

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, October 19, 1995**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 95/10/19

[The Speaker in the Chair]

head: Prayers

THE SPEAKER: Let us pray.

Our divine Father, as we conclude for this week our work in this Assembly, we renew our thanks and ask that we may continue our work under Your guidance.

Amen.

head: Presenting Petitions

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present a petition signed by 693 people urging the Alberta Legislature to

1. De-insure the performance of induced abortion . . .
2. Use the community-based resources that are already in place that offer positive alternatives to abortion.

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

MR. HENRY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I beg your leave to present a petition today signed by Albertans mainly from Edmonton requesting that the Legislative Assembly urge the government "to recognize the importance of, and fully support, the provision of Early Childhood Services" in this province.

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

MR. BRACKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your permission I'd like to table a petition from the parishioners of St. Albert parish, who urge the government to

1. De-insure the performance of induced abortion . . .
2. Use the community-based resources that are already in place that offer positive alternatives to abortion.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave this afternoon to present a petition signed by 324 Albertans urging the Legislative Assembly to

urge the Government to give legislative protection to Wind Valley by officially designating it an Ecological Reserve, and to not allow the Limestone Valley Resort development to proceed without a full Environmental Impact Assessment and Natural Resources Conservation Board hearing.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have a petition with 526 names from my constituency running from Legal to Morinville to Smoky Lake.

We the undersigned residents of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly 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.

I might suggest that the caucus over there was not one of the positive alternatives.

THE CLERK: Notices of Motions.

Speaker's Ruling Introducing Bills out of Sequence

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, the hon. Leader of the Opposition has given written notice for leave to introduce a private member's Bill. He wishes to introduce Bill 232 out of sequence as Bills 227 to 231 have not been introduced. The Chair feels it is appropriate to comment on the procedure for private members' Bills before Bill 232 proceeds further.

The practice of the House for private members' Bills changed after the agreement between the House leaders of September 9, 1993. That agreement, as members are aware, gave rise to amendments to the Standing Orders which now place added importance to private members' Bills. The practice of preparing and introducing Bills has rested in large part on the procedures established based upon understandings reached by the House leaders. It has been the practice that private members' Bills be introduced numerically according to the results of the Bill draw. Members will recall that last spring there were some six Bills introduced in sequence after Bill 220.

In order to alleviate any difficulties and to ensure that the process for private members' Bills is not adversely affected, the Chair would encourage the House leaders to discuss the procedures before we progress on Bill 232.

head: Tabling Returns and Reports

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

MR. HIERATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chairman of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices I would like to table the report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the Calgary-McCall by-election held on Thursday, April 20, 1995.

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

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table a letter from me to the Ethics Commissioner following a question in the Legislature last week and also the response from the office of the Ethics Commissioner to that letter.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to table five copies of the discussion paper Technology Integration in Education as well as five copies of the Business Involvement in Education questionnaire.

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

MS LEBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two documents to table this afternoon. The first is an excerpt from *Hansard* wherein the Premier implied yesterday that the health care forum that I was holding would be biased.

The second is a tabling of the participants at that health care town hall meeting so that the Premier can see that the forum is unbiased. I would also like to extend an invitation again to the Premier or to any other member of the government to attend that particular forum.

Thank you.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I indicated yesterday at the close of question period while we were discussing points of order that I would be tabling in the Assembly documents indicating that I had brought certain correspondence to the attention of the Premier prior to raising questions in this Legislative Assembly. I would now like to table four copies of a letter which I sent to the Minister of Health on April 11, 1994, clearly copied to the Premier. Attached to this correspondence were copies of a letter from the Premier to Dr. Morgentaler and a letter from the Minister of Health to the doctor in response. As I said, this was sent April 11. In particular I table these documents in reference to the Premier's comments in *Hansard* as reported on page 1923, where he said: "Had the hon. member [referring to myself] had the courtesy to phone me and ask . . ."

THE SPEAKER: Order, hon. member. This is not a debate.

head: Introduction of Guests

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a large group of students from Bertha Kennedy school. I'm very fortunate that they are here today. There are 99 students with a few relatives and a godchild, Melissa McDonald, in there. The teachers with them I taught with at one time: Mr. Brent Andersen, Mrs. Sonia Reid, and Mrs. Heather McKay. The vice-principal actually taught me once upon a time, so that shows you how very young I am. They have some parents with them: Mrs. Julie Chichak, Mrs. Kim Augruso, and Mrs. Brenda Hillis. I would ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted this afternoon to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly 31 fine students from Holy Redeemer school with their teacher Mr. Russell, their teacher's aide Mrs. Delaney, and parent Mrs. Harris. These students come from the rural part of my constituency, the Ardrossan area. They are in the members' gallery, and I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely privileged today to introduce to you and Members of the Legislative Assembly a hardworking young gentleman friend who has been newly elected to the Edmonton city council as alderman for ward 3. I'd ask Robert Noce, who is with my assistant, Loretta, to stand and receive the warm welcome from this Assembly.

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

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly a fine citizen of my hometown in southern Alberta and a public member on the board of governors of the University of

Lethbridge. I ask Gary Johnson, who is sitting in the members' gallery, to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head:
1:40

Oral Question Period

Private Medical Clinics

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, the process for reviewing correspondence in the Department of Health is very thorough. Letters are written by research officers. They are then reviewed by a manager. They are then reviewed by a director, an assistant deputy minister, the deputy minister, and the minister. That's five levels of review. When a letter is under the signature of the Premier, there are probably one or two more levels of review. In spite of all these checks, the Premier suggested that his letter stating the government's intent to cover facilities fees at private clinics contained a major typo. Will the Premier please tell Albertans how such a major typo could have occurred when the letter was reviewed by at least six and probably more people whose job it is to write and review the Premier's letters?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I take full and absolute responsibility for two and a half years ago having not read that letter thoroughly. I take full and absolute responsibility. But again I say: is this man, is this person calling me a liar? Is he calling me a liar? Stand up and say it, and then say it outside the House. He doesn't have the spine.

MR. MITCHELL: The Premier thinks it's a saloon, Mr. Speaker, and we settle it out back. Well, we don't. We're going to debate it right here.

Will the Premier explain why, when this letter was brought to the attention of the Minister of Health and the Premier in April 1994 – it's just been tabled by my colleague from Edmonton-Glenora – the Premier at that time didn't correct his typo and produce the so-called draft that he tabled in the House yesterday? How did that slip between the cracks?

MR. KLEIN: I really don't have any idea. I do know that I get literally hundreds of pieces of mail every day, original pieces, never mind the copies. If I had to start to read every copy that was sent to every MLA, be they opposition or government members, I mean, I would have no time to do absolutely anything else.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the hon. – I would ask the leader of the Liberal opposition to be understanding in this particular situation. But I would challenge him one more time to stand up and say it if he's suggesting that I'm lying. Be honest enough to say it, and then say it outside the House. [interjections] No, no. They want to chitchat about it, and they want to call me down. He doesn't have the spine to do it, because he knows I'm right.

MR. MITCHELL: All typos aside, Mr. Speaker, will the Premier state once and for all what exactly his policy is on private clinic facilities fees?

MR. KLEIN: I would be happy to. Mr. Speaker, the situation as it exists today is the situation we would support. The hon. Minister of Health has put some matters on the table that we think would be a compromise, but our primary position would be the situation as it exists today. It's not broken. It hasn't hurt a soul. It's eased the pressure on the public health system. It has been working for 10 years. It's not broke; why fix it? The Liberals

across there and their big ally, Mrs. Marleau in Ottawa, are the only people who want to sort of dismantle it and say, "Well, there's something wrong with this thing," and fix it.

I've asked the leader of the Liberal opposition, Mr. Speaker, time and time again to go to patients who have been treated at the Gimbel eye clinic and say to those patients that they have done something wrong. He won't do that. I am now getting hundreds – literally hundreds – of letters from patients, from people who have received treatment at the Gimbel eye clinic, saying that they have received absolute superb treatment. Superb treatment. Will the leader of the Liberal opposition stand up there and say: the Gimbel eye clinic as it now operates should be closed down? Will he contact the patients who have received treatment at the Gimbel eye clinic and say to those patients: you have done something wrong? That's what he's saying in this Legislature.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, it's very interesting to say that it's only the Liberals that disagree with the Premier's position on facility fees at private clinics. I want to table copies of four letters signed by the Minister of Health two days ago in which she states very clearly, and I quote, "It is our intention to eliminate facility fees in the semi-private clinics," on the same day he was saying that it wasn't his intention to do that. He's simply reiterated that position very, very clearly – no typos – today, moments ago, before all of us. Will the Premier tell Albertans why the Minister of Health is privately telling the federal government one thing while he is standing in this Legislature and saying quite a different thing? Just another typo?

MR. KLEIN: Well, I think we're sort of . . . [interjections] Are we onside here, Shirley?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Yes, we are. [interjections]

MR. KLEIN: Our primary position . . .

MR. DECORE: Which one is going to take the polygraph now?

MR. KLEIN: For the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry, who just asked me a question across the alley, what I will do: if he will provide me with the equipment, I'll set it up in front of my office, and we'll have a confessional stand, starting with the leader of the Liberal opposition; okay? And next in line would be all the members of the press.

Mr. Speaker, the minister and I are saying that our primary position is the situation as it now exists, but if we have to go some distance to reach a compromise with the hon. federal Minister of Health, we're willing to do that. What we are saying – and this is fundamental to the question – is that what is inherently unfair about this situation is the arbitrary nature of the deadline. On that point, we're one hundred percent together.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, what he's saying is that he supports facility fees and his Minister of Health doesn't. [interjections] That's what he's saying. [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order, hon. members. Supplemental question, without the preamble.

MR. MITCHELL: Before the Premier's position unravels too much further, could he tell us whose policy on facility fees is the government's policy: his or the Minister of Health's?

MR. KLEIN: Well, I'll have the hon. minister supplement. I have said this publicly to the media, and I'll say it here in the Legislature: our primary position is the position that now exists in the province of Alberta. I've always said: it's not broke; why fix it? I don't get a lot – as a matter of fact, I don't get any letters or phone calls of complaints about private clinics as they now operate, and there are numerous private clinics. They operate here; they operate in other jurisdictions. They have been operating this way in some cases for in excess of 10 years. There simply isn't a problem. The only problem that exists is in the eyes of the federal minister and the Liberal opposition over here. It hasn't hurt anyone. I would like them to table all the letters of complaint they've had relative to private clinics, and I will table all the letters of support that I've had. This is starting to become an issue because it has been given a profile, but before it had any profile, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't an issue.

So our primary position is: it's not broke; don't fix it. But we're willing to put on the table some positions that perhaps could be construed as compromise. [interjections] Well, no. Mr. Speaker, we want to settle this whole situation through negotiation. That's what negotiation is all about, and negotiation, as the leader of the Liberal opposition well knows, involves compromise.

1:50

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I think perhaps I should clarify for the hon. member. [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order please. We've had enough of the noise for a little while today.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of points that really need to be reiterated. Alberta operated under a set of rules, as did their clinics, for over a dozen years. On January 6, 1995, the federal Minister of Health changed the rules, changed the interpretation, and put us in a position of being in contravention of the Act. We agreed at that time that we would work with the federal minister to reach agreement. That's our desire: to work in that position.

I wrote to the federal minister – and if the hon. member would lay all of the correspondence on the table instead of picking lines and pieces, we would have a better understanding. I wrote to the federal minister on October 11 – and it's been tabled here – and I laid out a set of principles that we were willing to negotiate. The federal minister wrote back to me and said: I don't see in your letter that your proposal eliminates facility fees. I wrote back to her the letter the hon. member is suggesting and said: in fact, yes it does. That is the basis of our negotiation, Mr. Speaker. It is on this proposal.

The fact remains that we were not contravening the Canada Health Act until the federal minister changed the rules in January and, if I can believe what I read, again yesterday. What we've said is that we want sustainability. We want a set of rules that is clear and that does not change from week to week. That's what we're asking for. I have asked for a meeting with the federal minister to clarify these items. We will have that meeting at the first instance.

I would appreciate the hon. member using all of the correspondence in his questioning.

MR. MITCHELL: Yesterday the Premier was confused about what he was writing, Mr. Speaker, and today he is confused about what he is saying.

Will the Premier now support the position of his Minister of Health so clearly reiterated here and so clearly written here, her position to eliminate facility fees in semiprivate clinics? Could he stand up in the Legislature and clarify it all and just support that position?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, it is quite clear. The primary question is: leave it alone. It's not broke; don't fix it. Right? Secondly, I will support the minister in saying that if there is some way that we can reach some compromise, if we can negotiate this with the federal government, we want to be cooperative. We want to demonstrate that there is indeed the flexibility that the Prime Minister has been talking about within Confederation. This pertains as well to the referendum question. We want to show that we're willing to be good partners in Confederation and to reach compromise if compromise is possible.

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

Deputy Minister of Health

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I asked the Minister of Health for clarification surrounding her allowing the Deputy Minister of Health to accept fees for speaking engagements, the minister clearly stated that these engagements were made prior to Jane Fulton becoming deputy minister. I'm tabling copies of the transcript of a CBC radio program in which an official spokesperson for one of the organizations for one of the paid speaking engagements states that an agreement to have Dr. Fulton speak for a fee was finalized on August 9, 1995, more than a month after Jane Fulton became deputy minister. Now, my questions are to the Minister of Health.

AN HON. MEMBER: A typo.

MR. SAPERS: Let's hope it's not a typo.

Will the minister please tell Albertans which statement is correct: what she was told by her deputy or what the conference organizers are saying?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I definitely cannot speak for the conference organizers, nor would I try to, contrary to what some of the hon. members across the way might do. I clearly stated that in Dr. Fulton's contract with Alberta Health, cleared by the Ethics Commissioner of this province, there was an allowance for her to carry on speaking engagements that she had agreed to, to carry out contracts that she had had previous to that. I said that I would be pleased to put those engagements before this Legislature, and I will. If the hon. member would like me to further review this particular instance on the basis of somebody else's information, I would be pleased to do that for him.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you. I would like that review very much, Mr. Speaker. So would all Albertans.

When exactly will the minister table in the Assembly the list of commitments that Dr. Fulton has made to be paid for speaking while she is serving as Deputy Minister of Health?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I will lay that before this Legislature at the first opportunity. When this issue was raised in the Legislature, Dr. Fulton was not available. She was in fact away. I have spoken to Dr. Fulton about this matter. She is in

full agreement that those should be tabled here, and we will do it at the first opportunity.

MR. SAPERS: Will the minister tell Albertans exactly how many days off her deputy minister takes to collect payment as a fee-for-service speaker, and when did that position become a part-time position?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member may believe that he is making points by casting aspersions on a highly respected person in this province. I do not appreciate this. I think that Dr. Fulton is a well-respected person, as has been clearly stated by awards that she has received over the years. I think this is a new low.

Dr. Fulton is entitled to vacation the same as every other person who is employed by our civil service, and over the course of the period of time the only time that Dr. Fulton will be using for speaking engagements that she had agreed to before assuming that responsibility will be taken as vacation time. There will be no days off for that particular activity.

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

2:00 Electoral Boundaries Commission

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In September each household in Alberta received a flyer of the 1995-96 Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission. In the spring this Legislature passed legislation directing this commission to review the existing electoral boundaries and to report back to you within seven months on that review of the existing boundaries. Because of the recent municipal elections, I am concerned that Albertans may miss the opportunity to make representations to this commission because of an obscure notice which requires a written notification by midnight, October 21, of any group who wishes to attend the public meetings, which will be held later in November. My question is to the Minister of Justice. Will he please contact this commission and ask them to revisit this prescreening date in order to accommodate the new town councils and municipal governments that have been elected?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Justice.

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just happen to have a copy of that flyer. [interjections] I'm sure the opposition are very interested in this, Mr. Speaker, and maybe if they would stop cackling over there, I could give them an answer.

There is a provision in here that talks about "notice should reach the Commission before midnight, October 21." I think the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie has a good point, particularly with new councils not yet sworn in and with the recent municipal elections, that this date of October 21 should not be an absolute date. It's my understanding that it is not in fact an absolute date, but I think the point is well taken, and I would undertake to the Assembly to make the comments of the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie and other members who have also brought this to my attention available to the Electoral Boundaries Commission.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MRS. BURGNER: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Is the minister aware that the wording in this document already identifies what is being

considered by this commission without regard for section 3, which asks for a review?

