

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, October 25, 1995**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 95/10/25

[The Speaker in the Chair]

head: Prayers

THE SPEAKER: Let us pray.

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

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

Amen.

head: Presenting Petitions

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my duty and pleasure today to present a petition on behalf of 270 voters in the Smoky Lake-Thorhild area. They're saying:

We the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to urge the government to place a moratorium on any further reductions to the budget for health, and to immediately commence a process to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of health care services currently available.

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

MR. HENRY: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I would beg your leave to table two petitions today, if I may. The first petitions the Legislative Assembly to ensure that "all school boards provide transportation for each eligible child in rural Alberta without the use of transportation fees" or user fees. These are signed by individuals from Ardmore, Alberta.

I have another petition I'd like to present calling on the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to restore funding to kindergarten to its rightful place of 400 hours as a minimum. That's signed by people from Edmonton, Redcliff, and Medicine Hat.

Thank you very much.

head: Introduction of Bills

Bill 49

Racing Corporation Act

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce Bill 49, the Racing Corporation Act.

This legislation repeals the Alberta Racing Commission Act and the Pari Mutuel Tax Act and formalizes this government's stated intention to privatize the regulatory functions currently performed by the Alberta Racing Commission.

[Leave granted; Bill 49 read a first time]

head: Tabling Returns and Reports

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I am tabling today a copy of the annual reports for the period ended March 31, 1995, for the following: Headwaters health authority, Calgary regional health authority, Crossroads regional health authority, Capital health authority, Lakeland regional health authority, Keeweenok Lakes regional health authority No. 15, Northern Lights regional health

authority, and Northwestern regional health authority. Because of the bulk involved in this tabling, four additional copies are already in the Clerk's office for processing.

MR. MITCHELL: Yesterday the Premier indicated that he requested the Auditor General to do the special investigation of Swan Hills, but of course he didn't. On July 28, Mr. Speaker, I wrote to the Premier asking him to request the Auditor General, in this letter. These documents indicate that his office refused to do any kind of investigation at all. It was our letter of August 2, which is attached to this, that precipitated the Auditor General's special investigation into Swan Hills. The Premier avoided it.

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

DR. WEST: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Continuing in the spirit of openness and accountability, I am pleased to file the following information today that has been requested: ministerial orders issued between June 15, 1993, and October 1, '95, for the Department of Transportation and Utilities; a list of the primary highway construction projects completed January 1, 1994; the safety improvement projects identified in 1990, improvement priority list, and their status; the document Northwest Rail Authority, a Proposal; and the document Alberta High Speed Rail Concept.

head: Introduction of Guests

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

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Agriculture has a long and proud history in this province, and one of the people that has played a key role in the development of agriculture in this province is a guest that I am about to introduce. This gentleman has dedicated much of his life to the development of agriculture. Indeed, he's part of the reason why it's been so successful. I'd like to introduce to you and through you Ernie Isley, a true friend of agriculture, residing in Bonnyville, Alberta.

Thank you.

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and to the Members of the Legislative Assembly Mrs. Jean Campbell, our first private contributor to the endowment program of the Alberta heritage scholarship fund. Also with her today is her daughter Cheryl.

Mrs. Campbell and her family have donated \$40,000, which will be used to establish two new scholarship programs in honour of some very special people. The Theodore R. Campbell scholarship will recognize the outstanding achievements of a native student pursuing an education degree through the Blue Quills First Nations College, and the Janet and Horace Allen scholarship will recognize the graduate with the highest grades in sciences from the Crownsnest Pass high school. I'd ask Mrs. Campbell and her daughter to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the members of this Assembly who are the ones who passed the legislation last session to make this day a reality.

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

MR. BRACKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a privilege and an honour to present to you and to Members of the

Legislative Assembly 43 grade 6 students from one of St. Albert's finest schools, Robert Rundle. They are here to learn more about the legislative process and are keenly interested. Some are even committed to becoming politicians. One of the students, Cady Gowler, is the granddaughter of our Associate Sergeant-at-Arms, Al Gowler. They are accompanied by their educators: a very dynamic young educator, Chris Akins, and a school in St. Albert was named after his grandparents; and an educational colleague and friend, principal of the school for 21 years, Ron Thronson, who has dedicated 43 years to education in our province. They are also accompanied by their parent helpers, who we greatly appreciate: Mr. Wayne Beaton, Mrs. Sandra Langford, Mr. Dale Chapelsky, Mrs. Yvonne Sharuga, Mrs. Patty Whiting, and Mrs. Kelly Kump. They are located in the public gallery. I'd ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Dunvegan.

MR. CLEGG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure and privilege today to introduce to you and through you a very community-minded individual from the village of Girouxville. He's presently president of the chamber of commerce there. I would ask Norm Doucette to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

1:40

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Mr. Speaker, I have two introductions this afternoon. First, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 51 bright and energetic students from the Wes Hosford school in Sherwood Park. They are accompanied today by teachers Mrs. Marilyn Macyk, Ms Jane Dimitroff, and Mrs. Bonnie Hunka and by parent helpers Mr. Vic Chmelyk, Mrs. Lorretta McLaughlin, Mrs. Debbie Bjarnason, Mrs. Tanice Nichol, and Mrs. Janice Willman. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure and honour for me to introduce 39 guests, both parents and students, from the St. Louis de Montfort school in Red Deer-North. They're here watching what I hope will be our example of good behaviour to reflect in a classroom setting today. They are with their teacher Mrs. Nicole Zimmerman, along with parents Mr. Roberto Bencivenga, Kevin Mathieu, Olive Duret, Mrs. Susie Hamill, Mrs. Susan McKenna, Mrs. Madeleine Kerr, Mr. Jacques Lamoureux, and Mrs. Lyne Grégoire. I would ask that they stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Peace River.

MR. FRIEDEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and to the members of this Assembly two good friends of mine: Mr. Normand Boucher and Mr. Ted Carruthers. Both are businessmen and entrepreneurs extraordinaire and are known to many members of this Assembly. They are seated in the members' gallery. I ask them to rise and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second introduction this afternoon to you and through you to members of the Assembly is a very good friend from Sherwood Park: Mr. Jim Stoetzel. He's accompanied this afternoon by his mother-in-law, Betty Amundson, who is visiting us today from Weldon, Saskatchewan. They are seated in the public gallery, and I'd ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MR. SHARIFF: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the distinct pleasure and honour to present to you and through you to this Assembly a distinguished individual who's made a lifelong commitment to the field of education. Seated in the members' gallery is Pat Sokolosky, an active member of the Whitehorn Community Association, a teacher, as well as an Alberta Teachers' Association representative for the district of Calgary. I request Pat Sokolosky to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MS HANSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon I would like to introduce two people who are in the public gallery who act as support people for Judy Bethel, the Member of Parliament for Edmonton-East. She's a Liberal Member of Parliament. Chris Smith, who operates the Edmonton office, is in the gallery. She's accompanied by Jan Ramsay, who is originally from Calgary and is now working for Judy in Ottawa. Would you please rise and accept the welcome of the Assembly.

head: Ministerial Statements

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

90th Anniversary of Department of Agriculture

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When Alberta became a province in 1905, agriculture was one of the first recognized areas of responsibility by the new government. The Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Development and the province celebrate a shared 90th birthday this year.

We've come a long way. In 1905 agriculture in Alberta was an infant industry struggling to meet the needs of the new settlers. The total land area seeded at that time to all crops was only half a million acres, mostly seeded to oats to feed horses. Today our seeded cropland is in excess of 24 million acres. Our cattle numbers total 5.8 million head, and Alberta has emerged as Canada's leading producer of primary farm agricultural products.

For the first time in history, Mr. Speaker, Alberta leads the nation in farm cash receipts, exceeding \$3 billion in the first six months of 1995. Alberta is a national leader in the production of forages, barley, sugar beets, honey, sheep, and beef cattle, and over the past 90 years the ministry has helped provide leadership in this phenomenal growth of the agricultural and food industry.

In the early decades the department focused on helping farmers improve their production practices. As the industry diversified and became increasingly complex, the department expanded services to better serve the industry so the industry could better serve itself.

As we look to the future, international trade doors are opening, and Alberta producers are poised to serve those new markets, respond to the customers' needs, and profit accordingly. In its business plan Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development predicts this province will have a \$20 billion value-added industry by the year 2005. The business plan also predicts Alberta beef and pork production will double, and there will be a tenfold increase in potato products, diversified crops, and specialty livestock.

The Alberta agricultural industry moves into the next century as a strong global competitor. The ministry is committed to supporting its advancement by improving market access, product quality, and cost competitiveness, and by diversifying products, by increased value-added processing improvements, and by promoting environmentally sustainable practices. This is a fundamental shift in the approach from where we began 90 years ago. We have to focus on our customers' specific needs, making sure we grow what we can sell rather than trying to sell what we grow. This will be our challenge for the future.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lethbridge East.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'd like to thank the minister for recognizing the achievements of Alberta Agriculture over the past 90 years. Alberta Agriculture has played an important role in the development of Alberta's agriculture. They have introduced and championed programs in information dissemination, agricultural awareness, and farm safety and have administered many of our support and development programs for agriculture. These have all contributed to making Alberta's agriculture sector Canada's best and one of the world's most reliable sources of top-quality food and food products.

Alberta's agriculture sector is changing. It is responding to the information age, the global market, the global focus of markets, and the concentration and commercialization of firms. Alberta's agriculture is no longer just production of basic products. It encompasses value added and the identification and satisfaction of market niche needs. Mr. Speaker, Alberta Agriculture must also respond. It must redefine its role within this dynamic agriculture sector. It must facilitate the ongoing change while buffering the transition. It must also become a proponent of the industry in the national and international fields.

Alberta Agriculture must also focus more on the second mandate of the minister, that being rural development. Issues that must be addressed in this area include the market area changes resulting from our new focus on the transportation sector, community viability, rural resident expectations of services, and the creation of employment opportunities in agriculture through value added and peripheral or supporting area development.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's agriculture sector is like Alberta: the best in Canada. Much of this is due to the support from Alberta Agriculture. We as Albertans need to say thank you for a job well done. Be flexible, be adaptable, and keep up the good work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head:
1:50

Oral Question Period

Special Waste Treatment Centre

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, there are still many questions that the Auditor General was unable to uncover about backroom deals that made Bovar rich and health care poor. For example,

the Auditor General points out that the Premier agreed with the Swan Hills corporation that he should tighten up the Bovar deal, delay construction until the new deal was made, and cancel the agreement if Bovar wouldn't bend, but for some unknown reason the Premier did a complete about-face and renewed the agreement with Bovar anyway. What made the Premier change his mind, Mr. Speaker? Was it policy or politics?

MR. KLEIN: Policy, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MITCHELL: Policy for political pals, Mr. Speaker.

A second unanswered question. Once Bovar gets the money, what assurances do Albertans have that the plant's not going to close the moment that the Premier hands Bovar the \$147 million cheque? What guarantees do we have that it's going to stay open?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, this is all germane to the ongoing negotiations relative to the sale of our interest. I would have the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw, who's the president of the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation, supplement.

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

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly that is an issue which will be forming part of our discussions in phase 2. To again reiterate to the House, the purpose of phase . . . [interjections] To reiterate, because the hon. members don't seem to understand as they chirp away, the purpose of phase 1 was to simply build a fence around our future liabilities with respect to the operation of the facility. There's been no agreement made with respect to transferring our interests to Bovar in phase 1.

During the phase 2 negotiations, which, I will indicate quite clearly, may or may not result in a successful conclusion – if we do successfully conclude those discussions, we will ensure that there is a minimum time frame with respect to operation of the facility, plus we need to ensure in those discussions that Bovar can't simply take the dollars and run. That is certainly an issue that's paramount to us, and we're going to be bringing that forward.

