

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, April 29, 1996**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 96/04/29

[The Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Let us pray.

At the beginning of this week we ask You, Father, to renew and strengthen in us the awareness of our duty and privilege as members of this Legislature.

We ask You also in Your divine providence to bless and protect the Assembly and the province we are elected to serve.

Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table today responses to questions taken under notice by the Premier on April 24, 1996. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora posed questions pertaining to the Out-of-Province Supplementary Assistance Committee's approval process. Clarification is provided herewith.

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

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to table the 1995 annual report of the office of the Farmers' Advocate of Alberta. Additional copies will be available in my office.

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

MR. ZWOZDESKEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table a copy of the ad "Remember When" from section A of yesterday's *Edmonton Journal* along with the names of 30 individuals who are opposed to Bill 24 and in particular who are opposed to the cancelation of the Alberta Multiculturalism Act, as am I.

MR. McFARLAND: Mr. Speaker, I've made a mistake. I wonder if we might revert to petitions.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. member has asked if we could move back to petitions. Do we have agreement on that?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed?

Hon. Member for Little Bow.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and my apologies. I have today four copies, as I am required, from the Lethbridge Northern irrigation district urging the government to immediately expedite the repairs to the LNID headworks canal, as noted in their resolution.

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

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

(continued)

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table a copy of the ad "Remember When" Alberta multiculturalism was important in this province. This ad is accompanied by 23 names who are opposed to Bill 24, as I am.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd request permission to table an ad endorsed by 22 constituents and other Edmontonians opposed to the provisions of Bill 24 and in particular the diminishing of the concern for multiculturalism.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I have five documents to table. Each of them is a letter indicating that these people are normal Albertans, and they express their concern with Bill 24. The first one is from a minister in Foremost, another is from the Chamberlins in Edmonton, the third is from a Ms Pardo in northeast Calgary, the fourth is from a Len Baker, who resides in northwest Calgary, and the last one is a letter dated April 25 from the Dignity Foundation addressed to the hon. Minister of Community Development.

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

MR. DALLA-LONGA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have four copies of documents filed in the District Court of the United States basically covering the subject of Samuel Francis, former treasurer of Solv-Ex, and his conviction for stock manipulation.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

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

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the privilege today to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly a group of 74 grade 10 students from the Austin O'Brien high school in Edmonton-Gold Bar. They are accompanied by Colleen Stepney and Deb Shinkaruk. I think they're in both galleries. I'd ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of the House.

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

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Mr. Speaker, thank you. It's my pleasure this afternoon to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 66 students and four teachers from the Pine Street elementary school in Sherwood Park. They're accompanied this afternoon by teachers Mr. Ken Werenka and Mr. Alex Newhart and parent helpers Mrs. Wall and Mrs. Bell. They are seated this afternoon in the public gallery, and I'd ask them to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Oral Question Period**

**Hotel de Health Inc.**

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, over the weekend the business community in Leduc held a very successful trade fair at the Black Gold Centre. One of the exhibitors was Hotel de Health. Their display included a sign indicating that one of the benefits of their scheme would be, and I quote: provide Leduc-area residents with preferential access to Hotel de Health medical services at no extra cost to the patient. To the Premier: now that Hotel de Health has expressly said that they will create a two-tiered system of health care which provides preferential access for some Albertans, doesn't the Premier think that it's about time his government stepped in and protected universal health care for all Albertans?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, certainly it's the intention of this government to protect at all times the universality component of the Canada Health Act. We have said in the past and I'll say it again today that if anything happens that violates the fundamental principles of the Canada Health Act, it simply will not happen.

MR. MITCHELL: They're advertising to break the Canada Health Act, Mr. Speaker.

How can Hotel de Health possibly provide – and I'm using their words – preferential health services for some Albertans and still remain within the Canada Health Act? I wonder whether the Premier could answer that question.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I guess anyone can say what they want to say, but when it comes to actually doing it, if it does indeed violate the Canada Health Act, it simply is not going to happen.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, let me ask the question again. Maybe we'll get to the heart of it for the Premier and maybe he can answer it. How can the hospital services operated by Hotel de Health for cash be consistent with this government's purported policy of ensuring universal and comprehensive access regardless of where you live or how much money you make in this province?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, once again, if whatever Hotel de Health is proposing is not in accordance with the Canada Health Act, it simply will not happen.

MR. MITCHELL: Of course, that's what he said about privately funded clinics as well, Mr. Speaker, and they're still continuing.

**Private Health Services**

MR. MITCHELL: In the brochure being handed out by Hotel de Health, they claim that they will install an expensive MRI in the Leduc hospital. This will compete directly with and undermine the Capital health authority MRI service, which is budgeted to provide MRI services for Edmonton and for surrounding communities. To the Premier: how can offering a private MRI for cash be efficient when this service will compete directly with the public MRI operated by the Capital health authority?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that in the city of Calgary there's a private MRI clinic that is operating, and there's one in Edmonton as well. These clinics are operating very efficiently and very effectively, and they're offering services. They have been operating for some time. Where has the leader

of the Liberal opposition been?

I will have the hon. Minister of Health supplement as to the rules relative to the private operation of MRIs.

**1:40**

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, just further on the issue of how a private MRI operates within Alberta, they do operate for third-party insurance claims or other private insurers. They are not funded by Alberta Health in any way, so therefore no public dollars are going to them. The only exception that would occur there is if the hospital-based MRI diagnostic system requested an MRI to be performed in one of those facilities. They would enter into that negotiation, and they would pay for that out of their global budget, which would still be the public-funding envelope. So there is no preclusion from these clinics operating in this province, but they are not being funded by the public purse.

MR. MITCHELL: This means, Mr. Speaker, that Crossroads, the public health care authority, will be buying MRI from that service and not from Edmonton. Why won't the Premier set up a provincial policy that will limit this kind of costly duplication of expensive programs and that in this case will undermine the efficiency of the Capital health authority MRI, which is designed to service Edmonton and surrounding communities? This is very different from existing private MRI services.

MR. KLEIN: Yes, it is very different because it hasn't happened. I mean, there is no MRI. That's what makes it, you know, vastly different from what exists in the city of Edmonton and what doesn't exist in the city of Leduc. We're talking about ghosts here. We're talking about if, maybe, sometime, someday. If it violates the fundamental principles of the Canada Health Act or the government policy, which I'll have the hon. minister explain, then it simply won't happen.

Hon. minister.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, certainly there is nothing stopping any regional health authority from purchasing services if they are negotiated at a negotiated fee, if they are needed. This government has put in place at taxpayers' expense – and I should say also with respect to some of the MRIs, through the generous funding of the lottery dollars to health capital – MRIs in this province. They are there to meet the needs of the people in this province. They are situated today in Calgary and Edmonton. I'm not sure if the hon. Leader of the Opposition is suggesting that there should be no further MRIs put in place in the province – I'd be interested in hearing his comment there – or if he is simply suggesting that we should not purchase services from a private clinic or if he is simply against private enterprise in the province.

MR. MITCHELL: Can't the Premier and the Minister of Health understand that it will take some form of regional co-ordination in this case to stop the erosion of the MRI service in this city and to create overall efficiency, far greater efficiency and lower costs by protecting the publicly funded health care system that we have instead of allowing Hotel de Health to erode it and undermine it.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, no one in this government has allowed Hotel de Health to do anything at this particular time. Quite simply, we don't have a proposal. Again, I have to reiterate, I think for about the seventh time during this question period, that if anything happens that violates the fundamental principles of the Canada Health Act, it simply won't happen.

### Physiotherapy

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Speaker, two-year-old Nicole Kroeger of Calgary suffers from cerebral palsy and requires intensive physiotherapy. She needs this therapy to help her learn to walk and to control muscle movement. Her physiotherapist says that optimal treatment for Nicole requires three visits per week, but this may be unrealistic given the quotas imposed by the Calgary health authority. Nicole's family can't even pay for the extra treatment because Alberta Health officials have determined that this would give us a two-tiered health care system. My questions are to the Minister of Health. Why does the Minister of Health say on some days, such as today, that facility fees are okay, yet at other times she and her officials say that such fees will create a two-tiered system and that wouldn't be right?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, there's quite a wide chasm drawing the reference between these two questions. In physiotherapy services certainly if there is someone who is not receiving the long-term physiotherapy that is required, I think that should properly be taken up with the managers of the physiotherapy program in the Calgary health authority, because there is provision for those problems that are chronic. Certainly if the hon. member would like to pass this information to me, I would be pleased to take it up for him.

There is more than one way of delivering physiotherapy services. Many times for chronic needs those are delivered through the home care physiotherapy program. The important thing is that the client receives the physiotherapy that is required for treatment of their particular problem. Sometimes it is maintenance, and sometimes that can be done in a group setting. Sometimes it can be handled with training from a physiotherapist for keeping ongoing therapy occurring with supervision from time to time.

It is very difficult to assess an individual problem without having all of the information, and I would be most pleased to look at this for the hon. member.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: First supplemental, Edmonton-Glenora.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll get that information to the minister.

While the minister is reviewing that information, maybe she can answer this question as well: if the government policy is supposed to ensure that all Albertans will get all the physiotherapy they require, then why does a quota system exist in Calgary?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member does misunderstand the community rehab program. I would remind all members in this House that the community rehab program is more than physiotherapy. It is a number of therapies that may be required by people for full rehabilitation. It is also designed to meet high needs.

I would also remind all hon. members in this Legislature that Alberta is one of four provinces that fund physiotherapy. We made a decision that the dollars that we have available in these areas should be directed at high needs. So, Mr. Speaker, we have developed the program with that in mind.

As I indicated, there are a number of ways of receiving physiotherapy. It can be through the home care program, it can be through the hospital-based program, and it can be through the community rehab program. To suggest that every Albertan will

receive physiotherapy through the community rehab program would be, I think, an unfair surmise to put on that program. It is directed at high needs, and not everyone's needs will meet the criteria for that program.

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Speaker, we're talking about a two-year-old with CP. I think that is high needs, and I think all Albertans would agree that that's high needs.

How will the Minister of Health solve this problem, the problem that physiotherapy is being rationed out in Calgary and across this province based on your budget and not based on medical need?

1:50

MRS. McCLELLAN: Again the hon. member refers to this individual, and I have already indicated that I will review that case. I would agree with the hon. member, as I think everyone in this room would, that that is an area of high need. How it is addressed is something we need to work out with the Calgary health authority and see what plans they have in place for that.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I have to remind the hon. member one more time that physiotherapy is not considered a part of the Canada Health Act. It is not considered a part of the Canada Health Act. However, in Alberta we have placed a priority on rehabilitation and therefore have put considerable dollars towards rehabilitation. We did feel that the public dollars that go to that area should go to high needs. We are one of four provinces in Canada that fund physiotherapy, and we have made the decision to fund it through the community rehab program. I think this is a benefit to all Albertans, and I believe that every Albertan wants to ensure that the dollars we expend in health are spent in the best way.

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

### Goods and Services Tax

MR. LANGEVIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta taxpayers will be contributing millions to help the Atlantic provinces harmonize a provincial tax with the GST. It seems that because of our responsible budgeting and our financing without a provincial sales tax, Albertans are now being penalized by the feds, since we will not be receiving a similar tax break. My question today is to the Provincial Treasurer. Will you be lobbying the federal Minister of Finance to decrease the GST in Alberta?

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, the answer to that question is yes. It's funny though. The member asks the question – you know, there were dozens if not hundreds of Liberal candidates across this country in 1993 making a solemn promise to eliminate the goods and services tax. The Liberal candidates, I think one in my own constituency, promised to eliminate the GST, and what have they done? They've not only taken a 7 percent GST; they've made it into a 15 percent GST. That's the way Liberals like to deliver on their promises.

So the answer, Mr. Speaker is yes. In his meetings with the Prime Minister and clearly when First Ministers meet with the Prime Minister in June, I know the Premier will be making the request to the Prime Minister. I will have an opportunity to meet with the Minister of Finance on the 18th of June, when ministers of finance across the country meet, but the bottom line is that the billion dollars that Ottawa has to borrow – they have to borrow?

billion dollars to make this payment to three provincial governments in Atlantic Canada to help buy down the cost of the PST – I think is something that is patently unfair to the Canadians who live in Alberta.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: First supplemental, Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

MR. LANGEVIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: because it has been suggested in the past that maybe the feds may consider a cut for Albertans in the future, does the Treasurer have any information about that possibility and when it may happen?

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, when you think about a province like Newfoundland, right now they have a 7 percent goods and services tax federally and a 12 percent provincial sales tax: combined, 19 percent. Ottawa has cut a deal with Newfoundland where they're going to drop it to 15 percent. So they're effectively dropping the GST to 5 and a half percent in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Why isn't the same deal being offered by the Liberal government in Ottawa to all Canadians living across this country? No, what the Liberal government in Ottawa – and I underscore the word “Liberal” government in Ottawa – has done is drop the GST for three Atlantic Canadian provinces so that the Canadians living in those three Atlantic provinces pay a lower rate of taxation than the Canadians living in the province of Alberta. What kind of government, in the interests of fairness, would do such a thing? Well, clearly the Liberal government in Ottawa has no notion about fairness in taxation.

MR. LANGEVIN: Again to the Treasurer: what other option for tax reform could this province present to the federal Minister of Finance?

MR. DINNING: Well, the number one option, Mr. Speaker: fairness would clearly be a good place to start. We don't have fairness in the country today. Clearly they could reduce the GST . . . [interjections]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I apologize for interrupting you, Provincial Treasurer. I was unable to hear you.