MR. EVANS: I think what the hon. member is referring to, Mr. Speaker, is on page 3, where it says: "The Commission is considering after preliminary deliberations" three separate matters. I think we have to refer to the purpose and the reason for the commission, but again if the hon. member feels that what is being suggested by the commission is going beyond its mandate, I'll undertake to provide the commission with those concerns.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the document, which I'll file a copy of for the Assembly, there are specific identifications of percentages of population within ridings. If this review is not done as requested in the legislation, will the Minister of Justice be able to explain to Albertans how they will have to pay for the additional cost of new boundaries if the report is not tabled within the seven months that has been asked?

MR. EVANS: Well, Mr. Speaker, there is a requirement in the Act for the preliminary report of the commission to be available within seven months of the creation of the commission. That would make it the end of January 1996. I think the hon. member brings up a good point, that there are deadlines that have to be met, and I'm sure the commission is moving along on it to serve out its mandate and to have that interim report available to us in good time.

If you take a look at the purposes of the commission itself, Mr. Speaker, I think it is quite clear that they are first to review the existing electoral boundaries established under the Electoral Divisions Act and then to make proposals to the Legislative Assembly. I have every confidence that the seven-month time frame for the interim report is a reasonable one. We in fact debated that in the Legislature. In fact, the further five months for the final report is a reasonable time as well. I'm looking forward to receiving the final report of the commission by the end of June 1996.

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

Special Waste Management Corporation

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Mintz report, an independent review of the joint venture agreement, the half billion dollar sweetheart deal between Bovar and the Alberta government, finds that it was not fair to taxpayers, that it exposed them to unacceptable financial risks, that it provided every incentive for too much plant, and operated at too high a cost. It further finds that it was even bad environmental policy. To add insult to injury, the Mintz report finds that Bovar was paid \$30 million more for risk and taxes that it should not have received. My questions regarding 'BovAtel' are to the Acting Premier. Can the Acting Premier tell this House why no independent fairness review of the joint venture agreement was undertaken either in 1989, when it was mandated, or in 1993, when it should have been, and why the government didn't fight an election on it if they were so darn proud about it?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, what I can do for the hon. member is take that question on notice on behalf of the Provincial

Treasurer, and I am sure that he will respond to the hon. member just as quickly as possible.

DR. PERCY: How can any minister in this government, Mr. Speaker, sit there and deny responsibility for a \$500 million loss, a half a billion dollars? Surely someone up there is accountable. Would somebody over there please stand up and say, "Yes, we're responsible and accountable"? Stand up and accept responsibility.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I don't think that anything in my previous answer denied responsibility. In fact, I think it quite properly refers to taking the question on notice on behalf of my colleague the Provincial Treasurer. I know that the Provincial Treasurer will respond very quickly and I'm sure with a great deal of enthusiasm to the hon. member's question.

DR. PERCY: One more time, Mr. Speaker: will somebody over there stand up and say that they are responsible and accountable for losing a half billion dollars of taxpayers' moneys?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I will take the question on notice for the Provincial Treasurer, which is, I believe, the proper way to deal with this according to the protocol of this House.

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

Grazing Leases

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A recent survey done in the constituency of Calgary-Fish Creek indicated a concern about grazing leasing. A large area of our provincial Crown land is in the white zone and is used by farmers and ranchers under the grazing lease agreement. Farmers and ranchers need grazing leases to expand their cattle operations and their interest in pasture. My first question is to the Minister of Agriculture. When the oil and gas companies move onto this Crown land for exploration, who gets paid for surface rights and the right to enter?

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

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is generally a private agreement between the lessee and the oil company as to what arrangements are made regarding right of entry and the costing of the use of that particular land. The lessee is the one that is paid for this.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Environmental Protection wishes to augment.

MR. LUND: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I think it is very important to note that on all Crown land, whether it's under disposition or not, the Crown gets an entry. We get anywhere from \$200 to \$450 an acre, depending on the type of soil that it is, and that's paid to the Crown.

MRS. FORSYTH: My second question to the Minister of Agriculture: when we as the government own the land and the mineral rights, why don't we also keep the revenue from the surface rights?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: This is a good question. Really the answer to this is: what is the payment made for? The payment basically is made for damages that are incurred through the use of that land, through the restrictions that are placed on the use of that land because of that land being put to different uses by the oil company. So, indeed, what this is doing is paying for inconvenience, and it's paying for loss of the use of that land.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Why don't we change our lease agreement to reflect grazing rights only and retain all other rights, including surface rights?

2:10

MR. PASZKOWSKI: In 1987 a task force was struck to study this whole situation. They toured the province, met with all the stakeholders regarding this particular subject. At that time it was decided that because indeed there was inconvenience created to the lessee – there was indeed loss of use of that land to the lessee – he should be compensated correspondingly. That issue is then negotiated between the oil company and the lessee, who come to an agreement, and that is a true free enterprise system.

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

School Construction

MR. BENIUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions will be directed to the Minister of Education. Will the minister confirm that all costs associated with the construction of all new schools, public and Catholic, in Edmonton with his permission are paid for entirely by provincial funds and that there is no extra property tax levy on any property near the school?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, this is correct, but there is one other provision or exception, and that is that when it comes to the acquiring of the land or services associated with the land, that may result in some impact with the agreement of the municipal government. In most cases we are fortunate through city planning to have school reserves established across this province, and therefore the amount of funding for the land is negligible or zero. In some cases it is necessary to acquire additional land, and sometimes there are mutual agreements reached with municipal authorities.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. BENIUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Why has the minister not approved the construction of any new schools in the older, developed areas of Edmonton with an established student population, specifically my riding?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I think it's very important to know and to remember that the priorities that come to Alberta Education and through Alberta Education to the school buildings branch are those priorities established by the local school board. For instance, it is my understanding that in the current year for certain the Edmonton public school board has chosen not to make any applications for any new construction. In terms of what the requests were in previous years, I'd have to check that, but we are not going to initiate the building of new schools in any particular

area in this province unless it is done in co-operation with and it has some priority with the local school board.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. BENIUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister agree to write a letter to the newly elected Edmonton public and Edmonton Catholic school boards advising them that he supports equalizing all new school construction throughout Edmonton and endorses new schools being built in the older developed areas of Edmonton?

MR. JONSON: No, Mr. Speaker. As I stated earlier, this decision in terms of an overall plan for school buildings is a responsibility of the local school board. Yes, I congratulate all new school boards across the province, but they, including the school boards in Edmonton of the Catholic separate and public systems, have that responsibility to assess the needs as they see appropriate and make building submissions accordingly.

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

Workers' Compensation Board

MR. PHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some of my constituents have to wait for weeks and sometimes even months before their WCB appeals are dealt with, and whether they're happy or not, they still have to have WCB as their workers' compensation agent. My question today is to the minister responsible for WCB. What is the maximum waiting time for WCB appeals in Alberta today?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, waiting times for appeals have been reduced over the last couple of years, and it's been an exciting process to see, as people have applied the various management principles and consistency of management, those claims reduced. It varies from one situation to another. If it's fairly straightforward, waiting time is not normally that long, but if in the wait for the appeal, as often happens, the injured worker brings forward more information – it might apply to an injury itself or some added medical advice or a specialist – that in turn can cause delay. So it can vary quite a bit from one application to another.

The member is correct. There are times when a person can actually wait several months until a final appeal actually comes up and is dealt with. The reasons for it, as I've stated, vary from one to another.

MR. PHAM: To the same minister: how many appeals were successful in 1994?

MR. DAY: I guess it would depend on whose version of success you're talking about. There's a huge number of claims that are administered in a year, as a matter of fact about 165,000. That's not 165,000 injured workers but from either the previous year or a claim having to come back two or three times a year; 165,000 claims were administered in 1994.

Now, if there is an appeal wanted, first of all there's an internal appeal that is provided for the worker should they so choose. Last year, in '94, about 3,000 workers chose to go through the internal appeal process. That's about two percent of all claims that were administered. Of those 3,000 or 3,100, approximately 75 percent were upheld. That means that in 25 percent there were some adjustments made.

Of the 2,000, then, that are left whose claims were upheld, some of those people want to go on to a totally independent appeal. That's where they go to the Appeals Commission. So of those appeals, 870-some in 1994, over three-quarters were upheld, and in about a quarter there were some changes made.

Sometimes there are still people who are upset, and maybe justifiably so, and they request the Ombudsman to look. There were 110 requests last year to the Ombudsman. Of those 110, there were 13 that were deemed by the Ombudsman to merit some administrative adjustment.

So in a nutshell you've got about 97 percent of all claims that come settled to the satisfaction of the claimant, about 3 percent go on to appeals, and a few of those are adjusted further.

MR. PHAM: To the same minister: will the minister do something to change the WCB monopoly and give working Albertans more choices? [some applause]

MR. DAY: Well, I see the members of the Liberal Party applauding for the suggestion of privatizing the WCB, so I'll look forward to some input from them on that, because that in fact is exactly what the member is talking about.

The challenge, the great challenge, of course, over the last two and a half years has been to say to the WCB: we will take the politics out of this operation, and we request that this operation run as an insurance company, not a social agency. That's why legislation passed in the spring in this House took away the guarantee, as it were, from the taxpayers of this province in terms of the unfunded liability of the WCB. Now business principles are being applied. The WCB is operating with a surplus and not an unfunded liability.

In terms of a monopoly situation, there are many choices available in terms of services to the worker, but I would be open – and I've said this before. If any member can show how a company – and it would have to be a very large one – could come in and actually buy and deliver the services of WCB, I would be interested in looking at that as long as it meant that the services to the workers were not in any way hampered and in fact would be improved and the cost to businesses lessened. Then let's engage in that conversation.

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

2:20

Physiotherapy

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In August of this year Heather McKay was in constant pain and basically immobile because of a prolapsed disc. Her doctor prescribed physiotherapy. Upon phoning the Sturgeon community health centre, she was informed that there was a three-week wait just to be assessed. Unable to wait three weeks, Heather went to Grandin physiotherapy, where she was assessed and treated the same day. However, Heather's physiotherapy bill after six treatments was \$180, and she's been told by the Capital health authority that she will not be reimbursed. My questions are to the Minister of Health. Why do you insist that we do not have a two-tiered health care system when Heather McKay had to pay \$180 just to be able to walk?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I know that the hon. member would want to research this information for herself, but maybe she would like to explain to me about the six other provinces and territories in Canada that do not cover any rehabilitation physio-

therapy through their funds and ask if they have a two-tier system there. In Alberta we have suggested that rehabilitation is important. We have also stated that the use of public dollars is important, and we have put in place a program that meets needs of persons in this province.

Again, I challenge the hon. member. There are only four provinces in Canada that offer this service. Are the other provinces offering a two-tier system?

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental to the Minister of Health of Alberta: will the minister promise right now to tell all Albertans caught in this policy confusion that they will be reimbursed?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, what I will tell the hon. member, this person, and all Albertans is that we will continue to meet the high quality health services delivery systems in this province. We will continue to believe that rehabilitation is important to persons, and we will continue to fund through public dollars those areas that are considered through an assessment process as high needs. That is the commitment I will make to this person and to the taxpayers of this province, whose tax dollars I am responsible for.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's disappointing that the minister doesn't see physiotherapy . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order.

MRS. SOETAERT: My final supplemental: why is it that you can no longer go to the physiotherapist of your choice in Alberta under this program unless you are willing to pay out of your own pocket? Solve this confusion and this mess in physiotherapy.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I again invite the hon. member to get current and get with it. On October 15 we laid out clear criteria for who would be funded under the rehabilitation program. I will remind the hon. member again what the rehabilitation program is. It is not just physiotherapy. It is a multi-disciplinary group of rehabilitation services, all of them important in their own right. We have put in place clearly a guideline, a numbering system from one to 15. We have said that this program will cover those with needs who are rated a seven and above. Blue Cross and other insurance companies have told us that they will insure the areas that are six and below.

Again, I think the hon. member should applaud that this government recognizes that as an important service and funds it, unlike many other provinces, some of which may have Liberal governments.

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

Workers' Compensation Board (continued)

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are also to the Minister of Labour, and they are also concerned with the Workers' Compensation Board. The board recently announced that 1996 assessment rates for business were going

down, and this is the second consecutive year that this has happened. [some applause] While I, too, would applaud that, on behalf of my constituents I want to be sure that these reductions are not on the backs of the injured workers. My first question: what stipulation if any does the board put on the money returned to employers as part of this premium rebate?

MR. DAY: Actually, Mr. Speaker, there's a stipulation put forward that's very clear even before they can apply for those dollars, the stipulation being that you have to have a health and safety program instituted at the workplace, not just on paper but as a matter of fact in practice. So what is required is an outlay of resources, of cash dollars from the companies before they can even get onto this program. Once they have come up with the resources and shown their intent and their seriousness by being willing to invest in health and safety, then they enter the program, then it's monitored, and then, and only then, if injuries are reduced, which clearly shows a benefit to the worker, a certain portion of that reduction goes back to that company in cash dollars. Some companies, in fact, do use it to go back into ongoing health and safety. Others use it to expand their operations, which means they can hire more workers. Others use it for different purposes.

So the clear stipulation is stated up front: you must have an occupational health and safety program in place, active, promoted by everybody on the work site, right from the front line to the head office. If you achieve the results, then you get some dollars back.

MR. DUNFORD: Mr. Speaker, I want to continue the focus on the injured worker. My second question: is the infrastructure still in place to assist in the needs of injured workers?

MR. DAY: Actually, I think we can say that it's not only in place but expanded, even over the last couple of years. There's more to infrastructure than simply a worker walking into an office. In fact, when you are dealing with a worker being brought back to health from an injured state, you're talking about medical specialists, you're talking occupational advisors, and you're talking about vocational people who assist in updating. There's a wide range of services. I can say that that network has probably been expanded over the last couple of years, but it is indeed a significant infrastructure. It is in place, and it is meeting the needs in our view.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, then why are centres such as Lethbridge losing their WCB service centres?

MR. DAY: That is a very good question. As a matter of fact, it's one that I raised myself relative to Red Deer when I was confronted with the news that there would be a reduction of operations in the Red Deer WCB office.

As you know, we have, as I stated earlier today, taken the politics out of this operation and require the WCB to run as a business and to run as an insurance company, not a social agency. That has been to the benefit of the workers. So any kind of plan they have in terms of moving services around must be accompanied by a clear business case. For the very reasons of infrastructure, which I just addressed in the previous question – it was actually injured workers telling us that they were frustrated with

the process of being at one office maybe to look at their claim on paper and to have to travel to another jurisdiction, many times Edmonton or Calgary, to find that network of services: doctors, medical specialists, vocational upgrading supervisors, occupational supervisors.

There's a wide range of services not always available in the regions. Because of that, in some cases it was determined, following a pilot that was run in Grande Prairie and an overall assessment of case management on a regional basis, that in some cases the case managers would be moved to the centres where all of the services would be provided to allow more of a one-stop shopping approach to the workers. We are monitoring it, and I look forward to hearing from members if they're seeing anything they want me to know about that.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

Grande Alberta Paper Ltd.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question is to the minister responsible for forestry. Last week, as also mentioned by the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, there was a report released, a \$1 million, government-commissioned multi-sciences report, that says:

Further allocations of the few remaining uncommitted public forests in Alberta is inadvisable and not consistent with current national and international directions in forest stewardship.

My question to the minister is very straightforward: does the minister reject the conclusions of this study?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Environmental Protection.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We dealt with this issue on Tuesday of this week. In any case, I made it very clear at that time that, no, we're not rejecting this report. There's a lot of very valuable information in it. We gather information from a number of sources; this is just another one of those sources.

2:30

I've asked the department to do a thorough investigation of the report, but I must also remind the hon. member that a number of the things that are in the report are things that we're already doing. This government for some time has been operating on a sustainable yield basis, and I certainly will not be signing any agreements that could not operate on a sustainable yield. We also have many planning processes in place that address a lot of the other issues, like wildlife. There's more to the forest than just a harvest, and we're doing those things.

I've also got to remind the hon. member that on our staff we have many professional people. We have professional foresters, people who have taken an oath like any other professional. They're not going to be telling us and advising us to do things that would be to the disadvantage of the forest. We have biologists. All of these folks have input into our policies and our agreements.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, a very interesting answer in view of the fact that he has been quoted in the Southam press as saying: we will find the lumber for Grande Alberta Paper.

Does the minister intend to get this timber for Grande Alberta Paper by cutting back some areas now under existing FMAs? Or is he going to direct the 16 pulp manufacturers in this province to supply this mill with pulp so they can make paper, just as he

directs people to cut logs to supply processors in Alberta with logs?

