

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, May 7, 1996**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 96/05/07

[The Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

THE SPEAKER: Let us pray.

Dear God, author of all wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, we ask Thy guidance in order that truth and justice may prevail in all our judgments.

Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Notices of Motions**

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(2)(a) I'm giving notice that tomorrow I will move that written questions and motions for returns appearing on the Order Paper stand and retain their places.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MR. TANNAS: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table five copies of a petition sent to the Electoral Boundaries Commission. It's signed by 533 people of Nanton who would like their area moved back to the Highwood constituency.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table four copies of a letter that I have sent to Mr. Chrétien, the Prime Minister of Canada, underlining that Albertans must not be expected to subsidize in any way, shape, or form the harmonization of the GST and indicating that whatever rate is charged explicitly or de facto to some other part of this country, Albertans must be treated on an equal basis.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Leduc.

MR. KIRKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a letter sent to the Health minister by the Friends of the Leduc Hospital asking her to hold a plebiscite under the Local Authorities Election Act. This letter indicates that some 1,800 names on a petition have requested that that particular action be taken by the minister.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

MR. TRYNCHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour today to introduce some 70 visitors to the Legislature from the Percy Baxter school in Whitecourt. There are some 38 sitting in the public gallery and some 32 sitting in the members' gallery. They're accompanied by their teachers Mr. Michel St. Louis and Mr. Jim Ferguson, parents Hilda Sheehan, Mrs. Jody Whitaker, Mrs. Jan Kallal, Mrs. Shona Layden, Mrs. Debbie Gailey, Mr. Matt Gailey, Mrs. Tami Becker, Mr. Bernd Becker, and their school bus driver, Mr. Art Rowe. I would ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HLADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to

you and through you some 35 visitors from Rundle College. They are led by Mr. Gary Sylven and Mr. Rod Martens. Some of my colleagues are very impressed with their stature and the clothing that they're wearing here in the Legislature. Could they please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MR. HIERATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 22 visitors from the Coaldale seniors' organization. Half of them are in the members' gallery and the other half in the public gallery. I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly a STEP student who will be working in my constituency office over the summer, Jocelyn Laing. She's accompanied by Dave Prenoslo, who's been introduced before, who we call the Super-STEP. If they could stand and receive the warm welcome of the House, please.

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

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly a constituent from Bowden, Nancy Hudson. She's accompanied by visitors from Ontario: her mother, Jean Mark, and a cousin, Audrey Henry. They're in the members' gallery, and I'd ask them to rise to receive the warm welcome.

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to introduce to you today a resident of the Peace country who is down in Edmonton furthering her education both academically and, of course, in the school of politics. I'm privileged to have her working in my office as a STEP student over the summer. I'd like to introduce Annemarie Wahl. Would you please rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Oral Question Period**

Health Workforce Adjustments

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, questions are mounting over the \$7 million transition fund set up with taxpayers' money to help doctors who have been hurt by this government's cutbacks. My questions are to the Premier. Does the Premier agree with his Minister of Health, who defends this deal with the doctors? Right here: minister backs MDs' \$7 million fund.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, all I can say is that nothing has been finalized relative to this situation. The simple fact is that nothing has been finalized.

Relative to the minister's personal thoughts on this matter, she's entitled to express those personal thoughts, and I will turn it over to the minister.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I have a great respect for the media in this province, but if I were to take at face value every headline and attribute it, as the hon. Leader of the Opposition

does, I think there would be some interesting headlines. The Leader of the Opposition wasn't really thrilled when we held up a headline that said: too many hospitals in Alberta. That was a direct quote from that hon. leader, and there was a lot of but, but, but.

Really, if he went on and read the article, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. member is referring to, it talks about my discussion of the \$7 million and an explanation to the media, which I think they understood, that these are funds that are physician funds.

MS LEIBOVICI: Taxpayer dollars.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, it doesn't matter in health whether you are a nurse, a laundry worker, a person in dietary; you are paid with taxpayers' funds because health is funded by the taxpayers in this province.

What is important is the point that this is part of a capped agreement, and as I pointed out yesterday, this has been very beneficial to Alberta. We have gone from \$907 million in that agreement to the agreement this year of \$737 million, and you cannot exceed that amount. No matter how many services are used by the taxpayers in this province, that is the limit. The reserve moneys that are there are moneys that have accumulated under that agreement, Mr. Speaker. So clearly they were determined that they would be turned over to physicians. The AMA in their negotiating said that they would rather that we held these funds in a reserve and that we looked at other opportunities for use of them.

There's over \$32 million in this fund. What those funds will be used for is a determination of a discussion between the AMA and of course the Minister of Health. No money will be transferred out of this fund or any other fund that I'm responsible for without agreement here. That part of this discussion has not been concluded. The minister has not approved this document. I made that very clear yesterday. Mr. Speaker, I will be reviewing it with the AMA.

I want to point out again that every health worker in this province is paid with taxpayers' funds. It may be the thing to do today to sort of take issue with physicians, but I would rather deal in fairness.

1:40

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, the minister has taken about four minutes to defend a plan the Premier says that he hasn't made a decision about.

Does the Premier, then, agree or disagree with the Conservative Member for Olds-Didsbury, who is describing this deal as obscene?

MR. KLEIN: You're right. Mr. Speaker, I neither agree nor disagree.

MR. MITCHELL: What does the Premier say to the people of Lethbridge-West who have been calling their Conservative member disgusted with this deal and who have been told by that member that the Minister of Health should kill it?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I haven't had that discussion with the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West. I don't know the extent to which his constituency office is receiving phone calls on this matter. This matter has yet to come Treasury Board, it has yet to come to cabinet, and it has yet to come to the caucus of this government. Yes, it was part of a negotiating point in the

settlement with doctors, but nothing from this side of the House has been settled in that regard.

Health Restructuring

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has reassured Albertans that this is a year for monitoring and restructuring the health care system, and he has said very clearly on many occasions that the health care cuts are over. But last night in Bon Accord the Conservative candidate in the Redwater by-election, Mr. Ross Quinn, said: there are more health care cuts to come. To the Premier: what does Ross Quinn know about the Premier's plan for health care cuts that the rest of Albertans haven't yet been told?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the health care plans for the constituency of Redwater are as they are for every other regional health authority in the province. The business plans have been filed. Yes, the restructuring is taking place. The restructuring is taking place within existing budget guidelines, and I would assume it's to that particular question that Mr. Quinn alludes.

MR. MITCHELL: He wasn't alluding. He was very explicit, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, we'll go on here and ask the Premier: why is it that the Conservative candidate, Ross Quinn, is saying that there will be more cuts to doctors' fees and to drug programs for seniors?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm probably getting this 10th-hand, you know. Was the leader of the Liberal opposition there to hear Mr. Quinn say that, or did someone hear Mr. Quinn say something and then say it to someone else who said it to someone else who said it to the leader of the Liberal opposition? Is that how it came about?

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, this was a public forum. Many people heard these statements.

Is this how health policy is made in Alberta now: by throwing out ideas during a by-election and seeing what the fallout will be?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I'll speak to our candidate in that riding, who I understand is doing a magnificent job and will win. I'll speak to him about exactly what he said, in what context, and get to the bottom of this.

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

Alberta Council on Aging

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Council on Aging is an umbrella organization for seniors' groups, and it serves seniors across the entire province. The council is a strong, vocal advocate for seniors' rights, has been constructive and vigilant in examining the effects of the government's cuts of benefits and services to seniors. The government has now announced its intention to cut the \$64,000 that this organization requires to function. So my question is to the Premier. Why have you done this?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, this is a budgetary question to which the hon. Minister of Health can reasonably reply.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, as the minister that the

Seniors Advisory Council reports to – and I'm quite proud to have that group within my portfolio – I can tell the hon. member that through the discussion of business plans, as with every agency and department in government, the reductions asked have not been any greater than any other department's.

Mr. Speaker, what I would also tell the hon. member is that under the very able chairmanship of the Member for Calgary-Currie and her board members a discussion has been held as to how best to carry out the mandate of that Seniors Advisory Council to continue to ensure that they are a strong voice for seniors and to hear from seniors and to bring that information to government, which they've done very well. As you know, they table an annual report in this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, what I have found through that board – and they are very capable, very fine members – is that they agree with fiscal responsibility. They prefer that the dollars we have available go to programs that will directly affect seniors – and certainly we've been able to do that – and that we live on a few less dollars for the council. I think that when the hon. member sees the annual report, that will be tabled in the next instant, she will find that it's of every bit as fine a quality as the past ones have been. She will also find that the activities of that council will continue throughout this province as a voice for seniors and the listening role of seniors.