MR. MITCHELL: I'm always encouraged when I hear that the Premier's actually involved in negotiations. It worked out so well last time.

Until questions of this kind have been answered by a public inquiry, Mr. Speaker, how can Albertans trust a Premier who was so directly and personally involved in this Swan Hills boondoggle and doesn't want any of the details to come out through a public inquiry?

Speaker's Ruling Improper Questions

THE SPEAKER: Order please. The Chair would again remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition that the questions should be asked of the government as to its policy or its practices, not personalities. This is not a personality contest.

Special Waste Treatment Centre (continued)

MR. KLEIN: Thank you for that, Mr. Speaker. Again, I take exception to the assertion that this was a boondoggle. [inter-

jections] I really do. I reiterate, and I will have to quote once again from the Auditor General's report:

Some people have characterized the Swan Hills facility as a business venture, and its financial results as losses. I believe . . . This is the Auditor General, not me.

. . . this is unfortunate because from the earliest days, most serious observers . . .

Most serious observers. That is, good-thinking Albertans, not Liberals.

Most serious observers viewed the facility as a government program that was delivered in conjunction with a private sector partner.

He goes on to say:

In many ways, the Swan Hills facility has achieved its intended program objectives. Alberta no longer has a PCB problem, a claim that few jurisdictions in North America can make . . . The facility has undoubtedly reduced significantly the health and environmental risks associated with the storage and spillage of hazardous wastes.

That's what the Auditor General had to say about the Swan Hills facility.

Private Medical Clinics

MR. MITCHELL: Despite advice from his own health experts over the past two years, the Premier continues to support extra billing by private clinics in this province. Why is the Premier going to the wall on this issue when he has been contradicted by his Minister of Health, he has been told he's wrong by his Health department officials, and the only people who are going to benefit are a handful of private clinic operators who want to double-dip?

MR. KLEIN: To the best of my knowledge, Mr. Speaker, these so-called private clinic operators have invested literally millions of dollars in terms of specialized equipment, building their own facilities, and specialized training for the physicians who attend patients in those clinics. We think it is quite reasonable for those people to charge a facility fee. It's been going on for 10 years. It really isn't something that I get a lot of mail on. I don't get a lot of complaints about this practice. It has alleviated pressure on the public health system, and we think that it does not violate in any way, shape, or form the fundamental principles of the Canada Health Act.

MR. MITCHELL: What pressure has been put on the Premier by his political friends that has forced him, driven him to grandstand on this issue of private clinic facility fees despite the fact that he's been contradicted publicly and repeatedly by his Minister of Health?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the question was: what kind of pressure has been put on? To answer the question: none.

MR. MITCHELL: Then, Mr. Speaker, is it just a coincidence that one individual who stands to gain from the Premier's commitment to extra billing by private clinics is Dr. Peter Huang, who accompanied the Premier at a meeting on his trip to the Orient, who received the Calgary contract for cataract surgery, and who just donated thousands of dollars worth of eye surgery to the Premier's October 13 political fund-raising event? Now health care is up for auction.

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the leader of the Liberal opposition has some friends who are doctors also and who

are probably benefiting in one way, shape, or form from the health care system.

To answer the question quite specifically, Mr. Speaker, what Dr. Huang and his associates are doing is in no way connected to the issue of facility fees. This is a contract with the Calgary regional health authority, more specifically the Foothills hospital.

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

Multi-Corp Inc.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Speaking about the Orient for just a minute, during the 1993 trade mission to China the Premier made an unscheduled and unannounced detour in Hong Kong to open the office of a company called Multi-Corp Inc. Now, a month later the Premier spoke about that same corporation to a group of Edmonton businesspeople as an example of a good investment. My question to the Premier is simply this. Why did the Premier make this stop at this particular business at the expense of other companies that were on the trade mission with him?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, it was not made at the expense of other companies along on the mission. Multi-Corp is a very innovative Alberta company and asked me to speak on their behalf. I'm glad to do that on their behalf or on behalf of any other company, as I have done in the past.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, I appreciate that answer, Mr. Speaker.

My supplemental question is also to the Premier. Did the unscheduled and unannounced stop to open Multi-Corp, using taxpayers' dollars, by the way, have anything to do with the fact that many of the Premier's close friends and political allies in fact are the officers of this particular corporation?

MR. KLEIN: No, Mr. Speaker, that is not the case.

MR. BRUSEKER: My final question to the Premier: when the Premier further promoted this particular corporation at the meeting of the Hong Kong-Canada Business Association of Edmonton on December 6, 1993, was this simply to help line the pockets of some of his associates including Hugh Dunne, the director of his office; Bud Shandro, a sizable donor to his leadership campaign; Ross Glen, who's made donations to the PC Party, in fact, whose office he's opening tomorrow, and who all bought stock in the company one week prior this speech and whose shares subsequently quadrupled in value?

MR. KLEIN: Well, if I had that kind of impact on shares, Mr. Speaker, then I think I've done awfully well for a good Alberta company.

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

2:00

Grande Alberta Paper Ltd.

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to move from 1993 to 1995 and the future of this province.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed lightweight coated paper project that has been proposed by Grande Alberta Paper is of significant importance to this province and obviously to the northwestern part of Alberta. On September 15, in a letter to the president of Alberta Newsprint, signed by the Minister of Economic Develop-

ment and Tourism and the Minister of Environmental Protection, it was stated: "anticipate that a decision will be made by October 25, 1995," which is today. I would ask the Minister of Environmental Protection to please advise this Assembly and all the interested citizens in this province, particularly northwestern Alberta, what the status is of this project.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Environmental Protection.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, Grande Alberta Paper is a very important project to Grande Prairie, to northern Alberta, and, for that matter, all Alberta. That is the reason Environmental Protection and Economic Development and Tourism have been working very hard to bring this project forward. One of the difficulties we ran into was the supply of fibre. There was a difference between the estimations by the department of lands and forests and the company's estimations. So we've been working on that supply. We are not prepared to move ahead with a project that in fact would not be sustainable. We're working to make sure that there is a sustainable supply of fibre, and we will be extending the period to January 25, 1996. By that time we're confident that there will be some kind of agreement worked out between Grande Alberta Paper and the Alberta government.

MR. JACQUES: For clarification, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: is that date of January 25 based on consultation with Grande Alberta Paper?

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, over the last number of weeks, particularly the last couple of weeks, there have been very intense negotiations going on between a number of companies. Grande Alberta Paper has requested this date of January 25, 1996. Because the flow of fibre will involve more than just one company, it was necessary that we allow this time period in order that those negotiations can be completed.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental?
The hon. Member for Redwater.

Special Waste Treatment Centre (continued)

MR. N. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back in June 1989 the environment minister, now Premier, was to review the Swan Hills joint venture agreement but did not. In June 1992 the environment minister, now Premier, received advice from the board of Alberta Special Waste to get out of the whole deal for only \$40 million but did not. In May of '92 the Alberta environment minister said that oil field waste would be treated in Swan Hills, but on December 11, just two days after the environment minister became Premier, he said that it would not. Now, my question is simply this: why did the Premier not once, not twice, but three times ignore the advice of his department and board?

MR. KLEIN: Well, I'm not so sure, Mr. Speaker, that I did. All I can say to the member across the way is that I acted in the best interests of Albertans and in the best interests of environmental protection.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Supplemental, Mr. Speaker. Has the Premier ever sat down to quantify the amount of money that these lapses of duty on his part bestowed on his Calgary friends?

MR. KLEIN: One of the problems I have, Mr. Speaker, is that mostly all Calgarians are my friends.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, to paraphrase Winston Churchill: never have so few received . . . [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Order please. [interjections] Please.
Final supplemental.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Never have so . . . [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Just the question.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Okay. My question, Mr. Speaker: in view that so few received so much for so little, would he now agree that . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: You're no Winston Churchill, buddy.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I agree. Yeah. You got more fat between your ears than he had around his hips. [interjections] Sorry, Mr. Speaker, but he asked for it.

Will you not agree, then, that a public inquiry is required to clear the air and determine who got what and why?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I will simply have to reiterate the answer I gave yesterday to the same question, and that is that a thorough, independent adjudication has been made by the Auditor General, and I trust his opinion and his findings and his recommendations.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. [interjections] Order. Order. [interjections] Order, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

2:10

Family Violence

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [interjections] I wonder if there's a full moon out tonight. [interjections] It's them wasting the time, not me.

Mr. Speaker, earlier today the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues released its report *Desperately Seeking Certainty: Assessing and Reducing the Risk of Harm for Women Who Are Abused*. The aim of the report is to increase the safety of women who are abused by their spouses or partners and to increase the safety of the family. The advisory council believes this report offers a strategy to lessen the possibility of tragic headlines for some Alberta families. My first question today is to the Minister of Justice. According to the council's report the government's own survey said that 79 percent of Alberta women support the registration of shotguns and rifles, yet our government opposes the federal government's proposal for universal firearms registration. What alternatives to national firearms registration does our government propose?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Justice.

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'd like to commend the Advisory Council on Women's Issues for their report. I think it addresses a very important issue, and that's violence for families, violence against women and children.

Secondly, in terms of the number of people who were involved in the study that was done by my department at the end of January of this year, there were 241 women who were surveyed. Yes, indeed, there were 79 percent who said that they favoured registration. Now, it's interesting that the women's advisory council has reviewed that information, and rather than saying that we should register firearms, they have come back and they have said: what kind of alternatives should we be looking at in partnership between the women of Alberta and the government to ensure the safety of women? I think that is a very important question. I'm happy to work with the council to try to deal with that question.

Just a couple of points I'd like to make. Firstly, Mr. Speaker, when I, on behalf of the government of Alberta, along with colleagues representing the governments of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Yukon, and the Northwest Territories, made a presentation to the Senate, we said: "We have a program here that's \$85 million in terms of registration of firearms. We don't have any information that would lead us to believe that there is a connection between safer communities, lack of violence, and firearm registration. So let's put that money to better use; let's make sure that that money goes into programs that would see more time and effort being put into creating safer communities and making women and children in this society which we call Alberta much safer."

Now, we put our money where our mouth is as well, Mr. Speaker, because we've been working on a domestic violence registry along with the police forces of this province. We have three main criteria that we've been working towards. One is to create a registry for restraining orders throughout the province that would be available on the CPIC, the Canadian police information centre, computer. Secondly, we want to ensure that our chief provincial firearms officer has all of the information that is available to him on convictions and domestic violence problems when he is dealing with an application for a firearms acquisition certificate. Thirdly, we want to have a computer database across the province to deal with all matters of convictions and other domestic violence occurrences so that the proper authorities can react appropriately.

Again, as I said in my preamble, I think it's important that we meet with the council and work on better and more productive ways of dealing with this important issue.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you. My second question is directed to the Minister of Family and Social Services. According to the council's report, abused women on social assistance cannot afford telephones to call for help. Will the government provide these women with toll block telephones as requested by the council?

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

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In an ongoing effort to assist clientele in abusive situations, Alberta Family and Social Services implemented a new program in September to provide telephone services to those welfare clients

in high-risk situations. The new program covers the cost of telephone hookup, telephone arrears, and telephone deposits for welfare clientele leaving abusive situations. This program also provides victims access to ADT, the emergency response system. This emergency alarm system is provided free of charge to those individuals who are considered to be in high-risk situations.

Specifically to the question on the toll block system, Mr. Speaker, this is placed by Edmonton Telephones on accounts that they consider to be at high risk of nonpayment. This system prevents the caller from making long-distance calls from their particular telephone number but has the option of receiving long-distance calls collect from outside long-distance callers.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MRS. FORSYTH: Yes. Thank you. My third question is for the minister responsible for women's issues. The council makes five recommendations, primarily that the government take the lead in reviewing the risk assessed . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. member, preambles are not for supplementals. Please.