I wonder if we could listen to the brief explanation by the Provincial Treasurer.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, clearly the one thing they could do is reduce the GST to 5 and a half percent in this province, like they're doing in the province of Newfoundland. They could provide the money back to Albertans. They could reduce federal income taxes that are payable in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Energy may want to comment on this as well. You know, last year the federal government took away the one preference that private investor owned utilities have in this country, and that's when they removed the public utility income tax transfer Act. Paul Martin had the guts to acknowledge that they did it because they needed the money, and it turns out now that they needed that \$170 million from Albertans so they could pay off the people living in Atlantic Canada with a promise they never should have made in the last federal election. Now we know where the federal government is taking its money, that it was provided by Albertans. Now they're giving it to the

people in Atlantic Canada. That is not fair, and we'll drive that case home to the Prime Minister.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Energy is rising on just a supplementary answer to the GST?

MRS. BLACK: Just to supplement on the GST: another example of the promise to have a fair tax system in this country, which they did not follow through on. Examples as cited by the Provincial Treasurer clearly are that western Canada is supplementing eastern Canada. We can see this in depletion allowance; we can see this is in taxation models all across this country, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Minister of Energy, two things. One, I hope that you were on the GST issue. Secondly, I was unable to hear, so I can only assume from all of the noise that perhaps you weren't on the GST. So the question is: is your supplemental on the GST, and if so, let us hear it.

MRS. BLACK: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Clearly the question on the GST was to have a fair taxation system across this country. Clearly what the federal Finance minister has done in this last move again is to add additional discrimination within the tax system. The tax system should never provide for discriminatory practices across this country. I think that was clearly explained by the Provincial Treasurer. However, I'd like to add that this is not the first time that the federal Finance minister has put discrimination into this country by asking Albertans to pay for something that they should not be paying for, like the GST harmonization program. Clearly we should not be buying into that program, and I would hope that Albertans and these people across the way would send the message to their cousins down there: no more.

#### Human Rights Legislation

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, last Thursday the Premier told us that not all Albertans are entitled to equal consideration of his government. Only those Albertans described by him as normal will get his ear. Curiously, this apparently doesn't include any of the people he appointed to his own task force to review the human rights law. It apparently doesn't include any of the volunteers in the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce, the Calgary United Way, or any of the member agencies who were part of the 75-member Coalition on Human Rights. My question is to the hon. Premier this afternoon. Precisely what is a normal Albertan, and how do you recognize one?

MR. KLEIN: Just look over there; right? Look up there. The only place you needn't look is right there. Mr. Speaker, you know, it's too bad that they are Liberals, because they would feel uncomfortable attending Conservative functions. Now, about 360 – or was it 400? – good Conservatives attended a function in honour of the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall on Friday night. I would suspect that those people who came to that function represented probably about 40 or 50 countries from around the world, came as new immigrants with a sense of pride and a sense of courage to this country to contribute. You know, Mr. Speaker, they were happy. They were all happy. They were all good Progressive Conservatives. They were happy to be Canadians. They were happy to live here. They were happy with the human rights legislation. They are happy with our multiculturalism

policies that serve to break down racism and discrimination.

**2:00**

There wasn't one person, not one person at that function who complained about or even mentioned Bill 24. What they wanted to talk about were the important things in society. Close to 400 people at this one function, one constituency, more people at this one constituency function than the Liberals got for their whole annual general meeting, and not one of them expressed concern about Bill 24. They wanted to talk about jobs. They wanted to talk about the future of this province. They wanted to talk about health and education and social welfare reform and the environment and infrastructure and all the things that make this province work and make this province beautiful.

MR. DICKSON: I'd remind the Premier that he's there to listen to over 2 million Albertans, not just the 50 colleagues who sit in the government caucus.

What message is this Premier sending to Alberta's schoolchildren, particularly those who face intolerance and racism and who look to this Premier and his government for action and for leadership?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, that was a pathetic question. That was absolutely pathetic. All you need to do is to look at this caucus.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity last night to meet again with a multicultural mosaic. On Saturday afternoon I had the honour of attending the opening of the Ismaili jamatkhana, and there were people there from all races and colours and creeds. It was a moment of celebration. Again, at that function not one single person mentioned Bill 24. They all talked about how good and how nice it is to live in this great province of ours.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Final supplemental, Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. DICKSON: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. My final question would be this then: on what basis has this Premier decided that his government is not there to serve every Albertan and that he can somehow pick and choose who he'll represent?

MR. KLEIN: We are there to serve every Albertan, Mr. Speaker. Not every Albertan obviously agrees with what we are doing. We have to satisfy the needs of the majority, and the majority of Albertans happen to believe in what we are doing.

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

### **Long-term Disability Program**

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning I read reports that indicate that 1 in 20 civil servants is off on long-term disability leave. Not only are these numbers concerning, but so is the fact that the cost to taxpayers and the government's insurance plan is about \$24 million a year. My question to the Minister of Labour: what's being done to assess the recipient's eligibility and these concerns, Mr. Minister?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, as we speak today, there are approximately 1,052 individuals who in fact are on the long-term disability program. That's not 1,052 people who've claimed in one year. Those claims go back as far as 15 years in some cases. Looking at the aspect of increased and improved health and safety

standards alone over the last few years, there have been questions as to: is there more that can be done to either prevent or in fact mitigate these claims that are coming in?

We want to make it very clear from the government's point of view, Mr. Speaker, that all persons who need this program are able to qualify for it. We want to be sure that they're adequately and properly compensated and cared for. Also, almost everybody who applies for this program does say that they would prefer to be working. So, with that, there are some initiatives in place to work with all employees to re-evaluate as time goes on and, as time goes on when they're on the particular program, to see in fact if there are possibilities for a modified return to work or in some cases full-time work.

MR. McFARLAND: Mr. Speaker, supplementary to the same minister: will the review of possibilities for people returning to work include a review of what conditions in the workplace are causing people to need stress or disability leave, including the criteria for eligibility?

MR. DAY: Actually, Mr. Speaker, in conjunction with the employer, the insurance company, and union representatives these questions are all being looked at and addressed. Right now the cost to the government of the premiums alone on an annualized basis is about \$10 million per year. The evaluation that has taken place has already shown that in the last six years – we started to notice about six years ago that the stats showed there was an increase in the number of people applying and in fact receiving the benefit, and that's in the face of enhanced and better occupational health and work safety programs.

Since a review started about two years ago, in fact that increase of people claiming has tapered off somewhat, and there has been a slight decline. So it does show that in working with people, there seems to be advantages and there seems to be also areas identified where prevention can take place and in fact an ongoing and healthy workplace environment can be maintained.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Final supplemental, Little Bow.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What programs or initiatives are available to the people making the transition back to work from a long-term absence or disability?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, right now there's a pilot project in place and working and has been for some time, and this is in conjunction with the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees. An agreed upon health facilitator has been hired. When people are making the claims, within 10 days they are contacted, and individuals sit down with them to evaluate the different forces that were at play to bring them to the place of even applying for long-term disability, and if in fact they're going to be moving in that direction, then everything is done to address the care and compensation they'll receive. In fact, also other areas may be looked at in terms of return to work. Of all cases that have been accepted over the last 15 or so years, we're finding now that the average is about four years, and people are returning to work.

So the message has gone out clearly that this is an important program. It's one in which we want to make sure that people who are truly in need are adequately cared for and compensated and others can, in fact, as it has been shown, due to their wishes, be moved back to the workplace in either a modified way or full-time employment.

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

### Solv-Ex Corporation

MR. DALLA-LONGA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Solv-Ex Corporation has not made an operating profit since its inception almost 16 years ago. Solv-Ex Corporation is currently being investigated by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, the FBI, plus its former treasurer was charged, convicted, and sent to jail for stock manipulation. All the while executives of the company make claims about its oil sands process and the support of this government to its activities. My first question is to the Energy minister. Is the government aware that the Premier's name is being used in information which promotes the company, such as an April 25, 1996, circular sent to shareholders, and are they agreeing to such disclosures?

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious situation. If, in fact, this is the case, I would expect the hon. member to hand-deliver that over to me immediately, and I will take immediate action on it.

2:10

MR. DALLA-LONGA: Mr. Speaker, I'll take her on her word on that.

My second question once again is to the minister. Why is this government risking the reputation and future investment in our oil sands by continuing to support Solv-Ex?

MRS. BLACK: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify something. The document that the hon. Member for Calgary-West filed today is a document that was filed August 15, 1990, in the United States. It, then, has a supplementary document showing some testimony that goes back and some convictions for 1992.

Clearly, what has gone on is that the company involved in this that he keeps mentioning was given permission to build a test pilot facility in the Fort McMurray area to test out a technology that they believe to be commercial. There are conditions attached to that, of course, to bring that project to the fold, and it had to go through the process of the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board for ratification, for approval.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is saying or is insinuating, which I really object to on the floor of this House, that the Alberta government is supporting a company over another company, and that is not the case. A process is in place for evaluation to develop leases within this province, and this company went through that process, the same as every other company must do. I really object to the hon. member trying to draw conclusions that this government is supporting this company or that company, because we do not get involved in that kind of arena. That is market driven. These are publicly trading companies. They have shareholders, and we are not a shareholder of this company. We do have a regulatory process that clearly must be followed by every company that makes an application for development in this province.

MR. DALLA-LONGA: That's not the message that's been given out there.

My final question is to the minister, Mr. Speaker. Would the minister confirm that someone from the Premier's office, specifically Rod Love, has been meeting personally with Solv-Ex officials?

MRS. BLACK: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is not part of my portfolio, to comment on individual meetings, but clearly I really have to say one more time that I really object to the innuendo that the government is involved in promoting corporate structures within this province. We have a process that is in place to look at the regulatory requirements for the development of the oil sands, and if anyone is putting a negative spin on oil sands development, it is clearly the Member for Calgary-West. The oil sands are the future of this province, I believe, and one of the most strategic resources in this country. For any kind of negativism to come from this hon. member I really think is detrimental to the province of Alberta.

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

### Hospital Discharges

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are to the Minister of Health, and they deal with early discharges from hospitals. When I run into people on the street that have complaints, I try to get the specifics, and we deal with them, then, as quickly as we can, but we still have some concerns that get raised in the community. As recently as last Friday morning a colleague and I met with a group of physicians, and this was their number one item on the issues that they wanted to deal with. My question to the Minister of Health is: given the concerns that have been expressed to your office about early discharges, do you have officials within your department specifically looking at what some of the concerns are that are being raised in this area?

MRS. McCLELLAN: The issue of discharge from a facility does come up periodically and particularly the question of early discharge. Mr. Speaker, I should say that there are sort of benchmarks that are really Canadian, North American, for length of stay for particular illnesses or procedures that may occur in a facility. Ultimately the question of whether a patient is discharged from a facility rests with the presiding physician or physicians, as that may be. Some experience that I have seen is that it is often up to three physicians who make the decision – or it can be more – and should be determined on the patient's condition, certainly, or what procedures they had. So there are benchmarks that are accepted by the medical community and by the institutional community, but the final decision on when a person is discharged should be and I believe generally is made by the physician.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: First supplemental, Lethbridge-West.

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister: would the proposed smart card be able to track an early discharge from, say, for an example, Lethbridge regional hospital and to then a subsequent admission in either another facility within that region or another particular region?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member is questioning as to whether it would track a readmission that might have been triggered by the discharge, we do that today. In fact, the Capital health authority just released their report, which showed that readmissions are really quite stable and have not increased in the recent time period of reporting. We do track that, and regions are co-operating in tracking between regions as well, so if a person perhaps receives treatment in an urban area, which is quite often the case, and then has to be readmitted, that tracking can occur.

No question about it, Mr. Speaker, we are working hard on improving our information systems so that we can have that data. I'm not sure that the proposed health card would have a significant effect, but it certainly wouldn't be detrimental to improving that and could be helpful.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Final supplemental, Lethbridge-West.

MR. DUNFORD: Yes. Thank you. Has the minister or have members of her department investigated the possibility of some interim step between an early discharge and the home care system? I don't want to call it a halfway house, because that has other connotations, but something similar to that particular model?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of things actually in place today. Sometimes when a person is not requiring the higher level of care that is in a full acute care hospital but still requires care that is at a higher level than might be received in home care, there are what they call subacute beds or they could be called step-down beds or they could be called recovery beds. Of course, they're much more economical than occupying a bed in a facility that is delivering high tertiary care. So those are in place. I can tell the hon. member that all of the regions are looking at using those beds better, in some cases putting them in place. The other is good discharge planning to ensure that when a person is discharged from a facility, all of those steps are taken so that they either go to that type of facility or, if they do go home, that the appropriate follow-up and home care is there for them and that there are numbers that they can call if they need help.

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

### Game Farming

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Agriculture Canada recently confirmed that a game farm elk imported into Saskatchewan was infected with transmissible spongiform encephalopathy, or TSE, a disease similar to mad cow disease in cattle. This particular animal was imported from the U.S. prior to the border being closed on elk imports, and during that time Alberta imported more elk than Saskatchewan did. That means that we can't dismiss the fact of the risk of having this disease in our game farm herds in Alberta. My first question to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development: have you checked the records of every elk imported into Alberta from the United States to see if any came from the same place or the same herd that this infected elk came from?

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

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes. Forty elk came from that same herd, and the 40 elk were destroyed when the TB epidemic came through Alberta. Therefore, we have no residual elk left in Alberta.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: First supplemental, Sherwood Park.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier promised us some time ago that he would review game farming in the province of Alberta due to the public concerns that disease

from captive animals would spread to our wildlife. I'd like to ask the minister: given the TSE issue in Saskatchewan, would he agree to that review now?

