-Medicine Hat says no. I think he's probably right. Being born and raised in his constituency, I know one of the things that you offer an old sheep dog that's finally getting ready to collapse when they're around 12 years of age is the chance of being driven 50

miles to see a tree before it dies. I think that if the hon. member has his way, the dog will never even see a tree.

Now, what I wanted to get at here was that I was asking the members over there who are not members of the cabinet what they are doing. They must be getting letters and concerns about logging: private land logging, public land logging, where it's going, whether environmental damage is done or not. I would ask you to appeal here. If you vote for this motion, you're giving your minister absolute carte blanche to hide who's being fined for bad forestry practices and who is not being fined.

You must remember that like all cash fines, they don't discriminate against the big fellow. To the Essos and the Weyerhaeusers and the Alberta-Pacifics and the Mitsubishis and the Daishowas of this world money isn't going to hurt. A little logger does. So consequently when your minister has the right to hide who is being fined to try to protect the little person - it's not the little person. The ones that are doing a lot of logging are the big ones, and they don't want to be seen as doing five, 10, 15 offences.

3:20

As a matter of fact, I have in my files, Mr. Speaker, one of the largest companies in Alberta, a foreign company, that was fined \$5,000 by the minister, but the point is that they were allowed to keep the logs. The logs were worth \$15,000. Big deal. Big punishment: a slap on the hand. Then you get smothered with kisses. Well, this is what we want to know, and that's why I think I ask the members that are not members of the cabinet to just think about it a minute.

How are you going to pry loose from old Iron Jaws here himself any information about what kind of mistakes are being made out there in the forestry sector? Don't forget that forestry now is a major, major industry in this province. In fact, he's saying: just trust me. This is a case where we've got to join together on both sides of this House, all people who are not members of the cabinet to say: "Look cabinet. Look cabinet. We want to know who's being fined, how much they have been fined, and how often they've been fined to know what kind of a racket you are running here."

THE SPEAKER: The question is on Motion for a Return 174 as amended. All those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE SPEAKER: Carried.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:23 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Amery	Gordon	Mirosh
Black	Haley	Oberg
Brassard	Havelock	Paszkowski
Burgener	Herard	Pham
Calahasen	Hlady	Severtson
Clegg	Jacques	Smith
Coutts	Jonson	Stelmach

Day	Klein	Tannas
Dinning	Kowalski	Taylor, L.
Doerksen	Laing	Thurber
Dunford	Lund	Trynchy
Fischer	Magnus	West
Forsyth	Mar	Woloshyn
Friedel	McClellan	Yankowsky
Fritz	McFarland	

Against the motion:

Abdurahman	Kirkland	Sekulic
Bruseker	Leibovici	Soetaert
Carlson	Massey	Taylor, N.
Chadi	Mitchell	Van Binsbergen
Decore	Nicol	White
Dickson	Percy	Zariwny
Hewes	Sapers	Zwozdesky

Totals: For - 44 Against - 21

[Motion as amended carried]

Advanced Education Access Fund

M176. Dr. Massey moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing all data, reports, and analyses that reveal how the Department of Advanced Education and Career Development arrived at \$47 million as an appropriate amount for expenditure on the access fund.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Speaking to the motion, \$47 million was part of the budget cuts that advanced education imposed on colleges, universities, and institutes across the province, and this part of the cuts was withdrawn and set aside to create 10,000 student spaces. Those interested would like to know how that particular figure - why \$47 million? - can account for 10,000 student spaces. How was that figure arrived at?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleague the minister of advanced education I'm pleased to accept the motion.

[Motion carried]

Western Grain Transportation Subsidy

M177. Dr. Nicol moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing any report or other data compiled for or by the government between January 1, 1985, and January 1, 1995, that demonstrates the difference in shipping costs for Alberta grain farmers if the western grain transportation subsidy is paid to the producer.

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

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that Motion 177 be amended, and I would ask that it read as follows:

That an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a summary listing of reports or materials available from the government published between January 1, 1985, and January 1,

1995, that deal with the difference in shipping costs to Alberta grain farmers if the Crow benefit were to be paid directly to the producer.

The reason for the amendment, Mr. Speaker, is to be able to compile a complete listing of documents available for the member in time in order to comply with the Standing Orders related to filing motions for returns in the Assembly. We have contacted the member and hopefully the member is in agreement with this.

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

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I agree with the amendment. It'll just provide us with the background material that we need to get the information that's necessary, and I would hope all members support the amended motion.

[Motion as amended carried]

Police Services

M178. Mr. Zariwny moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of any studies, reports, or working documents prepared by or on behalf of the government between January 1, 1994, and January 16, 1995, pertaining to provincial policing.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

MR. ZARIWNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If I could speak briefly to the reasons for it. The reason for the motion for a return is for Albertans' beneficial use and for them to get a better understanding of the work of the Department of Justice in the area of jail privatization. Indeed, disclosing how the government planned to privatize its jails as well as set up the pilot project that the minister had indicated earlier is in fact a prerequisite to good government and democracy.

Thank you.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, the government will be rejecting Motion 178.

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

MR. CHADI: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I feel compelled to speak to this motion. We heard an awful lot in the last year about the privatization of different entities in this province, and policing was one of them. I was a bit concerned over what would happen with respect to a privatized police force, what would happen in terms of expenditures in this province. I think we would have probably looked at increasing the amount of money that we do spend for policing compared to what we are spending today with the RCMP system in this province. So when it was originally suggested that we were looking towards our own provincial police force, I of course at that point was a little bit confused and wondered why we would entertain such an undertaking.

I question now what it is within the documents that we're asking for that is a problem, because I certainly don't see a problem in providing that information to any Albertan. I would hope to think all members of this Assembly would rise and advise as to what it is that's in fact detrimental to any Albertan. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will allow others to continue.

Thank you.

3:40

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reason I support this motion is that I think Albertans are very much concerned with the whole area of policing in 1995, a lot of concern in terms of public safety. Polls show it; our constituents tell us that in surveys and phone calls to our offices.

There's a problem that I also hear from my constituents. My constituents are offended that the current Minister of Justice teases Albertans by throwing ideas out. They're usually recycled ideas, things we've heard before. I mean, as a native Albertan I can't count how many times I remember that we've talked about the prospect of a provincial police force. I think Albertans get weary of being teased by people they elect to make decisions.