MRS. FORSYTH: To the minister: what action will the government take on the recommendation that the council requested that the government take the lead in reviewing the risk assessment and safety management strategies laid out in the report in consultation with shelter workers, representatives from the criminal justice system, and other frontline workers?

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to say that as the minister responsible for women's issues I'd like to commend the chair of this organization for this report, which I have reviewed and which I have found to be very comprehensive and proactive.

Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Family and Social Services have already said, we already are taking actions on a number of the recommendations made within the report. The report, in my observation, is a very positive exploration of what is known about risk assessment and gives a proposal for building upon the current programs that we have that will help increase the safety of women. Again, to be very clear, this report does not have a criticism of the current programs and services, but for those people who read this report – and I invite all members to read this report – the report talks about the importance of the current programs and services and presents a proposal for building upon those current programs.

One of the recommendations made by the council, Mr. Speaker, is that the Alberta government has been asked to look into the program through its Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence and review the strategy presented in the report. That is being done, and there will be a meeting set up on the 30th of October. Members of this interdepartmental committee have good links with frontline workers, and of course the advisory council did use the benefit of the information provided by frontline workers in establishing its strategy set out in the paper.

Medical Laboratories

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Speaker, a massive experiment is under way today in Alberta, and it has to do with medical lab restructuring.

For example, the Capital health authority is contracting with a brand-new, privately owned lab consortium to take over existing facilities in Edmonton. In essence, the government is allowing millions of dollars worth of publicly paid for equipment and facilities to be given away to private health providers so that they can make a buck at public expense. Now, my questions are to the Minister of Health. What protection has the minister given Alberta taxpayers as millions of dollars worth of publicly paid for equipment is being turned over to private operators who are guaranteed a profit yet have to take no risk?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you what this agreement will do for the Alberta taxpayer. It will introduce efficiency into the system. If the hon. member believes that labs operating at 15 percent efficiency is good for this province and good for taxpayers, then I think he should have another examination of the fact.

Mr. Speaker, what we do have occurring, not just in Edmonton, not just in Calgary but in many areas of this province, is a co-operation between private and public, where the best opportunity for testing with the latest information, latest techniques, latest equipment is available. What we are doing is removing \$29 million worth of waste from the laboratory system in this province.

2:20

MR. SAPERS: Well, Mr. Speaker, maybe the minister can explain, then, how exactly it saves this money. How can it save money to abandon public laboratories that are already equipped, already in place, already operating at cost for brand-new private-investor labs which you guarantee a profit?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I have to read on occasion the name of the party across there to remind me who really is there, because philosophically I am lost in their thinking. Is "profit" such a bad word in Alberta? I want to remind the hon. member that many companies in this province are companies that lend to the economy in this province and employ thousands and thousands of Albertans.

I invite the hon. member to sit down with the Capital health authority and examine the lab restructuring efforts in this city. Mr. Speaker, if he is condoning inefficiency, where public and private labs were operating at about 15 percent of efficiency, then he could explain that to the taxpayers in this province. Regional health authorities through their legislation have the opportunity to enter into contracts with the private sector to provide services. The member knows full well that those contracts involve in some cases the use of public equipment and joint ventures.

Mr. Speaker, again, I invite the hon. member to sit down and understand the lab restructuring in this city rather than getting his information from a newspaper or wherever.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. SAPERS: Yes, Mr. Speaker. After sitting down with the operators of those labs and sitting down with the regional health authorities, they asked me to ask this question, and that question is: which friends of the government was the minister catering to when she directed health authorities to ensure that there was a role for private labs even when they weren't wanted in the health restructuring process?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I can only say that if the hon. member has sat down with the regional health authority and with the private labs who were able to reach a contract, then he is suggesting that he knows far more about this than the experts in the field, and I have to rather doubt that.

Mr. Speaker, my concern is that the highest quality provision of lab services is available to the people of this province and that they are done in the most cost-effective manner. I could not condone \$29 million of waste in laboratory services in this province. I will not condone it, and the new agreements eliminate it.

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

Landlord and Tenant Legislation

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this month the Municipal Affairs office released a discussion paper on residential tenancies inviting ideas and comments from the public on combining the Residential Tenancies Act and the Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Act. The constituency of Calgary-Currie has a significant number of landlord and rental components, so this proposed legislation affects my constituents. My questions are to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Two specific items have been brought to my attention through the Calgary Apartment Association. These include the removal of the damage deposit and also the recommendation that tenants may complete their own repairs and have their rents credited accordingly. I would like to ask the minister: how can these initiatives protect the rights of landlords?

MR. THURBER: Well, certainly, Mr. Speaker, we issued a discussion paper some short time ago, and we did it for that very reason. There have been concerns expressed about the management and the disposition of security deposits, damage deposits as they're called, and also some of the other facts about tenants being able to do their own repairs and have it taken off their rent or reach some other agreement. We felt it best to get all of the stakeholders involved in this. So we did issue this discussion paper, and we're in the process of receiving information back from the stakeholders with an eye to combining these two Acts in the spring Legislature.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As tenancy issues vary between major centres and smaller urban ones, will there be an opportunity in the legislation to reflect this issue of density?

MR. THURBER: Well, certainly, Mr. Speaker, again we hope that all of the players in the field will get involved, because it's very important that they have the opportunity to have input into this to discuss all of the topics that become of concern to them. It's very important for us to have full consultation and full input from these people to discuss the density problems as well as security deposits and the ability for renters to do their own repairs and have them done.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MRS. BURGNER: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Lastly, to the minister again. These consultations have been going on over the month of October. Could the minister clearly address the

issue of the timing and the process in which this document and this consultation will have unfolded?

MR. THURBER: Mr. Speaker, this is a very important process that we're going through, and as I mentioned before, we want to try and have their input in here in time that we can bring forward legislation in the spring. You have to remember also that this affects nearly half the population in Alberta, who are in rental accommodations or own rental accommodations. We want the discussions to be full and open. There are many other items on the agenda for them to comment on, and we do welcome that input.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Bonnyville.

Canmore Interchange

MR. VASSEUR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This summer the government let out a \$3.8 million contract for the building of a new interchange in Canmore to provide better access to the SilverTip development. The Premier is very familiar with this development since his friends Hal Walker and Bud McCaig have a direct financial stake in it and would greatly benefit from the new interchange. Ironically, the development sits across the highway from the Canmore hospital, which is facing a half a million dollar cutback. To the minister of transportation: can the minister explain to the people of Canmore why their hospital must endure cuts to services while there seems to be plenty of money to benefit the Premier's friends?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, the two issues are totally unrelated.

MR. VASSEUR: Pavement before people, I guess.

Does the minister believe that \$3.8 million is more desperately needed for a new construction project than health care in Canmore?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, you know, I didn't want to be terse about my answer in the fact that the two aren't related. There is both social and economic development in the province of Alberta, and you cannot shut down a society absolutely for one or the other. The construction and development of our roads and infrastructure in this province must go on. We're doing the best we can with the budgets we have. We scaled back the projects in Canmore from a \$20 million project to the ones that are on the deck at the present time. We had total communication with the town of Canmore, whose council and mayor have totally supported this development.

We must look forward to the future. We must look to growth, and if we don't start now, we'll be so far behind later with our tourist industry, with the movement of our people and the development of this province, that we won't be able to catch up.

MR. VASSEUR: What percentage of the cost of this project will the developer be responsible for since this project mostly benefits the owners of SilverTip development?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, there's an innuendo in there that's totally false. These developments are built in the public interest, as I said before. Not long ago in the media the Leader of the Official Opposition made a statement that he would cease all new project development, capital development in our road development and only do rehabilitation and channel all other moneys to other

programs. I would like to point out that there are other infrastructure developments in this province, Highway 40 and other areas, that have been looked at over a 20-year plan. I don't know that future generations in this province are going to tolerate the irresponsibility of ceasing to keep up our infrastructure consistent with our economic development.

2:30

Red Deer College

MR. DOERKSEN: Mr. Speaker, my questions today are directed to the Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development. Red Deer College has for many years actively sought after degree-granting status, brokered degrees, or now even applied degrees. My colleague from Red Deer-North and I and the rest of our colleagues from central Alberta were very disappointed upon learning that Red Deer College had not been approved for an applied degree. Red Deer College has worked co-operatively with the government and has demonstrated leadership in the efficient management of its resources. Would you please explain why they have not been successful in the application for an applied degree? What are the reasons, Mr. Minister?

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

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand the member's concern that Red Deer College was not successful in the competition for one of the remaining four applied degrees that could be awarded under the program that we have put in place. Certainly I agree with his preamble having to do with the good work that Red Deer College has done in the past.

The criteria that were set out for applied degrees in our province were quite concise and straightforward. Colleges were invited to put forward submissions. Each applied degree must combine six semesters of formal instruction with an evaluated work experience component of at least two semesters. The program must involve employers in program design, delivery, and costs of the work experience. I can't overemphasize or overstress this component of work experience, because it is so indicative of the market demand for whatever program they may have been putting forward. There is also an expectation that students will receive maximum credit transfer from relevant certificate and diploma programs, including other Alberta institutions. There will be no research role involved by the faculty who teach these programs.

Mr. Speaker, with 28 applications that were submitted, we had some difficult decisions to make. The four approved programs were the strongest ones that were submitted.

MR. DOERKSEN: Mr. Minister, what other opportunities will be made available for other applied degrees or brokered degree proposals for Red Deer College and other colleges, like Medicine Hat?

MR. ADY: Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that Red Deer College for some time has been interested in providing the ability for students to complete a postsecondary degree on campus and not have to leave home, and I support the principle of enabling students to do that. For example, Red Deer College already delivers a bachelor of nursing collaborative program with the University of Alberta. This program has served as a model for other institutions to follow. In addition, the college facilitates a University of Calgary bachelor of community rehabilitation program on its campus. So

there are opportunities there for institutions to explore that and to enhance those types of things for their students within their communities.

MR. DOERKSEN: Mr. Speaker, we'd like to ask the minister today whether he will commit that he will do his utmost to remove any barriers that hamper the co-operation between universities and colleges towards brokering degrees.

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, one of the stumbling blocks, or the inhibitors as the member calls them, that has caused a difficulty in accomplishing that has been money, and now the advent of our access fund has given an opportunity for these types of arrangements to be enhanced. I know that Red Deer College is working with the University of Calgary on a proposal for a bachelor of arts degree in English and social sciences. The college is also working with the University of Alberta on a bachelor of education special needs degree program. Following its review of the institution's letter of intent, the Access Fund Advisory Committee has asked the institution for a complete proposal, and I expect to receive the cycle 3 recommendations from the committee in February of 1996, and we'll have to make a determination at that time of how successful they will be to access funding to make some of those things happen.

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

Gainers Inc.

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In January of 1994 a portion of the assets of Gainers Inc. was sold to the Pride of Alberta Meat Processors Company. The Gainers Inc. pension plans were terminated on January 15, 1994, without notice to the employees, and employees were informed that no payments would be made until they were approved by Alberta Labour. Subsequently the plan moved into Treasury. Nearly two years later these employees are still waiting for their entitlements from the Gainers pension plan. My questions are to the Provincial Treasurer. Can you explain why these Gainers employees have had to wait nearly two years to receive their entitlements?

MR. DINNING: No, Mr. Speaker, I cannot. I know that the Minister of Labour, were he here, would be happy to try to answer that question and certainly would be able to search out the information within his department, where private-sector pension plans are administered.