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member made a statement earlier indicating that somehow we were going to all of a sudden find this material. I want to remind the hon. member that currently the annual allowable cut in the province would range anywhere from 22 million cubic metres to 25.6. It's not a pure science, but those are the estimates. Currently we're harvesting somewhere in around 13 million to 15 million cubic metres. So there is a lot of fibre still available for allocation, and the ability to use more chips is certainly one that we are looking at.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, how can he go in both directions at the same time and in the same speech? The fact is that he said that there's no further timber around and then he said that there's plenty of timber around.

In view of the fact that he doesn't know which way he's going, would he agree to an independent audit, which would help him decide what direction he is to go?

MR. LUND: Well, Mr. Speaker, obviously the hon. member wasn't listening. I guess he thought that maybe somehow I had been indoctrinated by a Liberal so then flip-flopped and went every direction.

I was very clear in indicating that there was timber that was not allocated at this time. There are a lot of chips out there. We are going to be changing and hoping that we can move away from the direction of chips. That will probably raise the price, and what it will do is make more timber come out of the bush, and we will have more fibre to work with.

head: Members' Statements

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

Politics in the '90s

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to use my time today to talk a bit about politics in the '90s. I didn't say 1990s necessarily, because there is a strange phenomenon in history. It seems that in the last decade of each century there's upheaval within our world, and of course this year and this decade is showing itself to be no different. Many governments today are trying to deal with a redefinition of services to the public, trying to deal with deficit and debt and of course looking at what is the core of businesses that they should be in.

So the politics of the '90s, Mr. Speaker, then comes down to a situation of trying to set priorities on limited budgets. In order for us to do that, of course, in looking at government roles, we first have to decide what that is. One can pick immediately on the concepts of public safety and security, some standards in delivery of education and health, and also a climate for economic development. But we really must attune ourselves, I believe, to providing for a transition to the community level. I support this concept in the sense that it has always been my belief that the closer we have the decision-making to the actual payer, the better off we are. Whether it be the taxpayer to a federal system, whether it be a taxpayer to a provincial system or a ratepayer to a municipal level, these people are all the same people, and they exist both in your community and in mine.

So we must have a call to arms today for those communities with their agencies, with their nonprofits, with their families, and

especially the churches so that as vacuums are being created within our communities, they can fill those gaps.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May I do two duties in one right now? Thank you very much.

head: Introduction of Guests
(*reversion*)

MRS. SOETAERT: I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce another class from my constituency in Spruce Grove, Brookwood school. We have 16 visitors, and they're very bright students in a grade 6 class that asked very good questions. Their teacher is Tina Hayes, and their teacher's aide is Mrs. Hilsabeck. They're here with parent helpers Mrs. Kessir, Mrs. Jacobs, Mrs. Morton, and Mrs. Petasky. I would ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Now I get my two-minute statement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: Members' Statements
(*continued*)

Special Education

MRS. SOETAERT: I remember as a child being in a primary grade classroom where the teacher taught 33 students across three grades. The teacher handled things well until a new student arrived. The boy was about seven years old, and in the language of the time was described as slow. Unable to cope with the special needs of that youngster and the demands of 33 others, the youngster was placed in the back of the classroom and ignored. He often seemed unhappy, and I'm sure the teacher, unable to meet his program needs, felt badly too. Thankfully we have progressed since those days, and we acknowledge that there are a variety of special needs that our students have that educators across this province have learned to fulfill.

Due to recent cutbacks in education, we are starting to see the return of lost students in the classroom. The Liberal caucus believes that children should be integrated where appropriate for both the child and the rest of the classroom. In order to properly include special-needs students, a program must be properly funded. Teaching tools, teacher aide time, and appropriate teacher time for these children must be available. Now because of government cutbacks we see classrooms built for the size of 25 students housing 30-plus students, including those with special needs.

When special-needs children are properly integrated, all children benefit from knowing that different children face different challenges in their lives. Every child deserves equal access to quality education. It takes a special person with special training to teach special-needs students, and now because of cutbacks we see classrooms of over 30 students, including possibly three children with special needs. There are often no aides in the classroom, and the teacher doesn't necessarily have a background in special education. Who is this serving?

Mr. Speaker, this government has a responsibility to our young people, and it is time to live up to that responsibility.

Thank you.

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

Conflict of Interest Allegation

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A philosopher once noted that "if a reputation is not carefully preserved it dies quickly," and a proverb in scripture reads that "a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches." My name, my reputation and that of my husband were called into question in this Legislative Assembly on October 12 by a question put to the Premier by the Leader of the Official Opposition. It was alleged that I and/or my husband were in a conflict of interest position as a result of the Calgary regional health authority retaining the services of HealthDesign Group Architects Ltd., an architectural firm in which my husband is a partner. The Ethics Commissioner has ruled that there was no breach of the Conflicts of Interest Act in this matter, and I tabled his letter in the Legislature earlier today.

Mr. Speaker, I understand and accept the role of the opposition to bring to the attention of this Assembly those issues that they feel are in the public interest, but I also believe that caution must be exercised when one's name and one's reputation are to be part of that question.

2:40

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to quote from the Ethics Commissioner's letter, in which he identifies that there is no conflict. He further says:

I also wish to acknowledge the proactive approach you have consistently taken since you became a Member of the Legislative Assembly . . . [in advising] me from time to time of your own actions to ensure that you do not receive information relating to projects which might involve your husband's firm.

Further, Mr. Speaker, had the opposition really investigated this issue, they would have noted that my husband is currently serving as the president of the Alberta Association of Architects, reflecting the regard of his peers as a senior member of his profession and the confidence in his abilities and leadership.

Mr. Speaker, in elective politics, in the final analysis one's name and reputation are the only currencies that count, and I therefore ask members of the opposition to please be careful. My name and reputation and that of my husband and therefore that of my family are important. Allegations of personal impropriety are easy to make, but a name and reputation are hard to earn. Be mindful that members of the regional health authority and other professional associates have also been touched by this unfounded allegation. My constituent asked to address this letter to the opposition, that this line of questioning will not assist us in health care restructuring.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: Projected Government Business

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we near the end of this week, I'd like to ask the Government House Leader his plans for next week.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to say that our plans together will involve, depending on what we finish with today, if we do get to Bill 43 and Bill 44, Monday in the afternoon we would look at second reading of Bill 46. If we haven't yet finished Bill 44 today, then we would also deal with that in Committee of the Whole. In the evening we'll be in Committee of the Whole on Bill 45, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act. Again, should time allow, we would deal with Government Bills and

Orders as they're on the Order Paper now. Also on Monday afternoon we will look at second reading of Bill 48, which is on notice right now, the Teaching Profession Amendment Act. So that would be in the afternoon of Monday the 23rd.

Then Tuesday, October 24, in the afternoon, if Bill 48 is not done, we would continue with Bill 48 and other Bills as they may be on the Order Paper, and the evening in the same vein. Also, we'll look at third reading of Bill 45, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act. That's Tuesday evening.

Wednesday evening. At that time again we'll be in second reading, Committee of the Whole, or third reading. I will be in ongoing daily communication with the Opposition House Leader to look at what order best meets the needs of the members of the House.

On Thursday, then, we would look at Royal Assent of Bill 45, which is the appropriation supply Act, and continue dealing with the Bills as they are on the Order Paper, with the usual advance daily notice in the mornings.

head: Orders of the Day

head: Government Bills and Orders head: Second Reading

Bill 45 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 1995 (No. 2)

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Provincial Treasurer I would move Bill 45 for second reading.

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

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to this Bill, and I'm going to focus my comments on the appropriations for Environmental Protection. We now have as context for the \$147,500,000 both the fairness assessment by Coopers & Lybrand, which basically assesses whether or not the buyout of the joint venture agreement is fair, and today we also have in our possession a report by Dr. Jack Mintz, which is an assessment of the fairness of the joint venture agreement. That ultimately is the issue at hand: the fairness of the overall package that the government signed.

The fairness of the buyout is in fact a sideshow because it is constrained by the conditions of the joint venture agreement. So when one brings up the issue of fairness, it is only appropriately applied to the fairness of the joint venture agreement. There are a number of issues that should be assessed with regards to the fairness of the joint venture agreement, and let me just list the four that we had asked Dr. Jack Mintz, an internationally respected tax economist at the University of Toronto, to assess.

First, we asked him to assess whether or not there was an appropriate sharing of risk and return between the private-sector participant, Bovar, and the government. Second, we asked him to assess whether or not the joint venture agreement included appropriate incentives so that the private-sector participant would act in a cost-efficient manner. Third, we asked Dr. Mintz to assess whether or not the joint venture agreement was transparent, or open, so that Albertans, when assessing the operation of the Alberta Special Waste Management system, would know that it was operating smoothly and that there were the right signals there to act efficiently. Fourth, we also asked whether or not there

were mechanisms in place by which the provincial government could have exercised control so as to monitor and veto decisions undertaken by the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, when you assess the response of this independent fairness review of the joint venture agreement. Dr. Mintz finds that, first of all, there was a totally, absolutely, utterly obscene spread of risk between the government and the private sector. You have \$500 million in losses by taxpayers. The private-sector participant, Bovar, gets an 18.5 percent return on equity. That is not fair. It is totally inappropriate, and it should be repugnant to every member of this House.

Second, when assessing the incentives of the agreement to act efficiently, Dr. Mintz finds that every element of the joint venture agreement led the system and certainly the private-sector participant, Bovar, to have too much capital and to pad the expenses. Through having too much capital and by padding the expenses, they made more money because they had a rate of return that was based on the capital invested in the system. So every incentive for them was to be uneconomic: build too early, build too big, and build too costly. That was the name of the game from the perspective of Bovar, and, boy, did they ever do it. Witness the half billion dollar price tag.

Furthermore, Dr. Mintz, in assessing the fairness of this joint venture agreement, found, when he looked at the formula that set out the rate of return, that it allowed a risk premium to Bovar, but there was no risk because they were guaranteed a rate of return. Furthermore, it allowed for an imputation for taxes, but they never paid taxes, Mr. Speaker. So they received over \$30 million that they ought not to have because the joint venture agreement was too rich and tilted far too much in favour of the private-sector participant, Bovar. Every element of that contract was tilted in favour of the private-sector participant.

The third point, with regards to transparency: was it open and clean? Again, Dr. Mintz's arm's-length review found that it was not. The nature of the relationship, for example, between Bovar and Chem-Security was not appropriate. They could charge each other consulting fees. Who could monitor whether the consulting fees were appropriate? On what basis were they paid? It didn't matter. It would be part of the payment in the system contribution. It would be part of the base. Bovar would be laughing all the way to the bank. So it wasn't open; it wasn't clean.

Perhaps, I think, most damning is that when you assess the joint venture agreement, as Dr. Mintz did, you find that the government did have authority. They did have veto power, and they chose not to exercise it. They had equal representation on the board despite the fact that the government had only 40 percent of the ownership, but the government appointees sat on their duffs. They did nothing as dollar after dollar went up in smoke, \$500 million, Mr. Speaker.

2:50

So when we come, then, to assessing the estimates and voting on this appropriations Bill, the \$147.5 million that is there for the buyout of the joint venture agreement, no one could call it fair. No one could call it appropriate. No one should ever say, "Gosh, isn't this a good deal?" It is a travesty that we will end up paying \$147 million to a private-sector participant to buy our way out of a bad deal, and each and every step along the way, Mr. Speaker, the government had the opportunity to get out of it. They didn't have to sign it initially. They could have reviewed it in 1989. They could have made recommendations. They could have not proceeded with the expansion that's cost us literally hundreds of

millions of dollars. In April of 1993 they could have just said no. They could have done a fairness assessment of the joint venture agreement; that was not done.

Let's lay our cards on the table: it could have been an election issue. If the government thought this was an appropriate expenditure of money, that the environment was worth this, and that this was the best policy to deal with environmental issues, there was the perfect opportunity in June of 1993 to put it on the table and say: this is the cost of cleaning up the environment. But it was not done. It was hidden in April of 1993. The loan guarantee in June of 1993 was hidden. It was all hidden. It wasn't brought up during the election campaign, and it's been dragged in torturous detail from the government month after month after month because of pressure from the Liberal opposition.

This is a sad day, Mr. Speaker, for Albertans, because today we asked a very simple question in the House: who's responsible and who is accountable for losing \$500 million? The Acting Premier took it under advisement. So no one was going to leap up and accept responsibility. Of course I hope that on Monday the Premier will in fact stand up and say: "Yes. Decisions were made under my watch, my watch as Environment minister in 1989, my watch as Premier in 1993, my watch as Premier in 1994, and under my watch as Premier in 1995. Yes, I and my government accept responsibility for this financial fiasco." That hasn't happened. We look forward to it happening.

So when I look at this appropriation for \$147,500,000, I ask: how should I vote on this? I have been of mixed minds because, on one hand, when I go through the conditions of the joint venture agreement, it's an ironclad agreement that must have been signed by idiots. Nobody who respected the taxpayer would have signed the joint venture agreement. Given that joint venture agreement, what's the least-cost way of getting out of it, short of abrogating the agreement by bringing it into the House and saying that this deal is too obscene to pay out?

When you look at the numbers, they range from about \$123 million to 200-plus million dollars. The payout that the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw has negotiated is in the ballpark. It's fair only in the context of respecting the constraints imposed by the joint venture agreement; it is not fair when you look at the joint venture agreement in its entirety. So you have to ask yourself when you look at this: fairness ought not to apply to buying out the joint venture agreement? The issue of fairness ultimately applies to the joint venture agreement itself, and I can only say that the joint venture agreement is neither fair for Albertans, nor is it a document that worked in their best interests. All I can say is that it's an obscene financial document that worked to the detriment of Albertans and to the benefit of a few people in Calgary. The fact that they're going to receive a large sum of money because they hoodwinked successive ministers is to me one of the great travesties that Albertans will have to hold somebody accountable for.

So with those comments, Mr. Speaker, I will take my place.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to pick up in debate where the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud left off. In the commentary that has been said in this Legislative Assembly about the Swan Hills issue, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud is very articulate in saying that only an idiot would sign that joint venture agreement. But you have to wonder. I also made comments in this Legislature that Bovar perhaps might be

congratulated for their negotiation skills, but I think ultimately Albertans have to understand that the government of Alberta over the last 10 years has been a very willing participant in the Swan Hills fiasco, that has befallen Albertans to the extent of a half billion dollars. We debate this afternoon the appropriation of \$147.5 million and with that appropriation come very close to closing the book on one of the largest financial fiascos in the province's history.

Mr. Speaker, the government of Alberta won't say today who's responsible for this fiasco, and we can only wait to see whether or not the government will ever say who's responsible for this fiasco. The evidence, of course, is before us that the government of Alberta under the Conservatives have never said who's responsible for fiascos. They have never indicated to us who was responsible for NovAtel. They've never indicated to us who was responsible for Gainers. They've never indicated to us who's responsible for the Magnesium Company of Canada, and that of course was based on complete incompetence. All of those scenarios were based on the complete incompetence of the government each and every time.

Now, the difference of course with the Swan Hills and the Bovar deal is that it was a mixture of some incompetence and some deliberation. In going through the scenario from 1985 through to 1995, in fact the plant was built, the joint venture agreement was signed under protest by the chairman of the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation, who was, as we know, fired for not recommending the joint venture agreement to the government. When he refused to go along with it, the then minister under the Conservative government fired that individual for not getting on board and for saying that the deal was bad for the taxpayers of Alberta.

We've had a deliberate agenda carried through and carried out from beginning to end with the construction and operation of the facility, the ill-fated expansion in 1991, where the assumptions that were being made were grossly inaccurate, were not independent, were based on Chem-Security, the operator of that facility, basically saying, "Well, we've checked with our suppliers, and they say that they're going to have lots more for us." That was the basis and the extent of the reasoning behind the expansion of that facility. As the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud said, the incentive given to Bovar was to build quick, build big, and get a better return on investment for the capital investment. There was no downside to Bovar to expand the plant. The only downside to the expansion was to the taxpayers of the province of Alberta.

Bovar was in a no-risk situation. Bovar has received under the joint venture agreement a return on equity of 18 and a half percent with absolutely no risk whatsoever. I'd like to ask hon. members opposite if they can get 18 and a half percent on their money at absolutely no risk whatsoever. That was the deal that the government of Alberta cut with Bovar. They could use other people's money from the bank, and that was backed and back-stopped by a \$100 million loan guarantee approved by the Premier of the province of Alberta.