If there are compelling reasons, cogent reasons why we can provide a better level of policing at lower cost, then why would the government be coy about it? If there has been an assessment, a study on this, why wouldn't you share it with the people that are paying the freight, the people whose streets are supposedly to be made safe by policing, whether it's through the RCMP or a provincial police force? One wonders whether this is an issue that simply comes up conveniently every time the RCMP provincial contract comes up for renegotiation. Coincidentally that seems to be the time when this matter comes up. We know that the government has done studies on this. We know that this is an issue important to Albertans. Why not table the information so Albertans can make their own decision?

Many of us have been suspicious that when we talk about provincial policing, there is a trade-off. The one clear advantage of the RCMP is a very high quality of training, probably unparalleled by police forces anywhere in the world. I think Albertans are justifiably concerned that it would take an enormous investment of provincial tax dollars to ensure that we had a provincial force as well trained as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

I get weary, Mr. Speaker, when the people we elect to lead simply throw these things out and then reel them back in and wait to see the reaction. If there have been studies, I think Albertans have paid for them. Albertans are entitled to see the information. Albertans are able to make their own conclusions.

Speaking of conclusions, one has to ask: why is it that the government wouldn't share this kind of study? They could come along and amend this. Some other ministers at least have shown some leadership by coming along and saying: well, I can't give you all that; here are the reasons why not, but here is what I will give you. We asked for "studies, reports, or working documents." The government comes back and offers none of that, not a single document. Now, that could mean that those Albertans who believe the government has done studies and do some research before they start talking about things are wrong and the government does no studies. They just simply talk idly. Well, some people may confuse impetuous decisions with decisiveness. I don't think my constituents view it that way. So let's see the report. At minimum I think Albertans are entitled to a full and a clear explanation. I'm afraid that a simple, no, we don't accept it, simply doesn't cut it, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

MR. DECORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in support of this motion. I think it's a fact that Albertans are

getting weary, even in Lloydminster, of ministers, of members of the government standing up from time to time and saying: we think we should get rid of the RCMP; we think we should look at a provincial police force. This has, I suggest, a demoralizing effect on a policing system that has served Albertans very well. Every time I hear a Solicitor General or a Minister of Justice muse, it seems to get reported in the newspapers, on media. I remember the hon. Member for St. Albert mused about it. We spent all kinds of energy and media time and discussion debating whether or not there should be a provincial police force. I don't think there should be, because I think the RCMP have served the province of Alberta well. You of all ministers . . .

DR. WEST: No, I did not.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, the minister should know that because he comes from rural Alberta. As a young boy growing up in Vegreville I had great respect and still have great respect for a police force that's part of our history, that's part of our heritage, that I want to retain. I don't want government ministers or government members standing up and saying, "Well, jeepers, I think it's time to look at a provincial police force."

Now, if there's some compelling documentation, if there's a study that shows that I'm out to lunch, show me, prove it to me, put it down on a piece of paper.

DR. WEST: Here's the study on it. Larry's out to lunch.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I thought I heard the minister of transportation saying that he was out to lunch, and I think I'd agree with that statement. He usually is out to lunch.

Mr. Speaker, this isn't a joking matter. This is a serious matter. This is an issue that tends to undermine a stability that has served Albertans extremely well. I talked about that last night in this Assembly, that our policing system, our law system, our judicial system is second to none in Canada and in the world. To keep undermining it by saying, you know, we're going to do this and we're going to do that - if I'm wrong, prove it.

There is another argument. The other argument is that if public moneys are being spent on studies - and it is our information that they are, and the minister I think is confirming that - then let's see those studies. Let's not be secretive. Let's fulfill the mandate that this government talked about when they said that they were going to be open and accountable, and they used the word "transparent." Well, let's see that transparency. Mr. Speaker, I suspect that if this issue were given to the Freedom of Information Commissioner, if he were in place today, we would have those reports. So why delay what's going to happen anyway?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona to close debate.

MR. ZARIWNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would agree with my colleagues that good and honest government doesn't have to be ashamed of disclosing any of the reports that it has prepared. There are some basic issues that have to be disclosed. The people of Alberta need to know the answers to certain questions regarding a report that I understand was prepared in November of 1994. That report was prepared by one of the minister's officers, and it recommended, as I understand, that a \$10 million savings could be had if a provincial police force was established to take over for

the RCMP. Although this report was an initial draft, it was sent to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The minister's report failed to address a number of issues, including items such as the fact that the RCMP provides our province with many services at no cost. Now, we'd like to know whether in fact the report does say that. The cost savings presented apparently in this report were based on substantially reduced salaries of the newly formed provincial police force.

As well, we understand that the RCMP responded with a scathing critique. I believe one of the reasons stated in the critique was that the police force not be established. Again, the minister has a duty, I think, to confirm or not confirm that by releasing the report.

Now, a revised report was prepared for his use, and I understand that based on that report the minister made an announcement that a provincial police force would not be established. Surely the minister would want to release this report to substantiate his announcement. It is again in the interests of the people of Alberta that he release this report, and I say that in support of this motion.

Thank you very much.

3:50

THE SPEAKER: All those in favour of Motion for a Return 178 as proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE SPEAKER: The motion fails.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:51 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Abdurahman	Henry	Sekulic
Bruseker	Hewes	Soetaert
Carlson	Kirkland	Taylor, N.
Chadi	Leibovici	Van Binsbergen
Collingwood	Mitchell	Zariwny
Decore	Nicol	Zwozdesky
Dickson	Percy	

Against the motion:

Amery	Haley	Oberg
Black	Havelock	Paszkowski
Brassard	Herard	Pham
Burgener	Hlady	Renner
Clegg	Jacques	Severtson
Coutts	Jonson	Smith
Day	Klein	Stelmach
Dinning	Kowalski	Tannas
Doerksen	Laing	Taylor, L.
Dunford	Magnus	Thurber
Fischer	Mar	Trynchy
Forsyth	McClellan	West

Friedel	McFarland	Woloshyn
Fritz	Mirosh	Yankowsky
Gordon		
Totals:	For – 20	Against – 43

[Motion lost]

Jail Privatization

M179. Mr. Zariwny moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of any studies, reports, or working documents prepared by or on behalf of the government between January 1, 1994, and February 13, 1995, pertaining to the privatization of provincial correctional centres.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Justice, the government will be rejecting Motion 179.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRUSEKER: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I need to speak to this motion for a return. It's true that the Minister of Justice has said that at least for the moment the concept of privatization of the correctional services – I want to specify "correctional services" – is on hold to allow the members with the provincial government employees, the correctional officers themselves, to try to implement savings. When the Minister of Justice was asked by my colleague from Edmonton-Strathcona earlier during question period to release the report, he made allusions to the fact – and I'm not sure whether they were allusions or illusions – that security and safety would be a concern.