MS LEIBOVICI: Given that I would assume it's not only the Minister of Labour but also the Provincial Treasurer that would have some impact, perhaps the Provincial Treasurer can answer this: why was the Gainers Inc. hourly employees' pension plan allowed to operate with a deficit?

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that the hon. member knows her law, and the province's law would tell her that private-sector as opposed to public-sector pension plans are regulated and overseen by the Ministry of Labour. As for the specific pension plan for Gainers employees, I am advised by the former chairman, Mr. Strang, that this is a matter that is being worked out by the Department of Labour with Gainers' officials so that those employees' pension benefits are secure and are there. I gather that there is some long-lasting, I regret to say, paperwork that is taking longer than I might have wished or that the hon.

member or employees might have wished, but the benefits themselves, I'm advised, are indeed secure.

MS LEIBOVICI: If I may, Mr. Speaker, table the following documents: the purchase and sale agreement protecting only some of the employees' pensions; the March 16, 1994, letter from Gainers Inc. outlining that no pensions are to be paid without approval from Alberta Labour; the June 30, 1995, letter from Gainers Inc. indicating that they're working closely with . . .

MR. DINNING: Question. Question.

MS LEIBOVICI: It's a tabling.

MR. GERMAIN: She's tabling. She's entitled to table documents, you bully. [interjections]

Speaker's Ruling Tabling Documents

THE SPEAKER: Order please. Enough of this chitchat. There is also a position on the Order Paper in the Routine for tablings as groundwork for questions. Hon. members could do that too. They're not to use tablings to take valuable time from question period.

MS LEIBOVICI: Mr. Speaker, I would hate to take away time from question period because it is valuable to all Members of the Legislative Assembly.

Gainers Inc. (continued)

MS LEIBOVICI: . . . and two other letters indicating that the pension plan is still under review and that the employees have not received their pensions.

My last question is to the Acting Premier, whoever that may be, as to whether the Acting Premier will commit that the employees of Gainers will receive what is owed to them immediately, without further delay. Thank you.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, when the Department of Labour has done their job – and I will encourage and work with my colleague the Minister of Labour to make sure that that gets done – they will be in receipt of those benefits.

THE SPEAKER: Did the Leader of the Opposition have a point of order?

head: Orders of the Day

2:40

head: Written Questions

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, I move that written questions appearing on today's Order Paper stand and retain their places except for questions 241 and 242.

[Motion carried]

Provincial Fiscal Projections

Q241. Mr. Sekulic moved that the following question be accepted:

What are the government's projections for the following economic indicators which underlie the fiscal projections

of the 1996-97 and 1997-98 fiscal years, as set out on page 15 of the 1995 provincial budget:

- (1) 90-day Alberta Treasury bill rates,
- (2) 10-year Alberta bond rates,
- (3) Canada-U.S. exchange rates,
- (4) Alberta unemployment rate,
- (5) Alberta natural gas sales,
- (6) Alberta natural gas reference price,
- (7) West Texas intermediate, WTI, crude oil price,
- (8) Alberta real manufacturing exports,
- (9) Alberta retail sales,
- (10) Alberta housing starts,
- (11) Alberta real business investments,
- (12) Alberta corporate registrations,
- (13) Alberta average weekly earnings, and
- (14) Alberta realized net farm income?

MR. DINNING: It's regrettable that the Member for Edmonton-Manning asks you, Mr. Speaker, to spend as much money on ink and paper as you are required to do because his research branch has been unable to read Budget '95. Virtually all of the information that the member is looking for is contained within the economic statistical section of Budget '95, and I would encourage the hon. member to go there. But having kindly and gently asked the question, we will be only too happy to comply in providing the hon. member with the answers.

[Motion carried]

Provincial Fiscal Projections

Q242. Mr. Sekulic moved that the following question be accepted:

What are the projections for valuation adjustments and other provisions for the 1996-97 and 1997-98 fiscal years by general provision for accounts receivable, obligations under guarantee and indemnity, and other, as set out on page 52 of the 1995 provincial budget?

[Motion carried]

head: Motions for Returns

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, I move that motions for returns appearing on today's Order Paper stand and retain their places with the exception of Motion 243.

[Motion carried]

Environmental Impact Assessment

M243. Mr. Sekulic moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of phase 1 environmental assessments of the Magnesium Company of Canada site in High River conducted by or on behalf of the government between January 1, 1993, and March 15, 1995.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Environmental Protection.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately the hon. member, as seems to be the pattern from the opposition, is first of all asking for information that we are unable to provide, and for that reason I must reject this one. The fact is that the government did not do a phase 1 environmental assessment.

The second point that I think is important to recognize is that there was a final assessment done, but it was done by a private-sector company, and we are not privy to that information. So if the hon. member would ask that company, he may be able to get the information that he's asking for.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Yes. I jumped to my feet because, as I recall, on these motions you're in very grave danger if the mover asks why. That's considered closing debate on the motion. On this particular thing, I think the minister, if he's not out to lunch, certainly his assistants are, to say that a private organization did the environment study and that we cannot hand it over. Apparently at that time MagCan might have been privately owned, but as you know, Mr. Speaker, the government had taken over MagCan, held it for awhile, and has sold it.

So the public has taken a bad bath anyhow on the financing because this was a plant, Mr. Speaker, that the government found was uneconomic, not only after running in partnership with their partners for a short while – or maybe it didn't even get off the ground. The partners closed it down and put it into bankruptcy. The government wanted to go in to examine its assets. It not only didn't find the environmental study but found that the patent the plant was supposed to have to take magnesium out of the fossil waters of southern Alberta and B.C. didn't belong to the organization.

The hon. member, being an agricultural man, will understand what buying a pig in a poke is, and this is what happened here. He had neither the pig nor the poke when it was finished, just a hunk of concrete down there that had a patent that was owned in Europe or down east somewhere. So the government did some perambulating around and sold the plant back to the organization that talked them into this in the first place, without the phase 1 environmental study, for about a nickel on the dollar.

Mr. Speaker, I seldom make forecasts, except, you know, it's going to snow this winter. The second thing that's going to happen: these people are going to discover that patent and be back taking magnesium out of the water again after the government has been cleaned out. So now we have the minister sitting there – and there's nobody that looks more benign and happy and more like a Buddha at peace with the world than the minister. [interjections] The hon. minister of social welfare looks like a tiger compared to our minister of the environment. Nevertheless, that doesn't take away from the fact that he's hiding a study under the guise that it could be connected up with private, but I don't see where the private comes in, because the government has owned the plant, is in the process of selling it back. The public has taken such a bath on this that they would like to have any kind of information that the government might have that would bear some light on why this extraordinary deal went through. It makes Bovar look like a very simple stock transaction compared to this one. This is the next one we'll be after, by the way, Mr. Speaker, if you want to know.

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

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, thank you. Just a couple of comments. I'd like to remind members in the House that the comments about this particular plant were contained in not one but two throne speeches. In two throne speeches this plant was held up as a paragon of what this government was doing for diversifi-

cation in Alberta. It was referred to with loving care that here was an example of the way the government was working to create wonderful opportunities and new technology in this province. Well, now we see of course that all of that was fraudulent or simply never happened, because my colleague from Redwater has described exactly what occurred.

Mr. Speaker, not only do we not have access – the government, when they finally took it over, didn't have access to the technology. I mean, the thing was a shell. If I understand correctly from the minister, they didn't do an assessment. Now, perhaps I need to read the Blues because I wasn't too clear on exactly what he said in answer to the question, but I thought I understood him to say that the government had not done an environmental assessment. So how can the government have been making the decisions that they were making about the plant? I mean, they were very irresponsible decisions that were being made, but apparently they were being made without any analysis whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps the minister would care to respond to those questions as well.

2:50

THE SPEAKER: Unfortunately, this isn't question period.

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to respond to the minister's rejection of Motion for a Return 243. I share the same concerns that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar just expressed. What I think I heard the minister say in respect of Motion 243, that requests a copy of the environmental assessment done anytime between January 1, 1993, and March 15, 1995 – the minister said: we didn't do one, but the one we did do was done by a private-sector company. I know that the government goes out of its way to try to figure out how to reject motions for returns. So it sounds like what the minister has done is he has decided to cover both bases at the same time by saying: the one that the private-sector company did is the one we didn't do. As if that makes any sense.

Mr. Speaker, it is with respect to a phase 1 environmental assessment done on the rusting dog called MagCan down at High River sometime between January 1, 1993, and March 15, 1995. Maybe the minister is just out of the loop; maybe he doesn't know what's going on at that point in time. The phase 1 environmental assessment refers to the extent of the environmental impact assessment that's done, not whether or not the assessment was done before the rusting dog was built, as opposed to the assessment that was done after the rusting dog has been standing there for years because it's such a huge boondoggle. So, hon. minister, it is with respect to the phase 1 environmental assessment conducted by or on behalf of the government between January 1, '93, and March 15, '95. If the minister is telling us now that a private-sector company did that, then it is on behalf of the government.

So now the answer is different. The first answer was: we didn't do one. The second answer was: well, a private-sector company did it; we didn't do it. So now the third answer is: we refuse. That's the answer. You bet, Mr. Minister, that there's an environmental impact assessment sitting there, and couched in all of that nonsense of an answer, Mr. Speaker, is: we simply refuse.

MR. LUND: Go ask them.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Mr. Speaker, the hon. minister says, "Go ask them." Well, isn't that interesting? He never told us who it was. He says, "Go ask them," but he forgot to tell us who it was, and I can't engage the minister in debate anymore. So it's easy for the minister to sit there and say, "Go ask them."

Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I think that for every environmental impact assessment that I've seen, it is done by a private-sector company on behalf of the government. There are many environmental consultants that work by and on behalf of the government to provide that information. So now we come to the Legislative Assembly, where private companies as consultants provide that service, and the minister says: "Oh, no, we got you. We got you. We didn't do it in-house; we got a consultant to do it." So now they can refuse to release information yet again on the rusting dog down at High River at the Magnesium Company plant. The rusting dog: that, hon. member, was the phrase that was used by the Member for Calgary-North West. The Member for Calgary-North West day after day after day in this Assembly continually asked the government for information on the rusting dog, the one where the government sat back and let taxpayers' money get sucked out and bled and announced to the public: we forgot about the technology; we forgot.

You know, actually that kind of reminds me of the announcement just recently by the Member for Calgary-Shaw, who's the chairman of the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation. He said: oh, Albertans, we forgot to tell you there's another \$25 million or \$30 million out there that we forgot to account for in the administration costs, that all of course went to Bovar. Did we forget to tell you about the \$25 million or \$30 million? It's the same thing, Mr. Speaker. It's the same thing with the information here.

Once again we ask the Minister of Environmental Protection for information relating to the Magnesium Company of Canada plant. The minister, in a rather circuitous fashion that's very hard to follow, simply says to the Assembly that this government chooses not to be open and accountable, that this government chooses to hide behind all sorts of glosses and veneers of something to do with private-sector companies that are used by the government all the time for consulting services, and says ultimately: we refuse.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask members of the Assembly to vote in favour of Motion 243. Thank you.

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

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Motion 243. It's incredulous that this motion is being refused. I have looked back on the history of this rusting dog, as it's been referred to, and remember well the conversations and the debate that went on about the viability of this plant within the petrochemical industry in the city of Fort Saskatchewan and Strathcona county. The word from the private sector was: don't touch it; it would be a disaster. That information was passed on to the government of the day and particularly at that time to Premier Getty. But no, no, no. The politicians in their wisdom in those days knew better than the private sector; they knew better than all the petrochemical industry.