3:00

The expansion went ahead with grossly inaccurate assumptions of the volume of waste to come to Swan Hills. The expansion went ahead on the assumption that oil field waste would be designated as hazardous waste, and that representation was made to the NRCB. After that representation was made to the NRCB, the government of Alberta changed its mind and decided that oil field waste would not be hazardous waste to go to the Swan Hills facility, and the Swan Hills facility lost that significant source of

contaminated waste for destruction at that facility. Now, that one, Mr. Speaker, wasn't Bovar's fault; that was the government. They made a representation, and then they changed their mind. So of course Bovar and Swan Hills are going to be caught in a situation where they have overcapacity because of the large and unneeded expansion of the Swan Hills facility.

Well, since the government was in control of those decisions, the government well knew that the expansion had nothing to do with dealing with Alberta waste; it had to do with lining the pockets of Bovar. Why else would it have occurred, Mr. Speaker? The government knew they were not going to let hazardous oil field waste go to Swan Hills. The government knew that under the joint venture agreement a larger facility meant more money for Bovar. The government knew that by excluding oil field hazardous waste from going to Swan Hills, it would be disposed of into the ground, so it's not an environmental protection issue. What's the purpose? The purpose of the expansion on the agenda that was followed all the way through was to line Bovar's pocket. That's who the government of Alberta was supporting. It wasn't protecting the taxpayers of Alberta.

So we get the expansion of the Swan Hills plant, and very quickly after that Chem-Security and Bovar come to the province and say: "My goodness me. We don't have enough waste to keep that plant running economically. We need to import hazardous waste." So of course then the process begins where we look at the importation of hazardous waste to make Alberta the PCB magnet of Canada. You know, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Environmental Protection says: this is a great deal for Albertans because now Alberta is PCB free.

MRS. SOETAERT: I wish we were PC free.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Yeah, I wish we were PC free, hon. member.

Unfortunately, hon. member, we are not PC free, and unfortunately, hon. member, we are not PCB free, nor are we PCP free, because according to the Minister of Environmental Protection Alberta no longer has a problem with PCBs in the province. With the expansion and with importation, which is fully endorsed and supported by the provincial government, we now become potentially the PCB magnet for all of Canada. Now, even with that, Mr. Speaker, it's highly unlikely, well, it's probably virtually impossible that Bovar can turn a profit at that plant without opening up one more border – and that border is the border between Canada and the United States – for the importation of hazardous waste.

Mr. Speaker, mark my words. After we agree to the appropriation of 147 and a half million dollars and Bovar takes over ownership of the plant and the deal is signed, sealed, and delivered, Bovar will ask the government to allow it to bring in PCB waste from the United States. That process is already beginning. In fact, the minister and I spoke of that when we did supplementary estimates in supply with the last budget. The question was raised – I think it was from the Member for Pincher Creek-Macleod, as I recall – whether or not we would now start bringing in PCBs from the United States. Well, the minister didn't say yes, but the minister didn't say no. So that will probably be the ultimate conclusion from the joint venture agreement.

So we now have importation, and what's interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that right after we get approval from the government for the importation of hazardous wastes from all over Canada,

including PCBs, as soon as that happens, the government wants out of Swan Hills. So what was the overall agenda? The overall agenda was to build the plant, expand the plant, get importation, totally contrary to the Premier's assurance to all Alberta that the hazardous waste plant at Swan Hills was only ever going to be for Alberta-sourced hazardous waste. The Premier of Alberta repeated that promise over and over and over and over again. This plant is for Alberta-sourced hazardous waste, consistent with the policies of every province collectively that you deal with your own hazardous waste. Now Alberta says: "Come to us, Canada. Come and dump your toxic waste in our province. We're happy to receive it." Bovar is looking for profit. It's not an environmental issue; it's a profit issue for Bovar.

Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud indicated that the Mintz report review of the joint venture agreement stated that there was even bad environmental policy in doing this. The bad environmental policy, of course, is that in the obscene sweetheart deal that the government cut, there is no incentive to the operator or joint venture owner of the plant to be environmentally responsible. There's no incentive. Now, the operator of the facility may be acting in an environmentally responsible manner, but there's no incentive. In fact, we have said to the operator of the facility: "Don't worry about the cleanup costs. Don't worry about the decommissioning costs. Don't worry about any of that when your plant, that we don't own anymore, closes and shuts down. We will take care of all of those costs."

Now, Mr. Speaker, you'll remember that the minister and I had a bit of a difference of opinion. We said that that cost could easily be estimated to be about \$30 million, and that figure was based on performance bonds that private operators in the United States are required to post when they operate a hazardous waste facility. It is the responsibility of the private operator of the facility to post a bond for the cleanup, and it's in the range of \$30 million. Now, the Minister of Environmental Protection said: "No, no. It'll only be about \$100,000." But we said, "No, we think it's closer to \$30 million." In the financial statements that were released by the province for the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation, the estimate provided in the notes to the financial statement put that figure at between \$31 million and \$57 million for the decommissioning and the cleanup of the Swan Hills hazardous waste treatment plant.

Now, what incentive is there for the operator of that facility as a private operator to worry whether or not that cost is \$31 million or \$57 million or \$75 million or \$100 million? What do they care? They don't care. The bill goes to the taxpayers of the province of Alberta. That's who gets the bill. It's not Bovar who gets the bill; it's the taxpayers of the province of Alberta. So where's the sound environmental policy by saying to a private operator, "Don't you worry about the pollution and the mess; we'll take care of it all at the end of the day"?

There has long been in the province of Alberta a concern that we establish and develop policy that requires that the polluter pay. All provinces in Canada, all western jurisdictions are moving to policy that says that the polluter pays. Well, the message that the Minister of Environmental Protection is sending far and wide, across the world, is: in Alberta the taxpayer takes care of the pollution.

3:10

What's interesting about the precedent that the Minister of Environmental Protection is setting is: okay, what happens next? Now, let's say that the Minister of Environmental Protection

decides he is going to prosecute a polluter because the polluter should pay. Well, the polluter should be saying: "Well, wait a minute. What are you coming after me for? You let Bovar off the hook. Bovar doesn't have to pay anything for its pollution. How come I've got to pay?" "Well, different, very different," will say the Minister of Environmental Protection to that offender. "We had a joint venture agreement with Bovar. We had a very special sweetheart deal with one of our friends." Unfortunately, you know, the minister will say to that offender, "You're not our friend, not the same way Bovar is." Not a level playing field, Mr. Speaker. If you'd had a sweetheart deal like Bovar had, then you wouldn't have to worry.

MR. N. TAYLOR: You can kiss my ring, but Bovar did more.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Well, there you go, hon. member. There you go.

So with what they're doing in terms of Bovar and the joint venture agreement – with closure of this issue, with the appropriation of 147 and a half million dollars, with the agreement that they're going to be cutting with Bovar under the letter of intent – the message that the government of Alberta is sending across the world is: Alberta taxpayers will take care of pollution, not the polluter. I don't know, Mr. Speaker, if that's part of the Minister of Environmental Protection's Alberta advantage, but I think it sends a very, very, very bad and wrong message. The policy should be that the polluter pays, and in the context of the cleanup cost there should be a requirement that Bovar post a bond, that the risk be balanced between the joint venture partners, that Bovar take responsibility for the operation and the ultimate cleanup of that facility at the end of the day: \$57 million.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the appropriation of the \$147.5 million, the Member for Calgary-Shaw, the chairman of the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation, announced yesterday that he'd been in error. You know, there had been a mistake made. We forgot \$25 million. We forgot somewhere between \$25 million and \$30 million because we sort of got really sloppy in our accounting with respect to the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation. We got really sloppy, and we forgot to tell Alberta taxpayers. When we announced in July of 1995 the letter of intent and the ultimate cost to taxpayers, we forgot to factor in \$25 million to \$30 million for administrative expenses. Forgot. The government also forgot, when it announced the \$147.5 million payout, buyout, sellout, whatever you want to call it – they forgot to tell taxpayers that they were responsible for the cleanup cost, now estimated between \$31 million and \$57 million.

So that, Mr. Speaker, is . . .

MR. HAVELOCK: A point of order.

THE SPEAKER: Order please. Is the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw rising on a point of order?

Point of Order Clarification

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes, 23(h), (i), (j). Mr. Speaker, I distinctly recall that at the news conference we made it absolutely clear that remediation and the responsibility for that stayed with the government.

I'd also like to indicate with respect to the \$30 million that at no time did I suggest it was as a result of sloppy accounting.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the point of order. My intention was not to place those comments at the feet of the Member for Calgary-Shaw. It was the ultimate conclusion that it was sloppiness on the part of the government in the accounting, not that the Member for Calgary-Shaw had made those statements.

With respect to the other point that the Member for Calgary-Shaw had made, in terms of announcing that the cleanup cost would stay with the taxpayers, I do not take issue with that comment. All I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, is that they didn't tell us how much it was going to cost and said that it was going to be \$100,000. Those are the distinctions I was making.

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

THE SPEAKER: Is it on the same point of order?

The hon. Minister of Environmental Protection.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the hon. member is just going on and on and misrepresenting what was said. I said that the cleanup could be as low as \$100,000. The fact is that it depends on what you're going to do. If in fact the plant is totally decommissioned, torn down piece by piece, and the site is totally restored to its original landscape, then, yes, the estimates could go that high. Nobody knows for sure. The \$100,000 would easily put a fence around it and stabilize it. So the number could be anywhere in between there. Never, ever did I say that it would be limited to \$100,000, and if he goes back and checks in *Hansard* when this came up at the estimates, he will find that I said it could be as low as and then said: depending on what you were going to do with the site. [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Order please. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning wishes to get the floor for debate or for the point of order?

MR. SEKULIC: Debate.

THE SPEAKER: It would appear to the Chair that we're in a debate on this matter. Different members have different interpretations of what was said. That is the pure nature of debate, and other members will have the opportunity to clarify the record.

The hon. member has clarified that he was not speaking of any particular member; he was speaking about the government. I'm sure that the government members will have a chance to respond to the errors of the hon. Member for Sherwood Park, if there are any that they notice.

Debate Continued

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just in response to the Minister of Environmental Protection's comments, my recollection of the event was that the minister had indicated that it could be as low as \$100,000, and we don't know the top end of the estimate. His figure that he used to the media in dealing with that particular issue was that it would be about \$100,000. Now, the minister does say that it depends on the extent of the decommissioning, it depends on the extent of the cleanup, it depends on a number of factors as to what that cost is. Now, I refer specifically to the financial statements of the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation and specifically note 11, that identify the cleanup cost at \$31 million to \$57 million. I

don't think that the Minister of Environmental Protection will take issue with his own financial statements.

The commitment that was made by the minister through his press release on July 25, 1995, is that the site would be restored. The site ultimately after closure would be restored to the full and complete high standards for environmental protection in the province. Now, Mr. Speaker, the difficulty I have is for the Minister of Environmental Protection to, on the one hand, say that the cost could be about \$100,000 and, on the other hand, give a commitment to the people of Alberta that the site at Swan Hills will be fully, properly decommissioned and reclaimed to the highest environmental standards in the province of Alberta. What I'm saying is that if you restore the site at Swan Hills after the plant closes to the full and highest extent of environmental standards in the province of Alberta, the best estimate that we have is between \$31 million and \$57 million, not \$100,000. Now, what I don't know is whether or not, when the Minister of Environmental Protection agreed to the letter of intent, he knew that Albertans were going to be stuck with \$57 million to clean it up.

Thank you, sir.

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

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to join in the debate today not to quibble about some of the facts that have been related this afternoon but to bring a different perspective to this debate, and that is, first of all, I'm supporting the Bill and the fact that we need these dollars to end this particular agreement.

The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud I thought was quite articulate in his earlier speech this afternoon, but he talked again about the fact that many of us didn't rise this afternoon when he asked for responsibility. I was prepared to rise and accept responsibility for this. It ties back to the comments he made about it becoming a matter of a platform or an issue during the election campaign.

3:20

I made Bovar a matter of an issue in the election campaign because we had a situation in Alberta that had been in existence for a number of years, where the government in I believe a sincere attempt to diversify an economy got themselves involved in various ventures. One of these was Bovar; others that have been named earlier were NovAtel and MagCan. I have been prepared to accept responsibility both individually and collectively for every one of those particular issues. I would be pleased to talk to the Whip and have a situation – I know that you don't like exhibitions during question period, but if that question came before us again, I would encourage every member on the government side to stand up, and we'll acknowledge responsibility for these types of things.

Why did we get elected? The theme that I used in my campaign, which I believe many of my colleagues did, was that it was Conservatives that got us into some of these problems and it was only Conservatives that were going to get us out. The history of the Liberal Parties throughout this country would show that they would be incapable of making these sorts of decisions to get us back out. So I say to all of you, including the Member for Sherwood Park, that you can whine and cry about the dollars, but the point that I would make this afternoon is that we are getting away as taxpayers in the province in a very cheap and inexpensive way. Just like Gainers and just like some of these other ventures

that you want to bring up, the blood was spilling on the floor, and we had to stop the bleeding.

I thought it took real courage from the Member for Calgary-Shaw and members of this government to say: we must stop this, and we will stop it. We've done it. Yes, we open ourselves up to ridicule from your side of the benches. Yes, I get phone calls in my office from people who are not supporters and talk to me now about Bovar, as they want to talk about NovAtel and the others. I say to them this: the Liberal Party of Alberta has been able to use math, and they have created a list of what they call boondoggles, and if you add up that list, it comes to \$2.3 billion. Now let's add Bovar to it. Let's add another \$500 million to it, and we get to \$2.8 billion. That is still less than 10 percent of the debt that we have in this province that we were elected to clean up. We're going to do it. If this means getting out of Bovar, if this means getting out of some of these other things, we're absolutely going to do it. We are going to leave a legacy in this province that we are not in the business of being in business. We are here to get out of the business of being in business, and we will do it. [interjections]

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

THE SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order. [interjections] Order. Hon. members, time is limited for this debate. By the rules, we have to have a vote later this afternoon, and many hon. members wish to participate.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Debate Continued

MR. SEKULIC: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is an extremely emotional issue. I'm happy to see that the Member for Lethbridge-West stood up and with full emotion blasted away. In fact, the Member for Lethbridge-West took responsibility for taking this province \$3 billion further into debt than it needed to be as a result of the delivery of programming. It's about time, and his colleagues should stand next to him and stand as proudly as he did for getting us into this debt that we're currently in.

I just want to correct some issues here, Mr. Speaker. The mathematics are important in this province. In fact, if the mathematics had been important some 10 years ago, we wouldn't be in the problem we're in today: \$2.8 billion, from the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West. That's what he quoted, that \$2.8 billion total cost, or debt, was incurred as a result of his government, which was a Conservative government, and it remains that. Well, that's not just 10 percent of this province's total debt. The net debt that the Provincial Treasurer gives us – the figure he gives us is \$8.6 billion. So just running some quick math here: \$2.8 billion from \$8.6 billion. Let's say that it's \$9 billion and \$3 billion. Well, it's closer to 30 percent. So the math is an important issue.

Mr. Speaker, when I looked at this, when I heard the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud earlier asking that question, asking for the government members, for anyone on that front bench to stand up and take responsibility for 'BovAtel,' I thought that was meaningful. I thought 'BovAtel' was the best way of describing this deal, and I'll tell you why I think it's the best way of describing this deal. It's because it links the past, then, to now. The way the past needs to be linked is not just the statement of 'BovAtel.' It's also that the same ministers that were sitting there on those front benches then are many of the same ministers that are sitting on the front benches now.

MRS. BLACK: Try again, bucko.

MR. SEKULIC: In fact, Mr. Speaker, they were there around that table stating that, yes, they wanted to enter into those Bovar deals and agreements.

The Minister of Energy said, "Try again, bucko." Mr. Speaker, I'd like the Minister of Energy to tell me what argument she made in cabinet against entering this deal. I think Albertans are entitled to hear her opinion, the then and now, because she's still on the front bench here. So we have to call this the 'Bov-Atel' deal because we still have the same players now supposedly getting us out of this deal, and I certainly hope that they are getting us out of the deal.

Mr. Speaker, 'BovAtel,' bottom line, is going to be around the half billion dollar mark, \$500 million. Now, to many Albertans I think that number isn't going to mean as much until it translates into reductions in programs and services in this province. When they go to an emergency room and have to wait, that's when it's going to start to mean something. When we restrict kindergarten from 400 to 200 hours, that's when it means something. 'Bov-Atel' is two-thirds of the entire amount of all of the health care cuts of this province for this government's full term, so it means something.