2:20

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, I think we should review a little bit of the procedure as far as game farming in Alberta is concerned. We have a genetic background on all the elk that are produced in Alberta through a tagging process, and that's firmly established. If there's a reference to the chronic waste disease that affected the animal in January in Saskatchewan, the only way to determine if indeed there is a presence of this disease, unless the disease becomes very external – and that's only in the very latter stages – is to destroy the animal. If what is being suggested is destroying the whole industry in this province of Alberta – that's the only way that you can determine whether there is an incidence of chronic waste disease with the live animals – we would oppose that. We have a complete genetic background. Scientists don't really have total agreement as to whether the chronic waste disease is genetically transmitted or indeed ingested. That is not scientifically clear, so I'm not quite certain as to what the basis of any further study would be.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Final supplemental, Sherwood Park.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll agree with the minister that there's much that we do not know about these kinds of diseases. What I'd like to ask the minister and perhaps the Minister of Environmental Protection to supplement is: until we have more facts than we have now and because of the risk or at least the knowledge that TSE and tuberculosis are out there, will the minister require game farms in Alberta to double fence their perimeters to completely protect our wildlife from this and other diseases like tuberculosis?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, we have every reason to believe that the animals that are kept in captivity or are game farmed are far safer than even the wild animals. We have no reason to believe that there's any risk with the animals that are kept in captivity. I think it's important that in the review of the chronic waste disease indeed what is happening is that there is a mutation of a prion within a gene, and this is really where it all starts. The mutation, of course, carries on in the protein. Rather than establish itself in its normal way in the growth of a gene, it goes off in a different direction.

Mutations take place in animals. Mutations take place in vegetation as well. That's a process that takes place continuously. For what reason? Scientifically we don't know. It's a prion that's gone wild. And why? Scientists really don't know. We also know that it happens not just in animals. It happens in vegetation as well. So scientifically what is it that we're going to study?

As far as the safety of the animals is concerned, we have every reason to believe that animals that are being game farmed are far safer. We know the genetic background. If the animal falls ill, we have that animal that we can deal with. In the wild we don't have that opportunity of identifying what diseases may be out there, what the incidence may be out there. There are a lot of questions that we really don't have answered in the wild that we are able to answer with a great deal of satisfaction in captivity.

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

### Grain Marketing

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over this past weekend several constituents contacted me expressing concern that they had regarding media reports over the weekend that the government was considering intervening on behalf of the barley growers who were charged with violations of federal legislation in their protest last week. I would like to ask the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development if he would confirm that indeed his department is considering intervening on behalf of these farmers?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Well, going back to November of last year, a plebiscite was held on dual marketing. At that time, a substantive majority, 66 percent of barley producers and 62 percent of wheat producers, indicated their preference for dual marketing.

We have lobbied very strongly. We have discussed with our federal minister on numerous occasions allowing Alberta farmers the opportunity and the option for dual marketing. To date we have not received that option, and farmers in Alberta are showing a fair amount of frustration. In one instance several farmers loaded their trucks and crossed the American border and contravened the Canadian Wheat Board Act or the Customs Act, whichever they were charged under.

It is the province's view that indeed we have to work together to change the law. Condoning breaking the law is something that we will not support, but in our efforts we feel very strongly that indeed we must work together to see that the law is changed to properly identify the needs of producers in this province.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: First supplemental, Medicine Hat.

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is it the intention of the government to pay for direct legal costs to offset the costs of lawyers for these farmers, these individuals?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: As I've mentioned, it is not our intention to support breaking the law. We will continue to work to have the law changed, and we will continue in conjunction with the Minister of Justice to explore ways to have the law changed and to see that the wishes of the Alberta producers are adequately met. That process is still in place. We are still working with the Department of Justice to firmly implement a process that indeed can challenge the existing Act if the federal minister is not willing to make any changes.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Final supplemental, hon. member.

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the minister indicated that he will continue to lobby and work with the federal minister, would the minister comment as to whether or not these court cases will inhibit those discussions with the federal minister?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Obviously there have been transgressions where the farmers have shown their frustrations in Manitoba in the past, and indeed there have been challenges that have come forward. I, quite frankly, can certainly understand the frustrations that the producers are going through. Indeed, they've produced a product. They've produced wheat and barley that can be marketed in eastern Canada; it can be marketed in parts of B.C. in whatever manner the producer chooses. The producers can go and obtain export permits without any problems at all. Yet if you farm in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and the Peace block of British Columbia, the Wheat Board has sole jurisdiction over

marketing of wheat and barley. That is a monopoly and indeed something that goes counter to our normal marketing process. Therefore, the farmers are showing frustration. However, we cannot condone the breaking of the law.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: That's the end of question period. The hon. Minister of Energy wishes to supplement an answer given earlier during Oral Question Period.

The Minister of Energy.

### Solv-Ex Corporation

(continued)

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to supplement the answer to the hon. Member for Calgary-West with regard to his question today. He said that he had information that Solv-Ex had published a document on April 25, 1996, that indicated that – and I'll read from the front – the Premier was quoted on page 3 as supporting the Solv-Ex project. I responded that there were innuendoes being spoken by the hon. Member for Calgary-West, and now that I have in fact received a copy of the Liberal news bulletin, I would like to set the record straight as to what this item is he's talking about and be very, very clear. I think it's absolutely unforgivable that this House has been used to indicate something that is not there at all.

In the background information to a letter to the shareholders of this particular company, they have a section called Background Information. It clearly says – and please endure this, Mr. Speaker, because I think this is very important. This is a publicly trading company. It says:

Solv-Ex's application to construct a plant to produce oil and metals/minerals on its own lease was subjected to rigorous review by the Alberta Government. It was the first company to obtain approval to build a plant under the Government's new regulations, which do not permit ground water contamination. In an April 15, 1996 interview with the Ft. McMurray Today newspaper, Alberta Premier Ralph Klein said regarding Solv-Ex and its project, "They played ball. They've played fair. I see no reason why it shouldn't go ahead on its technical and environmental merits."

2:30

Mr. Speaker, what this is saying is that there was a review process that is a regulatory review process – it's very rigid in this province – which every project must go through, and if in fact they meet the requirements, then he sees no reason why they should not go ahead. Now, the innuendo that came from Calgary-West did not indicate that, and I think it should be retracted by the Member for Calgary-West.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: We have points of order.

The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

### Point of Order Supplementary Responses

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise under *Beauchesne* 409(6), which questions the minister's relative competence. I'm doing that in relationship to what the Minister of Energy stood to speak about. I thought – and I know most of my colleagues did – that she would be speaking to clarify what the Treasurer was saying.

MR. DINNING: Oh, whine, whine, whine. [interjections]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. Provincial Treasurer, you'll



have a chance to respond to the point of order when it's your turn.

MR. MITCHELL: I want to make it clear, Mr. Speaker, that when it comes to GST, it was a Progressive Conservative government that brought in the GST. There is no doubt about that and no mention made of that.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker – and this is very significant; this is very significant – this Conservative government spent \$500,000 in an ad campaign to support that Progressive Conservative government's bid during the 1988 election campaign. Yes, they did.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Chair is compelled to stand. We're into debating the merits of the issue as opposed to the point of order, and that's why the Chair chooses to rise.

Now, I wonder if the Provincial Treasurer, who has been speaking, or if the Government House Leader wishes to respond to the point of order as opposed to the item of debate.

To the point of order, the Provincial Treasurer.

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, in responding to the leader's . . .

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: If I have cut you off unduly, I apologize.

On the point of order, not on the debate. On that understanding, hon. member.

MR. MITCHELL: I'm quite concerned, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Energy didn't clarify. The point is that this Conservative government spent \$500,000 of taxpayers' money to support the Conservative Mulroney government. The other point is . . . [interjections]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. leader, I'll be watching closely the hon. Provincial Treasurer, who I'm sure is going to stick to the point of order. That's all I'm asking you. I'm not trying to deny you debating time, but this is a point of order time, not a debate time.

Provincial Treasurer, on the point of order only.

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm referring to section 409 of 'Bowchesnee,' Parliamentary Rules and Forms, and responding to the member's purported point of order. [interjections]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. We would quote another section of *Beauchesne* on the noise.

MR. DINNING: Referring to this point of order of the Leader of the Official Opposition, who, it should be acknowledged, has just walked out of the Assembly, I simply – the question must be brief, Mr. Speaker, is the point of order I believe. I just want it to be clear not only with the question, the brevity of the question, that it was the Liberals who promised to eliminate the GST, and they have not done that. They've in fact increased the GST, and that should be acknowledged. [interjections]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. The point of order presumably is raised on the supplementary answer offered by the hon. Minister of Energy. The Chair can't possibly know, no matter how clairvoyant the Chair may appear to be, what a minister is going to say ahead of time. The Chair is quite aware that the minister's responsibility may have some limited information to

which she could add, then, to the Premier's answer. The Chair was, however, unable to hear for a period of time the Minister of Energy. There are cases where different ministers have relevant information to impart in supplementing an answer, whether it be by the Premier or by one of the other ministers. Again, answers ought to be as brief as possible and not provoke debate, nor should, of course, the points of order provoke debate.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Private Bills**  
head: **Second Reading**

**Bill Pr. 1**

**Alberta Wheat Pool Amendment Act, 1996**

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to move second reading of Bill Pr. 1, the Alberta Wheat Pool Amendment Act, 1996.

It's been through Standing Committee on Private Bills. I understand it's got unanimous consent, and I would request that all members support the second reading.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 1 read a second time]

**Bill Pr. 3**

**Evangel Bible College Act**

MR. RENNER: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Montrose I would like to move second reading of Bill Pr. 3, the Evangel Bible College Act.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 3 read a second time]

**Bill Pr. 4**

**Bethesda Bible College Act**

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill Pr. 4, Bethesda Bible College Act, which is almost the same as the previous Act just passed.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 4 read a second time]

**Bill Pr. 5**

**Farmers' Union of Alberta Amendment Act, 1996**

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to move second reading of Bill Pr. 5, the Farmers' Union of Alberta Amendment Act, 1996.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 5 read a second time]

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

**Bill 19**

**Agriculture Financial Services  
Amendment Act, 1996**

MR. PASZKOWSKI: I move third reading of Bill 19, the Agriculture Financial Services Amendment Act, 1996.

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

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to speak in the concluding session on this Bill. We've talked about it on a number of occasions before and brought out the issues that were raised. I want to start by reiterating the fact that this Bill carries a lot behind it in section 10. It adds the farm income disaster payments to the payment authorization for the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation. It provides us with a piece of legislation which now allows for Agriculture Financial Services, through its work with Alberta Agriculture, to design for farmers a program which will provide disaster payments or income stability payments, depending upon how you interpret the calculations.

**2:40**

This in essence has created quite an open-ended ability for the government to act in terms of providing support mechanisms to farmers without coming back again to get any kind of public input to this process. Mr. Speaker, I think that when we look at the farm income stability program as it's now proposed in the documents being circulated by Agriculture Financial Services, this really brings to the interest or to the attention of Albertans the real need for public debate from all participants on major pieces of legislation, major programs of the government.

This farm income stability program has been very widely discussed and negotiated with the farm sector, and the minister sought input very widely from a number of professionals. We ended up, then, with basically a program now which does probably as good a job as it could, but when you look at what it actually sets out to achieve, you have to look at it from the perspective of: was that the end result that was really acceptable to all Albertans?

As I've said in the discussion at committee stage, this Bill now provides the government with a mechanism to develop a system of income support for farmers which has very little to do with the concept of risk and risk management on the farmers' behalf. We've got a program here now that operates completely independent from other risk management procedures that are available to farmers. There's no requirement for the farm income stability program to be tied to good risk management by farmers, such as crop insurance or other forward contracting and hedging processes that are available. Mr. Speaker, these are the kinds of things that, if we are going to have these kinds of programs developed, the public has a right to have input into the formulation of so they can look at how their dollars are being used.

Most Albertans feel that there is a need for that kind of crisis support for farmers, but in the context of how this program is put together, it does provide an extremely broad capacity to provide support to a lot of farmers who, given their structure, probably don't need it. It's a matter, then, of whether or not it's going to be an effective mechanism to really help the farmer who's in a crisis situation, like the beginning farmer. Is it going to be in a position to help the farmer who has had two or three years of reduced yields, reduced revenues because of a cyclical drought pattern like we've seen in the northeastern part of Alberta? Mr. Speaker, it won't help those farmers either.

So what we've got is a program here that really needs to be reviewed again. The minister committed to a review after one year when we were in committee stage. I think in that review process is when we have to make sure there's a mechanism put in place for public input so that the Albertans who are footing the

bill for this, the taxpayers of Alberta, have a chance to say, "Yes, that's the kind of program we think we can afford to provide for farmers," or "No, it's not." When we're dealing here now with trying to support income for farmers at 70 percent of their three-year running average, then what we've got to do is look at how that compares to the equity that's created for all Albertans when we deal with income supports, either in terms of other businesses in the province or in terms of Albertans themselves when they are faced with disaster through unemployment, through disability, through misfortune, in terms of skill development. These are the kinds of criteria that we have to put in place in dealing with an equitable system for providing the farm income support mechanisms that are available through this kind of a program.

Mr. Speaker, I think we need to look at the perspective of whether or not this really does achieve the intended result. The process, when you go through the calculations, shows a real variation in the kind of support that'll go to the individual farmers. In the examples that I've been able to work through my process and my analysis, most of the benefits go to the farmers in Alberta who are structured with high equities, with low input costs, with on-farm labour supplied, and these are the farmers who in essence have the margin as calculated in this process. Basically, all is disposable income, and we're supporting the disposable income of those farmers.