[The Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker, we have not heard on what grounds the Minister of Justice feels that that would be a safety concern or a hazard. We have not had a clear indication of how government could possibly impact upon the safety of either the officers or the public or the inmates themselves. Those in fact are the three main issues that have been raised by members of this caucus, the safety of those three groups that I just mentioned.

Mr. Speaker, the Justice minister has not stood today to tell us why it is that this cannot be released. He has not stood today to tell us that there is some confidential information that cannot be released. The only thing we've heard is that for the moment things are on hold. Now, being a cynic and a skeptic, as I am, my concern is that what will end up happening is that we will see the Minister of Justice allow the correctional officers the opportunity to show how they can in fact introduce savings. You know what? I have absolute faith that the correctional officers will find those savings. I think they will be able to show ways that in fact they can save that 10 percent that the Minister of Justice has asked for. You know, what I'm concerned about is that then the Minister of Justice will turn around and say, "Okay, now I can get another 10 percent on top of that by privatizing," after the correctional officers have found the first 10 percent. The end result is that all that will have happened is that the correctional officers may in fact get a small, six-month reprieve until finally we end up seeing privatization occurring. [interjections]

Excuse me, Mr. Speaker. I was having difficulty hearing myself over the conversation of these two ministers who were so loud on the other side.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. Hon. members, can we hear Calgary-North West give his reasons why he would like Motion 179 accepted.

MR. BRUSEKER: Yes. That's what I was speaking to, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

So, in fact, until we see or hear the Minister of Justice give some valid reasons why this should not be provided, this is the kind of document that may in fact lead to a significant change in the way correctional services are provided in this province.

Now, all too often when we see privatization initiatives undertaken by the government, we get either an indication that there are no studies or that the studies are not going to be made public. Well, in fact, because they are changing the method of delivery of government services – and in this particular case we're talking about the service of providing corrections and incarceration – therefore, there is a responsibility on the government to release this information. Now, I understand that they have been very consistent. I'm not sure that I understand why that consistency is there, but they, I must say, have been very consistent in refusing information of this nature.

Having said that, I would even be somewhat relieved if we would hear the Minister of Justice or some other member of the cabinet on the front bench stand up and say, "Well, listen; we will allow your Justice critic, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, to come over and read the thing," not to take a copy away but even just to sit down and be able to read it, to see what's in it, to understand it, to give some clear indication of what the problem is. But we don't even get that assurance; we don't even get that opportunity. It's simply a flat: "No. We won't accept this. We're not going to provide you the information." Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that is irresponsible on behalf of the government. I think a document such as this that deals with the privatization of provincial correctional centres could impact on the nature of the province as a whole, in particular, as I said, the inmates themselves and, secondly, the correctional officers who are working in those facilities. As I have four of those correctional facilities in my constituency, I also have a good number of those workers. A good number of the correctional officers live in my constituency. So this potentially is a document that could impact on the lives and the livelihood of my constituents. Therefore, I want to see a copy of this.

Finally, thirdly, it could impact on the safety of Albertans that live near those correctional facilities. I've chatted with the Member for Olds-Didsbury because he, being a neighbouring constituency, has expressed some concern as well. I think all Albertans should have a chance to review this document before a decision is made by this government.

Therefore, I would encourage, Mr. Speaker, that all members should support the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona in his motion for a return.

4:10

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. DICKSON: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. It occurs to me that the government that has introduced net budgeting as a way of accounting in the Legislature has now introduced something else: net decision-making in the Legislature. In effect where we end up is that the government doesn't want to share any of the issues they've addressed in terms of coming to a policy decision. They simply want to leave Albertans with the distillate. They want to

leave Albertans with the decision at the end of the day, notwithstanding the fact that the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act provides that at some point that information is producible and is available to be shared with the people that paid for it.

So we see the situation here: Albertans know because the government told us that Mr. Bob King, the former Deputy Solicitor General, a man who's been involved with Alberta corrections for a very long time, went down to the southern U.S. and talked to people running private jails and toured private jails. Mr. King, being a pretty conscientious civil servant I'm sure, gathered volumes of material and presumably prepared some extensive reports for the benefit of the Minister of Justice and the Conservative caucus.

Is it too much to ask? Is it unreasonable for the taxpayers of Alberta, that paid for Mr. Bob King's airfare and the expenses of his trip, that paid for whatever else went into gathering this information, to be able to see it, to be able to access it? Even if the government were to come back and say, "Well, maybe we've got some policy papers that we put to cabinet that we think are so politically sensitive we don't want to share them," I believe that would be something we could debate. That would be something that reasonable men and women could argue over. But to refuse to share with members in this Assembly and, by doing that, refuse to share with all Albertans any studies, any reports, any working documents prepared by or on behalf of the government between the beginning of 1994 and February 13, 1995, just makes no sense.

I know Alderman Joanne Kerr, who represents wards in the northwest part of Calgary, had legitimate concerns on behalf of her constituents and wanted to meet with the Minister of Justice. I think he met with her and I expect probably gave her assurances, but you know, in 1995 people don't trust the elected people very much. Lord knows, they have good reason why they shouldn't have a great deal of trust. People, in the same fashion as they don't accept what lawyers and doctors and professionals tell them, want more information. They want to be able to make the judgment themselves. I think the government does itself some long-term injury by refusing to understand that that's what Albertans are asking for, that's where Albertans are at, by simply slamming the door shut and saying, "We're not sharing any of it." I don't know how many of these Wednesday afternoons in the course of a typical spring session of the Legislature we're going to go through with requests for information like this, go through this same kind of process. At some point, Mr. Speaker, I predict it's going to come back and haunt the government.

So this is one of those times where I want to provide some gratuitous advice to the government, because I know they want to stay in power and maintain support for a long time. I'm going to offer them some advice in terms of how they can do that. Part of it is, I think, that a government that would want to stay in power would look down the road and try and predict what the issues are going to be in the next election and then plan their strategy accordingly. I want to predict to the Provincial Treasurer, the man who authored net budgeting in this House and, by implication, net decision-making in this House, as I spoke of before, that one of the issues in the next election is going to be genuine openness and genuine accountability, not the rhetoric but the genuine article.

I think people are going to look back at an issue like this that has alarmed Calgarians. I see we have a number of Calgary MLAs in the Chamber this afternoon, and I'm confident that they're getting the same kind of expression of concern that I hear. Whether you're the MLA for Calgary-Bow or the MLA for

Calgary-Currie or Calgary-Mountain View or Calgary-Fish Creek, those members hear the same kinds of concerns from Calgarians that I do. It isn't good enough to simply tell those people: "The minister's looked at it. Trust the minister; trust his officials." People want more information. Reasonable men and women may disagree over whether a particular study or report should be shared, but it's just absolutely preposterous that the government would say: none of this will we make available.