I remember well the day that former Premier Getty phoned me up and informed me that the land that had been optioned out in Fort Saskatchewan was not going to be utilized and picked up for this magnesium plant, that it was going down into the southern part of the province of Alberta – and a gentleman I highly respect,

who sits on the government side of the House today – and it was actually announced during an election campaign. Surprise, surprise. After all, the private sector had said: don't touch it; there's no money to be made in it; the technology probably won't work. But no, no. The politicians knew better than the private sector.

Now, to add insult to injury, after we've lost the public's money once again, we have a minister in this House clearly refusing to give what should be public information: the environmental assessments. Surprise, surprise. Guess who was minister of the environment probably when this environmental assessment was done? None other than the Premier of the province of Alberta today. You know, we hear today the lack of credible assessment that went into the expansion of the Swan Hills plant. Now we've got a minister sitting across there denying information to the public.

MR. LUND: A point of order.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Environmental Protection is rising on a point of order.

**Point of Order
Questioning a Member**

MR. LUND: I wonder if the hon. member would entertain a question.

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: No. I would decline on this occasion because really I have to respect the origin of the question.

THE SPEAKER: You want to continue your remarks then?

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Yes, I certainly would, Mr. Speaker.

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned that in fact there was . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order please. The Chair thought that the hon. member had declined to accept the question, but then when she sat down, her actions indicated that she might be willing to accept. If not, please continue.

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: No, Mr. Speaker, I clearly stated that I would not accept the question because I have to respect the origin of the question. In this instance, when a minister of the environment is denying what should be public information, I don't feel inclined to answer his questions, quite frankly.

3:00

Debate Continued

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Looking at what we've seen in this Legislature this fall session, it clearly shows that this government is not open and accountable. They work behind closed doors. They're not accountable to the public when it comes to the environment. They're not accountable when it comes to assessments that should be done when public money is going to be invested in any questionable business practice. With regards to Motion 243, what is it this government is hiding behind?

The other reality, Mr. Speaker, is that they make great fanfare about the Auditor General undertaking a review of government mistakes or boondoggles or whatever you want to call it. But the bottom line is that an Auditor General does not have the power to call people under oath. He has not the power to get to the bottom

of what goes wrong. That's what's wrong when you require the Auditor General to investigate. So to this government, through the minister of the environment: you're certainly not open, and you're certainly not accountable.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I would like to encourage the minister to reconsider, and I'd like all members of the government and of the Assembly to vote in support of this motion. I do that particularly knowing at least part of the recent history of the minister of the environment, and the part of the history that I'm familiar with of course is all of the work he did as chairman of the all-party panel on freedom of information and privacy. I heard firsthand that minister declare to Albertans from one corner of the province to the other how in favour he was of freedom of information and how committed he was to helping the Premier live up to his commitment about being open and accountable and transparent for all Albertans.

This is a very reasonable request for information which in fact in any other government would be public, and I would like to see this minister honour the commitment he made to Albertans when he was chairing that committee on freedom of information. I'd like to see him provide this information. Mr. Speaker, he could take the lead from his colleague the minister of transportation, who has come into this Assembly a couple of times in the last few days and said: further to those freedom of information requests, I'm tabling reports, I'm tabling documents, I'm tabling information for the benefit of all Albertans. I daresay that if the minister of transportation can do it, so can the minister of the environment.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Highwood.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with some hesitation and a little sadness. I've heard a lot of nonsense today and in the past on the Magnesium Company of Canada plant, most of it by people who don't know the whole story. I don't pretend to know the whole story, but I certainly know a number of things beyond what has been trotted out here today.

It has a long history, Mr. Speaker, going back to the late 70s, when a company from Europe came and looked at the area and said: "There's a great sandstone layer here that we would like to use to have a magnesium plant. We also have a magnesium formula and testing for making magnesium very much less expensive than current plans." In those days we had the Hon. Pierre Elliott Trudeau and FIRA, the Foreign Investment Review Agency. This company came and approached the area and looked at it and did their testing. There's a wonderful supply of very high-grade magnesium ore just across the rocks in British Columbia, and they thought this would be a great place to do business. They had to put forward a rather detailed plan to FIRA. Within two weeks of it being in Ottawa, the government of Quebec – surprise, surprise – had a complete project proposal to this company. It's interesting to know about industrial espionage; well, it works well with FIRA.

In any event, they then suspended their idea of the plant in High River and moved on to one in Quebec because of course there was a wonderful deal with Hydro-Québec there. Later on, when they continued and went with the plan for High River, a number of companies dropped out, and others took their place. The plant in Quebec then triggered American countervail against imported

magnesium from Canada, and we had a number of other problems, not the least of which was the parent company's Supreme Court problems in the United States with regard to their pipeline. In any event, it was closed.

We now move to today, and you could just propose a simple scenario. In my constituency there was a case of an individual operating a company where instead of transporting the wastes, as they had contracted to do, to the much maligned but fine facility in Swan Hills, they chose to put them in barrels and bury them. Then the gentleman was caught, and he escaped to Libya. The last we heard, he's in Greece. The site has been cleaned up, and no one will buy the site.

Now we go to a simple scenario that relates to, finally, what the motion is about. If you had a property that had the potential for environmental damage, then why wouldn't you require the potential purchaser to do its own assessment and take responsibility for that assessment instead of having an ongoing responsibility to the government? That is a possible answer. I do not speak for the minister of the environment, and we have not discussed this. But it seems to me, relating the one instance in my constituency with the other, that this is a reasonable solution. Government, don't go in and do the assessment, because you'll be hung forever with any of the outfall. Now the company has it.

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

MR. CHADI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, as well, did not want to engage in debate, but after listening to some of the comments being made on both sides of the House, I felt compelled to jump to my feet. For clarification purposes because the minister cannot get up and speak again – after listening to the minister, I believe that what the minister has been saying is that simply because the government has sold the plant, anytime that lending institutions – in this province in particular, I know – are about to finance any property, they want to see an environmental assessment, period, before they put any money in, and it had better be a clean environmental report or one of very minimal environmental damage prior to them getting financing. So I believe that the minister of the environment, when he talks about a private-sector report, an assessment, is referring to exactly that report.

One thing that caught my attention was in fact when the Member for Highwood was speaking about the origin of this plant and the construction up until the present state of it. He talked about that the site had been cleaned up, and in fact he talked about the government cleaning it up. At least I thought I heard him say that the site had been cleaned up. Now, it would lead me to believe that in fact if the site had been cleaned up, it would be very difficult to believe, Mr. Speaker, that the government did not have some kind of an environmental assessment on file. If there was one and it said that the site needed to be cleaned up, then we cleaned it up, probably prior to selling it. In that case, we have something on file. In that case the minister of the environment ought to produce that document to the member, and I'd ask him to reconsider.

MR. LUND: He's talking about a different site completely.

MR. CHADI: Mr. Speaker, the minister is suggesting to me now that the Member for Highwood spoke about a different site. Well, whether it was this site or another site that had been cleaned up, it's neither here nor there. The fact of the matter is that it's very highly unlikely that the government sat on the plant for a

number of years and had not had an environmental assessment done. If I were the Member for Highwood, I'd be quite concerned on behalf of my constituents.

This section of land that this plant sits on – and I've heard all sorts of adjectives here this afternoon: the rusting dog. I heard one before, Mr. Speaker, that I haven't heard yet today: a money-sucking pig. I sort of like that one a little bit better: a money-sucking pig. We've got rid of this money-sucking pig, rusting dog, slash, whatever magnesium plant. But I find it unbelievable that we did not have an environmental assessment. The minister of the environment is shaking his head, and I believe him. What gets me, though, is: how could we sit for five years owning a magnesium plant of that magnitude, knowing full well that the type of use on that section of land was probably relating to some kind of environmental contamination, and not get at least a phase 1 done?

3:10

Now, there are different levels of environmental assessments that are required in this province, but a phase 1 is a very minimal, cursory, if you will, look at the environmental contamination, if any. So if there are other sites in this province that we own and that had situations where we had plants on them that lend themselves to contamination, I'm wondering why on earth we aren't protecting ourselves in a better way.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Before recognizing the next participant, could there be unanimous consent in the Assembly to revert to Introduction of Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Member for Highwood.

head: Introduction of Guests
(*reversion*)

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Dr. Dick Sobsey. He's the director of the Developmental Disabilities Centre at the University of Alberta, and he is here today to observe third reading proceedings for Bill 211. He's in the members' gallery, and I'd ask him to stand and receive the warm traditional welcome.

head: Motions for Returns
(*continued*)

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

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, rise to express some concern and perhaps disappointment regarding the minister's rejection with regard to Motion for a Return 243, requesting copies of phase 1 environmental assessments relating to the Magnesium Company of Canada site near High River.

I was very moved by the explanations given by the hon. Member for Highwood, who provided us some very nice history and told us what was really behind this deal in the first place, which I'm hearing with fresh ears, and I thank him for that. Similarly, he went on and explained something about the cleanup and so on.

I thought that the new minister of the environment would take this excellent opportunity as a new member to the front bench to really bring in that spirit of openness and accountability in a new and impassioned way, as I know that he had said on many occasions from this side when he sat not too far away from us. Indeed I know that these environmental assessments do get done from time to time, that they do get commissioned by the government, and I know they're done for the right reasons, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure that whatever it was that was done pursuant to some follow-up relating to this issue concerning MagCan, the minister has reviewed. I would like to think that there's nothing in those documents that requires they be kept hidden from us. I know that the minister would be anxious to place before this House anything that would further that cause of openness and accountability to which he is pledged. I believe him to be an honourable member of his House and a most honourable minister for this portfolio. So I'm going to appeal to him, and I'm sure that by the time I've finished my appeal, he'll probably volunteer the information forthright.

You see, Mr. Speaker, individual Albertans do realize that the government is trying and making some effort to be a little less secretive. Here is a wonderful opportunity, Mr. Minister, for you to do that. I would think that these assessments that were done would somehow impact on the \$168 million loss that has been sustained, to which, again, individual Albertans still haven't received adequate responses or adequate replies.

The other thing that concerns Albertans, too, is the coincidences of dates all the time, Mr. Speaker, and again this is a marvelous opportunity to clear that up as well. I see that the request deals with those issues of assessments that took place "by or on behalf of the government" for the period January 1, 1993, through to the spring of 1995. Now, the coincidental date there is that we're looking at that period shortly after which the former minister of the environment became leader of the Conservative Party and subsequently Premier as well. I'm sure that the Premier wouldn't want anything kept hidden. There's nothing there to hide, Mr. Minister. The Premier wouldn't want it hidden. So why wouldn't you volunteer this information to this House?

I know that the colleague sitting to the minister's right, the hon. Minister of Community Development, has volunteered information regarding the jacket purchase – you remember that – and he's going to come forward in an air of openness and accountability and honesty. I applaud him for that, and here's my applause right here.

Mr. Speaker, as you very well know – and I have said this to members on both sides of the House – I always look for items where I can either improve on what the government is doing or I can applaud the government for some of the things that it's trying to do in a supportive way. That's a fundamental part of what the opposition's role in this House is: to hold the government accountable, yes; sometimes to agree with government in their efforts to improve things for all Albertans; and on occasion to give them the support to go further in that particular vein. Here's a prime example of one place where this minister, a new minister, has an opportunity to do that. Just as the hon. Member for Highwood stood up and gave us an explanation of the goings-on from the past, so too can the minister of the environment do the same now and clear up some of this stuff.

I think Albertans are quite frankly fed up with the government's high-handed attitude on certain issues at least, where information is either kept from us or questions during question period are not answered specifically enough. We've all seen some of that, and

we tolerate it both ways, both sides. We understand that it's part of what the dynamics of this House are all about. But here is a straightforward, simple undertaking being requested to provide a small piece of information. Mr. Speaker, surely that's not asking too much.