Mr. Speaker, the actions of the government have been very well articulated by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud and the Member for Sherwood Park, and I'm not going to talk on those. I do want to speak to the consequences of those actions because those consequences are things that my constituents are telling me about. Those consequences, never mind the amounts, are the things I hear about on a daily basis from my constituents. And the mood: who wouldn't be pleased with getting the government out of the business of being in business? Who wouldn't be pleased with reducing one's debt?

MR. HENRY: Ross Harvey.

MR. SEKULIC: True. Ross Harvey probably wouldn't be pleased with those things, Mr. Speaker, but in fact we are, and my constituents are very pleased that we are working at eliminating the deficit, reducing the debt. Those are admirable and appropriate directions for a responsible government to take. The thing is that it took them 20 years to figure it out, that that would be an appropriate and responsible action to take. I was wondering – there were so many ministers that have been in this Assembly for the past 15, 20 years. Where were they? How did they just figure it out recently? I don't understand that.

Once again, as I stated earlier, Mr. Speaker, this government has demonstrated abilities to be pro company, not pro business. If they were pro business, they would have done everything in their power to maintain a level playing field, to avoid distortion of the marketplace. In fact, they didn't do that. They showed over and over and over, as they do still, preferential treatment towards certain players, and generally it's players that they know fairly well through, I assume, political connections. So we've seen that the Alberta advantage has existed in fact for the few and not for Albertans right across the board or those desiring to come do business in Alberta. It's been preferential treatment for certain players.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to make a few more comments with regards to the savings and benefits that potentially or supposedly Bovar was to have delivered to Alberta. There are some valid comments that for a small community the existence of such a plant

or such a facility would have spin-offs. One can't argue that, and that may be one of the few benefits of it. My understanding is that we were paying 400 percent more than any other jurisdiction for ridding ourselves of these wastes. Now, that's just bad economics. That's bad mathematics. If you can't do it more efficiently, don't do it. So why did they jump with both feet into such a deal and then try to explain it as a good deal for Albertans?

3:30

The other thing is: my understanding is that 80 percent of Alberta's wastes, or PCBs, actually go south of the border. So I'm not sure where the advantages are. The government has never demonstrated or articulated or clarified or listed the benefits of this plant. Now, it's been flowery. What do they call it? Green talk or green corp? It's been very nice in terms of rhetorical selling, but it's not been factual. It's not been demonstrated clearly that this is in fact a benefit to Albertans. I can tell you one thing. The costs are coming home now; they're coming home into every one of our constituencies. As happy as I am that the Member for Lethbridge-West stood so proudly to take responsibility for this, I'm a little embarrassed for him for doing that, because certainly if I was part of a government or chose to be part of a government, it wouldn't be a government that got us into such deals.

MR. HLADY: Chose?

MR. SEKULIC: Chose. Yes, chose.

Mr. Speaker, when I heard the Member for Lethbridge-West say that it was his government that got us into this and that only his government can get us out, I don't see the congruency. I don't see the logic in his argument. In fact, I believe only his government could have gotten us into this. But I'll tell you what. When I was at the doors, many people were convinced that it was this side, the Liberal alternative, that could have gotten us out of this with the least pain. In fact, if the Premier hadn't somehow changed his mind in that one-week period after the election, we could have cut our costs a lot smaller and a lot earlier. I wish he would have done that because I know – this is one thing I know that we all have in common. We did go to the doors saying that we didn't want to cost Albertans any more, that we didn't want to give preferential treatment to business. Yet if this party had formed the government on June 15 of 1993, I can tell you that Bovar would have been a done deal on June 16 of 1993. They would have cut their losses. We'd have been \$150 million further ahead. Kindergarten, chances are, wouldn't have had to be affected the way it was.

Mr. Speaker, with those comments I'll take my place.

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

MR. BRACKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, October 19, is another sad day in the history of Alberta, a sad day for all Albertans, a sad day that the taxpayer is now responsible for another half a billion dollars.

My family's involved in the oil industry, in the furniture business. If they would have done what has happened at Bovar, they would have been fired. They would have been gone. There would be no questions asked. In any business you have to evaluate as you go. It's unbelievable that they can sit there and actually assume that they're doing a great job.

I know when I first heard of this plant, Bovar up in Swan Hills, the news was: this is the latest technology; we're world leaders.

We said: oh, that's great; in the environment waste management we'll be a model for the rest of the world. But in any plan, whether it's the oil industry, the furniture business, or any business, you've got to look ahead, down the road. You've got to see what's out there. What is the other technology around? This wasn't done obviously. You can now do the same thing on mobile units. That technology has been around for a long time. It's newer, but it's been there. If this government and their \$200 million research budget would have done any research at all, they would have known that.

Why was it done? Was it done for political expediency, to reward a constituent and their Tory friends? It's unbelievable the way that this was handled. You look ahead. You evaluate what is happening, and you do it on the world scene, not just in Canada and North America. What is the technology around the world, and what do you anticipate? You have the scientists and many of the best ones here at the U of A and in other parts that you could at least have asked: "What do you assume is going to happen in this technology? Is this worth while doing?" It didn't happen. They go up; they brag about it. We find out that it turns out to be a disaster costing Albertans half a billion dollars. Now, if you had that money in the bank, you could probably get \$50 million in interest every year, and that could have supported many activities in this province. It's unbelievable that there's no foresight. It was: spend, spend, spend; we have all the money in the world. They didn't realize that the oil revenues had gone down, and you need to know that.

In any other business, in education – I know the minister of the environment bad-mouthed me yesterday and said: go back to the classroom. I'm happy to because they're more teachable. They think about what's happening. I gave them a simple illustration: if you get \$5 allowance and you spend \$10, how long do you think your parents will give you that allowance? They said a week or two and then we'd have to be responsible. Every student in those grades 5 and 6 classes understood that. Here they spend money, and all of a sudden there's no evaluation done, never, haven't heard of any. So they spend more without evaluating. Pretty soon it adds up and adds up and adds up to where we're at now, with a tremendous cost to taxpayers without them even again, except for the Member for Lethbridge-West – I give him credit for taking responsibility, the first one to say: yes, we were wrong; we haven't done this.

I know that the Member for Lethbridge-West talked about this, that it's cut off at \$3 billion or something. Well, this is not the case. As I travel through this province, every community has different disasters like this, tremendous waste. I look at St. Albert. Our own hammer mill at the Sturgeon general hospital cost \$1.5 million. What is happening to it now? It's sitting still. Wasted money: my money and your money and the taxpayers' of Alberta. It's unbelievable and not just at Swan Hills but across this province. This is a shameful situation we're in, Mr. Speaker.

If we'd had a Liberal government under Laurence Decore, this would not have been the cost it is today. He took Edmonton, brought the deficit down to where it is today. [interjections] Sorry, the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry. We have the Premier; his debt in Calgary tripled. They say that it's all just padding. We set out the fiscal policy, how to reduce the deficit, but they followed us. They were lucky enough to get in on the popularity of one person, and every member there knows that he carried them. They didn't know how to implement the deficit plan in the most efficient way. If we'd had that opportunity, you'd have seen a lot less waste. We would have done a better

job here, and this is proven. In my own constituency, the Sturgeon general hospital was supposed to cost \$32 million; it ends up costing \$51 million, with no heads rolling, with no responsibility, no accountability from any member of this government. If they were in private enterprise, in my family's businesses, they would be gone. If they had any integrity, there would be resignations saying: we can't handle this; we'll give it to someone else.

We also look at 2068. Not only this generation but the next generation and the next generation and the next generation will be paying for this government's pension debts that they've been irresponsible about. Oh, it's more than just \$3 billion; it goes on and on and on. Even the minister told me: 82 percent of northern housing, the money that went into it was wasted. His own words: wasted. Billions of dollars, he said, and you go on and on and on. So this \$3 billion is not anywhere near correct. You're looking at probably close to over \$50 billion to \$100 billion of wasted money. If you go around this province and add it up, you know that would be the case. You know, even the dam in the member's constituency, my colleague there, even his constituents said that it wasn't needed. It was payout to patronage. Anyway, as we look at this, what is the cost going to be?

Kindergarten students. I've talked to kindergarten teachers in several places around this province, and they're saying today and so are grade 1 teachers saying that the kindergarten students are not prepared for grade 1 like they used to be. What does the government do, the minister? After he cuts kindergarten, he goes and gets a list of studies that say that it makes no difference. What has he done in the meantime to verify whether it has or not? Grade 1 teachers are saying that the students are coming in not prepared, that some of them have a hard time going to the bathroom by themselves, and this would have been accomplished if they would have had the full 400 hours. So we look at it, and we say that no evaluation was done. [interjections] That's a fact. I'll take you by the hand to these teachers that are saying that. [interjections] You go ahead. I will be glad to. Yes, you know it. I'll take you by the hand. I challenge you to come with me. I will take you to these teachers. [interjections] Put your money where your mouth is. There's an old saying in the rodeo circuit: talk is cheap; it takes money to buy whiskey. I will be glad to take you there. Action is what we want.

3:40

MR. HAVELOCK: Len, are you a rodeo clown?

MR. BRACKO: Yes, I rode the rodeos. You bet. I'll show you my pictures. It's risk, you know.

MR. HAVELOCK: You fell off too many horses, Len.

MR. BRACKO: Well, I'll challenge you to a bareback ride anytime.

AN HON. MEMBER: No, a polygraph. Challenge him to a polygraph.

MR. BRACKO: Yeah, a polygraph I'll challenge you to, the front bench there. Polygraphs, yes.

So as we look at it, the Dr. Mintz report shows exactly what the true picture is. You know, the sad part is that the government tries to hide and cover up the true picture from Albertans. They try to whitewash it as if Albertans are ignorant and naive. They're not. They may not comprehend the \$500 million, but it's

going to come home. When they have to go to hospital and there are no beds or they say, "You can't come in even if it's an emergency because we don't have beds," they'll relate it personally. We know that what comes around goes around, and that's going to happen.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Lethbridge-West said that his Conservative government was responsible for \$2.8 billion of the province's debt. He now says that his own government can bring the province out of debt. In the business world the receivers would have been brought in. Yes, that's what follows incompetence, irresponsibility, and unaccountable managers.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rather than talk about this or speak on it, I think one of the things I wanted to touch on was a completely unnecessary need for the government to have taken a bath like this. Not that I'm saying that they couldn't have got the car out of the mud hole any other way than what they're doing, but that doesn't answer the fact that they were in charge and driving around the road and went into the ditch, and now they're asking us to help get them out of a mess. Now, I didn't want to touch on that, and I was a little disappointed that the Member for Barrhead-Westlock – I know he hasn't been maybe feeling up to par – hasn't got up and said something on this, because he was in at the very start of this. Whatever you say about the member, I think he forgot more about running a hazardous waste plant than the rest of his caucus will ever learn, and I think he could add a lot to the story.

I'll take the House back a bit. It all started in 1979, when I parachuted up from Calgary to try to beat the fair-haired boy from Barrhead. We had a real good ruckus; we had a good fight. It came pretty close. The Member for Barrhead-Westlock was a teacher at that time in Barrhead, and Swan Hills had had a lot of its production cut back, if I can refresh the memories, because the Premier of the day, Mr. Lougheed, had decided that he was going to try to let those eastern illegitimates freeze in the dark. So he had cut back Swan Hills' production. Of course what happened, as so often happens with this government – they hadn't looked down the road at all – is that the Montreal market that we'd had suddenly switched around and started bringing in their oil from the Middle East and north Africa. So when we decided to let those eastern illegitimates toast their feet at the fire, they didn't need our oil anymore or not as much. Consequently, Swan Hills was cut back to about 40 percent of its allowable – that's a trade name for its capacity – and there was a great deal of unemployment and people moving out of Swan Hills.

Of course, being the opportunist that I was, I saw a chance to get in the Legislature at that time to gnaw away at the ankles of this Conservative colossus. Somebody had mentioned somewhere: where in Alberta do you put a hazardous waste plant? Well, Swan Hills was the first thought, but that was the worst place it could be because there was no railroad there at all. There was a highway. I prevailed at the time, and I showed up later when the votes were counted in '79, when I swept this area that had always been Tory, all the way back to the time of Macdonald and Laurier, or about the time when the Tories first started, much to the surprise of the member now for Barrhead-Westlock and his minions and his backers. At that time he had a godfather called Dr. Horner. Nothing moved in that constituency without getting a pension. If you lay you down to sleep, you might get paid. In

other words, he had complete control of the patronage money at that time, and there was a lot of patronage money.

In order to win the election, I pointed out that having a hazardous waste plant in Swan Hills was a good idea. Not only was there a large number of people, Mr. Speaker, that knew the oil and gas industry and the refining of it. At that time a great number of people – and I think the Member for Barrhead-Westlock will back me up – including both sides of the House, thought I was crazy to suggest that Alberta would host a hazardous waste plant. I sold them a bill at that time, saying that that's not any different than a refinery. If you take a bunch of oil and gas and dump it on the ground or leave it around, it's going to kill the grass. If you take a swim in it yourself, it will kill you. Consequently, oil and gas is a hazardous waste, and the people of Swan Hills should know more about handling another type of hazardous waste and create the jobs going. So it went over quite well. I swept the election in that area, came very close. As a matter of fact, what little gray hair the man from Barrhead-Westlock has probably was engendered by the fright I gave him at that time.

Nevertheless, he decided that another election was coming up in a short time, and I would not get him by the hair again. He then came out and recommended and fully campaigned for a hazardous waste plant to be put in Swan Hills. This is fine. There's no more sincere form of flattery, my grandmother used to say, as imitation. Naturally they adopted that idea. The party over there has occasionally adopted my ideas through the years. This one they adopted, and they went ahead with the plant.

Now, the plant was all right until somehow or another the Member for Barrhead-Westlock got undercut by his own caucus and the Calgary power group that controls that caucus over there. When oil people – I say people, not oilmen because that's sexist; oil persons or oil people – were able to convince the Tory Party to allow them not to dispose of their oil and gas waste, that was making a plant a real moneymaker. So the Member for Barrhead-Westlock by this time, having always been kind to children, petting his dog every day, and saying his prayers at night, had moved on up to be a cabinet minister. Consequently, as a cabinet minister he found himself being undermined by the Calgary power group that said that oil and gas waste did not have to go through Swan Hills. That was a heck of a kick – and I'm hoping that the member will get up – but that started it towards being uneconomic.

Then it got another kick a few years later. By that time Calgary had been able to elect their own environment minister, their own person to be in charge of the hazardous waste plant. He of course went on to even greater heights. Maybe it's symbolic that he was in charge of the hazardous waste, because now he's in charge of a very hazardous economy: the Premier of the province. The point is that Calgary had managed to put their own lobbyists in there, so they went even a step further. Although this plant was supposed to be expanded, because it had been cut off oil and gas waste, they said: well, we'll expand the plant, and we'll import waste. The Member for Barrhead-Westlock again got cut off at the knees. Of course, outside of myself, I think he's been cut off at the knees in politics more than nearly anybody in Alberta, but I'd be interested in listening to what happened, how things went along. The point is that suddenly here's a plant that was built on a good, sound basis to look after oil and gas waste and to look after imported waste. They cut them both down.

3:50

I want to go on, Mr. Speaker. If you look at the past, it's like a Mother Goose story. Once you've read a couple of Mother Goose stories, you can guess what's going to happen farther on. Well, what's going to happen, just as sure as the Lord made little apples, is Bovar and that Calgary group are going to be able to talk this province. Now that they have been bailed out and picked up a few hundred million dollars' worth of assets for nothing, they're not going to sit there and run it at a loss. They're going to talk this government into allowing them to go back to handle waste that they can't handle today. And, Lawsy me, you'll see them making money, and even the little bulldog from Lethbridge will be able to say: "Well, you know, I supported you all the way through when you built the plant. I supported you all the way when you threw it out, and I'll support you now when Bovar's making a fortune out of it." So they'll go on and on like that.