On the other hand, when we get to the beginning farmer, the low-equity farmer, the low-liquidity farmer, then it's a crisis situation. What we're doing is supporting them through a part of their expenditure patterns that to them is totally not able to support their agriculture operation. We're supporting them on a part of their total revenue, their total cash flow for the year, where most of their expenditures have been put in as expenses in their farming operation, and these are not covered by this program.

So just in conclusion of my comments on this, I hope the minister, when he made the commitment in committee to review this program after a year to really see whether it provides a program which supports farmers the way this was intended, will do that and that he'll also commit to making sure that other Albertans besides the agricultural sector have a chance to participate in that input.

On that basis, Mr. Speaker, I think this is not a program that gives us what we want. It's a crisis program for this year for the farmers. When you look at what calculations are required, I don't think there are going to be very many farmers in the last year that'll qualify to be supported, even though in northeastern Alberta there were a number of them that experienced financial difficulties. So it's one of those kinds of things where we'll just have to wait and see. I guess if I had my choice, I would have done something very different, but that's what goes with being in a position where the input that we can give to this kind of program doesn't come until after it's already been made public.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 19 read a third time]

[The members indicated below moved that the following Bills be read a third time, and the motions were carried]

18	Energy Statutes Amendment Act, 1996	Magnus
17	Financial Administration Amendment Act, 1996	Day (for Dinning)

16 Economic Development and Day  
Tourism Statutes Repeal Act, 1996 (for Coutts)

**2:50 Bill 15  
Hospitals Amendment Act, 1996**

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

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to move third reading of Bill 15, the Hospitals Amendment Act.

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

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is one of a variety of Bills in health care that have come before the House, and our concerns with this Bill, as with a series of other Bills in this sequence, are the lack of significant consultation with various stakeholders, the failure to really place in the structure of these Bills a mechanism to review the various regulations and OCs that come through, and the common principle that these Bills are far more a skeleton as opposed to a structure, with the real flesh being driven by order in council and by regulation. Our concern as we see these various health care Bills come forward on a piecemeal basis is that it's very difficult, then, to get a handle on the overall structure of the health care system in this province.

This again is a Bill that we feel hasn't been adequately dealt with with regards to consumers. We have raised concerns with regards to insurance and basically the shifting of the costs of this. Certainly the hon. Member for Medicine Hat has assured us that this does not in fact simply lead to an off-loading of expenses, but again it's clear from discussions with others in the industry or with consumer groups that there is that concern. Certainly in second reading and in the committee stage we have flagged these concerns and have tried to do so on a consistent basis.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. We're now at that stage of the Bill where, you know, we've had the benefit of explanations from the member who introduced the Bill at second reading, and after introducing it, we've heard an attempt to explain the Bill further at the committee stage. But we now get to the point where members have to look at the thing on balance and determine whether this is a Bill that represents a net advantage to Albertans; not an advantage to a single industry, no matter how large or how important that industry might be, but a net advantage to individual Albertans. Those are the people that we're here to represent, whether they're part of the government caucus or attend government fund-raising dinners or not.

Mr. Speaker, I had some concerns when this Bill was first introduced, and I outlined those at second reading. I've listened attentively as the sponsor of the Bill has given his explanation and has attempted to respond to concerns and questions that have been raised. I have to say that there's still disquiet, there's still discomfort with what is going to be a very major change in the way we deal with health care costs. When we see the inevitable fallout from Bills that are passed too quickly, Bills that have an enormous impact on something as basic as insurance premiums and the way our whole tort system operates, when we see those kinds of major changes, I can't help but think: what sort of

consultation has there been with Albertans? What kind of opportunity has there been for Albertans to register their concerns? I think that on this particular Bill there simply has not been adequate input.

I talked to three lawyers last Friday who knew not a thing about this Bill, and two of the lawyers in fact do a reasonable amount of personal injury work. Now, that may say more for the inability of at least part of the profession to respond quickly to this kind of initiative, to solicit input and so on, but it does drive home the fact that we must have in this province in excess of three thousand members of the bar. A significant number of those people maybe don't do primarily personal injury work, but certainly that would be a significant part of their practice. The lawyers that I've spoken to, at least many of them, who are either personal injury specialists or at least do a significant amount of this kind of work raised concerns with this notion of going beyond where we have in the past.

I say again that we already have a system in Alberta that allows us to recover the biggest part of health care costs, and that is the subrogated claim that's typically brought by counsel for a plaintiff. That one captures the hospital costs.

In terms of what the Member for Rocky Mountain House and esteemed Minister of Environmental Protection may not appreciate, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that when we're dealing with this Bill, what in effect we're now doing is something radically different. We're now giving the Treasurer and agents of the Provincial Treasurer enormous power. This is now the power to go off and craft a formula that is going to potentially result in exposure of insurance companies to hundreds of thousands and perhaps millions of dollars in liability. This is going to be done by somebody appointed by the Provincial Treasurer. At least an appeal from some company that's dissatisfied goes to an appellate body directly under the thumb of the Provincial Treasurer. That was problematic when I first read it in the Bill; it continues to be problematic even at this stage.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that this is one of these Bills that we've had the benefit of some considerable debate on. It would make sense to me if the government gave a commitment at this time that this will not become law and will not be proclaimed for at least a period of a year. The reason I say that is that it may take that length of time for there to be the kind of opportunity that's required for input and consultation and to ensure that when we finish with this Bill, in effect we can say that Bill 14 represents a net benefit to Albertans: Albertans as consumers of health care service, Albertans as insurance premium payers, and Albertans in terms of people who have access to the courts and the litigation system to seek compensatory orders for loss directly attributable to motor vehicle accidents.

So those are the concerns with Bill 15. I think I mentioned a moment ago Bill 14, but I'm referring to Bill 15, Mr. Speaker, and want to be clear on that. I would just encourage all members to give some further thought to it. Whatever initial attractiveness there may be with this Bill I think tends to wilt rather quickly when it's subjected to the full light of day and the kind of careful scrutiny that I know all members will want to focus on Bill 15.

So with those comments I'll take my seat, indicating, however, that I will be voting against this Bill. I encourage other members to consider voting against this Bill.

Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

**3:00**

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

MR. SAPERS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The House has had an opportunity to debate Bill 15 at all of its stages. Unfortunately, there's been very little discussion coming from the government, which of course has sponsored the Bill, and this has created quite a difficulty, as you can appreciate. Several very legitimate concerns about the Bill and its impact on the health care system and on insurance premiums, for example, have been raised. There was even an amendment that was brought forward which would have made it very clear that insurance premiums, which will go up as a result of this Bill, should be segregated so that we will all know just how much of an insurance premium is now being paid in the form of a special health care tax as a result of this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, I've had an opportunity to discuss this Bill and its potential impact on the insurance-buying public with several insurance agents and brokers. Not one has disagreed with the proposition that Bill 15 will cause an increase in premiums. Likewise, not one of those agents or brokers has disagreed that perhaps the best thing to do in the public interest is to ensure that the premiums are clearly separated out so that we know exactly how much is going to be collected by insurance companies in the form of insurance premiums on behalf of the Alberta government to pay for our supposedly publicly funded health care system. Of course, the brokers and the agents are very concerned that this should happen because they know full well that their customers will come to them and say, "Why did my car insurance go up so much?" They're going to have to say, "Well, that comes to you courtesy of your government." Of course, they would like to be able to see that clearly in the Bill.

Now, as I say, that amendment, even though we proposed it and encouraged some debate, perhaps could have been improved by some input from the government side in terms of the implementation of that amendment pursuant to the calculation. Unfortunately, not only didn't we get the debate, but it was just voted down because I guess their Whips were on, and the government probably thinks that it creates perfect legislation.

Now, if the government did create perfect legislation, we probably wouldn't be dealing with Bill 15. I'll remind the Assembly that Bill 15 is an amending Bill of a previous Bill which the government also said was perfect, that they didn't need any help, and they refused to amend it or listen to the opposition's criticisms of that Bill. So we know clearly that the government can't hide behind this Bill as though it were in fact perfectly drafted. Their track record certainly wouldn't support that.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 15 will not serve the public interest. Based on that assessment, I would now like to introduce an amendment. The amendment is as follows, that

Bill 15, Hospitals Amendment Act, 1996, not be read a third time because the government has not demonstrated that consumers in Alberta will not experience insurance premium increases due to implementation of the Act.

I'll just pause for a moment while this is being circulated.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no question. We've just got the amendment, for those of you who've been following the debate. We're waiting for the copies of the amendment to be handed out. Then we'll get on with the question of the amendment and give the mover an opportunity to speak to it.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, then, on the amendment.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you. On the amendment itself. Of course,

the effect of this amendment would effectively be to bury this legislation, and that's exactly what it deserves. The Bill, as I've said, will not be in the public interest if it should be proclaimed into law.

To very quickly summarize the arguments against the Bill, Mr. Speaker, we see that this Bill will give the insurance industry an entrée into the administration of health care that perhaps needs to be more fully debated to be understood. If this Bill becomes law, we will see an increase in insurance premiums and perhaps an increase that will be directly influenced by government policy as the government decides what it will and won't insure and how much of general revenue it will or won't allocate to health care. We see that this Bill does not have within it any sense of consumer protection, that Alberta insurance buyers will not be able to know how much of their insurance premium is now actually being collected in the form of an insurance premium, that in fact it'll be a tax.

Mr. Speaker, it makes me think of the whole Alberta health care insurance plan, where it's been clearly identified by every objective review that the so-called insurance scheme in Alberta is a tax. It's a tax because you don't have the choice whether to pay it or not. It's a tax because you have to pay the same amount. It's not an insurance plan because it's not prorated, it's not group rated, it's not pool rated. It's got none of the telltale signs of an insurance program. It is in fact a tax. We're afraid that this government will now want to see automobile insurance premiums be used as a form of taxation as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, because the government has not addressed those concerns, even though we've given them every opportunity to do so, we get to this amendment at third reading, which presents the rationale for stopping this Bill cold, stopping it in its tracks. I would encourage all my colleagues in the Assembly to put aside which side of the House they sit on, to think about the merits of this amendment versus the merits of the Bill, and I would encourage them to vote for the amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to speak against this amendment. I really have to take exception to the comments made by the Member for Edmonton-Glenora when he expressed his opinion that members on this side had not spoken and answered the questions that he raised. In fact, I rose in this House on at least two if not three occasions to address the concerns and the questions of the hon. member. In every case I think I gave a reasonable and sound explanation for the logic behind this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I must reiterate one more time for the hon. member because obviously he wasn't listening when I said it at least twice before: Bill 15 in and of itself does not raise insurance costs. I've made the point on numerous occasions that I do not deny nor does anyone on this side of the House deny that Bill 46, in increasing the scope where the government will be claiming back costs as a result of the actions of wrongdoers, could in fact increase insurance costs. The amendment specifically refers to Bill 15 and says:

the government has not demonstrated that consumers in Alberta will not experience insurance premium increases due to implementation of the Act.

Well, very clearly, Mr. Speaker, I made the point on numerous occasions that Bill 15 in fact streamlines the implementation of Bill 46 and will result in decreased costs to the insurance industry

and to the government. In both respects those decreased costs will be passed on to consumers.

So obviously, Mr. Speaker, I urge all members to vote against this amendment.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has moved an amendment to Bill 15. All those in support of this amendment, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Defeated.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:10 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Abdurahman	Hanson	Nicol
Bracko	Henry	Percy
Bruseker	Hewes	Sapers
Carlson	Leibovici	Soetaert
Collingwood	Massey	Van Binsbergen
Dickson	Mitchell	White

Against the motion:

Beniuk	Friedel	McFarland
Black	Fritz	Mirosh
Brassard	Haley	Oberg
Burgener	Havelock	Paszkowski
Calahasen	Herard	Renner
Clegg	Hierath	Severtson
Day	Hlady	Shariff
Dinning	Jacques	Stelmach
Doerksen	Jonson	Taylor
Dunford	Laing	Thurber
Evans	Lund	Trynchy
Fischer	Magnus	West
Forsyth	McClellan	Woloshyn

Totals:	For - 18	Against - 39
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[Motion on amendment lost]

[Motion carried; Bill 15 read a third time]

#### **Bill 14 Health Foundations Act**

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I would move third reading of the Health Foundations Act.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The government has brought forward Bill 14 because they stated that this will allow for more charitable giving, that it will create a series of agent of the

Crown status foundations that together will be able to attract increased charitable giving to the support of health care.

Well, there are two problems with that assertion. The first problem is of course that as agent of the Crown foundations they cannot receive designated money that's being donated to them. For anybody to make the claim that these agent of the Crown status foundations will be able to direct more money into health care is an absolutely misleading claim. The fact is that to maintain your agent of the Crown status, you cannot direct where the money will go. Now, as we pointed out in debate, what this means is that if somebody wanted to give \$10,000 to one of these new foundations and in their mind believed this would in fact be money that could be directed towards cancer treatment for children, the government could turn around and take that money and use it to whatever purpose the government wanted. So you certainly can't make the claim that the purpose of these foundations will be accomplished as a direct result of this Bill, because that's not the case. If it were the case, it would violate Revenue Canada's own rules on agent of the Crown status and agent of the Crown giving.

Now, the second major problem, of course, with that previous assertion about the purpose of this Bill is that if you follow it through, what it suggests is that in fact either there is not enough charitable giving now in terms of health care or that the government is aware of many more private dollars to mine.