So with those comments I urge the minister to please reconsider and give us this information that is requested not just for ourselves but for the benefit of all Albertans, who are waiting and have been kept waiting for far too long on some of these very, very expensive poor judgments, this one a \$168 million loss to taxpayers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for St. Albert wishes to participate.

MR. BRACKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I wasn't going to stand up and speak to this motion, but I feel obligated to my constituents in St. Albert to do this. That's why they elected me: to get information that they don't have; to fight for freedom of information; to fight for things that have happened in the past, not to blame the government for what has happened, because we all know what has happened, but to make sure it doesn't happen in the future; to prevent it from happening. Prevention is one of the most important things today in life: prevent things from happening, the prevention of the waste of taxpayers' money.

You know, even at the municipal level in the city of St. Albert we have in our policy environmental assessment of land that goes to development. Whether it's residential, industrial, or whatever, it's assessed environmentally, and this is made public. People know what the concerns are, if there are any.

This should have happened. I'm not sure whether they're trying to hide something here or they lacked the leadership in the first place to make sure an assessment was done. I would just ask the minister to go out of his way, to take the extra step to try and get that information if, as he said, it was done by a private company and they don't have access to it – check with them – make sure that he does all he can to try and get this information.

We know that deals were made at the time for politically expedient reasons, to get re-elected, "We're promising you this and that." Special deals were made with these companies. I just want to comment that we have the same thing happening with timber in Japan. They're buying our timber during recessionary times, getting a great price, and now they are sinking it in the ocean, Mr. Speaker, to store it for future use instead of us getting the best advantage. So in this type of thing we need to look at it, get what's happened in the past so that we don't make the same mistakes in the future.

3:20

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning to close debate on this matter.

MR. SEKULIC: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I listened quite attentively to the comments that came forward from the Member for Highwood, and there were a few words that he put in that are critical to my statements and my desire to have the information, this and other information which I've asked for in this Assembly, and that is "the whole story." Who knows it?

I just walked through a number of Conservative business ventures in this province using taxpayers' money, public money. We have NovAtel at \$646 million, Swan Hills at the half billion, the Lloydminster biprovincial upgrader at \$392 million, Gainers

Inc. at \$209 million, and then Magnesium Company of Canada, \$164 million. These are all lost taxpayers' dollars. You could have put a barrel in front of this building and you could probably have heated about 40 or 50 people around that barrel, burning money for a year or two, to get to this amount. That's why when I come forward asking for information, I want the whole story. It takes time to get the different pieces of the puzzle, to put them together to form the real picture so that we can read it.

We see right now in front of us the whole Bovar issue. The whole story is not coming out. A lesson can't be learned until the whole story is known. This \$164 million loss to the taxpayer, which the taxpayer is going to pay for through service cuts in health care and education, I think we need to have more information from the government.

Earlier I heard the Treasurer responding to one of my written questions saying: well, it's all in here; it's all in this book, Budget '95, and if the member would have taken the time to read it, particularly page 143 - I'll go one further - he would have found it. In fact it's not the response to the question that I asked in writing. So, Mr. Speaker, I asked the same question on several different occasions to see if I'll get the same answer or an answer at all. Too often we don't get the information we need to formulate. In some cases maybe the government is to be credited for its work in this area, and maybe that's what we need the information for: to assess whether the government is worthy of commendation. It's kind of hard when you lose \$164 million to think of a way of commending you.

We heard the Treasurer earlier in question period speak about the difference between private sector and public sector, and he tried to educate my colleague for Edmonton-Meadowlark as to these differences. Well, I can tell you what. She knows well the differences between private and public. In fact, she's never used a single public penny to venture into private-sector investments, whereas the Treasurer can probably speak to about \$2.2 billion worth of private-sector investments using public dollars. So success in the private sector - I just want to put this out for the Treasurer's information - generates generally a profit, which it attempts to sustain or increase over time. I've listed just a small fraction of the deals that this government has entered. Success for this government has been to stop the bleeding, and for that reason we need to know the whole story.

Having put those few comments forward regarding this rusting dog, Mr. Speaker, I know that the minister of the environment would care to rise and comment and perhaps change his mind as to how the opposition and in fact all Albertans can get this information that they so readily require to get the whole story.

[Motion lost]

head: Public Bills and Orders Other than
head: Government Bills and Orders
head: Third Reading
Bill 211
Protection for Persons in Care Act

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Highwood.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to move third reading of Bill 211, Protection for Persons in Care Act. The purpose of this Bill is to provide comprehensive protection for persons who are in the care of certain publicly funded facilities

and who are, by nature of their condition, defenceless against abuse.

This Bill also acknowledges the need to provide clear protection from any type of retaliation to every person who reports in good faith cases of abuse. This Bill makes the agencies responsible and accountable for their actions. Agencies will have the duty to protect the clients they serve from abuse and to maintain a reasonable level of safety for their clients. Agencies must require all employment applicants to provide a criminal records check and must make staff and clients aware of this Bill's provisions.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 211 goes a substantial distance to make sure that obstacles to reporting abuse are reduced or indeed eliminated wherever possible. By implementing Bill 211, Alberta will move a considerable distance down the road to providing comprehensive protection for persons who depend on facilities for their own care.

Thank you.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, speaking briefly to third reading of Bill 211. During second reading and the committee stage we had the opportunity for a great deal of debate on Bill 211. We had the Member for Calgary-Buffalo come forward with some amendments in an attempt to strengthen the Bill. The Member for Highwood came forward himself with some amendments that did strengthen the Bill somewhat. The Bill is a step in the proper direction to give some protection to those persons that are not able to protect themselves.

During second reading and committee stage some specific incidents were pointed out, where persons that were unable to defend themselves or take care of themselves were abused. There are no words kind enough to speak to those types of persons that will take advantage of one that can't defend himself. I would like to have seen the Bill go considerably further. I would like to have seen the Bill have considerably more teeth. Nevertheless, it is much better than what we have there at the present time. There have been attempts in the past to bring forward similar legislation, that hasn't gone this far. This Bill has gone through the stages. It is here for third reading. There are many people in the community that are urging me at least to support the Bill because they do recognize that it is a step in the right direction, and at a later date it can be strengthened.

As I conclude, Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the Member for Highwood for guiding the Bill through and bringing it through the committee stage and, again, for recognizing the importance of the legislative change that occurred during the last term when private members' Bills were allowed to come forward and be treated as true free votes. I believe this is about the third private member's Bill that has passed that had not come forward as a government Bill. That's another regret I have: that this did not come forward as a government Bill. Nevertheless, it is at this stage, and I will support the Bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MRS. HEWES: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I, too, want to thank the Member for Highwood for bringing this Bill forward. I will support it. I would like to make some comments about some of the things in the Bill that I believe need to be stronger, with the hope that in future months we can work together on developing some further amendments to it.

3:30

In a perfect world, Mr. Speaker, we wouldn't need this kind of legislation. It is whistle-blower legislation to a great extent, and I think it's a sad commentary on our lives and on society that we have to write legislation of this kind. I think it's perhaps even more important in the present context, in the present environment in this province, that we have it. For that reason, while I believe the Bill still lacks certain elements, I will support it today.

I appreciate that the member has brought amendments to us. I wasn't present for the debate on those, and I apologize for that. It still doesn't for me give clear definitions of abuse, whether or not abuse is neglect or abandonment or absence of nutrition or whatever. I think we need to put our minds to defining those precisely, Mr. Speaker. I think that's what Albertans need to hear and what the care providers in our province need to know.

Mr. Speaker, our current environment has created a situation where I believe we are potentially putting more people who are vulnerable at risk. Some of it is being done because we believe it can be done, that people can be managed more expeditiously and more efficiently and cost less money. That is not a bad motive, but it shouldn't be the overriding motive. I fear that some of the things that are occurring within our institutions and our organizations in the province where that becomes the primary motive – we invite these kinds of difficulties that this Bill is determined to repair, the environment where we have more and more people being moved into commercial group homes, whether they are seniors or disabled, and where we do not in my opinion have sufficient rules and regulations to govern those and standards of operation of the care in those homes or of the personnel who work in them.

The other side of that coin, Mr. Speaker, is the deskilling that we see in all of our institutions, where people who do not have the training are being expected to take on work with people who are often difficult, who need extensive understanding, psychological understanding of their needs, and their caregivers are not trained for it. So we are putting not only the recipient, the resident, in jeopardy. We're also putting the caregiver in jeopardy, and they are fearful of litigation and all of the things that go along with it. I think it's part of that fear that has brought forward this piece of legislation today for us to put into law. There is increasing stress on staff in all of our activities, our institutions, our group homes, and it is unquestionably a difficult constituency that they're working with. Take it from someone who knows: seniors can be very difficult. We can be cranky. We can be miserable, and we can cause all kinds of problems for staff people and for colleagues and residents as well. So there are many hazards in our homes and institutions today.

One of the things that troubled me about the Bill, Mr. Speaker, is the absence of anything to do with family and advocates, and I would hope that we can repair that and beef that part of it up in another reading on it. I believe that increasingly in our society, as we deskill and as we move people into community health care and into community institutions, we will have a greater and greater need for trained advocates in mental health, in dealing with children, and in dealing with the disabled and elderly. I'm also aware that as the province reaches out and accepts more and more immigrants, people from other parts of the world who perhaps have difficulty not only with the language but with our culture of care and of providing care, we must in fact include advocacy on behalf of those people who increasingly are aging in our province and need the sort of institutional or support systems that this Bill deals with.

Mr. Speaker, I've been working recently with a group in the city of Edmonton that are deeply concerned about elder abuse. It is frightening to think that it occurs, but it's there, and we need desperately to be able to protect the people who work with elders in institutions, that if they see abuse, they need have no fear whatsoever of retribution or litigation or loss of their employment. It is an increasing problem, and I think it will be exacerbated by those other things in our environment that are occurring with the move to community services, with the move to privatize and commercialize, with the absence of standards.

Mr. Speaker, may I just make once again my plea to the government to look seriously at the need to develop standards in commercial and private nonprofit group homes and institutions that exist in our province without sufficient thought to who works there. They are not tested for criminal records, and these kinds of things need to be looked at very seriously.

Mr. Speaker, finally, the Bill seems to me to focus considerably on the complainant – on the agency, that is – and while I agree that we need to look at that carefully, I would like to see us in future months think carefully about the victim – resident I guess is a better word – or the potential victim of abuse, as has been described in the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, the other items that I felt were flawed were related to the reporting. Three things. One is a reasonable level of safety. The member has not, in my view, defined that clearly. Another one: the notion of the reporting. It seems to me that if there is any indication of abuse, a report should be made immediately, there should be no waiting time, and an investigation should commence immediately. I would think that would be something that should be written very firmly into the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, having made those few comments about some of the flaws that I see, that I believe would improve this piece of legislation, that would make it dramatically more valuable to the vulnerable persons of our province, I want once again to thank the member for bringing it forward. I will support it. I believe members of our caucus will support it. I will hope that as we develop regulations and as we work with the legislation, we will find other ways to tighten it up, some of those I have suggested today, and I'd be very happy to work with the member to do just that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. CHADI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, am pleased to be able to rise today to speak in favour of Bill 211. I thought that in a province such as ours and in the year 1995 things like this did not exist, where there would be repercussions for people in the health caregiving facilities, where if anyone were to see abuse, they would be somehow reprimanded for their actions.