MRS. HEWES: The Premier and the minister both seem to mix up the Seniors Advisory Council with what I'm asking the question about, the Alberta Council on Aging. This is a community organization.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Premier then: how does this muzzling cut fit with your election promise of '93 to protect the people who built the province? How does this \$64,000 cut fit with that?

MR. KLEIN: You know, one of the objectives of this government is to reduce the amount of overlap and duplication that exists in the delivery of service and to find ways to streamline delivery processes.

Mr. Speaker, I'll have the hon. minister supplement relative to the Council on Aging, and I'll have the Member for Calgary-Currie, who's the chairman of the Seniors Advisory Council, also supplement.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, certainly I think the Member for Calgary-Currie can speak to the definitive grant. I would apologize to the hon. member, but unfortunately with the amount of chatter that was occurring, I did not hear her correctly. I will simply say that the Alberta Council on Aging is an organization that also advocates on behalf of seniors and has enjoyed a granting status from the Seniors Advisory Council. However, as I'm sure the chairman of that council will outline for the hon. member, that council is moving away from being a granting organization, so it is not specific to one agency.

1:50

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

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to supplement and clarify the facts on this issue. The Seniors Advisory Council has had granting dollars in the past which it allocated for a variety of purposes. Part of that grant went to the Alberta Council on Aging. Three years ago, when I became chairman, I met with their organization and identified the

reductions in budget that we would be undertaking with respect to deficit elimination.

Mr. Speaker, to simply clarify, the \$64,000 was the grant that was issued to the council in the 1994-95 year. We had advised the ACA that we would be moving to a phaseout over a three-year period. The year before I believe the grant was in the neighbourhood of about \$70,000. This year, rather than choose one seniors' organization to grant operating dollars to, in light of restrictions in our budget we kept the grant money in the Seniors Advisory Council for the use of seniors all across Alberta, and we have been utilizing those dollars in a number of ways, some of which have been meeting with regional authorities across the province in order to discuss the transitions in health care and home care.

So while it is true the ACA will not be receiving grant dollars for operations, it is not true that the seniors of Alberta are being shortchanged. The council is using that money on behalf of all Albertan seniors.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, this is exactly what the ACA does.

Mr. Speaker, my final supplementary is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, will you now take the funds from the \$228,000 budget of the Seniors Advisory Council and restore the money to the community-based Alberta Council on Aging, who desperately need it?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I think that the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie answered that question. She pointed out quite clearly that seniors in this province won't be shortchanged. All departments of government have budget guidelines to meet, and as I stated earlier, the objective is to break down the amount of overlap and duplication. If one council can do it and do it in an effective and efficient manner, so be it. That's exactly what the Member for Calgary-Currie indicated, and that's exactly what the minister indicated.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Air Ambulance Services

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are to the Minister of Health. On or about February 1, 1996, a Claresholm area physician whose patient was suffering from an intracranial hemorrhage contacted the air ambulance dispatch centre with a request for a helicopter ambulance. The dispatch centre's outmoded chart of call precluded helicopter dispatch for a distance of 126 kilometres. In the interest of saving the patient, both the sending and the receiving physicians agreed themselves to dispatch a helicopter ambulance. To the Minister of Health: why does the chart of call continue to show 125 kilometres as the maximum range for the helicopter ambulance when in fact the range is well over 225 kilometres?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I did respond to this issue in part I guess – I think it was on April 18 – by filing a sessional paper on this issue. However, the hon. member has brought up something very specific to this, and that is the distance, the range that an air ambulance helicopter is permitted to use. I should say that the 125-kilometre range was one that was decided and was put in at the request of the approved medical crews themselves. We should take the advice of the people who are manning those helicopters. They proposed three zones at that time with guidelines for the type of transport within each of those zones, and the 125-kilometre limit arose from that.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Health: why doesn't the chart of call factor into account the number of patient transfer movements which would be required for a fixed-wing ambulance trip versus that of a helicopter trip, which the sending and receiving physicians in the Claresholm instance did, keeping the patient transfer movements down in that case to two instead of six for a fixed-wing aircraft?

MRS. McCLELLAN: I should say at the outset that the determination to send an air ambulance and what type of air ambulance is made on one basis and one basis only, and that is patient care. The chart of call is based on the time from the receipt of the request of the air ambulance to the arrival of that ambulance at the patient's bedside. The experts that make those decisions take a number of factors into account, and certainly patient movement or the number of times a patient has to be moved is part of that determination. So, Mr. Speaker, it is not just one criteria, it is many, and that is part of the criteria.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Health: Madam Minister, why does your department, then, continue to refuse to pay the invoice for this time-dependent, lifesaving exercise when it was requested by the sending and the receiving physicians and when even after the fact Dr. Hal Canham, the dispatch medical director, gave his verbal okay?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I would think that this is probably not the best venue to delve into a specific of one particular issue. However, it is my understanding that a meeting has been set up by the Ambulance Advisory and Appeal Board, which is in place to deal with these very issues and is chaired by the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul. I am sure that the hon. chairman will call his committee to that meeting and deal with that issue very expeditiously.

I have to remind the hon. member that our air ambulances are dispatched by experts, by people who do understand the medical need and distances to be covered in this province. So our main interest is that we move patients expeditiously and with patient care as the first priority. I assure the hon. member – and I know he is raising this concern on behalf of a person who has raised it with him – that that meeting will be held and that that issue will be dealt with very soon.

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

Computers for Schools

MR. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government's own technology integration in education paper recommended a computer ratio of 5 students to 1 computer in our school system. To accomplish this, the government has committed a grand total of zero dollars this year and then \$40 million starting next year until the year 2000. So my question to the Minister of Education is: given that his own government's figures say that we need a minimum of \$165 million to get to the ratio of 5 to 1, where's the remaining \$125 million going to come from?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, when we released the position paper that the hon. member is referring to, we clearly indicated that the

paper laid out the ideal objectives as far as information technology is concerned. We were quite open and candid about indicating that we would not be able to meet those ideal targets as far as computer-to-student ratios are concerned within the current budget plan. The current budget plan as proposed is \$40 million, plus we intend to have matching dollars identified by school boards, and they are spending in that neighbourhood right now. So we are talking about in total, when all is said and done, a commitment of about \$85 million over the three-year period. Now, that, I agree, is about half of what is identified as the ideal, but in the climate of other objectives of government, such as a sound fiscal plan and balancing our budget, this is still a very positive and very significant contribution in dollars.

MR. HENRY: Well, if the minister can't get the money, perhaps I can ask the Premier. In the context that many other provinces are planning to meet those targets and have committed tens of millions and hundreds of millions of dollars, I would ask the Premier: why is he allowing his government to ignore the recommendations of the integration and technology committee and refusing to put in the money needed so that we can have computers in our classrooms so our children can remain competitive with the rest of the country?

2:00

MR. KLEIN: The minister will indicate that it's part of his business plan, and I will have him supplement.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I really think that question was answered in the first response. The point is that we are making a very significant contribution towards improving information technology access for students in this province. Candidly and openly we said from day one that in the three-year business plan that we currently have, they were not going to be able to meet that ideal which is outlined in the policy paper very capably prepared by our implementation team, chaired by the Member for Calgary-Egmont. That is the situation.

MR. HENRY: Well, then, perhaps I can ask the minister this question. Since the minister has indicated that school boards are going to come up with about \$40 million, then can he tell me where they're going to get that money? Is he telling them to transfer money out of the instructional grant, out of the classroom, into computers, which are capital expenditures? Is that what you're saying?

MR. JONSON: Yes, that's a good point, hon. member. There has been considerable shifting of dollars from administration into instruction. You know, Mr. Speaker, I don't think the hon. member across the way would want this conclusion to be drawn from his remarks, but possibly in there he is ignoring the fact that right now there are resources within the school budgets of school jurisdictions across this province which in a very significant way are currently going into the improvement of information technology services and equipment in this province. It's our view that in terms of the matching requirement, it will be identifying and putting together in a critical mass or in a sufficient amount a very significant contribution towards this objective.

The other thing is that one of the expectations that we will have is that school jurisdictions, if they do not already have one, have a logical plan to utilize both their dollars and our dollars in a very effective way within school jurisdictions for students.

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

Worksite Safety Improvement Program

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are to the minister responsible for workers' compensation. My colleague from Lethbridge-East and I recently attended the day of mourning in Lethbridge in recognition of fatally injured workers, and it was a very sensitive and moving ceremony. Now we have the announcement of the distribution of more than \$13.3 million to more than a thousand companies that participated in a voluntary incentive plan run by WCB and Alberta Labour. Will the minister please tell the House the involvement in this injury reduction program of those who participated?