I encourage the government to rethink their position on this. Jail privatization is one of those concerns that cuts right across wherever you are in the political spectrum, wherever you live in this province. There are good reasons why people are opposed to it.

One of the reasons for wanting to see this information is that it tells us a lot about the way this government approaches policy issues. Some of us perhaps are too hard on the government and think that they don't do any analyses before they come up with stands and positions and introduce legislation. I'd like the government to prove me wrong. I think Albertans would be interested to see if the government could prove me wrong, and the way they'd do that is simply by making the information available.

Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Mr. Speaker, once again we run into this veil of secrecy. It seems to me that the government has not yet realized that this is the age of information, not the age of secrecy. We've long since come out of it. It gets to be a real nuisance that we can't get at the stuff that we think we're entitled to and that we think Albertans are entitled to know about. It's no wonder that the freedom of information Bill, which was passed a year ago now I think, just lies there gathering dust. It's supposed to be promulgated this fall, but I venture to say that the government will find a way to postpone that yet again.

So here we are. A simple report or a series of reports or studies, whatever it is, on a simple matter: privatization of jails. Is it something that we should do when one looks at it from the point of view of security, cost savings, treatment, all these particular factors? Is it something that we should apply here in our province to any particular jail that is publicly run right now? We don't know. Surely we should have that kind of information. Surely people in Calgary, in Grande Cache, in Peace River, or in Edmonton ought to be able to look at the studies that have been done and draw their own conclusions.

Now, I can only think of one reason why the government is sitting on this and why the Minister of Justice intones so solemnly that there might be elements injurious to the public good or something like that. Well, give them to us. Let us make that decision. Let Albertans decide that. The only reason I can think of for the government to sit on this forever and ever is that ultimately sometime in the future they will spring this on us unsuspecting Albertans, and we still won't know whether it's a good idea or not.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to end with a challenge to the members opposite, all of those who so duly ran on a platform of openness: put your money where your mouth is; vote in favour of the release of simple information.

Thank you.

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

4:20

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Yes. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in favour of this motion. Like my colleagues, I am deeply con-

cerned that once again this government is cloaking a decision in secrecy. There has to be a decision at some point in time as to whether they're going to let this issue die and allow our correctional institutions to continue the security system with the public-sector employees.

We know in our community of the city of Fort Saskatchewan, where we've housed the provincial correctional centre for many years – I believe it was 1904 – we've done that with a sense of security in our community. The underlying factor that concerned our community – whether it be city council, myself, the citizens living within the boundaries of Fort Saskatchewan, or the rural people living in close proximity – was that if indeed this government was going to make some significant changes to the way our security system within our correctional system worked, we wanted to be consulted. I think that's a fair and reasonable request. Part of that consultation obviously should be based on full information.

Now, like the Member for Calgary-*Buffalo* said, if there is indeed information within this study, which the Justice minister has indicated did take place, then we would accept that those parts of the study that would not serve the public interest in a positive way should be removed. But the remainder of the document and any other information that has been paid for with taxpayers' money should be fully shared with the communities and with the correctional system, if not all Albertans, so that they can become part of the decision-making process and do it on a well-informed basis.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I continually hear the Premier of this province saying: well, share your ideas; share your recommendations. But when we actually get to the bottom line, when we want as a community and as Members of the Legislative Assembly to participate in that process, suddenly they won't share the information with you. They've closed the door on you. It's back to the old-style politics of secrecy and nothing open in this government whatsoever.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I can well remember when the decision was made that the old correctional facility in the city of Fort Saskatchewan was totally inadequate and that there was no way they could renovate it to continue to house the inmates. So we went out looking for a site. The provincial government auctioned land and found a site for the new Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Centre, only to find that suddenly a spanner was thrown in the works: the site they had chosen was not acceptable to the major industrial group in the northeast of the city of Fort Saskatchewan. Indeed, because of Bhopal and the insurance question, the industrial group did not want a correctional system sitting on their doorstep. I remember being called to Government House and cabinet ministers saying: you know, as mayor of the city of Fort Saskatchewan, if you want to keep this correctional system within your community, you have to find an alternative site.

Now, remember, Mr. Speaker, at that time there was a downturn in the economy, so suddenly communities started clamouring for this facility, but previously nobody really wanted a correctional system. Nobody wanted a hazardous waste treatment plant. Really, they weren't looking at an economic benefit from either of those facilities because the economy was buoyant, but suddenly we had this downturn. So what I did in essence as mayor of the city of Fort Saskatchewan was look out there to see where we could find a site. That site happened to be in my backyard. I literally look out the back of my home into the correctional centre, and I don't have a problem with that to this point in time. Neither do my neighbours, and neither do the farmers or the other people that live around the Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Centre. But I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, I get

concerned when I start to hear them talking about privatizing the correctional officer system. My sense of security goes completely down.

DR. WEST: Hogwash.

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: You know, ministers can sit on the other side of the House and say "hogwash." I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that as long as this government won't share full information so that we in the community can make a decision whether privatization of a jail system is the way to go and that our communities would remain secure, it's not hogwash. It's hogwash over there because you will not share full information so that we can make an intelligent decision. I would suggest that indeed if there was nothing in that study that would be negative to this government, it probably would be shared at this time.

I fear for the correctional officers, who at this late stage of the game are being invited suddenly to sit at the table with government to look at some of the solutions and find this 10 percent saving. Mr. Speaker, they offered that months ago. They said: can we sit down with you to find a way of coming up with savings in running our correctional systems? It was declined at that time, and the government went off and did this study and whatever else, I'm not quite sure, south of the border, spending taxpayers' money. It's a wonder they didn't go off to the U.K. They can show you in the United Kingdom what happened when they privatized jails over there. We know some of the disasters that have happened south of the border, yet we still have to go running off for an American-made solution or a British-made solution instead of sitting down with the correctional officers and the mayor and council and citizens in these communities.

Mr. Speaker, I would once again say in this House that when the Premier invites us as an Official Opposition to bring forward recommendations and give sound advice, it's neglected. I could share many things that we've shared over the years with regard to health care, like looking at regional boundaries. Now, you're wondering: what's this got to do with this motion? [interjection] It's got a lot to do with the motion, because in essence this government will accept information or recommendations when it suits them, but when it doesn't suit them, they won't share their full information with people, the taxpayers who've paid for this study.