What we're seeing here is a play that's been acted out time and time again by this government, this party here. They launch themselves because everyone feels down deep that they may be a capitalist, that deep down if they got turned loose with Richardson Greenshields, RB securities, or whatever out there, they could make a fortune. So they all got in and started manipulating around, whether it was NovAtel or whether it was hazardous waste or whether it was exporting – nobody has ever brought up that they used to export semen to Mexico till they found out all the cows that they were hatching down there couldn't stand the heat. That was one of Doc Horner's early ones. I could go on for years with the weird schemes they thought up here that they were going to make a fortune with. Then all of a sudden a breeze comes through the door. Get rid of everything; it doesn't matter what it costs. Well, all these same vultures that talked them into being partners in the first place are now taking the stuff back for 10 cents on the dollar. Whether it was all the land they bought just on the edge of Edmonton, Mr. Speaker – sometime when you get time just go out to the edge of Edmonton and look at the thousands of acres that were picked up for millions and millions of dollars, out to Fort Saskatchewan, now being sold back to anybody who's got blue and orange underwear for 10 cents on the dollar. This is a repeat thing.

Well, you know what the next stage is going to be. All these people who bought the assets back for 10 cents on the dollar are going to pressure the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, the hon. Member for Barrhead-Westlock, the hon. members from Calgary, and say, "In order for free enterprise to flourish, we need this regulation changed and that regulation changed," and they'll grow fat again with the assets. It's such a predictable pattern, and this is what gripes me about getting up and voting this money today. You know you're throwing it down a rat hole, Mr. Speaker, because they won't have learned anything. The only way any political party learns anything, be it Liberal, Conservative, or NDP, is at least four to eight years in the wilderness. They're still riding high. If Moses hadn't spent 40 years in the wilderness, do you think they would be the chosen people of Israel? No. They haven't spent one hour in the wilderness. They think they're God, and if they're God, they can do no wrong.

So this is the whole foolish charade of this. We'll vote on it, we'll put the money in, and what have we got? We're going to go back. Bovar will be back, as I say, just as sure as the sun comes up tomorrow, with some fancy changes so that that plant will become economically sound – very, very sound – just as these other deals have, just as the NovAtel assets that were sold in Calgary for 10 cents on the dollar that are now manufactured

and sent all over the world. All this government ever does is open the door for entrepreneurs that take advantage of them. Every highbinder in this country from the equator of the eastern and western hemispheres knows there's a bunch of suckers sitting along this road that they will take along on the road and then get them into bed. As old Bezus Eustace had to say: you know, if you married the landlady's daughter, you always got the best bed in the house and the first pork chop. So marry the landlady's daughter, get into business, and you're looked after.

Thank you very much.

MR. KOWALSKI: There's a debate going on this afternoon, and I must say that I have a frail difficulty. I've not had an opportunity to hear all the comments made by individuals because I'm absolutely stone deaf in one of my ears right now. But that being the case, it still is an opportunity to have a discussion this afternoon and make a few comments with respect to an aspect, if I have been listening correctly for the last couple of years, that has been more thwarted by political diatribes and statements. Perhaps I can add just a little bit in terms of the history of this particular plant. This particular plant is not the Swan Hills plant. It has to be referred to as the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation. How did it all begin, Mr. Speaker?

Well, Mr. Speaker, I was not a member of this House in 1979, but in the early part of 1979 discussions began in this particular Assembly about continuing the tradition that Alberta had in terms of being an environmental leader not only in Canada but an environmental leader in North America. All members may recall, in fact some may not recall, that Alberta was the first jurisdiction in Canada to create a department of the environment. The Social Credit government did it before they were defeated in the election of 1971. They passed legislation that said that Alberta would become the first jurisdiction in Canada to create an independent, self-standing department called the department of the environment. It was after that, during the next several years, that the federal government in Canada created a department of the environment and many other provinces in Canada created departments of the environment.

One of the initiatives of the government elected after 1971 was in fact, then, to implement a series of new initiatives with respect to the cleanup and the protection, Mr. Speaker, and always the enhancement, not only the cleanup but the enhancement, of the environment in the province of Alberta. Albertans have something in their psyche and their niche that basically says that they love the blue sky and they love clean water and they love an environment that's not tainted. As kids many of us in this Assembly can recall driving along rural roads, and the former Social Credit government used to put up a green plywood Christmas tree at virtually every intersection in Alberta that said: keep Alberta green.

Well, it was that kind of tradition that was adopted by the government elected in 1971, and the government then moved with a whole series of initiatives, including being the first jurisdiction in North America to have a compulsory bottle retrieval system: you know, the one where you put a deposit on a pop bottle or something else. Many jurisdictions today in 1995 in North America still do not have that kind of system, and we went on with a series of other things.

By the late 1970s there was great debate in Alberta dealing with something called special or hazardous waste. It had to be defined. I was fortunate to have been elected in the fall of 1979, despite the fact that the member who ran against me – he was the leader

of the Liberal Party – said that he swept all the polls. I don't know how it's possible to sweep everything and not be elected, but the fact was, I was elected, Mr. Speaker. When I came into this Assembly in 1980, there was a series of committees of the Legislature and outside of the Legislature that basically said, "Let us deal with this whole question of hazardous and special wastes." A great debate occurred throughout Alberta, and there were hearings throughout all of Alberta by respected scientists, respected university leaders. Many people outside of government went around and held public hearings here, there, and everywhere. I look at the member for Clover Bar et cetera, et cetera, and some of her constituents were the leaders, in fact, of putting together the program that was to come about.

By 1984 the government had decided there had to be something that would be put in place, and that something was to be a system: the Alberta special waste management system. Question, question, question. What would the system entail? What would it involve? Would there be a hard property associated with it? A number of communities in Alberta had got very active in it and said: "Hey, choose me as the area. Let me be the area." There were public hearings in east-central Alberta. I can recall names, and I can put them on the table here, but everybody knows who they are.

One community in Alberta held a plebiscite on September 7, the same night the then Premier of Alberta went on provincewide television to say that there was going to be a mortgage assistance program instituted in the province of Alberta, and that community voted 80 percent in favour of saying that it would host a major killing plant, if there was to be one associated with elimination: not a holding tank, Mr. Speaker, not a garbage depot but a plant that would take this hazardous and special waste, incinerate it at very high temperatures and basically eliminate it so there would be nothing but small ounces of inert refuse that would be left over. That community was Swan Hills, a plebiscite in Swan Hills: 80 percent support on that plebiscite. They showed the greatest amount of interest of any community in the province of Alberta.

4:00

All those other statements about, you know, patronage, just think about that, Mr. Speaker. What MLA would want to have what would be perceived to be a major garbage dump with hazardous and special waste? When you have a syndrome called the NIMBY syndrome, that seems to pervade every community in North America, not in my backyard, what MLA would stand up and say, "I want it"? What community would stand up and say, "I want it"? No, no.

Mr. Speaker, they are very concerned about the environment, the people of Swan Hills. They had a very intelligent debate in their community, and they voted 80 percent in favour of hosting that plant, should they be successful. And they were successful after public hearings, after great debate, after complete analysis of the environment around Swan Hills to make sure that it was safe and was clean and that it would be effective.

At the same time there was another great debate, a very important debate, Mr. Speaker: what kind of system would there be? Would it be a hundred percent privately owned system? Would it be a public monopoly? Or would it be a joint venture? All three alternatives were on this floor in this Assembly, and all three alternatives were before the people of Alberta. This MLA argued strenuously in favour of a public utility one hundred percent owned by the people of Alberta, a government run utility at the time.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I didn't get my way. The decision was, in the innovation of the times, to basically say, "Let's have a joint venture where the private sector would put up certain dollars and the public would put up certain dollars." The saw-off in this case was that the public sector, the government, would get 60 percent of the votes on the board of directors and the private partner would get 40 percent. And it was developed.

By 1986 that was all behind us: the announcement made where it was going to be, the decision made in terms of documents, the arrangement of everything else. There were some really hard feelings by some people, including a former general manager associated with the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation when he was told that the decision was to go with a partnership rather than a hundred percent utility. The history clearly shows that those feelings were there, Mr. Speaker. In fact, a very good friend of mine who was one of the original members of the board of directors resigned because he didn't like the arrangement, but the reality was that the partnership was done and it was there. Signed, sealed, delivered: the thing was to go.

Well, boy, in 1986 I get the privilege of becoming Alberta's minister of the environment, and I got a whole bunch of things on my desk: the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation, that's now up and running, and I got to explain, defend it, and I certainly did; the Oldman River dam, what a great task, you know, to go out and build a big thing with \$300 million to \$400 million – I mean, it was exciting, Mr. Speaker, to be the minister of the environment – and all kinds of other things, irrigation in southern Alberta. But through it all the system went along, and it worked quite well. The Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation was in fact able to – able to – deal with some of the major issues that it had before itself, particularly the case of the elimination of PCBs in the province of Alberta, the retrieval of that one special and hazardous waste in Alberta. At the same time, we got inundated by requests from across Canada to have their waste come to the province of Alberta. We even talked to the federal government about the federal government becoming a partner in the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation.

The Member for Redwater is absolutely correct in one thing. One of the conditions of the liability of the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation – and, please, Mr. Speaker, I'm referring to the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation, not Swan Hills, because the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation has properties outside of the Swan Hills area and then deals with that whole system in Alberta. One of the items that was to be brought in and defined as a hazardous and special waste was the refuse that came from oil and gas fields in the province of Alberta. That was always intended to be a factor associated with the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation, is always factored in to the cash flow at the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation, and it was to have happened. It didn't happen, and when it didn't happen, it really destroyed the economic viability of that plant functioning to the way it was intended to function in the first place, in the original originators of the whole system. That's regrettable, it's unfortunate, but the Special Waste Management Corporation did arrive at the conclusion it was supposed to: to take these hazardous and special wastes out of land sites throughout the province of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, when you recognize there are hundreds and hundreds of orphan sites throughout this province, including one in downtown Calgary – I was really quite fascinated when I was minister of the environment and the then mayor of Calgary had kind of a problem because there was some oil firm down there

that had gone bankrupt or something and had all kinds of contaminated soil. Well, it was the government who moved in, grabbed the soil from Calgary, moved it to Swan Hills, made it inert. The taxpayers of Alberta paid for that, and that's part of the total cost of the running of the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation.

We invented such things as school laboratory cleanups. We went into every laboratory in Alberta and we basically said to the teachers in chemistry and biology and physics: "All this stuff that you've had for years, from hydrochloric acid to whatever the heck it is, that you don't even remember what's in the bottle anymore, give it to us. We'll take it. We'll destroy it in Swan Hills." The taxpayers of Alberta paid for that, and that's part of the cost of running the Special Waste Management Corporation.

We invented schemes in partnership with various municipalities throughout the province of Alberta and said, "Why not have a paint cleanup day or a special hazardous waste cleanup day?" Isn't it amazing when all of these citizens show up once or twice a year, whether or not it's in Edmonton or Lethbridge or Lloydminster or Medicine Hat, and they deposit all the refuse they have? Somebody picks it up. Somebody takes it to Swan Hills. Somebody liquidates it. Somebody nullifies it. Somebody neutralizes it. Doesn't anybody wonder who pays for it? It's the Special Waste Management Corporation that pays for it, and that's part of the cost of the cleanup in the province of Alberta, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very sophisticated garbage collection system in the province of Alberta, is what it is. There's not one municipality in Alberta that does not subsidize the cost of garbage collection. You may live in Grande Prairie; you subsidize it with taxpayers' dollars. You live in Calgary; you subsidize garbage collection with taxpayers' dollars. You live in Vegreville; you subsidize garbage collection with taxpayers' dollars. This was done on a provincial basis.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater is rising on a point of order.

Point of Order Questioning a Member

MR. N. TAYLOR: I'm wondering if the hon. Member for Barrhead-Westlock would permit a question.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of good harmony and to make sure that the record is very clear, I certainly will, but I want to just finish what I'm doing first.

Debate Continued

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, it costs money to protect the environment, it costs money to clean up the environment, and it costs megadollars to enhance the quality of the environment. If the province of Alberta in any one of the various governments going back to 1979 had not taken the initiative to deal with hazardous or special wastes, the quality of life in Alberta today would not have been the same, and yes, it costs money. If there has to be a comparison, go to the Niagara Peninsula in southern Ontario where they have spent over a hundred million dollars and nearly a decade in trying to find a location for a cure-it-all to deal with the hazardous and special wastes that have originated in that part of the world. They haven't done it. They haven't had the courage to do it. They haven't had the ability to create an interest among people to really transcend the idea. Yeah, we've got to

have a good environment, if we believe we're all environmentalists, but don't you dare do anything, and particularly don't you dare do anything in my backyard.

We've done it in Alberta, and we can continue to do it in Alberta, and hazardous and special wastes will continue to originate in the province of Alberta, Mr. Speaker. It will not end tomorrow. Our society is changing and changing very dramatically, and we have to continue to be at the forefront of all of this and in a leadership capacity for all of this.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make a couple of comments on several other items associated with this. Part of the deal in setting up the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation was that this would be a unit solely for the people of Alberta until two provincial elections had gone by, and only after those provincial elections would have gone by would there be a decision taken by the government to make a decision: yes to importation or no to importation. The first election was 1989; the second election was 1993. After that time that question was then raised by the government. It was dealt with, and the government said, "Yes, we're prepared to take a look at the importation of special and hazardous wastes."

4:10

In the meantime it is erroneous – hon. members may feel that they're very correct in this, but it is frankly erroneous – to suggest that there is an alternative to the kind of killing machines and kilns that you have in Swan Hills. There are transportable machines. We've had them in Swan Hills. We've tested them in Swan Hills.

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

Point of Order

Questioning a Member

DR. PERCY: It'll be under *Beauchesne* 333. Will the hon. member entertain a question after his talk's finished?

MR. KOWALSKI: I think the truth is very important, Mr. Speaker, and I'd be very happy to help, if I can, in any way.

MR. SEKULIC: Mr. Speaker, I also have a serious question under *Beauchesne* 482.

THE SPEAKER: Order please. The hon. Member for Barrhead-Westlock has said that he will entertain questions following his comments.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Redwater finally did get elected, you know, in our part of Alberta. He ran against my wife, but he finally did. He's probably one of the few members of the Assembly who will know that one day when I was the minister of the environment and I was giving my estimates – at that time there was a 30-minute speaking rule – I asked for unanimous consent to continue. The Assembly gave it to me, and I did. So if at the conclusion of my remarks I beat the time limit, I'll be happy to ask such a question and happy to entertain such questions.

Debate Continued

MR. KOWALSKI: The politics associated with the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation have really angered the

citizens who live in Swan Hills. Go back to the day when a group of citizens in this province were asked the question "If you as Albertans want to do something about cleaning up your environment" – and virtually everybody says: "Yes, we have to do something about cleaning up the environment, but, no, we don't want it within 50 miles of where we live. We don't want it in our municipality." These citizens are prepared to do all the hard work, to listen to all the arguments, to hire the scientists for themselves to advise them, and after that they have a plebiscite, and they say: "Forget about this NIMBY business. We're prepared as good Albertans to basically accept such a plant in our environment." They did it with 80 percent, and what they've heard for the last half a dozen months or three years or four years or five years is a desecration of the good name Swan Hills. So much so, Mr. Speaker, that just recently the mayor of the town of Swan Hills wrote a rather blistering letter to one member of this Assembly telling him to, you know, get a hold of reality and move forward with respect to this. It was as late as last Friday that I had another meeting with the very good mayor of the town of Swan Hills, and I should also point out that all mayors of Swan Hills have supported this, including the Liberal mayor who was there for a period of time. He was one of the great advocates of what was happening and what was going on.

So for people to say, you know, that the people there are disappointed or unhappy, Mr. Speaker, I don't know who those people are, and I certainly do spend a great deal of time in Swan Hills dealing with their concerns and their issues. I want to make that point, and I want to make that comment, because if anybody should be congratulated for being a true environmentalist in the province of Alberta, it should be the citizenry of the town of Swan Hills.

Now, I don't know how many people in this Assembly have ever seen this plant or this facility. I'm not so sure that people really know what it is. I think a lot of people read letters and write stories because it's great fun to have debates in this Assembly, but what it is, Mr. Speaker, is a conclusion to the existence in our environment of hazardous and special wastes. People can take whatever perspective they want about how much it costs. You've got to pay money to clean up the environment. They may have arguments about the partnership, and they may say, "Yes, it should have been the other one." That's easy to do in 20/20 hindsight, after the fact. The fact of the matter is that a decision was made at that time to go with the joint venture concept rather than one of the other two. So I suppose you can always say, "Well, it should have been that way, and it should have been that way," and boy, do you ever feel righteousness about that.