MR. DAY: I'd be happy to do that, Mr. Speaker. It's an exciting day today in Calgary and again on Thursday in Edmonton when we will witness the distribution, as the member has indicated, of over \$13 million in rebates to over a thousand companies who have participated in the voluntary incentive plan. For those companies to do that, they have to be part of a bigger partnership, which is called the partnership in injury reduction. That partnership involves WCB, Alberta Labour, occupational health and safety, and, even more importantly, industry safety associations.

Companies wanting to take part in that have to have a health and safety program. They have to have also an external audit done on that program, and their actual costs have to be less than their projected costs. In those cases those companies will receive a refund of the money that they had invested in terms of their own injury reduction programs, so it does result in less injury. Certainly those who attended the day of mourning ceremonies can be comforted to know that those programs work to lessen the impact and in fact reduce workplace fatalities and injuries.

MR. DUNFORD: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm a results-oriented kind of guy.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question. Question.

MR. DUNFORD: We'll get to that, Shorty, in a minute.

Aside from receiving cheques in the mail, what success have these companies had in actually reducing injuries to workers?

MR. DAY: Once again the opposition does not appear to be interested in programs that work. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the companies that took part in the voluntary incentive plan didn't just receive dollars back. Incidentally, those are their own dollars that they had invested up front. They received the benefit of seeing less injuries in their own workplaces. That means less injury in the community. That means less impact on the families of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Lethbridge-West said that he was results oriented. I can tell him that in 1995 the companies that participated in the voluntary incentive plan reduced their injury rate costs by an average of 11 percent. Companies not participating in the plan reduced their injury costs by about 1 percent. So those companies participating significantly reduced injury costs over those companies which did not.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental.

MR. DUNFORD: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the minister: how was it decided that excess money would be

refunded to employers instead of put to other uses such as programs for getting injured workers back to work as early as possible?

MR. DAY: Well, in fact, Mr. Speaker, it's important to remember that the money that goes in at the front end of this program is employer money at the start, and when it is returned and rebated, most of those dollars in fact go back into enhancing their health and safety programs. Those who are attending the ceremonies today will hear from managers and CEOs, as they will in the ceremonies on Thursday, how they directly take those funds, put them back into enhanced health and safety programming, in some cases even see that some of those dollars go back to the very employees who are involved very closely with management in establishing the health and safety programs. So the net benefit is to workers in these programs.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

WestView Regional Health Authority

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Lately we've heard the Premier and the Minister of Health and even the Treasurer, I believe, state that the Capital health region was the only RHA that was unable to live within its means. Yet the WestView regional health authority has been asking for more money since 1994. I've personally repeatedly asked the minister and even the Premier to extend more funding on behalf of the people of the WestView region, yet the Premier and the minister have turned their backs on these people until recently, namely last week. All of a sudden \$500,000 was made available. So I'd like to ask the Minister of Health a few questions to clear up this murky financial situation. First of all, did all regional health authorities other than the CHA come in on budget as of March 31?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, no, not all regions came in on budget. The Calgary region identified about a \$1.6 million budget shortfall, which is about .4 of their total budget. They identified that they would make that budget shortfall up over the next months and how.

The WestView region, which the hon. member is referring to, has had some significant budget challenges over the two years, and I must commend them for working very hard to meet those challenges. Part of their challenge is a deficit that they took on from sites when they became the region, which all other regions did too. Our department staff have been sitting down with them and working out a debt retirement plan, gave them some assistance in that area last year.

2:10

I would also like to point out to the hon. member – and he may not have picked up on this – that when the \$40 million for community dollars were distributed this year, they were not distributed initially in the budget lines in the budget, and we commented that we wanted to have some discussions with the regions before we made those allocations. In the discussions with the regions I outlined to them that we would like to distribute those on a population basis, which the regions did agree to, and the WestView region did receive more dollars through that allocation because of their population. They also received half a million dollars, .5, out of the allocation just recently to further assist them in meeting their budget difficulties.

One of the real difficulties that that region does face is that a very large number of their population does not receive or access their medical services or health services within that region, so they are therefore not funded for those. As high as 60 percent of their acute care services are accessed outside the region, and frankly in part of the region closest to the capital city, the number may be as high as 80 percent. That is something that the regional health authority is working very hard on, and I am sure we'll make progress. In fact, I noticed some improvement in those figures just very recently, Mr. Speaker.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Mr. Speaker, since the minister brought up the leakage, if I can call it that, from WestView to the Capital health region, is she perhaps contemplating a change in the boundaries? That would severely affect the funding of course.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, the only reason that we would contemplate a change in the boundaries would be if the citizens in those areas requested us to review that. I would expect that over the next period of the term of office of the new board, as the Provincial Health Council reviews and audits our health system, they may have some opinions on how we might deliver services better. Certainly I am not contemplating any change to those boundaries unless a community or communities and the regional health authorities come to the minister and say: "We think the boundaries should be realigned for this reason. This is the consultation we've had. This is the agreement. We believe health services could be delivered better if we did this."

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Mr. Speaker, since WestView ended the last budget year with a shortfall of \$1.3 million, has now received \$500,000, a one-shot deal, doesn't that indicate to the minister that they're still short money and they need more money, or is she first going to send in the inquisition headed by the Member for Bow Valley?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't term it an inquisition. In fact, as I indicated in my first answer, they have already requested that help, and they have already received that help from people in my department. That board wants to live within its budget. It wants to provide health services that are important to its region.

I indicated in my earlier answer that they, as others did, inherited a deficit that they had to work through, as the other regions did too. When we determined that surpluses would continue to be held by regions, we also determined that deficits would be held by regions. We could have taken all of the surpluses in, I suppose, and then paid all of the deficits and just kept the balance, which would have been quite a positive plus position for us, but that was not determined to be the best way to go.

I have already indicated to the hon. member that out of the \$40 million in community money, the WestView region did receive a higher amount, and I would be happy to show him in the budget document, if he just looks from last year, what their allotment was and what they got this year. He would see a significant increase.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's keen interest in the activities in his region, and I hope that this will help him understand it.

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

Cattle Industry

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. As noted before in the House, the cattle industry in North America is in the full throes of a liquidation. Cattle prices have plummeted to producers on both sides of the border. Canada and the United States are suffering. Could the minister indicate if he's aware if any government programs in the United States have been announced which may impact on Alberta's beef prices?

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

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly the cattle industry, both in Canada and the United States, is going through difficult times. Prices have dropped, and obviously it's very difficult in that particular aspect of the industry.

President Clinton announced a program that's going to have some dramatic effects on the United States' cattle industry, and I think it's important that perhaps our industry recognize just what some of those effects may be. There's going to be an accelerated purchase of beef for the school lunch program. In June there's going to be \$50 million spent on accelerating that program and in May \$13 million dollars. It's going to . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: What's this have to do with Alberta?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: What this has to do with Alberta is that we are the largest cattle producing province in all of Canada. We are the third largest cattle producing area in North America. The cattle industry is 50 percent of agriculture in Alberta. It's a very major and dynamic force in Alberta, and it's very critical that we understand the ramifications of what's happening in the country next to us.

The subsidy basically is going to be within the confines of the WTO though. I think it's important that we recognize that indeed the Americans are working within the confines of the World Trade Organization.

They're going to open up an additional 36.4 million acres to the conservation reserve program that are going to be used in grazing. This is not going to affect the American problem that much, Mr. Speaker, because the Americans are also caught in one of the worst droughts that they have ever had as far as Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas are concerned.

In the short and medium term, export credit guarantees are going to be made to boost sales. That's very significant. Indeed, it is very critical that there is an understanding of the effect that this is going to have on our Alberta industry. Program announcements have been well received by the American industry. Nevertheless, it will have direct effect on the cattle industry in Alberta.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: Alberta now has a farm income disaster program to ensure against farm income disaster. Is there any concern that this program will bring about trade sanctions?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Indeed this has been a major concern of the cattle industry and has been our concern as well. We've gone beyond limits to see that indeed the program that we have

developed, the farm income disaster program, is not countervailable. As a matter of fact, we have taken the . . . [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Order.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: It's unfortunate that the hon. members . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order, hon. members.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Obviously agriculture, which is one of the pillars of strength in this province, is of no interest to our opposition. That's very unfortunate. It's tragic really, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DECORE: It's because you're boring, Walter.

THE SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order.
Hon. minister.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you.
To the . . . [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Order.
Hon. minister, we'll try again.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry may feel that agriculture is boring. That's not our position, Mr. Speaker. That is not our position.

Indeed, we have taken the whole program, the farm income disaster program, to the WTO for a ruling. We've asked them for a ruling so that indeed our industry will not be damaged through any programs that we have initiated. [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I didn't realize this question would stir such a reaction from the opposition.

Mr. Speaker, my final supplementary is: what is the minister doing to gain access to the European Common Market?