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

Now, Mr. Speaker, almost every hospital, every health unit, every health organization, every disease-related public charity does fund-raising, and they do very successful fund-raising. They involve thousands of Albertans as volunteers and thousands more as donors, and they raise millions and millions of dollars. Of course, this is money that's all earmarked specifically for health-related purposes. One of the major concerns I've heard about this Bill is that should it become law, these new super agent of the Crown status foundations will be competing directly head-on with every one of those existing foundations, and the very fact the government is setting these up to attract the bigger ticket, the larger donations, is what's perhaps most troubling about it.

Mr. Speaker, if you can imagine, the government is now going to be competing with, for example, the Royal Alexandra Hospitals Foundation for donors who want to give more than \$5, or this government wants to compete directly with the Cancer Society for donors who want to give more than \$5,000 or compete directly with any of the foundations which work day in and day out based entirely on volunteer labour for the most part. This government wants to sort of reach into their back pockets. They might as well be either taking the money directly out of their bank accounts or at least cherry picking from their donor list, because that's what the effect of this Bill will be.

Mr. Speaker, again we have a situation where the opposition at every stage of debate has raised a number of very, very real and legitimate concerns about the government's legislative plan. We have pointed out to the government the folly of this Bill. We've pointed out the potential for some amendment. We have been greeted with silence or the next best thing to it, with really no solid rebuttal of the issues that we've raised, just simply with a sort of smug assurance that once again we're wrong and they're right.

Mr. Speaker, we know that this government eventually admits its mistakes. In fact, the Premier has taken to be quite good at

apologizing, at saying he's sorry and admitting his mistakes. I daresay that we'll find the Premier soon enough admitting to his mistake on this Bill as well when charity after charity comes knocking on the government's door and saying: "How come you did this to us? How come you put us behind the eight ball in this way? Wasn't it bad enough what you did to us with VLTs? Wasn't it bad enough what you did to us with gaming? Now you've even done this: you've affected our ability to raise money directly from our charitable support base."

So, Mr. Speaker, Bill 14 is not good public policy. Bill 14 should not become law in this province. Consequently, at this time I would like to move the following amendment. The amendment reads that everything after the word "that" be substituted with the following:

Bill 14, the Health Foundations Act, not be read a third time because the government has not proven to Albertans that agent of the Crown health foundations will not unduly compete with and impede the ability of existing health-related foundations to raise funds and carry on their charitable activities.

Mr. Speaker, I'll pause for a moment while the amendment is being distributed.

Mr. Speaker?

3:30

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Yes, hon. member. I think we're pretty well ready now, so you can go ahead with your amendment.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, I move this amendment because in my opinion and the opinion of the opposition caucus Bill 14 does not represent the best interests of Albertans and would make poor public policy should it be proclaimed into law.

Mr. Speaker, in essence what Bill 14 does: it tends to privatize the public interest. What it does is take away the true sense of charitable giving and support for those organizations and foundations and activities that we all as individuals want to support because of our perhaps personal experiences or perhaps because of other professional affiliations, and what it does is it tries to institutionalize them, tries to take them over, is very consistent with this government. In spite of their rhetoric where this government says they want to encourage local decision-making and they want to decentralize decision-making and they want to empower local communities, in spite of all that rhetoric what we know is that every day, usually behind closed doors by way of order in council, what this government does is it centralizes and puts an iron grip over all of those things that are important in the everyday lives of Albertans. Here's another example of how this government wants to move right in, using strong-arm tactics in the whole charitable sector of this province. They want to move right in and control that aspect of charitable giving that supports health care.

Now, the biggest reason why I imagine they'd want to do this, Mr. Speaker, is because they know how badly underfunded the health care system is in this province. They know that it is nothing to be proud of that Alberta has the lowest per capita funding on public health expenses in the country, and they know that that's not acceptable to Albertans. So what they want to do is try to capture some of the private dollars. As I say, they want to privatize the public interest, they want to reach into the bank accounts of Albertans and entice their money away from them, and instead of giving it to other charities that they may have been supporting for years and years and years, they want to try to

entice a little bit of charitable giving to go right into the government coffers by giving them just a slightly better tax break.

Mr. Speaker, I think that this is hypocritical legislation. I think that it's dangerous legislation. It's bad precedent, and it should not be supported. I believe the vast majority of Albertans would not support this Bill and do not in fact support this Bill. I would ask all members of the Assembly to support this amendment so that we can dispense with this very counterproductive public policy and get on with ensuring that our health care system receives the publicly funded tax base support that it deserves and that Albertans expect their government to commit to it.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I will speak very briefly against the amendment. I'm extremely disappointed that the hon. member does not understand the language in the Bill or the intention of the Bill. I can assure the hon. member that this Bill was formulated with the regional health authorities, consultation with existing foundations in the province. I believe that when I introduced this Bill at second reading, I gave an overview of the Bill that would resolve many of the concerns the hon. member has identified again today.

I will speak to one, and that is the competition with other foundations. Mr. Speaker, it was deemed that by setting a \$5,000 lower limit for an amount that the foundations must comply with, this would in effect cause it to not compete with existing foundations.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very positive Bill. I've spoken with regional health authorities as late as Friday. Their question to me was: when will the Bill be passed? This is extremely important to them.

I think what we all want to remember is that Albertans are charitable. Albertans are proud of the health and education systems they have in this province, and they want to contribute. They want to be partners in that. This certainly gives people an opportunity to do that, as do other foundations.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has admitted in his preamble that to provide other than the direction that is in this Bill would go against federal tax legislation, yet he seems to wish us to do that. That is not possible. I could give one other reason for direction that is required. Obviously the regional health authorities have the responsibility to operate the health services in the region. It is imperative that there be direction given to purchases of capital equipment, for example, which may have very high operating costs attached to them. Certainly, that must be within the provincial plan as well as each regional health authority's plan for the delivery of services.

Mr. Speaker, the other issue that is raised from time to time is the issue of these foundations being able to direct money to others. I would like to point out, as I did earlier, that if this were not allowed, we would have places which could not benefit from this, like St. Michael's health centre in Lethbridge, the Bethany care centre in Calgary, St. Mary's health centre in Trochu, for example.

MR. SAPERS: But they've got their own foundations.

MRS. McCLELLAN: The Caritas facilities, the Grey Nuns and the Misericordia, could not benefit from this. Mr. Speaker, the chatter from across the way is that they already have foundations. The hon. member is fully aware that agent of the Crown status is different.

MR. DINNING: No, he's not, Shirley. Explain it to him; go ahead.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, the Treasurer believes that he requires an explanation. I believe that I have done that. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, agent of the Crown status donations are generally given from persons who are settling estates or for tax purposes. I believe that this government has been extremely generous in bringing forward this legislation and foregoing provincial revenue so that people can contribute to very worthwhile causes like our health foundations.

The discussions that I've had with the regional health authorities and with people who are leaders in existing foundations in this province – as I said, some as late as last Friday – is that they are totally supportive of this Bill, and they are most anxious that this Bill go forward.

I would encourage the hon. member to reconsider the hoist on this Bill and suggest to him that it is needed. It is needed because Albertans want to be a partner in health in this province. They want to support their health authorities. They want to continue to have excellence in this province, and this is complementary to existing foundations. If the hon. member could demonstrate to me that he had sat down with existing foundations and that they had written to him raising concerns with this legislation, I wish he would have given this to me. It certainly has not come forward to me. In fact, the support from existing foundations is for this Bill because they see it as complementary, not competitive.

So, Mr. Speaker, I urge all members in the Chamber to support this Bill and to pass Bill 14 today.

[Motion on amendment lost]

[Motion carried; Bill 14 read a third time]

**Bill 13**  
**Registries Statutes Amendment Act, 1996**

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

MR. SEVERTSON: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I move third reading of Bill 13, the Registries Statutes Amendment Act, 1996.

DR. PERCY: There are several issues I'd like to discuss at third reading in terms of the principle of this Bill. The first is that I'd again like to echo some of the comments that have been made by colleagues earlier that Alberta has been fortunate with the Torrens system. The Torrens system works and is in fact universally recognized as a land registry system that is second to none. It's been emulated by other countries, who have come to this province to see a land registry system that is effective, that protects property rights, that is remarkably precise if managed well in terms of ensuring that all encumbrances and liens are known and that the transfer of title is handled expeditiously.

**3:40**

As I say, one of the concerns we've had with some of the provisions in moves to registries is how it in fact affects the Torrens system and the fund that stands behind it. We've tried to articulate those both in regards to this Bill as well as the privatization of the registries themselves, because I think that the ability to ensure property rights, to ensure that all legal obligations, encumbrances are known, to ensure the expeditious transfer of title from one generation to the next or within generations are certainly requirements of any community or region that wishes to engage in business in the 20th century. We're still not completely

convinced, Mr. Speaker, that the efficacy, the efficiency of this system is going to remain intact as we continue to privatize and amend the corporate registries Act. Thus far, we seem to be in good shape.

The second point I'd like to deal with is in regards to the issue of extraprovincial registrations. It's clear that this government – and one can see this in fact with regards to Bill 21, the Financial Institutions Statutes Amendment Act – in a sense assesses regulations in terms of the value added. To the extent that an argument can be made that in other jurisdictions they're attempting to regulate the registration of firms and their jurisdictions, why ought the province then to expend resources on the margin, basically duplicating an activity taken by another jurisdiction?

While there may be merit to that argument, one also has to be concerned about the issue of accountability and the public interest within this province. Clearly that is the role of this Legislature, and to the extent that this Bill allows that to be done to a greater extent through regulation or in fact just takes as given that other jurisdictions are doing an adequate job in their own process of registration, we in fact lose a degree of accountability in this province. That is another concern. As I say, though we're willing to accept the argument that one doesn't want regulatory overlap, the trade-off against that is the mechanism of accountability. So we've had some concerns in that area, Mr. Speaker.

I guess the other issue is the issue of the accessibility of general registration certificates. Previously, these were readily available in the northern Alberta and southern Alberta offices. Now it's a far more cumbersome and expensive process which lawyers must now go through to ensure that the interests of their clients are protected. That, I think, is a drawback, when you throw up roadblocks to the ability of individuals to access these types of required documents.

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

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

MR. SEKULIC: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 13, the Registries Statutes Amendment Act. The one concern I had – and I was trying to go through *Hansard* as quickly as I could to the best of my ability to see whether the issue had been addressed in previous debates, and I couldn't identify it anywhere, so I'd just like to put it before the Assembly.

For the last 10 or 15 years I've been very involved in the nonprofit sector with many of Alberta's good volunteers, Mr. Speaker. One of the things that I remember doing on a regular basis, on an annual basis, was comprehensive returns to the provincial government outlining the structure of the organization, the membership of the board of directors. In fact, they asked for a fair bit of detail, and as a director of some of the organizations that I was a member of and sat on the board of I was never really offended or found it intrusive to be asked these kinds of questions because we in effect took on a certain degree of public trust as volunteers. Consequently you'd assume that there'd be some liability and that that liability would be to some degree quite formal. So I in fact wholeheartedly co-operated with the requirements of the Societies Act, which governs many of these nonprofits.

I'm a little concerned now with what I see. On page 28 of the Bill, section 7(2), it appears that maybe annual reports, audited financial statements no longer need to be filed on a regular and annual basis. So the filing is only required where changes in

address or membership occur. Although I do have an incredible degree of trust in by far the majority of the organizations out there, there is a concern that on occasion you have individuals in positions of trust who violate them. Clearly in the history of Alberta we've seen that, \$32 billion worth of violation of trust.

Now, for that same reason I think we have a . . .

MR. DUNFORD: Oh, Peter, that went into schools and hospitals. That's not a violation of trust.

MR. SEKULIC: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West is quite correct. That \$32 billion in total did not go just down the drain or to private enterprise. In fact a significant amount was invested in road structures . . .

MR. DINNING: It paid your salary, fat cat.

MR. SEKULIC: . . . in health and education facilities.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Treasurer assumes that I was the only person in the public sector which received benefit from taxpayers. In fact, they've been paying his salary for the last 25 years. If anybody has cost this Assembly and Albertans a large amount of money, it's the man that's chirping there out of order. So I'd hope that he'd silence himself.

MR. DINNING: Welfare.

MR. SEKULIC: The Treasurer is now yelling "welfare," that in fact it was welfare that he received. There'd be a lot of people in Alberta that would suggest that maybe he in fact was a recipient of welfare, because there was no tangible result that accrued from the work that the Treasurer did in his many years. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the momentary silence we have from the Treasurer, and I would encourage him to continue with it.

Nonetheless, I just want to point out that the Member for Lethbridge-West was quite correct. That \$32 billion didn't in its entirety go to private-sector companies, to Bovar or MagCan. It surely didn't. That was only 30 percent of the net debt, so in fact some of the moneys were reinvested into Alberta. The issue with the total amount of moneys that were reinvested: it's a question of management and process as to how they were reinvested, when, and why. Many of those questions certainly would come back to haunt and in fact do come back to haunt this government when they're pointing outwards. The problem is within, not on the outside.

Nonetheless, when we go back to the amendment that has been introduced through Bill 13, this whole issue of accountability, particularly when there is the issue of public trust, as it's reflected for our nonprofit sector, I'm not asking for more regulation or that the government would somehow be more intrusive in the area of nonprofit organizations. However, there is a degree of accountability which I think has to be formal and consistent and I guess regularly adhered to.

The provision of audited financial statements is one of those areas where in the past – like I said, the organizations that I was a member and a director of did provide all the information required of us; that was: the membership of the board of directors, where they could be located or telephoned in the event that there were issues pertaining to their organization, and also the financial status of the organization, where some of their accounts were held. The reason many of these questions were asked was because many of these organizations have casino and bingo

licences and retained eligibility for many government grants. When you see government moneys being directed to any organization, I would say that there's a significant degree of accountability required.