You can say, "Oh, yeah, there's other technology now in existence." Well, I'm not sure that there is. I've looked at this high and low. I read the literature. I've seen the machines that have been invented elsewhere in Canada, Mr. Speaker. We've even had machines from the United States, the portable ones, to destroy PCBs. They were sent to Swan Hills to be evaluated and tested by the scientists there, and the conclusion was: no, it is not foolproof. If you want purity and if you want clarity that now goes to 99 point – I think it's five nines after that – clarity and purification of air and anything coming out of the Swan Hills facility, you're going to have to go a long way to find that. There's not one human body in this Assembly that is 99.99999 percent pure. You will have some smell on your person and you will have some germ on your person that will not allow you to have that degree of integrity associated with it.

So okay. Great fun. Great fun in 1995. Who's the scapegoat? Who is the scapegoat? A scapegoat for what? For being an environmentalist? A scapegoat for believing that you should have in the province of Alberta clean air, a scapegoat for believing that you should have clean water in the province of Alberta, a scapegoat for believing that you should have clean soil in the province of Alberta? A scapegoat, Mr. Speaker? I guess we're all the scapegoat because I'm proud to be an environmentalist and I am as much a scapegoat as the other 2.7 million people in Alberta.

THE SPEAKER: We have a situation in the Assembly now where the hon. Member for Barrhead-Westlock has agreed to answer questions. Unfortunately, his time has elapsed and it would take the unanimous consent of the Assembly to allow him time to answer these questions. Is there agreement in the Assembly for this to happen?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed?

The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to members on both sides of the House because I think the Member for Barrhead-Westlock had a very good story to tell, but he had left one question that I had wanted to ask him. I would like to ask him, in his opinion or his feelings, if he had been in charge for the last couple of years, could he have put this plant on a profit-making basis?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I've always followed a policy that once I had left being the minister of a particular department I would not publicly comment on the operation of that department. To answer that question today would cause me to basically violate a code that I've made to myself. I have not made comments about any department that I've ever had the privilege of being minister of, and I don't know if I'm authoritative to even answer that question because it is second guessing. I'm one vote of 83 in a Legislative Assembly, and I'm one vote of 53 in a governing caucus. I've explained my personal views about terms of what I've said should be, in terms of either a joint venture or a public utility of one hundred percent ownership, and I've also made a comment that when the decision was made to eliminate the oil and gas stream waste into the plant, it greatly affected the economic viability and the cash flow of the plant. I've pointed out that I thought that was very regrettable.

DR. PERCY: I'd like to thank the hon. member for accepting questions and the House for agreeing to provide unanimous consent. My question relates to the fact that a recent author has stated that it was the hon. member who had signed both the loan guarantees and had been responsible for the joint venture agreements. I would ask the hon. member to tell us who in fact signed the guarantees and signed the joint venture agreement.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I understand a book has come out recently authored by somebody by the name of Dabbs. The media asked me this question already today, so that's why I know the author of the book. The reality is, I've never had an opportunity to ever meet this guy. He never talked to me, never asked me a question, and I don't know what he said specifically.

I do know that I became minister of the environment in the spring, I believe it was May, of 1986. By that point in time the

whole conclusion with respect to the Alberta special waste management system had been determined. If there were documents that had to be looked at during 1986 and into early 1987 that had not been concluded, I as the minister of the environment may very well have signed a document at that time. I don't have those records in front of me. I can certainly pursue them. But I do know this: the conclusion to the plant had already been done. The plant had already, in essence, been announced, under way, constructed and the like.

In terms of the second part of the question that had to with . . .

DR. PERCY: The joint venture agreement, the amended joint venture agreement.

4:20

MR. KOWALSKI: The joint venture agreement came into effect in 1986, and it was to be relooked at three years after the fact, 1989, and I believe up for review after five years, 1991. I was no longer the minister of the environment as of September 1988.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Leduc.

MR. KIRKLAND: Not a question but I was going to address Bill 45, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Okay. Then the hon. Member for Leduc on Bill 45.

MR. KIRKLAND: Okay. Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll first compliment the Member for Lethbridge-West and the Member for Barrhead-Westlock. It's refreshing to see a debate actually take place in the House. I think it's really what was intended as far as this Assembly is concerned, so my compliments to them.

Mr. Speaker, I'd be neglectful if I did not stand up here and speak publicly and on record against a government that would offer a \$150 million gift, I'll call it, to incorporate Alberta. That comes in the entire package of a \$400 million to \$500 million loss to Albertans. I think that is particularly atrocious when we're dealing with health care in this province, as we are, with education and the difficulties we're experiencing there trying to find the dollars to provide good quality education, and also to those in the province that fall to the safety nets. I think it's critical that every member indicate that perhaps they're not satisfied with what's gone on, and certainly I've heard some justifications and excuses as to why. If this perhaps had happened back in days of the NovAtel and the Gainers and the MagCan era, it'd be lumped in, I guess, as just another stinging testimony of the incompetence of the government of that particular day. Instead, I would suggest it becomes today's stinging testimony to that incompetence that continues to run throughout the Conservative government, and I think that when the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud coined the term 'BovAtel,' it was very appropriate.

[The Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

The Member for Sherwood Park, as he so aptly does, articulated the failed process that actually occurred with Bovar, and I think he also indicated that there were options that could have been pursued that weren't. I hung on one particular term he used, Mr. Speaker, and that was that Bovar and Chem-Security had lined their pockets at the taxpayers' expense. I'm not convinced that simply Chem-Security and Bovar were the only individuals to have their pockets lined.

Two years ago, shortly after I was elected, I had the opportunity to chat with a businessman in Nisku, a very successful businessman, and he's very much an entrepreneurial gentleman. He put a great deal of time, Mr. Speaker, into a proposal whereby he would collect hazardous wastes throughout the province of Alberta and then transport those hazardous wastes to Swan Hills. Now, this gentleman is politically very wise, so he went to his MLA of the day, a good friend of his, and he asked for assistance to have his proposal accepted. I think we know that form of business goes on time and time again. The MLA of the day clearly stated that this businessman wouldn't be included in spite of his excellent proposal. I just relate this story because in fact it sets the background, in my view, and I see you have a questionable look on your face. It goes back, well, when they were collecting the hazardous wastes. The point that I'm trying to get at, if you'll bear with me here, is the fact that he said that he couldn't in fact be included in spite of the excellent proposal. The MLA of the day indicated that it was a retirement plan for the then sitting Premier, and I looked at him with wonderment and somewhat with disbelief. I said: well, I can't quite accept this.

But when I look at the options that have been set aside today, I wonder why we haven't explored some of those options, Mr. Speaker, and what pops into my mind is that particular story that they related two years ago. I wondered if it isn't a little messier than what we see, and thereby we can't move out of it at less of a cost to the taxpayers of Alberta. I found that a little disconcerting. I know this government says that they want to do the right thing as far as the Swan Hills hazardous waste plant is concerned. However, when we examine the options – and one of those options was very clearly pointed out by the Member for Sherwood Park, that agreement could have come back to this Assembly – and as we have rolled back wages, there is no reason why in fact we couldn't have looked at rolling back that 30 percent profit to start with through legislation. Now, that may seem somewhat onerous, but we've walked that in my three years already, this government has. I don't quite understand why we couldn't take that particular approach with that situation. I think you'd find the people of Alberta very supportive of that approach.

The concern, Mr. Speaker – and we talk about efficiency. I guess I always go back to my own constituency when I'm looking for an example as to how we can find that efficiency. I had the occasion to visit a business here in Nisku approximately two weeks ago. This business is in the process of disposing of hazardous waste, aerosol cans to be very, very specific. Now, in speaking with them, this individual has indicated to me that his business out there actually disposes of a 45-gallon drum of aerosol cans for \$300. It costs \$600 to do that at the Swan Hills hazardous waste plant. That tells me that in fact there are some efficiencies that have been overlooked or in fact there are some invoices here that aren't quite as accurate as they should be. This process in Nisku has been fully approved by the government, they've encouraged it, and there's a considerable savings there. I was reluctant to bring it up for fear that in fact . . .

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, we appear to have a point of order by the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw. You'll share it with us?

**Point of Order
Questioning a Member**

MR. HAVELOCK: *Beauchesne* 333. I'm just wondering if the hon. member would be prepared to answer a question . . .

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: That's 482, hon. member.

MR. HAVELOCK: *Beauchesne* 482.

. . . as to whether the disposal processes are the same.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Okay. The hon. Member for Leduc is reminded that you only have to say yes or no and don't have to give any reasons, or you can say yes at the end, whichever you want.

MR. KIRKLAND: I'll entertain the question upon conclusion of my comments, Mr. Speaker.

Debate Continued

MR. KIRKLAND: So some of those inefficiencies, some of those questions as to why we couldn't have actually arrived at a more efficient method of stepping back from the Alberta special waste management plant at Swan Hills I think cloud my ability to accept and support the Bill here, where we are appropriating the \$147 million to pay Bovar and Chem-Security. Certainly, I think that has been poorly handled, from my view. Many Albertans would share that opinion.

Now, there's been an effort – and I would suggest perhaps an honourable effort – to relieve the taxpayer of that great liability. As I indicated, Mr. Speaker, I'm not convinced that it has been done as efficiently as it could have been. The options that are available that have been pointed out by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud as well as Sherwood Park I think have merit, and those are areas that probably should have been addressed at that particular point.

Now, I enjoyed the hon. Member for Barrhead-Westlock's debate immensely. It indicated what is, and why are they guilty of cleaning up? Those weren't his exact terms, Mr. Speaker, but should they be apologetic for cleaning the air and cleaning the water and cleaning the hazardous wastes in this province? No, you shouldn't be apologetic for that, but you certainly should be apologetic for a system that obviously – though its end result was excellent as far as purity is concerned, the cost to arrive at that was somewhat questionable. I don't think there's anyone in this Legislative Assembly that doesn't realize that it could have been done for less and more efficient cost.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those comments I would state that in fact I will not support Bill 45, even though it includes some dollars appropriated to the flood victims in southern Alberta. Certainly I think it's very important that they receive due and proper payment for the damages that they resulted in, and because the Bill comes in a bundled form, I certainly wouldn't want to be on record as saying that I'm voting against \$30 million that has to be appropriated to deal with the Blue Cross costs. Nevertheless, the \$147 million in this Bill is one that I find that I can't support, and I can't support it for the reasons I've advanced up to this point.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I'll entertain the question.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw on the question agreed to by the hon. Member for Leduc.

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes, and I'd like to thank the hon. member for accepting it. He did mention that there was a businessman in Nisku who could dispose of aerosol cans for \$300, I believe, versus \$600, which the special waste treatment centre would have charged. I'm just wondering whether the method of disposal and the end result were the same or whether we're comparing apples with oranges.

4:30

MR. KIRKLAND: Mr. Speaker, the end result as far as purity and facts and figures I cannot speak to. What I do know is that the business in Nisku has been encouraged to continue to dispose of his waste out there by the government. His methods and his process have been fully accepted and adopted by the government. So one would assume that if there's a small percentage of difference between the hazardous Swan Hills disposal method and the one in Nisku, it's insignificant to the point where it causes this government concern. It's at half the cost, and that's very critical.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, followed by Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan.

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had to rise in the debate today after listening to so much of the opposition comments and particularly after reflecting on the comments by my colleague from Lethbridge-West. I find it unfortunate when I look at the level of debate, particularly from some of the members of the opposition. I would have thought they would have been more to the point in terms of the issue of the day, as opposed to the grandstanding and politicking of the past. So many of them, like myself, were elected subsequent to 1993, but they seem to be learning their lessons well in terms of innuendo. It was interesting today when we had a member's statement that addressed that very issue, which had been raised by this opposition. We see the same type of rhetoric in terms of the Member for Leduc, who through innuendo was casting some form of aspersion on previous MLAs who may have served in that area, yet we saw nothing tabled by that member. We saw nothing of fact. We see innuendo. We see aspersions.

MR. KIRKLAND: Point of order.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Point of order. Hon. Member for Leduc, on the point of order. Do you have a citation?

Point of Order Clarification

MR. KIRKLAND: Section 23(j), Mr. Speaker. I did not cast aspersions on the former MLA. I just indicated that he was involved in a conversation. I just want that record cleared.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: On the point of order.

MR. JACQUES: On the point of order. I would ask that the Blues be read at a later date, Mr. Speaker, if there's any question about what he said or how he said it.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Again, the Chair would indicate that it truly appears to be a difference of opinion between two hon. members as to what was said. I did not detect any aspersion cast. The hon. Member for Leduc did mention that I had some look, a frown I think he characterized it as. I was worried that he was going to move over the line. I don't think he did. So with that, we would invite the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti to continue.

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Very close to the line.

Debate Continued

MR. JACQUES: Notwithstanding the issue of the cost, it still comes back to one of the fundamental issues, and I think the hon. Member for Barrhead-Westlock certainly gave a very, if you like, thorough background in terms of the rationale of the day.

I don't think there's any member in this Legislature who likes to see a type of supplementary estimate that we have here today. It's not one that we stand up proudly and try to defend on the basis that it makes sense. It makes sense only from the point of view of the actions that were taken in those days and the actions which were felt to be appropriate on behalf of the province of Alberta. To sit and suggest that that action of some 11 to 12 years ago in some way is connected with the inability or the decision to not fund 400 hours of kindergarten is purely unreasonable. I could use stronger language, but I won't. We've heard Moses being referred to today. We've had a lot of reference by the opposition in terms of this, a lot of rhetoric, very little in substance, intending to inflame the debate but with very little factual information in terms of what the issue is before us today.

I do find it interesting – and it was only purely by coincidence – that today, as I was sitting here listening to the debate, a letter crossed my desk, a letter from the Peace Region Waste Reduction Action Committee.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenarry is rising on a point of order. You'll share it with us?

Point of Order Questioning a Member

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member entertain a question pursuant to *Beauchesne*?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, you just have to answer yes, no, or later.

MR. JACQUES: A little later.

Debate Continued

MR. JACQUES: This letter, Mr. Speaker, I repeat, came from the Peace Region Waste Reduction Action Committee. It's a committee of people that's based in Berwyn, Alberta. The letter, interestingly enough, is addressed to the hon. Member for Barrhead-Westlock, and it's dated October 2, 1995, a copy of which was distributed also to the mayor of the town of Swan Hills. It's relevant to the facility, and I want to read just a couple of brief excerpts. It says:

The purpose of this letter is to extend our compliments to you on the role that you played in the construction of the Alberta Special Waste Management Facility. The development of the special waste treatment facility has provided economic and business opportunities for Alberta, while addressing an important environmental concern.

It goes on with other complimentary remarks, Mr. Speaker.

The interesting thing is that we have not heard the references anywhere from the opposition with regard to the environmentalists' view on this subject matter. They're strictly, strictly, strictly coming at it from the point of view of innuendo, blame, the sky has fallen, the earth is opening up, Moses is coming, on and on and on.

Mr. Speaker, the interesting thing I found about this letter in particular is that it is signed by a well-known member of the opposition party. In fact, I have the acquaintance. This is a great

individual who I hold in high admiration, and I know the Member for Redwater does.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Don't keep us in suspense. Who is it?

MR. JACQUES: It's signed by Helen Rice, chairman of the Peace Region Waste Reduction Action Committee.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is this thing tabled?

MR. JACQUES: I can table it, yes, sir. I have four copies here by coincidence.

The interesting thing, Mr. Speaker, is that if we spent our time and effort in this Legislature going outside and seeking the honest input of Albertans in this province, particularly those that donate a lot of volunteer time and effort in terms of environmental protection, environmental awareness, environmental concern, environmental cleanup, I would suggest that you would find almost unanimous consent amongst those people that the Alberta special waste management facility is one of the best things that's happened to Alberta. It's one of the best things that's happened in western Canada and indeed one of the best things that's happened in Canada. Yes, there has been a price to pay for it, and yes, with the wisdom of hindsight maybe it could have been done better. I'm not going to argue that. But what I will argue and point out on behalf of all Albertans is that this facility has served us well. It has done a job in terms of PCVs and PCBs which could not have been without that plant.

We might suggest that there is a facility, as the member did, in Leduc that can dispose of aerosol cans, and again maybe that's very factual, but can that same facility adequately, with the same environmental action and output, process PCBs and PCVs? I suggest the answer to that would probably be no. So if indeed we're talking about alike facilities, let's make sure that they are like facilities.