Mr. Speaker, once again I urge the members, particularly outside cabinet: stand up and be counted. Put your money where your mouth is, and vote appropriately for openness and accountability.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenarry.

DR. L. TAYLOR: That's a nicer jacket today, Laurence.

MR. DECORE: I'm glad you like it. I put it on especially for you, hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Speaker, I want to start by saying that I was deeply concerned just moments ago when a minister of the Crown yelled across the way and said that he doesn't listen to anything that the opposition or the members of the opposition say. I just want that recorded, and I hope that the hon. minister was just engaged in repartee and he didn't mean that, because I think that's the kind of talk that is dangerous for a society. When a minister starts to think that he's holier-than-thou or king or something, it's a dangerous kind of situation.

Mr. Speaker, this is an issue that is of great importance to Albertans. We've seen in the Edmonton area – I've experienced as mayor in this city a situation where people have escaped from correctional institutions. Great fear comes about when that happens. When you get a convicted killer out on the loose, you're frightened. Albertans have a reason to be concerned about this issue. Now we've got a government that's talked about privatizing correctional facilities. We've got a government that's flirting with the idea. We know that the government has spent public money to study this issue and restudy it. Public moneys are being used to look at a very sensitive issue affecting Albertans. Now, our caucus was worried about this issue. When an expert came to do some other work in Edmonton and in Alberta, we asked that expert from the United States to come and address our caucus, to talk about this issue of public safety. This expert, who knows about the situation in the United States, who deals with the guards and who deals with the system there, was able to tell us that there is great concern in those areas, in those states where privatization of jails has occurred. [interjection] It was his advice, hon. minister of transportation – I'm glad you keep interjecting, because I'm convinced you're listening to this, and that's good. I like that.

4:30

Mr. Speaker, I listened to this, and a number of our members put questions to this expert and said: what about this; what about public safety; and what's your experience with such and such? And the answers that we got, I was convinced, came from a person with confidence and understanding, a person who was able to give us good advice and direction.

I feel confident now in standing and saying that I have a great fear, I have concern about privatization of correctional facilities, because from this expert advice I think there is some danger to the public when you start to privatize correctional facilities, when you start to put in some people who are sort of part-timers looking after the safety of Albertans.

Well, by the government taking the position that they're going to suppress this information, not make it available to this Assembly or to Albertans, I can only come to the conclusion, Mr. Speaker, that there's something in those reports which backs up the findings that we've come to and concluded ourselves, and that is that there is a danger to the public safety of Albertans. If there isn't, put up the information to prove us wrong.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Roper.

MR. CHADI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, feel compelled to rise and speak to this motion. It's a motion that concerns all Albertans, I think, in a very profound way. The motion as written, as suggested, would ask for "any studies, reports or working documents prepared . . . on behalf of the government." I don't think there is anything in this motion that says that you have to present us with all studies. It says "any studies" that will talk about privatization of provincial correctional centres.

Now the scary part. I've heard so much, listening to the debate here this afternoon from members and colleagues on the Liberal side of the House, that in fact Albertans are worried, Albertans are scared. It's an absolute fact, Mr. Speaker. I had an opportunity – and I'm grateful for that opportunity – last fall for a couple of months to travel Alberta and meet extensively with people of all walks of life and all ages. If there is one concern out there,

it was a concern with privatization of correctional centres and facilities in this province.

My colleagues that have spoken here this afternoon are not wrong in what they're saying. I have firsthand knowledge and experience from meeting with Albertans from all different parts of this province, and they tell me the same thing. I think if there is one area of concern, it is public safety and public security. No matter where I went – whether it was in Medicine Hat, or it might have been in Lethbridge or even up in High Level – they were worried about it. I can tell you one thing, Mr. Speaker: they were worried about it in areas where there were centres that would be privatized, areas like Fort Saskatchewan, places like Grande Cache, even in the remand centre. The concern was that the privatized centres would not provide the security that the government would provide, that the people collectively would provide.

I can tell you that I'm on record and will continue to be on record, Mr. Speaker, that some services must remain in the hands of the people collectively; some services must remain in the hands of the government, services like policing, services like correctional facilities, jails, land titles offices, that sort of thing. Can you imagine somebody going to a 7-Eleven and handing them a bill of sale and saying: "I just bought so-and-so's property. Here's a bill of sale. Register it in my name"? Those are the types of services that must remain in the hands of the people, and privatization of jails is one that concerns and terribly concerns people. It terrifies them throughout the province.

Another area of concern was the people themselves, the jail guards. They had some serious concerns with respect to their jobs, their families, their homes. These are concerns that we have to take seriously as legislators. We can't just pass them by as though they're unjustified. When somebody's about to lose their home because they may lose their job or their families are going to have to put up with less, they're worried, and they have a right to be.

So, Mr. Speaker, when I first heard that the privatization was not going to be an issue in Alberta, I was jubilant. I was happy. I was happy for those correctional guards. I was happy for the people of Alberta. Then another report came out that said, "Well, we're putting this on hold." The privatization idea is only on hold. It's not that it's a thought that has passed by. This is on hold.

Now, if we're on hold, I want to know and I think all Albertans want to know what it is that compelled you to put it on hold. If there's a chance of the idea coming back – and it would appear as though the Minister of Justice would want to bring it back – then I think we ought to see what is in those working documents and those studies. I think Albertans have a right to know. I think the government has an obligation to put that information forward. Here's a perfect opportunity to do it. I encourage all members to seriously consider this and bring that information forward now.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on this issue because of some things that are happening within the department presently. As we're all aware, there's been a task force set up with some employees as well as some department members in order to look at how to effect cost savings with regards to the jail system. One of the things that's extremely important in order for a task force to work is for there to be good faith. One way to ensure that there's good faith is to ensure that there's information available and that that information is available to both sides, the

employee group as well as the members from the department who are sitting around that table.

In voting against this particular request, I think the government is showing – and hopefully the Justice minister will prove this nagging doubt that I have to be untrue – and indicating that they're not willing to provide the information that will allow for a fair assessment of how to effect cost savings within the jail system. I think that by voting for this particular release of information from the government, it will indicate and will show us that they are willing to look at all aspects of providing cost savings within the system. The information within this particular report must be able to indicate where there are cost savings that can be effected. I would think that one of the ways this information can be made use of is as a springboard for the discussions so there's not a lot of time spent with regards to getting the issue started.

So with those words, I conclude my remarks. Actually, I do want to make one more point before I do that, and that is that I would hope this task force is not set up to fail from the beginning and that it would be a gesture of goodwill by the minister to provide that information.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Very quickly, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. I'm pleased to be able to participate in the debate on Motion for a Return 179.