3:50

I know that's a requirement that I have now as an elected official, and before I arrived here, it was a requirement that I respected as someone in the volunteer sector. I guess still sitting on both sides of the fence, providing volunteer services to a number of organizations and also as an elected official, I see that this degree of accountability is not excessive, and I'm curious as to why there's now less requirement to report on the audited financial statements of organizations on an annual basis. I'm not sure whether that came as a request from the nonprofit sector; certainly, it didn't from the organizations that I was involved in. In fact, Mr. Speaker, for the organizations that I'm with – and some have in the area of 6,000 members – this area of accountability is critical for the organization's annual meetings, where in fact the board of directors reports to its membership and proves, I guess the litmus test, public accountability.

So I would just question – although I see that the majority of the Bill pertains to housekeeping and I think just the requirements that we have as a result of many changes in the system, I'm not sure where this one amendment came from, this one being section 7(2) of the Societies Act. I'd look forward to a response, if any, from the hon. sponsor.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The concern with this Bill goes right to the heart of what one might think would be the government's natural constituency, and that had to do with the small businesspeople that run the various registry offices, but more than that, the small businesspeople, the individual Albertans that now are in a position where they have to deal with registry offices. We've certainly seen that the registry offices have presented something of a mixed bag. There are some advantages in terms of convenience. Certainly I hear from constituents that appreciate in some respects that it's easier to get to a registry office because they're dispersed and they may be more geographically convenient to access or some other advantages.

But there continue to be problems in terms of uniform treatment. I can give examples, Mr. Speaker. This would be the sort of thing where in one registry office an inadequately trained counter clerk gives information to some Albertan saying that they can't get a particular government form there or gives them in fact inaccurate advice in terms of how they go about getting a particular certificate. We didn't have those problems before. Why not? Because we had civil servants doing the job and they were well trained and there was a high level of in-service training. So we were able to ensure that there was a uniform quality of service to Albertans from one end of the province to the other. Now what we've got is sort of a mixed bag. In my community if there's a whole range of registry offices, I'll scout out the ones that have the most knowledgeable staff and the best service. You know, you have to wonder then what happened to the advantage if, in fact, out of a whole range of registry offices . . . [interjection]

Now, in Calgary-Bow there are a large number of Calgarians that are anxious to be able to renew motor vehicle registration, get birth certificates, marriage certificates, that sort of thing.



What we're finding is that when the government brought in this new registry system, they told us that service wouldn't be compromised, that standards wouldn't be compromised, that people would be well trained, that it was all a question of positive advantages to Albertans. Well, as I said before, there are some advantages, and I don't deny that, but we've also got some shortcomings in the system. One might have hoped that in this Bill the government would have been as anxious to address some of the shortcomings, patch up some of those things and ensure that we have not sporadically but uniformly a high level of service from every registry office. That's not provided for in this Bill. It doesn't provide that kind of comfort, that kind of assurance.

Those are my difficulties with the Bill in addition to the more specific things that have been raised by other speakers now and at previous stages. I just wanted to summarize those concerns, indicate that the government would be well advised to take a look at how they can ensure a higher level of training and information for these operators and for the staff in these registry offices. Those are the comments I wanted to make at this point, Mr. Speaker.

Thanks very much.

[Motion carried; Bill 13 read a third time]

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

**Bill 24**  
**Individual's Rights Protection**  
**Amendment Act, 1996**

[Adjourned debate April 18: Mrs. Fritz]

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross.

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to continue debate on Bill 24, the Individual's Rights Protection Amendment Act, 1996. The area I'd like to address within the context of the Bill is the area of multiculturalism. I'd like to talk about multiculturalism for a few minutes and to clarify for the members opposite what multiculturalism means to Albertans in the 1990s. I do that, given that I had listened very carefully to the debate from the Member for Edmonton-Avonmore.

There has been a considerable shift within the area of multiculturalism in the '90s. Multiculturalism, I believe, is about cultural diversity, it's about fairness, it's about equality, and it's about protection from discrimination. Back in 1988 Albertans told the provincial government that they wanted to live in a society that allowed its citizens "to be true to themselves and their traditions" and, also, that "every citizen has the same opportunities to achieve his or her hopes and dreams." Mr. Speaker, those were noble goals, but that was nearly 10 years ago. They still are noble, and they provided a strong foundation for us to build upon.

In the 1990s those attitudes are formalized in legislation, and shortly afterward we set out to help citizens increase their awareness of Alberta's culturally diverse nature with what we refer to in the Legislature as MAP 1991. Those were the days, Mr. Speaker, of colourful festivals, of ethnic food, music, and dance from what we sometimes call the old country. Those were the days of creating awareness and appreciation.

Multiculturalism has evolved since then. The concept hasn't remained frozen in time, and the Multiculturalism Commission is committed to reflecting the shift that is occurring. In 1993, Mr. Speaker, we held meetings with more than 500 Albertans in seven

different cities across the province. We asked those Albertans where we as a government and a province needed to go in the area of multiculturalism. We looked at our programs; we measured the social, political, cultural, and economic climates; and we analyzed all the factors that contributed to Albertans and the Alberta advantage. There's no question that Albertans are aware of the different cultures. We only have to look at the numbers from Statistics Canada and at our communities – the places of worship, businesses, schools of our towns and cities – to be aware and to know that in the next 10 years half of the students enrolling in school will be of visible minorities and to predict that by the turn of the century, only four years from now, 80 percent of new entrants to Canada's workplace will be women, visible minorities, and aboriginal people.

4:00

So, Mr. Speaker, multiculturalism has evolved, and multiculturalism in government is not about cultural retention. It's not about the festivals, the ethnic food, and the music from homelands. Those things are very important, and those things have survived and even thrived, I believe, without government involvement. Multiculturalism in today's society is about much bigger, far more important issues. Today multiculturalism is part of something that's much broader. It's about education, it's about understanding, and it's about acceptance.

Long ago the Alberta Multiculturalism Commission began reflecting that change in attitude. We reacted by changing our focus toward fighting racism and discrimination. When the Multiculturalism Commission asked Albertans about racism in Review '93, we found that a significant number of Albertans still hold negative attitudes about people from different cultures and backgrounds. In the fall of that year a poll in Canada found that half of the respondents admitted to harbouring negative views of some minorities.

AN HON. MEMBER: How many?

MRS. FRITZ: Half of the respondents.

A month later *Maclean's* and CTV found that more than 25 percent of Albertans considered themselves racially intolerant. At the same time, Canada's immigration department revealed that half of Canadians harbour intolerant or openly hostile views toward immigrants.

Meanwhile, people who head up important corporations in this country were already using diversity to their advantage, and in our publication *Multiculturalism: The Next Step*, which was filed in the Legislature, the head of Canada's Royal Bank said:

Some people think multiculturalism is a real problem. To them, multiculturalism is a threat. In fact, it is one of the greatest competitive advantages we could have. Quite simply, multiculturalism is the internal globalization of Canada. And it will be one of the key factors contributing to our ability, to our sense of confidence that we can succeed in the global economy of the future.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that he was talking about what we refer to as the Alberta advantage.

The president of the Conference Board of Canada said in 1995: our workplaces and markets are rapidly becoming a microcosm of the global village, and ethnocultural diversity is increasing being viewed by forward-thinking organizations as a source of competitive advantage.

So what is our role as a government in moving people from the situation where one in four of us say that we're racially intolerant to a situation where Albertans openly welcome multiculturalism

and diversity as an advantage? I'm not talking only about the visible racism of cross burning or hate mail or accusing the ethnic minorities when things don't go your way or sectioning off some compound where you shoot any trespasser who doesn't share your beliefs. I'm also talking about the less obvious things, sometimes even subconscious thoughts, that make people think they're somehow better than anyone else just because others look or worship differently. That's racism too. That's discrimination. These are not the kinds of attitudes that are changed with cultural festivals or dances or parades. Those events are wonderful, Mr. Speaker, and they will continue without government interference. Sadly the people who openly express hostile views of immigrants or minorities won't have their minds changed by taxing them for festivals or weekend classes. I believe the government's role is to promote education, acceptance, and understanding and to focus our energy on showing all Albertans the benefits of cultural diversity to show them how it can help all of us with the Alberta advantage, and those goals, I sincerely believe, are clearly addressed in the proposed legislation.

I'd like to quote from the preamble of Bill 24:

Whereas it is recognized in Alberta as a fundamental principle and as a matter of public policy that all Albertans should share in an awareness and appreciation of the diverse racial and cultural composition of society and that the richness of life in Alberta is enhanced by sharing that diversity.

That, as I said, Mr. Speaker, is contained within the preamble. "Share in an awareness and appreciation of the . . . racial and cultural composition of society:" that is the acceptance and understanding that I am referring to.

Another section of that preamble reads:

As a matter of public policy that all persons are equal in: dignity, rights and responsibilities without regard to race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, physical disability.

Bill 24 also recognizes all discrimination is wrong, regardless of whether it is against a particular gender, religion, or cultural background, and all Albertans are affected by issues of equity and fairness, not only visible minorities and not only people with different religions but all of us.

Education means the prevention of discrimination and racism, and education is one of the key components of Bill 24. The Bill's focus on prevention along with its education fund means a commitment – and I believe it's a serious commitment – to fighting racism and discrimination, and we have the experience and track record to make that happen.

For example, Mr. Speaker, the youth symposium last year, 1995, Building Tomorrow Today. We built a partnership with the Calgary boards of education, the various immigrant aid organizations, the parent school councils, the Boys and Girls Clubs, and with our young people. That symposium focused on youth, racism, and the experience of young people in schools, the experience of being singled out by teachers or ostracized by fellow students or of just being tolerated, not accepted or understood. Young people themselves identified the need for more education to learn about how to use conflict resolution and the importance of antiracism training for teachers.

Managing Diversity includes a weeklong summer school for business, government, education, social services, and private consultants who learn to live and work in culturally diverse environments. The summer school is the only one of its kind in Canada. It attracts more than a hundred professionals from across Canada to Calgary for a week of skill development, and this year is its 10th anniversary.

Symposium is a one-day session on cultural diversity for leaders

and managers from the private and public sectors. This past year, Mr. Speaker, it was led by the Hon. Murray Smith, minister of economic development, and Jeff Lipton, who is the president of Nova Corporation and a man committed to bringing diversity to the corporate world.

Another program is the cultural ambassadors/youth cultural ambassadors, which is referred to as YCAT, a program which helps our ethnocultural groups build bridges between their communities and Alberta society and helps all people understand and appreciate diversity.

Avalon is a simulation-based training program developed in partnership with the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board and is used as an orientation for the board and its staff, as well as a number of other school and youth programs such as diversity in school and society, school diversity projects, collaborative ventures, and so on.

[Mr. Herard in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker, there's a very long list of educational programs which I could continue to refer to and a large number of partners across the province of Alberta that also contribute to these programs, which are, as I said, very important in regards to the area of education. I believe that all of these programs speak to what we refer to as our new goals for the multiculturalism area; that is, education, understanding, and acceptance. Bill 24 reaffirms our commitment as a government to fairness and protection from discrimination. Discrimination against someone because of their cultural background or religious beliefs is no better or worse than discriminating because of their gender, and we believe that it's all wrong. Bill 24 acknowledges that education is the most effective way to combat all kinds of discrimination, and education is one of the major components of this new legislation.

#### 4:10

Section 16 of the new Act reads:

It is the function of the Commission . . . to promote awareness and appreciation of the racial and cultural diversity of Alberta society,

and further,

to promote an environment in which all Albertans can participate in and contribute to the cultural, social, economic and political life of Alberta.

It goes on, Mr. Speaker, to say that research, development, and conduction of educational programs are "designed to eliminate discriminatory practices." This reflects the work of the commission, the objectives of the Multiculturalism Act, and reaffirms this government's commitment to move forward with programs much like those that I have just described.

The education fund of over \$1 million will provide the new commission with the resources required to carry out these programs which help Albertans to understand and appreciate cultural diversity and to carry out programs which will continue to move to eliminate racism and discrimination. When we are successful at achieving that, I believe we will have achieved what Albertans agreed to even back in 1988, and that is to be true to themselves and their traditions and also to ensure that every citizen has the same opportunity to achieve his or her hopes and dreams without racial or cultural prejudice.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I would like to ask that the Assembly support Bill 24. Thank you.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, in answer to the Member for Calgary-Cross's plea at the end of her remarks, I want to make it very clear that we do not support Bill 24 on this side of the House, and we do not for a number of very significant reasons. In fact, I'd like to say that some of those reasons were . . . [interjections] Would the Treasurer like to speak to this Bill? Would he like to speak to it? Because he's truly making a fool of himself over and over again.

#### **Speaker's Ruling Decorum**

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Hon. members, we all recognize that the rules that have been established in this House are there to try and get some progress in debate, so I'd appreciate it if you would allow the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition to speak to the Bill.

MR. MITCHELL: He's being very childish, Mr. Speaker, the Treasurer is, and we're a little bit worried about his stability.

#### **Debate Continued**

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, we are opposed to Bill 24, and I'll tell why we are for a variety of very significant reasons, some of which were argued by the Member for Calgary-Cross. In fact, there were moments throughout her speech where I actually thought that her conclusion would be that she had to vote against Bill 24. She outlined a series of concerns which support our position, which is that we should be arguing against and voting against Bill 24.