I applaud the hon. Member for Highwood for bringing this Bill forward. The Member for Calgary-Buffalo had brought a Bill that was defeated. It was called the Whistleblower Protection Act. I think the Whistleblower Protection Act was quite similar in many ways but broader than Bill 211. I think we're going in the right direction, piece by piece. We will get there. I would hope we could do that yet in our term in the Legislature, and prior to the next election I'd encourage the Member for Highwood to bring forward yet another Bill that would encourage more people to see wrongdoing, whether it's in caregiving or any sector of our economy, of our province where tax dollars are being used, are

being paid to people that give care, if you will, to other individuals and are subjected to abuse.

It's a step forward, and I encourage all members of this Assembly to support Bill 211, as I will.

3:40

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I just would like to rise and add my support to Bill 211. I want to commend the Member for Highwood for bringing this legislation forward, and I also want to express my appreciation to the members opposite for their support of this Bill. I think it is an area that is of concern to all of us, and we, with our great respect for the elderly and the more fragile persons in our society, want to offer every opportunity for their protection. I think this Bill goes a long ways to enhancing that protection. We have said very clearly in Alberta Health that our responsibility will be to set standards, to have policies in place, and to ensure that those standards are maintained.

I would also want to just remind the hon. members that when we announced the Provincial Health Council of Alberta, which will be an arm's-length group, which has been set in place, one of the first tasks that I stated that I would be asking that council to do would be to examine all of our appeal mechanisms to ensure that there are not areas where there are no avenues for appeal or for adjudication or review. I believe that this Bill and its contents and the debate around this Bill today will be a very useful document and documents for that Provincial Health Council to add to their review.

Mr. Speaker, many of us have long and happy memories of associations with the elderly in our own families, and certainly it would disturb all of us in this Assembly to think that persons are not treated in a manner that is dignified and kind. I can speak with some authority in this area, having been raised for a number of my young years by my grandmother and having had the opportunity and I think a wonderful opportunity of living with that wonderful woman for a number of years. Certainly when I listen to the members here today, it reminded me of that and also brought home to me how dreadful I would feel if I had been concerned about her care in the last days and weeks of her life.

I would say that in almost all cases our institutions are caring; the providers in those institutions are caring. We want to ensure that when there are problems, we are prepared to address them and address them immediately to give us all that sense of security that our elderly and our frail and our fragile people are well cared for with quality care and kindness.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I would like to again add my support to this Bill and my commendation to the member for bringing this legislation forward.

MR. TANNAS: I would just say this, Mr. Speaker: I want to thank all those who spoke, those who have helped and encouraged me in this, and my predecessor with the Bill, the hon. Minister of Labour. To all of those people I owe a debt of gratitude for their help. I now ask that the vote be taken.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

THE SPEAKER: The question having been called on the motion for third reading of Bill 211, Protection for Persons in Care Act, all those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

[Bill 211 read a third time]

**head: Public Bills and Orders Other than
head: Government Bills and Orders
head: Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

THE CHAIRMAN: I call the Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill 212

Motor Vehicle Administration Amendment Act, 1995

THE CHAIRMAN: Before we begin consideration, the Chair would remind all members that we're going to stick to the convention that we have only one member standing and speaking at the same time.

The hon. Member for Bonnyville.

MR. VASSEUR: Yes. Just in concluding comments on this particular Bill, there is no question that the proposed legislation is supported by a lot of the members on this side, but the support does have some conditions to it. We have absolutely no problem with the principle of the Bill.

However, there are a couple of areas in the proposed legislation that we have some questions about. They were debated. There are two areas. Firstly, the area of zero tolerance for alcohol: if we would change the .08 totally in that existing legislation and look at maybe even reducing the .08 for everybody in lieu of .08 for just certain people that are on a probationary level of a licence, I could support it personally.

The other area is the no driving between midnight and 5:00 a.m. Again, I believe that we're creating an area that is going to be very, very difficult to enforce. I believe that a similar Bill can probably be brought before this Legislature at a later date taking a look at those two areas, taking a look at the regulations that we presently have, and maybe enhancing or deleting some of the regulations but making sure that it addresses the issue where we can ask our police force to do the proper enforcement.

Again, we support the Bill in principle, but I would recommend that my colleagues vote against the proposed legislation as we see it and as it has been amended so far. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

MR. DOERKSEN: I'm assuming, Mr. Chairman, this is to close debate. Will this be to close debate?

MR. WOLOSHYN: No. This is committee. You don't close debate.

MR. DOERKSEN: You don't close debate. Okay.

I just want to reply briefly to some comments that were made yesterday by the minister so we can put them in the *Hansard*, and then, Mr. Chairman, I will call for the question.

The minister refers accurately to the fact that even with a one-year minimum period to hold a learner's licence, somebody could get their learner's licence and put it in a drawer and at the end of the year go and take their driving test and pass. That's recognized. But the case today is that a person can get a learning

licence today and tomorrow take the driving test and pass. So while we can't control how much experience at this point a driver is going to get in the learning category, the minimum one-year period that is proposed will certainly encourage that to happen. That's what we're trying to achieve.

I've also heard a number of comments from some colleagues who feel that this Bill unfairly addresses our youth. I want to be very clear, Mr. Chairman, that I also have a great deal of faith in our young people. I have four of them in my own household.

3:50

DR. L. TAYLOR: How many?

MR. DOERKSEN: Four of them, Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat. Perhaps a difference for me is that I'd like to give them as much a possibility to utilize their full potential in life as possible. If we can help them learn to drive responsibly when they're learning, then we have a better chance of making sure that they have the ability to use their potential for their entire lifetime.

Mr. Chairman, I also appreciate the minister's commitment to sit down and talk with the RCMP, the police, and other stakeholders in terms of implementing this Bill. Perhaps I can address some of the Member for Bonnyville's concerns with that as well. When a Bill passes third reading, it does not become proclaimed. I would suggest to the minister and other members who might be concerned about this Bill that we could take a six-month period after third reading to examine in more detail with the stakeholders ways that we can implement this even better, including looking at the testing provisions that are currently in place. So I appreciate the minister's offer to do that, and it's something that I think we should follow.

In concluding my debate in committee here, I'd like to just remind the Assembly – and I'm going to refer to *Beauchesne* 689(1), which says, "A committee is bound by the decision of the House, given on second reading, in favour of the principle of the bill." Mr. Chairman, I think that implies that we've passed the principle of this Bill at second reading. What we are doing in committee, of course, and have done, is made some amendments to the Bill to make it a better Bill. So I think there's an obligation here to support this Bill in committee.

Mr. Chairman, with that I would ask for the question on Bill 212.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

Chairman's Ruling Reporting Bills from Committee

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. members, before we go to the next speaker, I wanted to just clarify an assertion. I didn't hear the quotation from *Beauchesne*. The one that I heard is not relevant to the issue, so I may have got it wrong. In any event, the custom for some time now in Committee of the Whole has been that we ask three questions. There are three questions on the remaining clauses, if they'd been amended, or on the Bill: are you agreed, and you say that; on the title and preamble, you can be agreed and you say that; shall the Bill be reported. If you vote against the Bill being reported, it is not reported and dies then. Just so hon. members of the committee understand that subtlety, that may not be quite so subtle, to assert that it can go on is not with our custom.

Now, if I were to ask, "Are you ready for the question?" I already have two people that have stood up, so we can't go with

the question when you have people that are prepared at committee to go.

So the hon. Member for Edmonton-Roper, followed by Medicine Hat.

Debate Continued

MR. CHADI: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I was a little worried when I heard that I may not have an opportunity to speak. I'm grateful, very grateful, to know and to see that you have a great command of the rules of the House.

I rise to speak against this Bill 212. I find it very difficult to believe in this day and age that we would try to create laws, make laws, and impose them on our young people, on people in this province for silly reasons. I mean, a law embedded in this Bill that says that somebody with a probationary licence cannot drive "between the hours of midnight and 5 a.m." – you know, it almost reminds me of . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Red Deer-South is rising on a point of order.

Point of Order Questioning a Member

MR. DOERKSEN: I would like to ask the member a question in debate.

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Roper, you are asked a question. You just have to say yes or no. You don't have to give reasons.

MR. CHADI: Absolutely. Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: I take that as a yes.

Debate Continued

MR. DOERKSEN: Mr. Chairman, I wish to ask the member where he was for the debate when we clearly enunciated that the curfew does not apply to the probationary period.

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

MR. CHADI: Mr. Chairman, thank you. I appreciate the question. I was working in my constituency when the debate was going on here and unfortunately could not be here, but I can assure the hon. member that I am here in committee stage because this is where I can ask the questions and engage in debate. At any time he may rise and ask a question, and I will ask all kinds of questions here.

Shall I go on, Mr. Chairman, or shall I now have a ruling that the question has been answered and I should continue?

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, the quality of the response to the question is up to the responder entirely.

MR. CHADI: Mr. Chairman, when I spoke about the laws that we create in this province and some of them being foolish, it reminded me of the law – as an avid hunter I can relate to this. I'm sure there are many members on the other side of the House that will know what I'm talking about when I say that on Sunday you can't shoot a duck. Yet I can shoot a partridge. Yet I can shoot a ruffed grouse. Yet I can shoot a deer. But I can't shoot

a duck. I think it's a foolish law. I think the laws that we create in this province ought to make some sense, and this does not make any sense whatsoever: that a 14-year-old individual cannot drive accompanied by a parent between the hours of midnight and 5 a.m. I think it's absolutely ridiculous.

I can just imagine myself being 14, 15 years old when I was growing up in a little town, Mr. Chairman, and I would have to – I would have to – supplement the driving when my father would be hauling cattle or doing whatever it is that we were doing.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Your bootlegging business would have fallen apart.

MR. CHADI: The hon. member talks about the southern Alberta farmers in the bootlegging business. It didn't happen in northern Alberta, hon. Member for Redwater.

I can only relate to a situation where I had to drive. As younger children we had to accompany our parents, and we supported them and helped them. That's how we learned to drive. To create a law that says that you can't drive between midnight and 5 a.m. is absolute nonsense, and that ought to be taken out of this Bill.

4:00

I think some of the parts in the Bill make some sense, and I think we ought to consider looking at them strongly. No tolerance for alcohol: I quite agree with that. I think that if anyone is caught with alcohol in their system being at a certain level, whether it's .08 – because I understand that's the tolerance level in this province as it exists today – then we ought to consider having that embedded in the law. We have to say: there is a level of tolerance, and the level is a certain amount. My understanding is that our system, our body, including the Member for Red Deer-South's, creates alcohol on its own and could perhaps be measured in a breathalyzer test. Perhaps there may be a trace. How do we conclude that that individual has consumed alcohol and it isn't the natural body-producing ingredients that are actually being detected? We need to have some kind of a level there to be able to say: this is the level that we'll tolerate, and anything beyond that cannot be tolerated. So I'd ask the hon. Member for Red Deer-South to give me an explanation as to why a zero tolerance level when I understand that the body produces alcohol on a natural basis as is.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to listen to more of the debate, and I would like to be able to jump in on this debate at a later time, but right now I'd encourage members to defeat this Bill. I think it doesn't do anything to make our province safer.

Thank you.

MR. RENNER: Mr. Chairman, I would also like to make some comments regarding this Bill. I, too, rise to speak in opposition to the Bill. I have some concerns with the Bill, and quite frankly I'm not sure that any number of amendments would alleviate my concerns.

In a more general term I need to comment on the process that we have for private members' Bills in the Legislature. I think that generally speaking it's a good process, it's a positive process, but the limited amount of speaking time that's available to private members' Bills does give me some cause for concern. I did not get an opportunity to speak to this Bill at second reading, and in that way I did not have an opportunity to voice my opposition to the principles of this Bill. We've heard repeatedly from the sponsor of this Bill that this Bill has the support in principle.