2:20

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Access to the European Union has been withheld supposedly because of the use of hormones in North America. This is nothing more than a trade barrier in that many of the countries within the European Union actually use hormones as well. So Canada initiated action supported by the United States, supported by Australia, and supported by New Zealand to challenge the process that the European Union is using as far as not allowing the access of Alberta or Canadian beef into the European Union. It's simply a trade barrier and nothing more. Consequently, as a result of this challenge, we hope to have some sort of ruling come forward within a month as to the process.

I want to compliment the federal government on this particular initiative because indeed the federal government has taken a proactive position. It's too bad we can't get the federal government to act on our grains industry the same way.

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

Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rents increase.

Taxes increase. Utilities increase. Food costs increase. Virtually everything increases but not AISH, not the assured income for the severely handicapped. Frozen for years now. To the minister responsible for AISH: will you commit today, here and now, that AISH payments will increase?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, to start with, we spend over \$430 million . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: How much? How much?

MR. CARDINAL: Over \$430 million. We have 9,000 clients.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, part of the overall welfare reforms that we announced back in '92-93 deals with that particular issue. At the time, we found most of the dollars were being utilized by young, healthy Albertans that didn't require those supports that clientele on AISH do. Since the reforms, of course, we've increased the budget to persons with disabilities. In fact, it allowed us to move over \$178 million to the most high-needs areas.

What it allows us also to do now is to develop not only a short-term plan as to how we deal with these particular sensitive issues, Mr. Speaker, but it also allows us to develop a long-range plan. Of course, along with a long-range plan we hope to reduce the costs administratively, which in turn will allow us to increase the benefits to those high-needs areas in the future.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, detours. Detours here. I want a straight answer, if I could, from the minister. Is the minister making a commitment that payments for persons with severe disabilities will increase?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, of course, I've said earlier in this House that there is an ongoing review of persons with disabilities. You know, I've always said that it is a very high-needs area. The majority of the dollars that were being utilized by this department were going to people that were employable and trainable. We've changed that now. We've reduced the welfare caseload below 50,000 from over 96,000 cases, which now allows us the time to plan and redirect dollars in the future, not only short term but in the long term, as to how we may increase the benefits for those most in need, and that is the direction of this ministry.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, why does the minister continue to sentence those severely disabled persons to a life of poverty?

MR. CARDINAL: To start with, Mr. Speaker, Alberta is, I believe, one of two provinces in Canada that has programs such as these. Therefore I don't believe that we are picking on persons with disabilities. I indicated earlier that we spent over \$430 million. For a population of two and a half million, I believe that is a pretty high amount of dollars.

In relation to the issue of poverty – and of course it's tied in with the question – the National Council of Welfare just released their report, in fact the spring of 1996. It ties in with the issue of people living in poverty. Back in 1989 the poverty rate in Alberta was 15.5 percent. In 1992 it went up to 19.4, and in 1994 – it includes AISH recipients – it was down to 15.9. Therefore, the issue of poverty is being dealt with in Alberta. Mr. Speaker, when you look at other provinces, you look at provinces where they are governed by Liberals – for an example, in Newfoundland

their poverty rate is 19.1. It's a Liberal government. In Nova Scotia it's 17 percent. It's another Liberal government. So I think we are doing very well in Alberta, and you can be assured that with this plan we'll do better in the future.

head: **Members' Statements**

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

Advanced Education Costs

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. University costs too much; I might go to college or not go to school at all: so claims Susan, a high school student from a less affluent Alberta family. As university and college tuitions rise, the gap between her family's income and those costs widens.

The assumptions by the adult education ministry that increasing the amount that students may borrow warrants higher tuition fees have been tested elsewhere and found wanting. Such a policy systematically discriminates against the poor. Common sense should have told the ministry that tuition sticker shock is most discouraging to these families. Increased tuition costs linked to larger loans, as the Susans of this province will attest, not only discourages students from lower income families but determines which institutions they will consider. A counselor serving a high school in a lower income Alberta area admits his students look for lower priced college programs in which to enroll.

Discouraging students from less affluent families from accessing advanced education is undemocratic, unfair, and unethical. That people from lower income families fear borrowing to finance educational expenses more than those from middle- or upper-income families should have been addressed before tuitions were allowed to rise.

What should be done? The assumption that students can borrow funds to cover program costs and thus all students have equal access to advanced education must be abandoned. We must track the impact of increased education costs on enrollment decisions of our high school graduates. We need to set advanced education participation rate goals for all Alberta students.

The province needs a system of financial aid that is simple and predictable enough for lower income families to understand, to use and build plans around. Most of all, Mr. Speaker, we must abandon a course of action that systematically screens out low-income students.

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

2:30 **Workers' Compensation Board**

MR. PHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great regret and sadness that I make this member's statement. Over the past two years I have met with many injured workers. The way they were treated by WCB, the pain that they and their families suffered were all totally different than the rosy picture presented by WCB. At first I did not want to believe these workers. I conducted my own research, hoping that I could prove them wrong. My investigation confirmed my fear: these workers' concerns over WCB were real and valid. With my member's statement today I will try to set the context in which I will ask my questions in the next few question periods.

First, Mr. Speaker, WCB claims that 80 percent of the injured workers surveyed were happy with WCB. I will prove that WCB has no data at all to back up this claim. Second, I will show that

over \$2 million that should go to the injured workers of this province were divided up among WCB brass in the fiscal year '95-96, and moreover another 2 million plus dollars is going to be spent in the same way this year. Third, WCB claims that they are operating at arm's length from government, that they do not use any public money and therefore should not be subject to the scrutiny of this Legislature. I will prove beyond any doubt that WCB does use taxpayers' money to subsidize their operations. Most important of all I will show that many injured workers are treated very poorly by WCB and that there is almost no meaningful recourse for them.

Mr. Speaker, my job is to represent my constituents and go to bat for them when they are treated unfairly. Turning a blind eye on their problems is both irresponsible and immoral. I hope that members from both sides of the House will give me the co-operation that I need to ask questions and have this issue addressed in the next few days.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Trans Canada Trail

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Volunteers across Canada continue to work on what has been called the new national dream, the Trans Canada Trail. This vision of a network of trails traversing our country from coast to coast is a legacy project selected during Canada's 125th birthday celebrations in 1992. The annual meeting of Alberta TrailNet, the group that is responsible for the Alberta section of this national project, met in Edmonton just recently. They are working to complete not only the east-west link across Canada but also a linking set of trails for walking, jogging, bicycling, and horseback riding across our province.

From Cypress Hills interprovincial park in the south through Dinosaur provincial park in Drumheller, the route will link up with the already established trails in Calgary and area. Calgary is, after all, the place where 30 years ago a small group of enthusiasts had a dream to create a citywide network of pathways. From that initial dream not only did Calgary develop its own excellent trail system, but the vision grew into this wonderful national project that will unite our country in a very practical way.

From Calgary the route goes west through Cochrane, Canmore, and Banff to link up with existing trails in B.C. However, a route will also go north from Drumheller to Red Deer, Edmonton, and beyond. In fact, at least 13 municipalities and eight associations have now confirmed their participation in the greater Edmonton area.

Trail development is one of the most cost-effective outdoor recreation facilities provided by municipal parks and recreation departments in Alberta. After all, walking and bicycling are respectively the first and third most popular recreational activities in our country. These are healthy activities that will remain popular even as our population ages. Moreover, with continued development of this network, not only will Albertans be able to go further afield; we will also extend our basis for a tourism industry along the routes in this province. Therefore we hope the Alberta government is considering what other provinces have already successfully accomplished; that is, the conversion of abandoned railway lines to public trails.

I would like to commend and thank all those who are donating

their time, energy, and money to this project, and I sincerely hope that many more will lend their support and enthusiasm to this national dream of a coast-to-coast trail-net by the year 2000 for the benefit of all Canadians.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West gave the Chair notice earlier that he wished to raise a point of order.

MR. DUNFORD: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. However, before I do that, I want to make an apology to the hon. Leader of the Opposition. During my question in question period I entered into an exchange and I characterized the leader, and I know better than to do that. So I want to apologize and retract that.

**Point of Order
Allegations against Members**

MR. DUNFORD: As far as the point of order, it's under 23(h), "makes allegations against another member." All I can say, Mr. Speaker, is, you know, he's done it again. In this particular instance the opposition leader alleges that I told the minister to kill it, referring to the \$7 million fund for the AMA, and this is just simply not true.

Mr. Speaker, I've only had to rise twice in the three years that I've been a member of this House, and in both cases it's been misrepresentations and allegations by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. If he would have bothered to learn anything about me at all, he would find that amongst my caucus colleagues my nickname is Huggy Bear, and it is quite foreign and uncharacteristic for me to use terms like "kill it."