We can't change the past; we can only move on. That plant is there, and I'm glad it is there. I think all Albertans, particularly over the last 10 to 15 years, are glad that there was some leadership taken in this province and that that plant was indeed operational.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

4:40

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry to ask his question of Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I ask this question because the hon. member at the outset of his speech made reference to the fact that the opposition today had overstepped the area of casting aspersions, that really the opposition had not followed the customs and the tradition of parliamentary procedure. Accordingly, I want to ask him this question: does the member accept the parliamentary custom, the parliamentary procedure, the parliamentary way of doing things, that's set out in *Beauchesne* and in all terms of reference that say that there is ministerial responsibility for errors, for gross errors. If he does accept that premise, that principle, how then can he condone the horrible mistake that NovAtel was and really the horrible mistake that Bovar has turned out to be?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, I think you only need to refer to the last one. The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti to reply.

MR. JACQUES: Well, there were quite a few questions to one question there. To start off with, do I acknowledge and do I appreciate and do I understand the precedent of this House and other Houses? Yes, as much as I can after some 27, 28 months of experience in this House. I cannot stand here and speak for a minister or suggest what a minister should do or not do. That is an individual responsibility and covenant of this House and of the government. Certainly if we want to get on to other subjects, as the member has alluded to, they are not part of the debate here today. To suggest that I somehow don't abide with that principle or in some way suggest that I would ignore it is simply not true. I support the traditions of this House, Mr. Speaker. I always have and I always will as a member of this House.

Thank you.

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

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise also to speak to the supplementary estimates, speaking specifically to the portion that deals with the \$147 million to finance the disposal of the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation. It hits hard at the fact that we have not seen accountability by this present government or previous Progressive Conservative governments. One would ask: how do we connect today in this debate to past governments? I think it's quite simple. Certainly the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti has indeed asked that question. We've seen the demonstrated lack of management ability through business ventures that indeed governments never had any right to be in in the first instance, and to a great degree that practice still continued after the last election. That is the connection.

The question is being asked also: how can we talk about kindergarten and health care in the same breath as supplementary estimates in connecting it back? It's quite simple to be able to do that. It's called accountability once again, Mr. Speaker, because what's true tradition in the parliamentary system is that when something goes wrong within government, the minister has to be held fully accountable. We've never seen that under any Progressive Conservative administration. So there never has truly been an accountability.

Now, I acknowledge the words of the Member for Barrhead-Westlock. In fact, he didn't go quite far enough back in dealing with this very interesting subject. Prior to 1979 as mayor of the city of Fort Saskatchewan I was very much involved in the initiation of dealing with hazardous waste in the province of Alberta. In actual fact it was the private sector that was the forerunner in looking at putting a plant in place that was very comparable to what we see in Alberta Special Waste Management, looking at comparable technologies that were developed in Germany.

Now, the interesting thing was that when we as a community examined the credibility of this company, Kinetic Contaminants – and if I recall it was Gerry Gerke who was the president of that company – upon investigation there was a feeling of insecurity in our community. We didn't feel that the financial credibility was there, and if the private sector entered into this type of venture, indeed our environment could be at risk. Once you started to examine the viability of a profit when meeting the highest environmental standards, it became quite apparent, Mr. Speaker, that there was no profit margin there, if you're to live within the then environmental regulations, which actually have been strengthened since that time.

So of course because of the rejection by our community to Kinetic Contaminants and the relationship with the department of environment and the city of Fort Saskatchewan, the government of Alberta at that time became involved in a very worthy debate. There's no doubt in my mind that the intentions of the government of the day were certainly to deal with the type of hazardous waste that was across this province, that had to be removed to protect our environment.

Now, it was a long process that took place, but during that debate it became quite evident – and I wholeheartedly support the Member for Barrhead-Westlock – in all the evidence that was laid before Albertans and the people who were investigating it that a Crown corporation, a public utility was the answer, and in essence if the technology outgrew itself, then that was the price of getting rid of this type of waste. Unfortunately, even back then that government of the day seemed to know better than the findings of the investigation of the special committee and the public at large, that it should indeed be a Crown corporation. No, no, no. They wanted to get into a business venture, and that's when it went all wrong.

Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, that's when I started becoming very disenchanted by the philosophy and the policy that I saw through the Progressive Conservatives. It wasn't just dealing with Alberta Special Waste Management. There was something else evolving at that time in our community of the city of Fort Saskatchewan, and that was where there was discussion that resulted in MagCan being built, looking at that technology or that product, yet the petrochemical industry and I said to the government of the day: "Don't get into that venture. The private sector is telling you that it will never go, that it will be a failure from a financial perspective." But that government of the day knew better than anybody else and went ahead with MagCan.

'BovAtel,' as we're now calling this, could have been prevented. I'll agree with members on the government side of the House that, yes, there was a cost to remove that hazardous waste from this province, and I accept as an elected official, whether it was municipal or provincial, that it was a cost that was worth taxpayer money being expended on. But once again this government and previous Progressive Conservative governments have this holier-than-thou attitude, that they know better than anyone else.

When I say that, I see the same thing when it comes to health care restructuring today. Why can we look at this supplementary estimate for \$147 and compare it to health care? Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm sick to the stomach knowing that there are five men, through a specialist that I know in the city of Edmonton – one of these men is a constituent of mine – with prostate cancer. He had his biopsy on September 28. There's a possibility, just a possibility, that he may get into the University of Alberta hospital by the end of November to have his surgery done. But the chances are that all five men will not get in by the end of November because this surgeon has one day a month. The prostate surgery takes four hours. Now, it doesn't take a mathematician to tell you that the five Albertans out there that need this surgery done are not going to be all done in the month of November. It brings tears to my eyes, because if I was a woman with breast cancer, I'd be terrified, quite frankly, if I was told I had to wait one month, far less three months, to get my surgery. So to the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, that's how I can correlate mismanagement by governments who think they know better than people who have investigated an area of investment. That's how I can tie the two together.

4:50

The Member for Barrhead-Westlock is quite correct: NIMBY was alive and well. I believe that Swan Hills was the community that quite clearly said: "We want this. We want it for economic growth. We're not afraid of this." We in Fort Saskatchewan didn't want it because it was sitting on the North Saskatchewan River. I visited that plant on three different occasions. It's leading technology, there's no doubt in my mind. But once again, Mr. Speaker, Progressive Conservative governments still have not learned. They don't know how to manage. They should never get into business because they make a mess for the taxpayers of Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Briefly I'd like to reiterate the purpose of this supplementary estimate. It is simply at this stage to allow for the government's liabilities and obligations, most of them, to be transferred to a numbered company and to fund that numbered company in order to meet this government's continuing obligations under the special waste treatment agreement, which was negotiated some time ago. It is not at this stage, as has been alleged by members of the opposition, to sell the facility. That is certainly for a later discussion, and I'm sure that will be brought forward and discussed in this House.

Mr. Speaker, what are the consequences of a no vote at this stage? If we were to refer to the fairness assessment tabled in the House yesterday, it could mean anywhere in a best case scenario of a continuing subsidy of \$123 million all the way up to a worst case scenario of \$326 million. I've heard some eloquent arguments from the opposition members today that there are some shortfalls with respect to certain government programs, yet they seem willing to risk those government programs by rejecting a request to try and limit our expenditures under this agreement. That strikes me as being rather inconsistent.

Mr. Speaker, the facility has served its primary purpose, and that was the safe destruction of special and hazardous wastes generated in this province. I think it served the people of this province well. I appreciate the tremendous support that this facility has received from the people of Swan Hills. As I mentioned last night, they've handled this entire process with dignity and reserve, despite the fact that the members of the opposition have tried to make this a purely political issue without having regard to the environmental impacts and the economic impacts that this facility has had in the province and in the Swan Hills region.

Mr. Speaker, despite the fact that this facility has operated well, I do feel that it is time to exit the agreement which we entered into some time ago. Do we continue to buy into uncertainty by rejecting this request, or do we provide an opportunity for the plant to continue to operate? Do we provide an opportunity for that plant to meet an identified environmental need, and do we continue to provide an opportunity to stimulate economic activity in rural Alberta?

Mr. Speaker, if the members of this House truly believe in doing the right thing, then they will support this supplementary estimate for the purposes and the reasons that I've given. I've had rather extensive debate on this issue over the last couple of days, and I don't want to go into it any further, but I would urge

all members to support the request for this supplementary estimate.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 45 read a second time]

head: Government Bills and Orders

head: Third Reading

Bill 43

Willmore Wilderness Park Amendment Act, 1995

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. EVANS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague the Minister of Environmental Protection I would move third reading of Bill 43.

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

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are now at third stage reading of Bill 43. I think members will agree we had some excellent and interesting debate on Bill 43 in second reading and in Committee of the Whole. At that time, in Committee of the Whole, the Minister of Environmental Protection, myself, and my colleagues in the opposition benches took some time to debate some of the details and some of the concerns surrounding Bill 43.

I do have to say that there are not significant concerns in terms of the legislation itself. There were some concerns about the implementation of Bill 43 after we do move the Bill from third reading at this point to the next stage. I think I can certainly say that I and my colleagues will be in support of Bill 43 at third reading in that we are very much in support of a proposition to provide legislative protection for the Willmore wilderness park in that it will explicitly and specifically prohibit industrial activity and encroachment into the boundaries of that park.

Mr. Speaker, in the debate that ensued in Committee of the Whole – and again I say that conceptually we are reasonably happy with the provisions of Bill 43, but in terms of the implementation what it does require, as of course in many cases what the legislation requires, is implementation through the process of developing the regulations. We understand, I will again state for the record, that the regulations for the Willmore Wilderness Park Amendment Act, 1995, will be the text of the forest management use regulation under the Forests Act, 1971. Now, in the context of the text of that particular regulation, the concerns that have been expressed by members of the opposition in the implementation of the legislation will be: specific and distinct prohibitions for all-terrain vehicles and specific and distinct prohibition from the use of snowmobiles other than for specific periods of time within the year and other than for the specific purpose of access to and use of traplines that exist in the park.

We are again at this point, Mr. Speaker, caught in a rather unfortunate situation where we have to rely on the assumptions of government that those in fact will become the regulations rather than being in a position where we can speak positively to the Bill and the regulations wherein the regulations would have been tabled to the Legislative Assembly or tabled to the Standing Committee on Law and Regulations, where we can have those concerns addressed specifically, we can see in fact the wording of

the regulations and have that extra comfort level that from concept to implementation the support for the concept of a Bill like Bill 43 can be received from the members of the opposition. So once again it raises the issue that if we had the regulations, if we had the comfort of seeing in black and white the draft regulations, over and above the assurances of the Minister of Environmental Protection, it would make the process much easier and it would make the process much better and more efficient for the people of Alberta.

5:00

In that context the minister gave some answers to questions dealing with specific sections of the Act, somewhat complete, but that I guess suggests, Mr. Speaker, somewhat incomplete. The legislation does allow for some dispositions with respect to the registered fur management licences. It does allow for dispositions to assist with trapping. We have the minister's assurances that that will be in relation to the traplines that exist there, the access to the traplines by snowmobile and no other all-terrain or off-highway vehicles, the restrictions on the construction of cabins along those traplines to make sure that the trapline is being used solely and exclusively for the purpose for which that trapline is intended and in no way could that be abused, where a registered fur management licence holder could rely on that trapline or an accommodation within the boundaries of the park for recreation or for other purposes.

Mr. Speaker, we have spoken in debate about Bill 43, the Willmore Wilderness Park Amendment Act, 1995, as a model for the protection of various unique and special lands in the province of Alberta. We have before us in Bill 43 an excellent model. We have before us in Bill 43 an appreciation by the government of Alberta that protection of unique and special places within the province of Alberta can work and will work in the form of legislated protection. It is a model that I think members on this side of the Assembly and I would hope members on the government side will agree can be adopted, can be worked to deal with other unique and special places in the province of Alberta that deserve the same level of protection.

The concept that we are dealing with here is not the creation of Willmore wilderness park but the conservation and protection of Willmore wilderness park. Whether we are dealing with other parks, whether we are dealing with ecological reserves, whether we are dealing with natural areas, the model now exists so that regardless of the designation, the legislated protection and conservation is possible. We need only look to Bill 43 to recognize that that kind of protection that entrenches the protection, the conservation, the biodiversity, the uniqueness of those particular areas of the province of Alberta can be accomplished by the Members of the Legislative Assembly.

I am hopeful, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Environmental Protection will accept that members of the opposition appreciate the gesture by the Minister of Environmental Protection to legislate protection for the park and will take this not as an end but as a beginning for the legislated protection of other areas of Alberta such as the Wild Kakwa, such as the Cariboo Mountains, such as other areas that need the same kind of protection. The reason they need the same kind of protection is because of the ever increasing encroachment and need for exploration in what I would call the last frontiers in the province of Alberta.

All members of the Assembly know that we have enjoyed individually and collectively the riches that come from the natural resources of the province of Alberta. Whether those riches are in the form of our oil and gas reserves, whether those riches are in

the form of our coal reserves, whether those riches are in the form of our water, whether those riches are in the form of our forests, we have all enjoyed the riches of the province of Alberta, but we all have to recognize – and in fact, Mr. Speaker, the discussion that just took place before introduction of third reading of Bill 43, the Member for Barrhead-Westlock – that we are all to a greater or lesser extent environmentalists.

In representing our constituents, we all recognize the importance and the significance of protecting the environment of the province of Alberta. That recognition comes in many different forms. It comes in the form of cleaning up at one end; it comes in the form of protecting and conserving at the other end. So we all have a responsibility, we all have an obligation to look for the appropriate mechanisms to make sure that that protection and that conservation take place in the most appropriate manner.

I recognize, Mr. Speaker, that the government has given some designation of protection to those areas of Alberta that I've spoken about.

MR. DUNFORD: This is so good, Bruce, that I'm going to send it to my constituents.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, hon. member. I appreciate the comments, Mr. Speaker, on the eloquence of my statements this afternoon. I'll continue being eloquent.

Mr. Speaker, the reality in Alberta today is that we are now encroaching on the last frontiers. We know what we have for reserves in our populated areas. The Eastern Slopes are now the focal point for exploration. In our attempts to diversify our economy, we are allowing companies to come in through forest management agreements and reserve unto themselves the forests of Alberta. But because we are now encroaching on the last frontier, it's now more important than ever that we look at the last remaining vestiges of unique wilderness in the province of Alberta and find the most appropriate way to ensure that they are protected. The protection is not protection for ourselves; the protection is for future generations. The best mechanism for protection for future generations is entrenchment of that protection through legislation.

We have discussed many times in this Assembly the distinction between legislation and policy. Policy can be changed by the government at any time on a whim. The change in legislation requires debate in the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, we've heard hon. members today, we probably hear hon. members every day talk about some of the rhetoric that flies back and forth in debate. Nonetheless, the best place for debate to take place for the best approach to making decisions about the future of Alberta is indeed in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, as compared to decisions about policy that are made by the government and the government alone. This Assembly is

able to give hon. members the benefit of two or three or several sides of an argument, and that is of course in the best interests of Albertans as to how we shape the future of the province of Alberta.

[The Speaker in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker, the way we shape the future of the province of Alberta in protecting our unique and special places, such as the Willmore wilderness park, is through amendments to legislation, as we see in Bill 43, or through the creation of legislation to protect the areas, to limit encroachment of industrial activity, to recognize the importance of conservation, to recognize the importance of biodiversity, and to recognize also that protection of those areas becomes a very important economic factor to the province of Alberta whether it's in the context of ecotourism or whether it's simply in the context of retaining for future generations those wilderness areas in their virgin form. It is an important economic part of the province of Alberta, because the balance between economic development and industrial development and environmental protection is the important balance for the overall success of the province of Alberta.

We've heard many times, Mr. Speaker, that environmental protection is at the opposite end of the spectrum to economic development. That's simply not true. Economic development and environmental protection are on the same footing; they're on the same plane. They're in fact ultimately the same thing.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that Bill 43, as I say, is a very good start in this process. It is the beginning; it is not the end. We look forward to debating in this Assembly many more pieces of legislation such as Bill 43 that recognize the importance of Alberta's biodiversity, that recognize the importance of protection of that biodiversity, that recognize the importance of legislated protection for those areas for future generations.

5:10

Mr. Speaker, with those comments I stand in the Assembly today and indicate to members that I will support Bill 43 at third reading.

[Motion carried; Bill 43 read a third time]

MR. EVANS: Mr. Speaker, we're having a wonderful time in the Assembly; I think all members would agree. But given the day and the hour, I would move that we now call it 5:30 and adjourn the Assembly until Monday at 1:30 o'clock.

[At 5:13 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]