Something's occurring in this province, Mr. Speaker, and it's something that I am detecting more and more every day as I cross this province and as I listen to Albertans. They are beginning to understand that they have a government that has become very mean. It has become very mean spirited. It has become very, very punitive. We are losing something in this province as a result of this government's, quote, unquote, leadership. They are beginning to reduce a sense of community, they exude a reduction in sense of community, and they are beginning to disregard blatantly a range of values that define Albertans in ways that this government has long since forgotten.

Yes, we have to be concerned about bottom lines and balancing budgets. If only this government had been concerned about those and this Treasurer for the last nine years when he voted so adamantly and aggressively for deficit budgets, but the fact is that Albertans do not define themselves simply and solely on the basis of bottom lines and financial perspectives. We have a sense of community and we have a sense of values which we have shared in this province to build the communities in this province, and that, Mr. Speaker, is not reflected by this government.

How do we know? Look at the meanness. Look at the mean spiritedness. Look at the punitiveness. The first thing they do is identify a problem. The next thing they do is identify somebody to blame for that problem.

DR. TAYLOR: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat rising on a point of order.

#### **Point of Order Abusive Language**

DR. TAYLOR: Yes, inflammatory language. Certainly the

Member for Calgary-Cross is not mean and not mean spirited, and I would certainly object to that and call on the member to humbly apologize to the Member for Calgary-Cross for calling her mean spirited.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: On the point of order.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that this government identifies a problem and then identifies somebody to blame.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: On the point of order.

MR. MITCHELL: I'm not talking to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. You can rule on it. Go ahead. I want to speak.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Leader of the Opposition knows full well that if you in fact use language that is abusive and insulting and likely to create a disturbance, then you have what you've got now. So I would suggest that perhaps you stick to the Bill, if you wouldn't mind.

Thank you.

#### **Debate Continued**

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, how often have we heard them say that the problem in the health care system is all those people who abuse the health care system? Of course they can't prove that there are people abusing the health care system, and not one of their initiatives has done anything to reduce this purported abuse. How often do we hear them say that teachers – that's a good, identifiable group – that there's something wrong with the teachers, that they're to blame for the quality of our education? Oh, we can appreciate. All we can see on this side of the House is the energy the teachers put in to supporting our children for their futures. How often do we hear that the problem is all of those people out there who don't want to work, but how many people do we ever meet who don't want to work?

DR. TAYLOR: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat is rising on a point of order.

#### **Point of Order Relevance**

DR. TAYLOR: *Beauchesne* 459, relevance. He's talking about health care. He's talking about education. We're talking about Bill 24 here; are we not, Mr. Speaker? Health care and education and what he's talking about are totally irrelevant to the Bill here.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: On the point of order.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, in this Bill we now see them focusing on yet another set of people in this province, several sets of people in this province to say that they must somehow be responsible.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Is this on the point of order, hon. member?

MR. MITCHELL: No. I'm not responding. You rule on it and let me get speaking.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Well, hon. members, far be it for me to try to interfere with any kind of debate, but in this case I think that we are in fact straying far afield. In fact, I believe that the tone and nature are in fact going to create disorder, and I would ask the hon. member to please speak to the Bill.

#### Debate Continued

MR. MITCHELL: This Bill, Mr. Speaker, as I just said, goes on to focus on three other sets of people, minimally, to blame them somehow or to hold them responsible or to be punitive towards them. These three sets are: well, generally people in this province, practically everybody in this province who has a huge stake in human rights; secondly, women, who lose significantly under this legislation; and thirdly, those people who uphold, depend upon, and sustain the value of multiculturalism in this province. I'm going to talk about how this Bill does diminish each of those groups of people, yet again indicating and underlining simply how this government operates: gotta blame somebody; we gotta use these arguments, this blame to justify some agenda. And they are losing their regard for people in this province.

Human rights, Mr. Speaker. Let's talk about what this government does to the Human Rights Commission. Well, they had the chance to implement 75 recommendations from a blue-ribbon committee set up, appointed by this government, a blue-ribbon committee called the equal in dignity committee. That committee recommended 75 separate recommendations that would have strengthened this unanimously, that would have strengthened this particular piece of legislation significantly. In fact, what the government has done is implement only 47 of those without significant changes and has left out many of the most significant alterations and improvements to the Human Rights Commission. In fact, they have gone one step further, and they have taken initiatives to weaken the Human Rights Commission. So now a complaint may be determined to be an offence that is frivolous and vexatious. How much will that be off-putting to people who have claims but who aren't influential, who feel insignificant or feel insecure in our society for whatever reason and who will be far, far less inclined to bring something to the Human Rights Commission?

4:20

The minister gets more power. The minister will be able to appoint. The minister will be able to determine how much the members of the Human Rights Commission are paid. The minister will now get more money under this new education fund in order to allocate as he sees fit or as she sees fit. The fact is that no matter what members like the Member for Calgary-Cross or the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat want to say, this Bill significantly reduces the power, the authority, the ability for the Human Rights Commission to operate effectively. Not only that, Mr. Speaker, but they lost the opportunity to enhance the role of the Human Rights Commission to provide better support, to provide better protection against big government in this province.

[The Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

The second group, Mr. Speaker, that they have affronted in this Bill is women. Women experience issues in this province differently than men do. They bear the brunt of certain issues in this province more significantly than men do, such as poverty, among many other such issues. This particular legislation does away with, abolishes the women's secretariat, which served an

important role, a number of important roles, one of which was to review government legislation to make sure that there wasn't bias, to make sure that there was fairness in that legislation for women in this province. The fact is that this Bill does away with that secretariat and therefore does away with an important support mechanism, a function within government that assisted women in dealing with issues which affect them more aggressively and differently than they affect men.

Mr. Speaker, the other and third group of people that are affronted by this legislation are those people in our multicultural communities and those other Albertans – and they are most of them – who value multiculturalism on many, many important levels. I want to tell you what multiculturalism means to me, means to my family, I believe means to the people of this province. It has provided richness to the people of this province, not just financial richness but a richness that goes beyond financial. It has brought to this province people from across the world. They bring their cultures, their music, their dance, their perspectives on the world, their family life, their appreciation of education, their desire to contribute to this place. They bring that to this province and to this country, and it is one of the reasons that this province has been special. [interjection] This is harassment. I'm getting tired of it. I'd like you to do something about it.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat is rising on a point of order?

#### Point of Order Questioning a Member

DR. TAYLOR: No. I'm just wondering if the little fellow will take a question.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no one by that name here.

DR. TAYLOR: Oh, the Leader of the Opposition. Would the Leader of the Opposition take a question?

#### Debate Continued

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, multiculturalism has brought a great deal to this province, both in a sense of what we are as a people and how we view the rest of the world. I think of my three sons, and I think of their opportunity to get an impression and an insight into the world, many different parts of the world, many different cultures, many different religions, without having to leave this province in order to do it. This lends a tremendous stature to this province.

It's also true that multiculturalism has been at the basis of some very important economic competitive advantages that we have. The Member for Calgary-Cross already outlined that.

DR. TAYLOR: Do you think that just happened since human rights legislation, Grant?

MR. MITCHELL: Well, the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat should perhaps read this legislation and understand, Mr. Speaker, that in fact this piece of legislation abolishes the Multiculturalism Act in this province. He doesn't seem to understand that, a frightening prospect.

He should also read the Alberta International Trade Review of 1994, which underlines that now Alberta trades with 150 countries and exports \$25 billion worth of goods and services across the

world. This doesn't happen by mistake, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't happen as a coincidence. It has happened in part and perhaps in large part because of our multicultural nature in this province.

The fact is that due to the variety of cultural groups that have chosen to bring their skills, their capabilities, their education, their entrepreneurship to this province, we have windows on parts of the world that other parts of the world can only imagine, can only envy. Just the other night I was speaking at the Indo-Canadian Chamber of Commerce. It was remarkable to talk with those people and to listen to those people, Mr. Speaker, and understand the various parts of the world that they had come from, not just India, not just Pakistan, but East Africa, many different parts of the world, and realize the breadth of their economic enterprise within Alberta, with its implications outside of Alberta, bringing wealth and jobs and economic development to this province.

Mr. Speaker, this has happened in part because we have been a province that has demonstrated respect for multiculturalism. The Member for Calgary-Cross is exactly right: multiculturalism isn't just dancing and it isn't just food and it isn't just a variety of religions. It is those things, but it is many other things. It is certainly a focus on decreasing intolerance and on elevating acceptance between and amongst people in this province and the people of our society and our communities. It is also very much economic.

If you were to set out to underline our belief in multiculturalism, if the government were to set out to strengthen its belief and evidence of its belief in multiculturalism, it would seem to me that the last thing you would do is abolish a piece of legislation that very clearly outlines exactly what we would value in multiculturalism.

The objectives of the Multiculturalism Act, which is going to be abolished – and I read these for the Member for Calgary-McCall; I think he'd be very interested to understand what he does when he stands up and votes for Bill 24 – are as follows: “to encourage respect for the multicultural heritage of Alberta.” Why would we want to abolish that particular objective, Mr. Speaker? Why would Calgary-Cross think that that would serve to reduce intolerance and promote acceptance, as she has indicated is still a problem in this province?

Secondly, “to promote an awareness and understanding of the multicultural heritage of Alberta.” Why would we want to do away with that statement in legislation, enshrined in legislation to give it strength and to give it resilience and to give it place in this Legislature and in this province?

To foster an environment in which all Albertans can participate in and contribute to the cultural, social, economic and political life of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, why is that so devastating to this government that they would want to abolish it and repeal it from this piece of legislation?

“To encourage all sectors of Alberta's society to provide access to services and equality of opportunity.” I ask this government the question: what is it that's so frightening to them, so disconcerting to them that they would want to do away with that statement of a value that is upheld by people across this province? There is no answer to that rhetorical question, Mr. Speaker, because they can't answer it. They want to have the best of both worlds. Calgary-Cross wants to get up and say: yes, we have these problems.

4:30

MRS. FRITZ: Mr. Speaker, point of order.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross rising on a point of order.

**Point of Order  
Imputing Motives**

MRS. FRITZ: Yes, and it's *Beauchesne* whatever. The Leader of the Opposition said that some of what was read, Mr. Speaker, is not contained within the new Bill, and it is under section 16.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member . . .

MRS. FRITZ: In particular, one that he had read was: promotion of the “environment in which all Albertans can participate.”

Yes?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I'm trying to understand what it is you're objecting to. If it is an objection to the line of debate, you have an opportunity, presumably – oh, you've already spoken – in committee and in third reading to speak to that. If it is something else, then you'd have to share it with us.

MRS. FRITZ: Mr. Speaker, you're asking me, then, which Standing Order it was under?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: That's what I was going to ask you, yes.

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's 23(b).

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Do you wish to speak to the point of order?

MR. MITCHELL: No, I don't, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Okay.

MRS. FRITZ: Can I explain it, Mr. Speaker?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: This is the one that requests relevance. I think I've been more than generous to the hon. member when you get up and it's not clear what your point of order is, but now that you have addressed it as “speaks to matters other than the question under discussion,” what you're saying is that he was speaking to matters other than under discussion. I certainly can't tell from the context of the speech that I've heard that it isn't relevant. He's been speaking about that which is being repealed, which surely is an action of this Bill that's before us. Do you think there's something else in there that I've missed?

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I may need your assistance with this then. The point of order that I'm looking for may be contained under (i), because I clearly heard the member of the opposition state that I had indicated in my speech that section 16,

to promote an environment in which all Albertans can participate in and contribute to the cultural, social, economic and political life of Alberta,

had transcended the Multiculturalism Act which he indicated was not under section 16 of the new Bill, and it is. He read that, so I took that as meaning, I guess, (i) then, false motives. I guess just clarification, to say it is there under section 16.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Sure. We now have the point of

order changing a little bit to "imputes false or unavowed motives to another member." Presumably you're saying the hon. member has imputed an unavowed motive to yourself?

MRS. FRITZ: Well, it's factually flawed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think maybe we've spent enough time. When you've got it all together, then you might rise again.

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you. I think it's clear.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Meanwhile, do you wish to speak to either or any of those points of order?

MR. MITCHELL: I know that the Member for Calgary-Cross is very, very sensitive about what she said on this Bill, Mr. Speaker, because she's contradicting herself. She on the one hand argues that we have problems that would be supported by defeating this Bill, and then turns around and says that she's going to support the Bill.

The fact is that what she said makes absolutely no sense. Section 16 doesn't refer to multiculturalism. I'm talking about multiculturalism, and I'm talking about the values that are outlined in the Multiculturalism Act that she and her government are repealing, Mr. Speaker. If she's sensitive about that, she should vote with us and defeat Bill 24.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Maybe I'll speak to the various points of order. On the matter of 23(b) the Chair has already indicated that within the context of what he was hearing, the hon. member was indeed addressing something in this Bill that's being repealed, so therefore it's legitimately a part of the debate.

With regard to the second point on which the point of order was offered, "imputes false or unavowed motives to another member," the Chair did not get the connection. However, at the time that the hon. member was speaking and suggesting that certain members, naming them or naming them by constituency, are going to support or not support or whatever, you're then getting into the unavowed motives. So if that's what you're trying to get at, then maybe there is something there.

With those constraints hopefully the hon. member may finish his debate.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, surely I can refer to a member's statement in this House and that's not provocative. That's exactly what I'm doing, and if she doesn't like it, then she's got a problem with that. She should vote with us.

#### Debate Continued

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, my point is, so that she understands and so that other members understand, that this government is repealing this very important statement of values supporting multiculturalism in this province, and that has the consequence of diminishing multiculturalism in this province. Multiculturalism is far too important to the people of this province, for the future of this province to be diminished in such a frivolous way.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that multiculturalism makes us all stronger, richer at a cultural level because it brings in so many different cultures, so much insight into the world. It gives my children, children across this province the chance to understand different cultures, different perspectives, different views of the world right here in their own communities. That is a priceless,

priceless asset that at the very least can be supported by its own piece of legislation and should be.