In any event, I want to assure the members of the Legislature that I did not use the term "kill it" to the minister, and I would hope that the hon. Leader of the Opposition would certainly, in terms of the honour and the character that he has, retract that statement.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Huggy Bear has mentioned that he did not use . . . [interjections] The hon. member has mentioned that he did not use the words "kill it," the it of course referring to the pool of funds that doctors may be able to access.

I find it curious that in the hon. member's statements on his presumed point of order he didn't say what the particular words were that he did utter to the press and in public immediately before going into caucus. Of course, the spirit and the tone of his message to the public was his dissatisfaction with this deal and of course the fact that constituents have called his office to let their dissatisfaction be known to him as well and his commitment to communicate that.

So I don't really see the point of order, obviously a choice of words but not a point of order.

THE SPEAKER: Well, the Chair will thank the drafters of our Standing Orders for the latitude that they have allowed members to clarify their respective positions. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West has had the opportunity of putting on the record how he feels about this. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has had that opportunity. I think the Chair feels that it is a disagreement amongst members.

head: **Orders of the Day**
head: **Public Bills and Orders Other than**
head: **Government Bills and Orders**
head: **Third Reading**

Bill 203
Family Dispute Resolution Act

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

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to move third reading of Bill 203, the Family Dispute Resolution Act.

The principles of Bill 203 have received widespread support from interested parties inside and outside this Assembly, and I want to express my sincere thanks for the support. Also, I would like to thank all those who agreed that a Bill such as this was necessary, those who worked to develop the framework, and those who put it into legal language. An awful lot of time and effort on the part of many individuals goes into producing a Bill. Thanks again to everyone that had any involvement.

Mr. Speaker, the focus of the Bill is to minimize the impact of divorce on children, because they suffer the most. This Act will be a start, a base that can be expanded on in the future.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I want to urge all hon. members to vote yes to this third and final reading of Bill 203. On behalf of families I thank you, and I ask for the question to be called.

THE SPEAKER: All those in favour of third reading of Bill 203, Family Dispute Resolution Act, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 2:40 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Amery	Doerksen	Stelmach
Beniuk	McFarland	Trynch
Brassard	Oberg	Woloshyn
Burgener	Paszkowski	Yankowsky
Day	Severtson	

Against the motion:

Abdurahman	Henry	Mirosh
Ady	Herard	Mitchell
Black	Hewes	Nicol
Bruseker	Hierath	Renner
Calahasen	Hlady	Rostad
Carlson	Jacques	Sekulic
Dalla-Longa	Jonson	Soetaert
Decore	Kirkland	Tannas
Dunford	Kowalski	Taylor
Fischer	Laing	Thurber
Friedel	Leibovici	Van Binsbergen
Fritz	Magnus	Vasseur

Haley	Mar	West
Hanson	Massey	White
Havelock	McClellan	
Totals:	For - 14	Against - 44

[Motion lost]

head: **Public Bills and Orders Other than**
 head: **Government Bills and Orders**
 head: **Second Reading**

Bill 212
Consumer Protection Act

[Adjourned debate May 1: Mr. Friedel]

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

MR. SEKULIC: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to . . . [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order.
 The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

MR. SEKULIC: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in favour of Bill 212. Sometime back, earlier this session, I introduced a Bill in this Assembly, Bill 204, which I was hoping I'd receive widespread support for. Unfortunately, a lot of the claims we hear now being tossed back and forth across the Assembly floor, "Free vote, free vote" - it didn't happen that day either, so it shouldn't be much of a surprise that we have in fact continued or the appearance that it's been continued. But this time a bad idea was voted down.

Mr. Speaker, in speaking to Bill 212, I believe that going into the next century the most valuable items in society will be water and information. The way information is used or abused dramatically affects our home lives and our business lives. We see that when incorrect information is passed along, the ramifications are often significant. Even in this Assembly many times we've seen when incorrect information is put forward that many, many members of this Assembly in fact take exception to and argue a case very strongly that they've been wronged. Well, I would expect that these same individuals who have so often spoken against incorrect data being used against them and their being wronged by the use of that data would be the first ones to rise in support of Bill 204 when the time comes, because they have been victims.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Bill 212.

MR. SEKULIC: Bill 212. Pardon me. Bill 204 would have done much the same, but Bill 212 goes one step further in a different area. [interjections] Mr. Speaker, I hear some comments coming from over there saying: same speech; just a different number. In fact, I hadn't written a speech then; I spoke from my heart. I haven't written a speech now. I'm speaking from my heart, and I know that's a new concept for some members in this Assembly.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Head and heart.

MR. SEKULIC: Head and heart. The hon. Minister of Health says that both my head and heart are in it. She's quite correct. I appreciate that observation. Quite accurate. Good insight.

When the previous speaker to this Bill rose and offered his opinion, which I noted were in fact written, he spoke that Albertans were in favour of smaller government, not bigger, and although I'd concede that that point is correct, I'd also suggest that perhaps it's partially insightful, partially correct. Albertans want a smarter government. Size is certainly an issue, but more important than size is cost, and those two do generally act independently of one another. You can have a larger government costing less or a smaller government costing more, depending on whose friends you hire. We've seen that sometimes some people have received significant amounts or some projects have received significant amounts of money. So I believe the basic premise that Albertans want a smarter and not necessarily a smaller government. The preference obviously would be to leaning towards a smaller government with the implication that that smaller government is a significantly less costly government and, most importantly, that that government is delivering the services that are required.

The idea or the principle which I think Bill 212 pursues is, as it states in this title, the Consumer Protection Act. But how does it do that? Does it go after Alberta businesses as some form of watchdog? Well, I don't think so. I think the marketplace tends to correct a lot of the weaknesses or the majority of the weaknesses in the marketplace. For the most part, consumers in Alberta have been well served by quality businesses responding to consumer needs and consumer signals in correcting their weaknesses. However, Mr. Speaker, just like in any other element of life, in business you'll also have the emergence of an unscrupulous few who, no matter what consumers send as signals, manage somehow to survive.

Mr. Speaker, if the story stopped there, that they were just in fact survivors, it wouldn't be as great of an effect, but the fact is that there are victims to these unscrupulous businesses that somehow manage to survive. Most often we see those victims to be seniors and people with lesser amounts in terms of monetary resources, and I guess the best way of describing them is that businesses are in fact very unscrupulous for preying upon that particular target group. But they wouldn't do that if that target group had some form of protection. One would argue, "Well, perhaps that target group or that consumer group should become better aware and should exercise their rights as consumers in a different manner and try to protect themselves."

3:00

Well, that's fine, Mr. Speaker, but I think we've been saying that, and in fact this government has tried in the past to offer consumer awareness information. I believe one of the avenues that they've used in the past was consumer and corporate affairs, which provided buyer beware type information through its offices and then pinpointed particular areas of concern where there were specific unscrupulous businesses that would prey upon individuals. So in that manner the Alberta government in the past has tried to raise the level of awareness of some of the potentially difficult areas. Now, I think that program to some extent has worked, and it has helped numerous individuals. I know even the Department of Family and Social Services would often refer clients who had been taken advantage of by unscrupulous businesses to that consumer and corporate affairs branch which would deal in consumer protection. So we know that the need existed, and we know that to some extent there was government intervention to attempt to assist consumers in those areas. So we know that at least the previous Conservative administration had some interest in protecting Alberta consumers.

Now, the question is whether that same interest has continued. Once again, it's not the promotion of a bigger government or a new bureaucracy, because those are nice dark figures that we can paint in people's minds to justify voting against any piece of legislation in this Assembly. However, Mr. Speaker, putting that aside, we have to question: does this in fact have potential? Does this principle in fact have potential to translate into benefit for the majority of consumers in Alberta? I think it does. Does this in fact have a benefit for businesses in Alberta? I'd hate to do anything to affect or distort the marketplace in any way. I would say that this Bill has the potential to benefit business. How, you would say, would it do that? Well, in the absence of an organization for small businesses or groupings of businesses to impose any kind of sanctions against businesses which were operating in a way that's inconsistent with appropriate and responsible business ethics, then we must look to some legislative format for imposing that criteria.

Mr. Speaker, I think Bill 204 does that to some extent. Bill 212, Mr. Speaker. I keep going to 204 because it was such a good idea, flowing in the same vein in terms of ensuring that information was accurate and reflected appropriately. Bill 212, I know, from my own constituents' point of view has some application. One of the most recent examples of a larger magnitude was, I believe, last year when many of us – and I know my constituents weren't exempted. It was suggested to them that they may be receiving more channels or less channels for the same money or more money through their cable subscriptions. I know that the hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan spoke to this. It's the whole concept that you may not be requesting services or goods, but you may receive those services or goods and somehow be liable for payment of those despite never having solicited or in fact needed those services or goods. I know that for the most part Albertans do not want to be bothered in their residences, in their private hours, which I would consider their family hours, by solicitation for products or services they didn't require. We do see this increasing in Alberta.