Mr. Speaker, in listening to the debate this afternoon on this particular motion for a return and the importance of the motion presented with respect to these "studies, reports, or working documents . . . pertaining to the privatization of provincial correctional centres," one of the things that has not been mentioned in this debate is that we have seen tabled in this Legislative Assembly a Bill by the provincial Justice minister on the privatization of jails and then very mysteriously that Bill vanished from the Order Paper, not to be seen again. It's incredible that the Minister of Justice would table a Bill in this Legislature to debate the issue of privatization of jails, presumably based upon the studies and reports that have been provided, and then pull that Bill off the Order Paper. So it says to me: I wonder what these documents really do say. What do these documents say that prompted the Justice minister not to proceed with his Bill on the privatization of jails?

4:40

Now, if the Minister of Justice had a defensible position – that it was based on greater efficiency, that it was based upon saving money for the provincial government – well, I have absolutely no reservation and no doubt that he would have come forward and he would have defended that Bill on the information he had that it was the right thing to do for the bottom line. I say that, Mr. Speaker, recognizing that everything this government does is in relation to the bottom line, and absolutely nothing this government does is in relation to people or in relation to jobs or in relation to public safety or in relation to keeping Albertans productive, vibrant, and active. That has nothing to do with what this government does. It all has to do with the bottom line.

So, Mr. Speaker, that then leaves us asking the question: what is it that these documents say that probably, presumably, proves that the government is dead wrong on the issue of privatizing jails or at least the reasons for privatizing the correctional system in the province of Alberta are wrong and cannot be justified? I

suspect that is the reason the government is not prepared to release these documents as requested in Motion for a Return 179.

I join my colleagues on this side of the House to ask hon. members opposite, who supposedly are for open and accountable government, to put up and vote in favour of this motion for a return.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

DR. L. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise. You know, we're looking at a motion that talks about "a return showing copies of any studies, reports, or working documents prepared by or on behalf of the government." What they're looking for is past information. I'm afraid it is a party and a group that lives in the past. We're interested in the future and the outcome. What they should be talking about is the outcome, the outcome of decisions.

We are in the process of consulting employees, making employees part of this organization, part of the decision-making process. Obviously, they're not interested in that. They're not interested in the employees. In fact, what I've heard this afternoon from those people is nonsense, absolute nonsense spoken by fools. [interjections]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order.

DR. L. TAYLOR: You know, you give these people information . . .

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I have to rise on a point of order. [interjections]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, hon. members. There is one speaker, and the Speaker normally asks for the appropriate citation.

Point of Order Abusive Language

MR. DECORE: Twenty-three (h), (i), and (j).

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Okay. Which of those would you prefer?

MR. DECORE: Any one of them.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: So you're going to speak on 23(j), I presume.

MR. DECORE: Twenty-three (j). I know the hon. member didn't mean that. He got excited in the heat of debate. When he talked about fools, I know he didn't mean that, and I ask that he withdraw that comment.

DR. L. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: You wish to address the point of order, hon. member? Yes, Cypress-Medicine Hat.

DR. L. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I did mean it.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I'm sorry. I did not hear what you said.

DR. L. TAYLOR: I did mean it, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: You were supposed to address the point of order.

Well, hon. members, I think that clearly we have a case of someone making an abusive or insulting comment likely to bring disorder. When we characterize nonsense and fools and use language such as that, the honourable thing to do would be to withdraw that characterization, hon. member, and continue on with reasoned debate as to whatever your point of view is on Motion 179.

DR. L. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I'll review my words, but I think you'll see that I didn't call them fools. I didn't call any particular member a fool. No particular member was called a fool. In spite of that, I'll withdraw the comments.

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

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: He's withdrawn the comment.

MR. DECORE: Fine.

Debate Continued

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Now, Cypress-Medicine Hat, to continue, in a less exciting fashion, reasoned debate.

DR. L. TAYLOR: Thank you. I'll try and control myself, Mr. Speaker, and not speak the truth quite so directly.

You know, Mr. Speaker . . .

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, 23(j).

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Do you have a new point of order, hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan?

Point of Order Abusive Language

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Yes, Mr. Speaker, 23(j). I heard a further insulting comment coming from the member. As a Member of this Legislative Assembly, that continued and insulting manner I find is in violation of the Standing Orders.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, you have the better of me in hearing. I did not hear any additional comments by the hon. member. Perhaps other extraneous comments were going back and forth, although some members who occasionally engage in that don't appear to have done so at this time. The Chair cannot rule on words that the Chair has not heard, so we'll have to wait on that point of order, Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan, until we have a chance to see the Blues. But I must confess that I did not hear any such language and was hoping to hear the hon. member carry on his reasoned debate on Motion for a Return 179.

Debate Continued

DR. L. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I'll try and do that, of course. I'll try and speak up perhaps. Or maybe turn the mike up a bit so the Speaker can hear it.

You know, I really in a sense object to what has just happened. We've been sitting here since – I don't know. Almost – what? – an hour and a half or two hours, Mr. Speaker. We've been listening to a lot of foolishness, people wasting our time.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Wasting time?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. If you object to something, you have a perfect right to do so, but you do so in form. Shouting back and forth is not a helpful way to debate.

MR. DECORE: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: You have a citation, hon. member, for the point of order?

Point of Order Imputing Motives

MR. DECORE: Yes, 23(i).

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pardon me?

MR. DECORE: Twenty-three (i).

Can you turn up the juice a little bit, please?

Mr. Speaker, I think it's degrading for the hon. member. I have more respect for the hon. member than he's showing today, and when he imputes false or unavowed motives to me or to members of this caucus, it's wrong. When he says that we're wasting time when we're asking for debate on a motion that is sensitive to Albertans, when we're asking for documentation that is supposed to come from a government that's transparent, there's something wrong here.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, you're entering into debate, and you've already had your occasion to enter into debate.

I would agree with both parties in the sense that there is right now a waste of time in the sense that Cypress-Medicine Hat has in his language baited members of the opposition, and members in the opposition in some senses have risen to the bait. What I am asking as Chair is: could we please return to reasoned debate on the issue at hand.

4:50

DR. L. TAYLOR: Well, Mr. Speaker, I certainly don't intend to be a bullbaiter. That's not my intention. I wish to speak on the motion. As long as I could have some time without interruption, it would be possible for me to do that.

Thank you.