Secondly, multiculturalism has been a tremendous economic competitive advantage for this province and this country, and the Member for Calgary-Cross made that argument specifically. At a time that we are facing a much more competitive global economy, why would it be that we would want to diminish the emphasis that we put on multiculturalism in this province? Multiculturalism has attracted people, made people from the around the world feel comfortable here, and that has given us and them windows on the world economically that we could hardly otherwise have imagined achieving, Mr. Speaker.

Before this government votes too hastily to do away with this focus on multiculturalism in a legislated way, they should be very careful to assess the tremendous economic impact that multiculturalism and our ethnic diversity has had on the economy of this province. If they don't want to believe what's been said in this Legislature about that, why don't they read their own Alberta International Trade Review 1994, where it states very clearly the huge impact of international trade on this province? We can only conclude that that is sustained, supported, enhanced by the variety of people from around the world who have chosen to come here, to raise their families here, and to commit their entrepreneurship and their investment within this province.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very, very bad piece of legislation. This is a piece of legislation that draws the line right here between government and opposition. This is a piece of legislation that outlines very clearly what their values are and where they come from – and it is not a very pleasant place – and it outlines very clearly what our values are and where we come from in resisting and in voting against this legislation.

We come from a set of values that says that community is important, that you respect other people for what they are, that you work with people, build on their strengths, bring them together, inspire their goodness to solve problems and to realize opportunities. Ours is a set of values that says that culture and multiculturalism are essentially important to the quality of people's lives, to their richness, not just financial, a richness and a depth in our lives.

If anything will measure the quality of a society and the quality of a place like Alberta, it is in large part going to be characterized by how we treat other people, by how we demonstrate our respect for other people, for how we demonstrate dignity and decency in the way that we relate to other people. Multiculturalism, human rights, a women's secretariat that has supported women in their issues in this province are all essential elements of how that measurement will be measured, Mr. Speaker.

I feel very, very badly when I look at this government and it wants to bring in this piece of legislation. I feel badly for the people of this province because this piece of legislation diminishes – diminishes – the way that we will demonstrate our respect and the dignity with which we will treat and demonstrate our treatment of other people. Mr. Speaker, this isn't just another Bill. This is a Bill about values. It's a Bill about how we build our communities. What we see over there is a government that is very mean, very mean spirited, very quick to pick on other people. We are voting against this piece of legislation because this is a bad, bad piece of legislation.

4:40

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Chair would understand that the bell has gone?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Yes.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Community Development has moved second reading of Bill 24, Individual's Rights Protection Amendment Act, 1996. Does the Assembly agree to the motion for second reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:41 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Black	Havelock	Oberg
Brassard	Herard	Paszkowski
Burgener	Hierath	Renner
Calahasen	Hlady	Severtson
Clegg	Jacques	Shariff
Doerksen	Jonson	Smith
Dunford	Laing	Stelmach
Fischer	Lund	Taylor
Forsyth	Magnus	Trynchy
Friedel	McClellan	West
Fritz	McFarland	Woloshyn
Haley		

Against the motion:

Beniuk	Henry	Sapers
Bracko	Hewes	Sekulic
Bruseker	Leibovici	Soetaert
Carlson	Massey	Van Binsbergen
Collingwood	Mitchell	White
Dickson	Nicol	Wickman
Hanson	Percy	Zwozdesky

Totals:	For - 34	Against - 21
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[Motion carried; Bill 24 read a second time]

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

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I'd like to call the committee to order.

### Bill 6 Gaming and Liquor Act

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We've been going through a lot of amendments from the Member for St. Albert, and we're down to A12. I think the Member for St. Albert has agreed to combine numbers - well, in your paper N, O, and P. I think that's where we are now. Hon. Member for St. Albert, is that correct?

MR. BRACKO: Did we vote on this, Mr. Chairman?

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Our records show that we have not voted on this.

MR. BRACKO: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Speaking to A12, which deals with the Standing Committee on Law and Regulations examining any proposed regulations to ensure that they're consistent with what the government should be doing, again we look at it, and this is one committee that should be utilized, one committee it's important we have. The chairman from Calgary-Shaw has not called a meeting. The Legislative Assembly has not called a meeting. This is needed to make sure that we scrutinize the rules, the regulations. You know, all the Premier would have to do is make sure this happens. He doesn't. Clearly, they want to keep secrecy still as their number one priority. Secrecy: keeping Albertans from knowing what is happening. We should be looking at what is appropriate for all Albertans, for our citizens, knowing that what happens now influences not only the present but the future. We saw what happened back in '86 when we didn't have scrutiny of the budget: the deficit and so on. This is a step forward, a step into the 21st century, that it be scrutinized, looked at from both sides of the House so we have the best possible legislation that can take place on this issue.

We looked further at publishing it in the *Alberta Gazette*, one important area where this should happen. Everyone who's involved in this industry, the liquor industry, whether it's the retailers, the wholesalers, the other of the big seven groups involved in alcohol, should have this information through the *Alberta Gazette* at their fingertips so that they know what the new rules and regulations are and they can plan ahead for the future. Most companies now that are going to be around and efficient and make a profit in the future will definitely need to have a business plan that looks not just two or three years but five and 10, 15 years down the road. So they need to follow the legislation, need to follow the rules and regulations that should be changed.

**5:00**

We saw what happened with Safeway. They were allowed to put up signs one day. The next day they were not allowed to do it. The regulations were not given in the *Alberta Gazette* like they should have been, and they had to find out the hard way through other members of the association in southern Alberta. Now, this should not happen. There should be no need for this type of inconvenience, this unorganized type of a situation whereby they have to find out from members of their organization instead of through the government, who should be responsible to all Albertans, responsible to business so they can carry on. These rules, regulations should be printed in the *Alberta Gazette*.

Also, they can look at any rules, regulations and see if they are in the best interests of all Albertans, Mr. Chairman, whether it's urban Alberta, rural Alberta, see how it affects each side and different things. There's always a consequence to any regulations. There's a positive and a negative. Someone's always affected one way or the other way. Do the positives outweigh the negatives?

Another example in the regulations that should be looked at: is there fairness? There should be fairness for all Albertans, whether you live in High Level, Manyberries, St. Albert, Alberta, fairness that takes place, that's looked at. This is one means of doing it, by taking it to the committee on rules and regulations, so each member will have their input, so each member is able to stand up to their constituent and say: "Yes, I looked at that. Yes,

we had our input.” Now we can't. I have to go back to St. Albert and say, “No, we don't have input on the rules and regulations, because it's done in secret. It's done by an order in council and not referred back to the standing committee.” It is shameful for all Albertans to have to be subjugated to this type of process. You can move forward. You can go forward on this. Move ahead. Put it on computer also so that everyone knows, so we can move forward. We can look after Alberta.

This is where, as we move, we are against more competition all the time from different liquor industries around the world, whether it be from the Orient, from south of the border, whether it be from Europe. We have this type of competition, and we have to know where we're going. It's important that businesses know the direction that they need to go, that the next generations coming up have a trust in the integrity and honesty of government, that they will have their interests in mind as they move into the workforce and into business and into commerce.

Mr. Chairman, it's very shortsighted not being able to have this, not having the Committee on Law and Regulations meeting and taking part. That's why members are elected here. It's in the best interests of their constituents and all Albertans. It's needed. We should have had it a long time ago. We will continue this path. We'll continue pressing for this until we get it. It won't be long. This has to become a priority. We can do the right thing now: support these amendments; move forward. Or we can continue to take two or three steps backwards to the detriment of all Albertans.

I know other members of my caucus will want to speak to this, and I will pause at this time and allow them to do so.

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

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Speaking in favour of the amendment, the chairman and members of the Assembly will know that this amendment is one that we have put forward many times in this Legislative Assembly in an attempt to have the government recognize that for the people of Alberta, the issues that the government chooses to deal with behind closed doors by virtue of order in council are in fact issues that should be dealt with through this Legislative Assembly as substantive legislation, or if we fall short of that goal, then they must at least have the proper vetting and proper public input through the all-party committee of this Legislature on regulations.

One of the things this Bill does, Mr. Chairman, perhaps as much if not more than most other Bills in this Legislature, is that it indicates and identifies the fact that there is so much substantive legislation that would normally come through a Bill that is now not coming through a Bill but is being left to the Lieutenant Governor in Council to do by order in council. This of course, as you know, continues the pattern of this government that it is essentially eviscerating legislation, building skeletons around the legislation, and then leaving the balance of the substantive legislation to orders in council. It is a disturbing and growing trend in this province.

The one mechanism to bring some balance to that – not that I condone the fact that issues of substantive legislation should be left to the Lieutenant Governor in Council by order in council, but at the very least the issues that are left to regulation should be vetted and debated and discussed through the Standing Committee on Law and Regulations. That committee has the right to see draft regulations so that they can see how they fit with the

substantive legislation.

I'll give you an example of what I see in part 6 in section 126 of Bill 6, which is the section that allows the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations. I'm going to point specifically to section 126(1)(w). What that says is that the Lieutenant Governor in Council under the authority of this legislation can make rules regarding

licensed premises and facilities, including the persons who may be on licensed premises or facilities, the food service at licensed premises or facilities and activities that may be carried on in or near licensed premises or facilities.

Now, Mr. Chairman, as I read that particular section, that says to me that that is substantive legislation.

The role of the Lieutenant Governor in Council in passing regulations in this history of this province has been to identify the forms that would go with a particular piece of legislation, that would deal with some of the ancillary or administrative matters of legislation. They did not until this government came along deal with the substantive issues.

Now, what does that tell you, Mr. Chairman? That tells you that this government is saying that in the name of efficiency and streamlining we are going to take away the role of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta and we are going to give it to the Lieutenant Governor in Council to do behind closed doors. I don't recall that that was the mandate of this government when the election in June of 1993 occurred, that they were going to eviscerate and take away the powers of the Legislative Assembly, but this is one more example of how this government is continuing to do that.

Section after section after section of section 126 of Bill 6, which is the section that allows the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations, deals specifically with substantive and important issues that ought to be entrenched in legislation. The loosey-goosey approach that the government takes to very substantive and very important issues is illustrated throughout this section.

I look at section 126(1)(a). Now, normally in a piece of legislation there are definitions that will form part of the legislation in order to clarify the intent of this Assembly as to what it's attempting to accomplish by virtue of that section of the legislation. This section says:

The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations

(a) defining . . . words and phrases that are not defined in the Act.

Well, why the heck aren't they defined in the Act? You have some definitions in this Act. Where are the rest of the definitions? If we don't get the benefit of the debate of those definitions in Committee of the Whole, which is where we are right now, then bring it to the Committee on Law and Regulations so we can have the debate there. Why the big secret, hon. government members? Now we have to have secret definitions that will come through the *Alberta Gazette* at some point because you don't want those definitions to see the light of day.

I mean, look at the definitions that we've got right now. I mean, we've got a definition in this Act that's “gaming supplies.”

“Gaming supplies” means supplies, equipment and devices designed to be used in a gaming activity, but does not include . . . things specified in the regulations.

Some definition. Why isn't it defined properly, and why is it being left to the Lieutenant Governor in Council to define words and phrases that are not defined in the Act? If they'd get their act together, as it were, the definitions would be in the Act, and we would be having that debate today, but no, no, the government has to go behind closed doors for substantive issues that ought to be in regulations.



5:10

I look at (b): "specifying, for the purposes of the definition of gaming supplies . . . things that are not gaming supplies." Well, put it in the definition. This is not rocket science, hon. members. You have lots of definitions in lots of pieces of legislation that say, "includes or does not include," and it forms part of the definition.

We go on and on and on with these kinds of provisions that are in section 126. Mr. Chairman, I'm going to close my comments with looking at section 126(2).

Regulations under this section may apply generally or to a specific licensee or registrant, specific licensed premises or a specific licensed facility or a specific circumstance or situation.

So now the government is going to bring in regulations that they're going to decide apply to some Albertans and don't apply to other Albertans. Mr. Chairman, I'd suggest to you that if you own a licensed facility in this province, you'd better make a daily habit of reading the regulations in the *Gazette* to see whether or not the government has decided that you are part of the regulation or you're not part of the regulation.

How in the world the government is going to do that is beyond me, unless they're prepared to stand and admit that it will all just be part of the regular old pork barrel politics of this government. Why else would they put that provision in there that is fundamental to legislation in this province of Alberta, that they're going to be selective in whom the regulations apply to? That's unheard of. It's unheard of, Mr. Chairman, that the government is moving forward with this kind of provision. They entrench it in legislation and say it's up to the Lieutenant Governor in Council to decide who is anointed and who is not in the province of Alberta. Unbelievable as it seems, it is entirely consistent with this government's selective and exclusive approach to the way it deals with and legislates and regulates for the people of Alberta, entirely consistent.

Mr. Chairman, I know that there are going to be many more comments about this particular amendment, but at this point I would move that we adjourn debate on the amendment to Bill 6.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park has moved that we adjourn debate on amendment A12. All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Opposed, if any? Carried.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: I move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration and reports progress on Bill 6.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: All in favour of the report?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Opposed, if any?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Carried.

MRS. BLACK: I move that the Assembly stand adjourned until 8 o'clock this evening and that we come back as Committee of the Whole, Mr. Speaker.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader has moved that we adjourn until 8 o'clock this evening and that we come back as committee. All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Opposed, if any? Carried.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:16 p.m.]