MR. DAY: Big Brother's going to protect them.

MR. SEKULIC: I hear a comment coming across the floor. It's in fact, I would consider, a valid criticism from someone who hasn't read the Bill thoroughly yet, that Big Brother somehow should be protecting everyone. Certainly that's not the aim of this Bill. If you want to use that same argument, then the whole structure of government becomes questionable. What is government? What purpose does it serve? Well, I think one of the purposes that it serves is to protect its citizens, to provide some formal structure by which its citizens can undertake business, participate in both business and social activities. Now, one can argue that this may sound like I'm proposing some Big Brother defence, but in fact that's not . . .

MR. DAY: A Big Sibling defence.

MR. SEKULIC: A Big Sibling defence. Well, whatever the case may be, we do have a purpose in this Assembly, and if one thinks quite honestly about what it is, it is in fact those few that I've mentioned; that is, to offer some form of legislative protection for Albertans. Most importantly, it's so that Albertans know what to expect in their marketplace, so that they know that there's a consistency, so that tourists coming to this province also know that Alberta has a business environment, like I said, 95 percent or

99 percent of which doesn't need any legislation to tell it what to do or where to go. But what do you do with that small percentage? To date, Mr. Speaker, very little has been done with the exception of the consumer and corporate affairs department, which offered information. This is simply an extension of what the previous Conservative administration believed in; that is, that the public should have a greater awareness of their rights in the marketplace.

Mr. Speaker, when we go into the marketplace and we offer any business with whom we're undertaking a transaction some information about ourselves and then in the time that we maintain the business relationship they maintain that information pertaining to our home lives, our address, our telephone number, perhaps even our credit card numbers, and maybe our credit ratings – that, for one, is very personal information – what do we expect that business would then do with that information? Well, obviously we've offered it to them with the expectation that it would enable us to undertake this transaction or transactions or a business relationship that may last some years. However, we also expect that that business will maintain correct, up-to-date records on our personal information so that that information cannot be used in a negative way against us. So the Bill speaks insofar as it would allow individuals a right to access personal information about themselves that may be held. I think that's a small request, a small requirement, and for the most part, most businesses are very forthright in providing any of their patrons with the information they hold on that individual. What then of those that don't? What if someone does have credit information on you which may be incorrect and which may be very detrimental to either your business or your personal life?

Well, sometime back, when I was still in university, I was acting as a treasurer for a nonprofit society here in the city. As a result, I undertook a number of activities in terms of purchasing and paying the bills. It so happens that one of the bills that was paid wasn't recorded accurately by that organization that we were doing business with, and that organization then took it upon themselves to link me personally, not the organization with which I was a director, with the financial liability. Well, about two years later, still in university, a struggling student, Mr. Speaker, I went and applied for a credit card and much to my dismay, not having had much in the way of need for loans or credit cards . . . [interjection] It's under section 2.

Much to my dismay, much to my surprise I found out that I had a bad credit rating. Never having had a debt in my life, I was beyond alarmed. So in trying to correct this wrong, I tried to investigate the matter. If you want to talk about bureaucracy – the government didn't have any intervention at that point – trying to get an accurate rating on my own credit at that point, a university student with not that many transactions or loans, I found it nearly impossible to trace the source of that information. Well, clearly there was something wrong. Here this Bill will correct that type of dilemma for people in the future. Although it's a small example, I know it's not one that's infrequent. I know it happens quite often. I know that when I was working with the Ministry of Family and Social Services, many of the clients of the department would run into difficulties in that same area, and they'd express that same concern to the staff of the department, who once again would refer them to consumer and corporate affairs to try to correct some of these issues.

3:10

Mr. Speaker, I don't think that in any way can a member argue that this is an intrusion into the lives of Albertans. Rather, I think

it's a responsible reflection of what Albertans would expect from those elected to office. I think that whole issue of what the cost is of now introducing such a bureau, a consumer services bureau – well, if there is a need to introduce such protection and if the Assembly is agreed upon that, then I think we can at that point look at perhaps even putting that bureau under a ministry through which it would report to this Assembly. The cost isn't one of \$100 million or \$200 million, as suggested by the Member for Peace River. No. In fact, if that's his financial projection of this cost, then I daresay that Liberals can often do things at a much lesser cost. I would say that this would quite nicely fit under one of the ministries, perhaps economic development because it is in the interest of maintaining an Alberta advantage. Perhaps it could be done in partnership with many of the business organizations and through consultation with the chambers of commerce in Alberta because, I would suggest, they may be very much interested in this type of legislation, providing that they had some input into how we could manage this. Once again, it would just bring a larger umbrella for all of the different business organizations and groupings that this sort of legislation would provide some benefit to.

Mr. Speaker, in coming to a closing on my remarks in favour of Bill 212, I do believe that information is one of the most valuable resources that we currently have in society. I think its value will only be enhanced in the future, and the management of such information is critical. I believe to that extent that the government has a responsibility to legislate and to monitor the way that information is exchanged and used and, most importantly, that each citizen should have a right to access and correct information about themselves wherever that information is, because abuse of such information will only be to the detriment of that individual and ultimately, if this is permitted to carry on, then to the detriment of all of us.

So in closing, I would encourage all members of this Assembly, particularly those members who felt sometime in the last three years that allegations or charges against them in this Assembly were inaccurate, incorrect and felt that they were wronged – well, if they feel that way, Mr. Speaker, then they'll feel very much in support of Bill 212, which would attempt to correct those types of situations in the public.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my place.

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

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Edmonton-Manning was becoming so eloquent at the end, able to actually take current events and bring them into his speech, and I was saying to my bench partner here from Calgary-Egmont that he's actually becoming quite skilled.

MR. HERARD: I didn't agree with him.

MR. DUNFORD: That's true. The Member for Calgary-Egmont did not agree that he was either articulate or skilled.

It's with some regret, however, that I find myself in a rather negative position, Mr. Speaker, in the fact that I have to speak against this Bill. But it is a negative day. May 7 will be known now, similar to December 7, as a day of infamy, because this is the day that free votes died in the Legislature of Alberta, and the Liberal opposition can take clear credit for it. They have shown that they would allow an opportunity to take personal retribution

against a former member rather than stand up for the principles that they believe in. It is a sad day. I have made statements in this House previously about free votes, and they have been proven true today.

MRS. HEWES: Point of order.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar on a point of order.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, 23(h), (i), and (j) of our rules. The member is certainly suggesting that members of this caucus – I looked around and realized we all did vote the same way. That is because we often think the same way. We have a very clear set of values, so it's not difficult for us to do that. To suggest for an instant that there was another motive behind the members from this caucus voting against the previous Bill is simply untrue and unacceptable, and I would hope that the member would withdraw that remark. It is not the case, and it is not under any circumstances the way members of this caucus behave in the House.

THE SPEAKER: Well, the Chair feels there is only one way for this discussion to go, and that would be for the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West to stick to the Bill that's before the House and not be digressing on other matters.

As far as allegations are concerned, our rules are directed to allegations against individual members and not to the corporate entity of a caucus. Nevertheless, the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West did stray from the matter before the Assembly, and he should return to that.

MR. DUNFORD: Mr. Speaker, I strayed once again. I'm extremely sorry for that.

Debate Continued

MR. DUNFORD: Well, all right. Let's deal with 212, and let's talk about it in this sort of context. Maybe we shouldn't talk about the corporate identify any further. Let's talk about a defining moment in somebody's life, and let's refer to the comments made in the non point of order in terms of shared values. I looked at this Bill. To see someone bring forward in the House an opportunity to create more bureaucracy – first of all, I would have expected to have seen Edmonton-Centre, for example, as the sponsor. I was shocked when I realized that it was actually Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan, because I believe, Mr. Speaker, that we have in that person, although I don't know her, someone who not only professed but published and seemed to be quite actually proud of the fact that she had been a Conservative and then decided to run for the Liberals. Well, now we see why. We see that she is a Liberal true to heart. I'm proud of her for leaving the Conservative Party to go to the Liberal Party, where she belongs.

MR. HENRY: Don't you try to do it, Clint.

MR. DUNFORD: Well, they'd never have me.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan on a point of order.

**Point of Order
Imputing Motives**

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Yes. I would cite 23(i). He is imputing false motives, Mr. Speaker, inasmuch as he should get his facts straight. I was a member of the Progressive – Progressive – Conservative Party, and I wish he would take note of that, a very different philosophy. The former Premier, Peter Lougheed, is beginning to identify the differences between a Progressive Conservative and a right-winged – and I won't say the word – Conservative. I'm proud to be sitting on this side of the House, and I'm proud to bring Bill 212 forward on behalf of Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

3:20

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West on Bill 212.