Well, it did not have my support in principle. Let me go on by saying that while the principle of the Bill does not have my support, the intent of the Bill does. I can understand that there are honourable motives behind this Bill, and I agree with the intent of this Bill, but the principles within this Bill I don't think are applicable in this particular case.

There are a number of areas, and other members have referred to them. I think the curfew on a learner's licence is a prime example. If the intent of this Bill is to ensure that we have safer conditions on our highways, that our new drivers are not placed in a position of undue risk, that's fine, but what does a curfew have to do with a new driver? What difference does it make if a new driver is driving at 11 o'clock or at 1 o'clock? They still have to have a licensed driver sitting beside them teaching them, helping them learn to drive. So if someone wants to learn to drive at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning, I don't see what difference that makes, quite frankly. They're getting experience behind the wheel.

The other aspect of the Bill that I do have some concern with is that although the Bill is targeted at new drivers, I think the Bill and the proposals within the Bill really do target young drivers. The reason I say that is that we have the provisions of zero tolerance. We have already had discussion on whether or not zero tolerance is in fact enforceable, and I'm not convinced that it is.

That issue aside, we are going to be in a situation where a police officer will pull a car over, and unless that police officer has some reason to pull that car over – presumably it's a traffic offence or something like that – the police officer would not even see the individual's driver's licence. All of us have gone through a Check Stop throughout the year. You go through the Check Stop. The police officer doesn't ask to see your operator's licence. He asks if you have been consuming alcohol, and if you have or you haven't, he makes a judgment call at that point as to whether or not you would be legally impaired.

In this particular case, if we have a new driver that's 40 years old going through a Check Stop and the police officer asks if they consumed any alcohol and the person says, "Yes, I was at a restaurant, I had a glass of wine, and I'm going home," nine times out of 10 the police officer would say: "Fine. On your way." But if it's a young driver, if it's obviously someone who is young, and the police officer was faced with that same situation, they would have more probability, more chance, of asking to see the person's operator's licence to find out if they're a newly licensed driver or not and whether or not they would still be considered a probationary driver. So that area has some concern for me.

We have had some discussion on the zero tolerance. We have heard people in this Legislature indicate that there is a natural tendency for the human body to produce a certain amount of evidence of alcohol even if the individual has not consumed alcohol. So until we can come up with some kind of a way to test for zero tolerance, then it's not proper, in my opinion, to pass a Bill in the Legislature that is questionable in its ability for enforcement.

I think that what we have to talk about and what we have to consider – and I would encourage the sponsor of this Bill to come forward perhaps with other legislation to address the situation, a very valid situation, of having new drivers more adequately prepared for all driving conditions. One of the things that I think would be more appropriate is to have a look at our testing procedure. If we feel that newly licensed drivers don't have sufficient training and experience to be driving a car, then I would

say in that case that the test is not adequate. Perhaps we have to have a more stringent testing procedure so that someone proves that they are capable of handling a car. Perhaps the testing procedure should deal with some kind of an emergency situation, where during the driver's test the car is put into a spin or there is some kind of a surprise situation and the person testing can find out what that driver's reaction is and whether they do in fact have experience enough to deal with that situation. That's where accidents happen. Accidents don't happen when we're just driving on a day-to-day basis. So from that point of view I feel that the Bill has some flaws. I don't feel that those flaws can be corrected by further amendments to the Bill.

So using that logic and using that reasoning, while I support the intent of the Bill, I encourage the sponsor of this Bill to come back with some other ideas. I cannot support the Bill at this stage, and I will not be supporting it at committee stage.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: On the remaining clauses of the Bill, are you agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: Carried.

Three up and you're in business.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:10 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Amery	Friedel	Oberg
Black	Fritz	Sekulic
Brassard	Hanson	Smith
Cardinal	Havelock	Taylor, L.
Clegg	Jacques	Taylor, N.
Coutts	Laing	White
Dinning	Langevin	Woloshyn
Doerksen	Leibovici	Yankowsky
Forsyth	McFarland	

Against the motion:

Bracko	Mar	Shariff
Calahasen	McClellan	Stelmach
Chadi	Mirosh	Thurber
Collingwood	Paszowski	Trynchy
Dunford	Pham	Van Binsbergen
Haley	Renner	Vasseur
Hierath	Rostad	Wickman
Kowalski	Sapers	Zwozdesky

Totals: For - 26 Against - 24

[The clauses of Bill 212 as amended agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. members are reminded that this third vote is the crucial one. Shall the Bill be reported? Are you agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:26 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

THE CHAIRMAN: Order. We have before us Bill 212, the Motor Vehicle Administration Amendment Act, 1995. We're on the third vote of the three votes at this stage, and the question must be understood. If you want to end the Bill at this point, you vote that it not be reported. If you want the Bill to proceed further, to third reading, then you must vote for it being reported.

For the motion:

Amery	Fritz	McFarland
Black	Gordon	Oberg
Brassard	Hanson	Sekulic
Clegg	Havelock	Smith
Coutts	Jacques	Taylor, L.
Day	Laing	Taylor, N.
Dinning	Langevin	White
Doerksen	Leibovici	Woloshyn
Forsyth	Magnus	Yankowsky
Friedel		

Against the motion:

Bracko	Mar	Shariff
Calahasen	McClellan	Stelmach
Cardinal	Mirosh	Thurber
Chadi	Mitchell	Trynchy
Collingwood	Paszowski	Van Binsbergen
Dunford	Pham	Vasseur
Haley	Renner	Wickman
Hierath	Rostad	Zwozdesky
Kowalski	Sapers	

Totals: For - 28 Against - 26

THE CHAIRMAN: The motion is carried.

4:40

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

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

MR. CLEGG: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain Bill. The committee reports the following with some amendments: Bill 212.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Does the Assembly concur in this report?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: So ordered.

head: Public Bills and Orders Other than
head: Government Bills and Orders
head: Second Reading
Bill 213
Public Accounts Committee Act

[Adjourned debate October 11: Mr. Germain]

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

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Mr. Speaker, thank you. It's my pleasure to enter into the debate at second reading on Bill 213, the Public Accounts Committee Act, which is sponsored by my colleague from Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan. I will take a few moments to speak to Bill 213, and I'll recognize and watch the clock because I know that we will be adjourning in short order to hear the Prime Minister's statements to the nation on other matters that are of importance to all Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to begin my comments by tabling with the Assembly four copies of a speech entitled *The Public Accounts Committee – How We Can Help*, that was presented by the Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan to the Auditor General's seminar in conjunction with the seminar *Improving Performance – Our Contribution* on December 6, 1994. I table these on behalf of the Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan, who at this point is unable to table them herself as she is at a function with the Lieutenant Governor.

As we engage in debate on private members' day, there has been some debate on Bill 213 as to whether or not the Bill ought to be supported by members, not necessarily the government or the opposition but as members of the Assembly, in what we are attempting to do in private members' Bills: to improve the situation for all Albertans. I must say, Mr. Speaker, that I suspect with the recent changes in the Standing Orders for the way this Assembly deals with private members' Bills, we as members of the Assembly probably just witnessed something that was unprecedented: a free vote that was as close as it was with all of the three votes required from Committee of the Whole to move the matter along and report the Bill. It was really quite historic in watching members on both sides of the Assembly voting for Bill 212, just prior to entering debate on Bill 213.

I think it's been clear that in our private members' Bills debate it is a question of whether members of the Assembly, not necessarily in a partisan way, look at whether a Bill that's being brought forward by a private member is in some fashion an improvement on the situation as it exists today. The Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan's Bill on the Public Accounts Committee is a Bill that is brought forward to find ways to make the Public Accounts Committee a more effective tool than it is today.

There are a number of constraints on the Public Accounts Committee. There are a number of obstacles that the Public Accounts Committee must overcome. From my speaking to members who sit on Public Accounts, I think there is generally a

feeling from members of that committee on both sides of the House that there is a sense of frustration in being unable to fulfill the mandate that members believe the mandate is to be of the Public Accounts Committee.

I think the mandate of the Public Accounts Committee is to be an effective watchdog for the expenditures of public funds and to look at past expenditures of the government to determine how we can in the future do a better job than we did in the past. I think it's a very laudable goal, and of course, Mr. Speaker, every Legislative Assembly has a Public Accounts Committee that is there to fulfill that role. Of course, that role is there to assist hon. members of the Assembly in looking at how public expenditures took place and how it can be improved on behalf of the residents of the province of Alberta.

Now, we've had some debate in the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, about one of the objects of this Bill, and that is to give Public Accounts the opportunity to bring before it not just ministers of the Crown but other senior officials who have information that they can impart to the committee to assist it in fulfilling that mandate. In looking specifically at the hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan's Bill at section 12(1), the Bill allows the committee to

summon members of Executive Council, senior public servants, or any other persons to appear before it to give evidence and produce documents under oath.

This is really the vehicle that will give the Public Accounts Committee the full opportunity to fulfill its mandate.

I recall some debate that occurred in question period that related to the public accounts that were recently released by the Provincial Treasurer, and those public accounts, the information that we were talking about at the time, dealt with financial information that was coming forward from regional health authorities. I recall hearing in that debate the Provincial Treasurer invite the hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan, who is, as you know, Mr. Speaker, the chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, to call the regional health authorities to the Public Accounts Committee.

Well, that's exactly right. That's exactly right. The Public Accounts Committee ought to have the ability, ought to have the opportunity to bring forward to it, to give evidence and produce documents, individuals like those Albertans who serve the province as members of regional health authorities. That is exactly the kind of process that ought to take place so that we can, year by year, look at the expenditures, we can talk to the people who are decision-makers in those areas, we can receive the documents that are necessary, and we can help to fulfill the mandate of the Public Accounts Committee.

So in fact I appreciated the words of the Provincial Treasurer, who in essence, by his comments in question period, supports the proposition that's been put forward in Bill 213: broaden and strengthen the ability of the Public Accounts Committee to get the information that ought to be provided to it and to receive the documents that it cannot at this point in time receive. That's what I consider, Mr. Speaker, to be one of the significant and major components of the Bill, because the Public Accounts Committee, as I've said, is often frustrated in its efforts to actually get to the very heart of some of the questions that come up about expenditures of taxpayer dollars.

4:50

The most recent example was even this morning. The Public Accounts Committee met this morning, as it does when hon. members are in session, and called upon the Auditor General to

appear before the Public Accounts Committee. The Auditor General admits to the Public Accounts Committee that he can do a certain amount of work to uncover information relating to the government's expenditure on the Swan Hills hazardous waste treatment plant and the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation's involvement in the hazardous waste system for the province of Alberta, but admittedly, Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the comments of the Premier, he can only go so far. He does not have the ability to get the information to provide all of the answers to questions.

The Public Accounts Committee with the strength of this Bill could. They could bring forward other senior civil servants, other persons who have relevant information to the questions about the expenditure of taxpayers' dollars. That's the kind of process, that's the kind of vehicle, that's the kind of tool that Albertans are looking for. They're not simply looking for a Public Accounts Committee that exists because it appears to function. They are looking for an effective Public Accounts Committee that is indeed effective, that indeed does dig deep, that indeed can ask questions, that perhaps might make some of those individuals that appear before it uncomfortable. That's what improves the process. The committee should be able to call those people forward and ask some of those uncomfortable questions and fulfill its mandate.

I rise this afternoon to speak in favour of Bill 213 in second reading, and with that, Mr. Speaker, I would move we adjourn debate.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park has moved that we adjourn debate. All those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Defeated.

We have before us, then, Bill 213, Public Accounts Committee Act.

[Motion lost]

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, considering the hour and considering a request by some members . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: By all members.

MR. DAY: . . . to observe a speech which is going to be given by the Prime Minister – and I emphasize that it is by some members – we will acknowledge that request and I would move that we call it 5:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 4:55 p.m.]