Debate Continued

DR. L. TAYLOR: Back to my point, Mr. Speaker. We're talking about release of documents, in the past of course, documents that really have no relevance to much of anything. It's really not a probable or plausible thing to release documents to the members opposite. I mean, we had a good example just recently of a report that was released, a report that came from the Fraser Institute. What did those members do? They took it; they distorted the report; they made it try and say what it didn't say. That's a fact of life. It was presented in the House the next day, and the full distortion of this report as presented was quite clearly pointed out. They tried to, for instance, suggest that seniors in Alberta were paying \$28,000 worth of income tax, if I remember correctly. I mean, it was simply not the truth. The average income of seniors in Alberta is about \$12,000 to \$15,000. Yet we had members on the opposite side that were deliberately distorting those particular reports. So, quite frankly, it's difficult to . . .

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

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Citation?

**Point of Order
Relevance**

MR. BRUSEKER: *Beauchesne* 459, relevance. What's this got to do with the motion on privatization?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. members, relevance certainly has been something that has gone through the mind of the Chair on many occasions during this rather interesting and prolonged debate on Motion 179. We've heard all about siting of prisons in constituencies. We've heard about a variety of matters, some of them that you might wish to characterize as being bordering on the relevance. So although on this occasion one wonders at the point that the hon. member is making, the Chair has already given rather wide leeway to relevance.

However, having said that, we would ask the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat and any other member who wishes to enter into debate on Motion for a Return 179 to please keep it relevant to the issue at hand; that is, the call for documents relating to privatization of prisons between the dates noted.

Debate Continued

DR. L. TAYLOR: Thank you. My comments were . . .

MS LEIBOVICI: A point of order. I'd like to . . .

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, we're having just one after another. We just had a point of order, and I made a ruling.

MS LEIBOVICI: It's another.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: You have an additional point of order?

MS LEIBOVICI: Yes, I do, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Would you please cite it, Edmonton-Meadowlark.

**Point of Order
Parliamentary Language**

MS LEIBOVICI: It's 492 *Beauchesne*, unparliamentary language: distort. I request that the hon. — and I'm starting to use that term very loosely — the hon. member retract his statements with regards to the distortion.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, in your question to the hon. member, you use a baiting term. I'm just trying to get all hon. members to get back to treating one another as hon. members. When you say you call him "loosely," that's just begging more bait, which unfortunately may be taken.

I'm going to ask the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat to ignore that baiting and to debate, in the few moments that may remain, the issue at hand.

DR. L. TAYLOR: I couldn't agree with the Speaker more, quite frankly, about this type of harassment that's been going on. I will . . .

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member. Hon. member. Cypress-Medicine Hat, we're just having one bait after another bait after another bait.

Would the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona please conclude debate on 179.

Debate Continued

MR. ZARIWNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I find the minister's rejection and suppression of Motion 179 unbelievable. But I think that for the record — for the purpose as well of some of the statements made by the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat — I'll list some of the decisions and statements made by the minister where in fact he has used this archaic information, this old information, and this past information to make his decisions.

We know that in the fall session, as well as from correspondence, the minister has shown that he will, through his ministry, privatize jails. Now, there's no doubt that he was going to experiment with at least one jail becoming private. Red Deer was mentioned as an example. Medicine Hat was also considered. The agenda of the minister was very clear. When we asked his predecessor on March 7, 22, and 28 of last year, there was reference to a report, and the report would be guiding that minister's decision. When in the fall we asked similar questions of the current minister, he made reference to a report that was going to guide his decisions. As well, during a meeting with officers of the AUPE on October 3 and subsequently on October 17 with some of the officials of the department it was made clear that there was in fact a report. The minister at that time made it very clear that he was going to privatize based on a report, that he was going to have a pilot project for one jail based on that report. Throughout the fall and even leading to this session, the minister indicated to us that he had a report which he had reviewed or was about to review with his caucus. In fact, I recall that when he was in Red Deer, he made this same statement. This was about two or three weeks ago.

The minister has instilled in many of the citizens of Alberta as well as most if not all the correctional guards a roller-coaster fear of privatization and concern for their safety. It's behooving the minister to release that report to alleviate that fear.

Now the minister announced just last week that the report which the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat has mentioned and which he used last week indicated a savings of 10 to 15 percent. That, to me, is not a past report or past information. That was just last week. The report is right there on his desk. We know that. It's looking at him, straight at him. He's presented no solid reason for not allowing it to be released, other than in his statements to this House he said that it had sensitive information. Now, surely privatizing the most invasive authority that government has — the power to put us in jail, any Alberta citizen — is sufficient reason to release the report that he's referred to and that his department, his ministry, has referred to in the last half to one year. Giving up this authority to a private agency and using as a basis the report that he has and then deciding not to disclose it is, in my estimation, being irresponsible.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would say that the minister by not releasing his report is hiding something. That's the only thing I can conclude. I believe what he's hiding is that the report shows there is not a substantial cost savings, and if there is, there is very little. What it shows is that there's a serious problem that exists with the privatization of jails, and that is that public safety is being jeopardized.

With those remarks, I would ask that the House support this motion, and I urge them to support it.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Having heard the motion by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, would those members in favour of Motion 179 please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The motion is defeated.

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

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Abdurahman	Dickson	Sekulic
Bruseker	Henry	Taylor, N.
Chadi	Hewes	Van Binsbergen
Collingwood	Leibovici	Zariwny
Decore	Nicol	Zwozdesky

Against the motion:

Amery	Fritz	McClellan
Black	Gordon	McFarland
Brassard	Haley	Mirosh
Burgener	Havelock	Oberg
Clegg	Herard	Paszowski
Coutts	Hlady	Pham
Day	Jacques	Renner
Dinning	Jonson	Severtson
Doerksen	Kowalski	Stelmach
Dunford	Laing	Taylor, L.
Fischer	Lund	Trynchy
Forsyth	Magnus	West
Friedel	Mar	Woloshyn

Totals: For - 15 Against - 39

[Motion lost]

Welfare Reform

M182. Moved by Mr. Bruseker on behalf of Ms Hanson that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a list of all agencies, interest groups, and individuals that the government has consulted with specifically on welfare reform from April 1993 through to February 13, 1995.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleague the Minister of Family and Social Services we accept the motion.

[Motion carried]

Workers' Compensation Board

M183. Moved by Mr. Van Binsbergen on behalf of Mr. Kirkland that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing any reports or data compiled for or by the government pertaining to the privatization of the Workers' Compensation Board between January 1, 1991, and January 15, 1995.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, this motion related to information for the Workers' Compensation Board I am more than delighted to accept.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Mr. Speaker, I was so flabbergasted by this immediate and so affirmative response that I am delighted. I thank the Government House Leader.