MR. DUNFORD: Oh, I don't get to respond about how proud she is. Okay. Well, you know, we had lots of red Tories, and it's nice to see them coming out of the closet finally.

Debate Continued

MR. DUNFORD: Now, what were we talking about? Oh, Bill 212. This Bill, you know, just flies in the face of everything that not only our government but Albertans have been telling people, including opposition members. They are fed up with big government. They are fed up with Big Brother this, Big Brother that. We continue to see through the process of private members' Bills just more and more of this stuff coming from the Liberal opposition. Of course, now that they've killed their free vote, I'm not sure just how many more of these we're going to have to contend with, but we'll see that I guess in the next session.

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

**Point of Order
Imputing Motives**

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Yes. My citation would be 23(i). Once again I hear the member imputing false motives. Indeed, today is private members' day. When I stand up as a private member of this Assembly on private members' day I vote the way I believe I should vote. I will not accept that member, Mr. Speaker, impugning my motives. If he had taken the time to read the very significant words that that incredible lady Marjorie Bowker conveyed to many of us with regards to the content of that Bill and listened to the legal community, I think any right-minded person would have stood up and voted against that. So I would ask that member not to impute thoughts into my mind.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West on Bill 212 and not on free votes and other things.

MR. DUNFORD: I won't talk about them killing free votes anymore. What I will say, however, is that I'm finding points of order really quite fun, and I learned that from the Leader of Opposition, who continued time after time to stand and give me credit for misleading statements.

Debate Continued

MR. DUNFORD: On 212. Again, I'm opposed to the development and the continued policies of Liberals that simply are to tax

and spend. Obviously, what would we have to do in this Bill but to increase taxes? [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Order please, hon. members. [interjections] Order please. The Chair was listening very carefully to the comments by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, and his comments were perfectly in order for the debate that we're having today.

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It once again indicates I think to all of us just one of the real values of democracy, and it's really great when you're on the winning side; isn't it? I actually feel really good about this.

MRS. SOETAERT: Democracy only works if you're on the winning side?

MR. DUNFORD: Well, actually that's quite interesting.

One of the problems an MLA has is that people just absolutely refuse to listen to what they say. I don't know how often we hear people from the other side trying to put different words in my mouth. We hear continually after an MLA has spoken – I'm sure it happens to opposition members as well. They say, "Well, what you're really saying is," or "what you really mean is," and I say, "No, what I meant to say was what I said." Now, one thing that is happening here today in the concern over some of the things I'm saying is that Liberal members are rising with points of order and they're talking about that it's what they said. Well, I think there's a place in the Bible somewhere, Mr. Speaker, that says that we should be judged not by what we say but by what we do, and these people killed free votes today. [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: To the Bill. The Bill.

MR. DUNFORD: Well, they did. They stood up as a block and voted against their previous member. If that's not killing free votes, what is it?

MS LEIBOVICI: Well, how many times did you vote against our Bills?

MR. DUNFORD: I voted along with the Member for Lethbridge-East on the recall Bill, so I don't have to take any guff from any of you guys. If there's been one advocate for free votes in this Legislature, it's been this Member for Lethbridge-West. [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order. [interjections] Order. We'd make much more progress on the debate on Bill 212 if members would address their remarks through the Chair and not across the room at each other and also if the debate was directed towards the Bill.

MR. DUNFORD: Okay. One of the . . .

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

THE SPEAKER: Edmonton-Glengarry.

**Point of Order
Questioning a Member**

MR. DECORE: Under *Beauchesne*, Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask the hon. member a question.

MR. DUNFORD: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Debate Continued

MR. DECORE: The hon. member has been quick to point out that he voted for the Bill of the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, but I would like to know if he or his colleagues received instructions on 210, the Bill proposed by the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat. Was the Whip on your side on that one, hon. member?

MR. DUNFORD: Well, Mr. Speaker, in answer to the question I can tell the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenarry that the Whip did not tell me how to vote on that particular Bill. I voted against his Bill because I feel very strongly that the two go together. I would be prepared on this point of order to make that argument. I support the Member for Lethbridge-East on recall. I don't know what it's like anywhere else in the province, but in the south we are very proud, both Ken Nicol and myself, of the way we're able to represent constituents. [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Order please. [interjections] Order please. Also, hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, in this Chamber we refer to people by their constituencies and not by their names.

While the Chair is on its feet, it would regretfully interrupt the debate by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West because pursuant to Standing Order 8(2)(b) we must now move to the next order of business.

head: Motions Other than Government Motions

Violence against Women

510. Mrs. Soetaert moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to help eradicate violence against Alberta women through the following initiatives: urging the federal government to implement stricter sentencing for abusers, establishing mandatory and continuing education programs for all provincial court judges on violence against women, providing 100 percent funding for Alberta women's shelters, providing comprehensive counseling for children and women who are victims of violence as well as the abusers, providing stricter enforcement of restraining orders, undertaking a review of Alberta women's access to the legal system, urging the federal government to eliminate extreme drunkenness as a criminal defence, and legislating guidelines to protect the privacy of women's counseling records.

Mrs. Burgener moved that Motion Other than Government Motion 510 be amended by striking out everything after "through" and substituting "education and prevention initiatives including the development of appropriate legal strategies, policies, and programs in co-operation with the federal government.

[Debate adjourned April 30: Dr. Nicol speaking]

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

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to conclude my time on this Bill by commenting on the fact that it's so important that we recognize the impact of violence against women. I'd like to relate a couple of events that happened in the last little while, where I went up to the door and on two different

occasions women who were in the house reacted with absolute fear to the fact that there was a man standing outside the door. It says something about our society when we have women in Alberta who are afraid when a man comes to the door. I think this is a really good reason why we have to have a look at the process that we have in this province to deal with violence against women, the recognition of the kind of support that women need to overcome those kinds of fears. I'd like to be able to say that I can go anywhere I want to in Alberta, go up to a door and not have a woman be afraid. I don't think I'm that fearful a person, Mr. Speaker.

So in conclusion, I think we should look at this motion and vote in favour of it. Thank you.

3:30

THE SPEAKER: Hon. member, the time allotted for this motion has expired, and the Chair is required to put all questions required to dispose of this motion at this time.

[Motion on amendment carried]

THE SPEAKER: Now the question is on the motion as amended. All those in favour of Motion 510 as amended, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say no. Carried unanimously.

Forest Management

511. Mr. Van Binsbergen moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to authorize an independent audit of the management of provincial forest lands to examine the adequacy of current forest management, which would include a critical analysis of timber supplies and the effectiveness of current policies and practices in achieving sustainable development.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are two parts to this motion. I think both are equally important. The first one calls for an independent audit with a view of critically analyzing the timber supplies in the province. That stems from a concern, at least on this side of the aisle and I think shared by many Albertans, that the government has overallocated timber supplies, and even on the basis of past criteria, which only emphasized the timber value of our forests, they still have overallocated.

I'd like to give a brief history here that sort of describes the concern about the inventory of timber supplies. First of all, the Forests Act sets out the forest policy in Alberta, and it is clearly rather outdated. It focuses on the timber management and not on other forest values. The Act doesn't really have a purpose section at all, but it states: "The minister shall administer and manage timber on public land under his administration."

Now, in 1991 the review of the Expert Panel on Forest Management in Alberta, which was chaired by Bruce Dancik and is often referred to as the Dancik report, recognized the need to improve these forest inventories. For instance, it said amongst its recommendations, number 14: "Priority should be given to

enhancing current inventories for purposes of management planning.” That is an important consideration.

Then we have concern expressed by professional foresters in the early 1990s; in other words, as long as five or six years ago. In January 1991 the Alberta Forest Products Association wrote to the then minister of forestry, lands and wildlife, LeRoy Fjordbotten, expressing concern about the overallocation of timber.

In 1992 the professional foresters of Alberta – those were the foresters that belonged to the Alberta Forest Products Association – petitioned the government to express their desire to have a new timber inventory done primarily because they were concerned about any new allocations being made to Grande Alberta Paper. That still hasn't been done to this particular day, but the concern is there, needless to say. In fact, they say that

the proposal put forward by G.A.P. should not be approved until an up-to-date timber inventory is completed and the resulting [annual allowable cut], based on local growth and yield data, is compared to existing commitments with allowances for the multitude of other non-fibre utilizing resources that Albertans feel should be protected in the area.

So those are concerns expressed by people who are knowledgeable, by experts.

Then I go on. I'd like to express the point of view made by the then Liberal environment critic in 1992, who is now the Leader of the Opposition, who wrote to the minister of forestry in 1992 also with concerns about forest inventory.

Shortages have been since identified in certain regions, and it is now quite well accepted; for instance, Alberta Newsprint found that its inventory showed a shortfall of about 30 percent in its FMA, and High Level Forest, another company, is concerned about the shortfalls. All that needs to be taken into account and acted upon.