[Motion carried]

Road Maintenance Privatization

M184. Moved by Mr. Chadi on behalf of Mr. White that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing any reports or data compiled for or by the government between January 1, 1991, and January 1, 1995, that demonstrate the savings realized by privatizing road maintenance activities within the province.

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, I will be rejecting that motion today.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are you ready for the question?
The hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

MR. BRUSEKER: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Just briefly. You know, I suppose that the minister has fulfilled what is required to be done by simply standing and saying no. But here we have a case where the minister is here, presumably has - and maybe I'm being generous here - a handle on what's happening in his department with respect to "savings realized by privatizing road maintenance activities within the province," yet no rationalization is given. I can't imagine where there would be safety or security concerns here, as have been given in other instances, so it begs the question: what problem is there with releasing this information? Under a government that supposedly supports the concept of open and accountable government, freedom of information, access to data, wheelbarrows full being provided, this would be a relatively simple thing: to show that by moving ahead with privatizing road maintenance activities, which is what the motion for a return deals with, in fact there would be savings.

I'm puzzled by the brevity of the answer given by the minister. I'm puzzled by the content of the brevity and would question why he would see that it would be a concern to provide this information. I guess the only conclusion that one can come to is that the government is so ideologically driven by the word "privatization" that, like Pavlov's dogs that salivate when the bell is rung, they must start to salivate when they hear the word "privatization" and that no matter whether it's good, bad, or indifferent, they're simply going to go ahead. Perhaps really the report that has been provided demonstrates that there are no savings, that in fact there may be increased costs by moving this way. Nonetheless, it would be interesting to see what kind of evidence the government uses in making decisions. So I would suggest that all members would benefit by asking the minister of transportation to provide this information.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Utilities.

DR. WEST: Yes. May I make a few comments?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, you can't. The Chair begs to apologize, hon. minister. Apparently the rules do not provide for

a second go-around at it except to the mover of the motion for a return. So I'll ask the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

MR. SEKULIC: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in favour of the government providing this information. I listened to the Minister of Transportation and Utilities rise to his feet. This is a Member of the Legislative Assembly generally known for his belief in the marketplace, and I support him on that. I think the marketplace is something that government needs to look to to enhance and improve the way it does its business.

This is an opportunity to sing the praises of privatization with evidence, and that's what's missing here. Here's an opportunity for the marketplace minister to rise and provide substantiation for his beliefs. I couldn't think of a better opportunity for this minister to jump to his feet and say: "Here it is. I'm going to show you. I'm going to show you why it's the better way." But, you know, Mr. Speaker, in fact that very, very thick book that we received just at the time of the budget, A Better Way II, may not in fact be a better way. This lack of transparency in this area is really something that should be questioned very seriously. This request does not entail any new work. There's no new work. There's no duplication. Simply it asks that if there have been "any reports or data compiled for or by the government between" certain dates, quite recently, "that demonstrate the savings realized by privatizing road maintenance activities within the province," they be tabled. This is very straightforward. In fact, once again I must reiterate, it's an opportunity for this minister to substantiate his beliefs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker's Ruling Speaking Twice in Debate

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Chair would draw attention to several matters arising out of the attempt by the Minister of Transportation and Utilities to speak a second time. All members are advised that our Assembly is exceptional in the manner in which it deals with motions for returns. No other Assembly both allows amendments to motions for returns and allows debate on amendments and a requirement for time dealing with motions for returns.

We have before us two possibilities. If the Assembly were to give unanimous consent to waive the Standing Orders and permit the minister to reply, that would be one thing, or secondly, the minister could offer an amendment and then speak. So I'll await determination by the minister to see whether or not he wishes to do either of those. If not, then we'll go to the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

5:20 Debate Continued

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, I note with interest that the government hasn't suggested that there is no such report. That would be one explanation for the position they've taken.

DR. WEST: Budget documents. Look through your plans. They're all there for you.

MR. DICKSON: It's interesting. There will be some members that will assert fallaciously that if Albertans looked at the three-year plans, we're going to find the information, but the reality is that when we look at the three-year plans and we turn them upside down and we shake them and we look to see if there's something

caught between the pages, we find it just isn't there, Mr. Speaker. It isn't there.

What's of interest is that I think on this one we have one government member that's going to support us. Now, I think I can say with a reasonable degree of confidence that there is one government member that will support us, because if members look at the Order Paper from page 6 to page 7, they will notice that the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti is also interested in how we can save costs for municipal infrastructure and provincial infrastructure for people in local municipalities.

What's of interest to me is that here we have a government member that recognizes that we want to minimize costs and inconvenience to local residents in terms of doing the required infrastructure. A key part of the required infrastructure is roads and road maintenance. So I expect that the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, to be logically consistent, because he's propounding Motion 504, which is going to be dealt with one more time in the House, would join us in pushing for this kind of information because that's really all members on this side want to do.

We also want to minimize costs. We want to ensure that Albertans are getting a net benefit. Members on this side don't believe holus-bolus that privatization is always better. I think Albertans recognize that it makes little sense to save a dollar of government expenditure if it costs individuals \$2 to go out and access the same service. So I think that if we assume that the report is there - because the government hasn't denied it, by implication they acknowledge the report's being done. I can't prejudge this, but if members were going to support the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti in moving his Motion 504, then they would certainly embrace this and embrace it with some enthusiasm.

Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Roper in conclusion on 184.

MR. CHADI: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In closing debate on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Mayfield, I would like to suggest to the House that in Public Accounts this morning, when we were discussing with the Minister of Transportation and Utilities the privatization of different road maintenance activities, the minister made it clear that in fact we have undergone some of the privatization, that in fact we're downsizing our fleet, that in fact we're selling some of that fleet by auction once a month, I think he said. So there must be some data that has been compiled for the government that would suggest and demonstrate that savings were realized by this privatization.

Now, the minister got up a little while ago and held up the business plan book. I'm looking at the business plan book right now, and there's nowhere in the business plan book that shows there were savings realized by privatizing road maintenance activities. Nowhere in the business plan does it say that. I think the minister's got the information, and I think he should give it. I don't see where it would harm him in any way, shape, or form. The only thing that I could see is that in fact, Mr. Speaker, the minister is holding it back just out of spite, and I would think that it would be wrong for him to do that.

Thank you.

[Motion lost]

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, I move that we now call it 5:30 and adjourn the House until 8 o'clock this evening, when we'll reconvene in Committee of Supply.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader has moved that the Assembly do now adjourn and that when we reassemble this evening, we do so in Committee of Supply at 8 p.m. All those in favour of this motion, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Carried

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