The present situation in terms of timber supplies has become even more critical, and a critical analysis of those supplies is very much necessary. By now we have over 99 percent of coniferous forest on Crown lands allocated or committed or reserved or what have you but is sort of spoken for in one sense or another, and about 89 percent of deciduous forest on Crown lands has suffered the same fate. So it all the more underscores the need for a new inventory, to do a new audit.

Professional foresters are still concerned about these supplies. In 1995 the Alberta Forest Products Association came out with a statement through one of its spokesmen, and it was reported in the *Edmonton Journal* of December 7, 1995. I quote: a new study of Alberta's timber supplies is needed before further allocations for projects go ahead.

So, once again, all that needs to be acted upon. Among forestry experts there is the fear that there will be a further reduction in the volume of timber that will be allocated for harvest in the future because they've discovered that regeneration is not as fast as was planned in some locations. There could be, of course, the reason that the government has already adjusted its estimate of the total volume of wood available for the annual allowable cut from 25 million cubic metres to 22 million cubic metres, although there hasn't been an official reason given for that.

The other cause of fear of reduction is that new values and new directions in forest management will affect the volume available for timber harvesting. I think there is the notion there that if finally we start adopting that – and certainly the government forces forestry companies to adopt ecosystems management – that may have an adverse effect on the annual allowable cut to some extent.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm making a case there for an audit, an independent audit, so that it is clearly aboveboard and truly plausible and credible. That speaks to the timber supply.

3:40

I would like to devote a few remarks to the need for sustainable forest management. I've also asked for an audit on those kinds of practices in the motion, and I think that if such an audit is done, it will show that these techniques, if I can call them that, are lacking in our forest management and there is a great need to bring about a change.

Now, when we speak about sustainable forest management, we're really talking about a new approach to forest management which is based on the maintenance of a viable ecosystem on harvested land. We're not just talking, then, about the volume of timber, but we're talking about everything else that grows in the forest. We also talk about the changing values that cause us to consider nontimber values such as setting aside lands in their natural state, for example, under Special Places 2000. Those are important considerations, needless to say.

The Act as is, the Forests Act, has no objective or formally documented long-term direction for sustainable forest management on provincial lands, and that is obviously a lack that needs to be corrected. The Dancik report, that I referred to earlier, that reviewed forest management in Alberta and was the result of the Expert Panel on Forest Management, came up with several recommendations in this regard. Their recommendation 17:

The department's inventory and mapping process should be extended to include wildlife species-habitat relationships as quickly as possible.

Recommendation 30:

All forest management areas should be assessed for priority land use needs, and stratified accordingly. Within each stratum, management of the priority resource should also embody sound management of secondary resources.

The review noted as well that there was inadequate provision for the use of forest for purposes other than timber production.

Another recommendation from the Dancik report was that the government immediately complete the Alberta conservation strategy, especially for the forest sector, and that is a good process that has been put into practice by the government that allows all kinds of stakeholders and the public at large to have input and participate in the production or the construction, if you wish, of a new strategy. I think the draft report of that particular strategy group is just about complete, and it should be presented to the standing policy committee on natural resources and sustainable development this spring, if I'm not mistaken. Then if they approve, of course it will go to cabinet, and perhaps we'll get to deal with it here too.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we're speaking about an all-encompassing vision for our Alberta forests, and that's far wider than the management of the forest for timber, and I'm stating that once again, which is the sole focus, really, of the Forests Act. It's important – and here we get back to the audits of the timber supply again. That needs to be done first and foremost so that by the time we start applying sustainable forest management practices or ecosystems, there is still a forest left and we do know what the supplies are and we can also allocate certain areas for special consideration and special study.

Now, further along those lines, because of the need for an audit on timber supplies and because of the need for really an audit to see what practices we are using and to what extent we have fallen behind because we have not yet applied the ecosystems practices,

it is particularly important that the government not commit any further forest lands for awhile. In the context of forest ecosystem management principles we need some unallocated forests as unlogged reserves and so on and as areas where existing forest harvest operations can expand, if need be, to provide the latitude needed to implement alternative silviculture practices: structured cut blocks and a mixed management model and variable rotational age.

So there is a need for sustainable forest management practices, and I think the best way to define that – I suppose it's open to different interpretations – is a combination of ensuring a sustainable supply of timber while meeting society's changing demands for forest. Our focus consequently has moved from harvesting trees to sustaining forests. It means that we are managing the forest for long-term socioeconomic benefits as well as for ecological sustainability. These include activities such as tourism, wildlife, recreational use of forest, aesthetics, and wilderness values. It also includes the recognition of need for public involvement to ensure that other forest values are being recognized in management.

The ecosystem management is but one tool towards achieving sustainability. It really is a new approach to managing forest that aims to sustain all species as well as the relationships amongst them and the environmental systems upon which they depend. In other words, it recognizes the interdependence of nature and not just the protection of certain elements, such as certain plants. For instance, the growth and survival of an estimated 80 percent of seed plant species are dependent on fungi, which protect them from infection and enable them to absorb nutrients from the soil.

So these new practices associated with ecosystem management would include, for instance, increasing buffer zones along streams and lakes to protect water and wildlife; creating reserves to protect environmentally sensitive areas or maintain old forests; using alternative forest management methods to conserve biodiversity, for instance, random shape and size cut blocks to give a closer approximation to the pattern left by forest fires; and also leaving coarse woody debris on cut blocks to provide cover for wildlife and to retain plant species.

3:50

Now, the question that needs to be asked is: are we then at this time achieving sustainable forest management? Surprisingly enough, we are in theory committed to that. The government is committed to it because, again, they signed in 1992 in the person of the minister of forestry, lands and wildlife, LeRoy Fjordbotten, the Canada forest accord, along with many other provinces and many organizations. Its goal, quoting from that accord, is to maintain and enhance the long-term health of our forest ecosystems for the benefit of all living things, both nationally and globally, while providing environmental, economic, social, and cultural opportunities for the benefit of present and future generations. Now, this is very similar to the Alberta forest conservation strategy that I talked about earlier. So there is still a far distance to be traveled before the government of Alberta has even started to implement that particular commitment that the minister of forestry, lands and wildlife made in 1992.

We need this audit very much to see to what extent we have fallen behind in that commitment. Therefore, I urge all members to vote for this motion. Thank you.

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

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the

opportunity to rise today and speak to Motion 511, calling for “an independent audit of the management of provincial forest lands,” as proposed by the hon. Member for West Yellowhead. As you are well aware, our province is blessed with an abundance of natural resources. The oil and gas industry has been the mainstay of the Alberta economy for the last 50 years, and we can only hope that it continues to thrive. Our excellent pastureland and fertile soil are also a major contributor to the economy. We are very fortunate to have as our minister of agriculture a man who recognizes the value of the agriculture industry and is taking steps to increase that value. [interjection] Right on.

Our economy, like every other resource-based economy, is subject to the whims of the marketplace and the forces of nature. We have good seasons and bad, and relying on a few markets makes us very vulnerable indeed. Alberta's forests were considered a vastly underutilized resource until the 1980s. Despite the abundance of timber in Alberta, our reliance on the oil and gas industry prosperity helped us to overlook its value. Today is a different story. With changes in technology we as a province have been able to capitalize on our vast resources to the north, attracting hardwood pulp and paper mills. We have also been able to better utilize our Eastern Slopes forests as well. This means that today, Mr. Speaker, Alberta's economy is stronger, more diversified, and less likely to be ravaged by the economic shifts in one resource sector.

Mr. Speaker, as a province it is our responsibility to wisely use the resources we have been blessed with. We have also been very fortunate to be led by specialists in the land and forest service who recognize the importance of Alberta's forests and who continually try to balance harvest needs, recreation needs, and conservation needs. It is this department's mandate to ensure the health of Alberta's forests for the long term.

I'm not suggesting the forest industry need not be held accountable or that policy need never be checked and changed if necessary, but I do believe the department's role in balancing long-term needs against short-term gains is sufficient to protect our forests from the destruction the hon. member is hinting at with his motion. The accountability does not stop there, Mr. Speaker. The industry also polices itself to ensure it is following the rules set by our government, and the public scrutiny today is harsher than ever before. There are enough checks and balances built into the system now to ensure the forests are being used in an appropriate way.

My objection to this motion also stems from a concern about the role of independent auditors. What does the Member for West Yellowhead mean by “independent”? I would suggest it would be hard to find objective auditors, if that is what he means. Let's face it, Mr. Speaker; we have radical opinions on the forestry harvesting issue: a side that wants all the trees saved and a side that prefers they are all cut down in the name of profit. How can the hon. member ensure an appropriate balance between the two on his independent audit team?

I would suggest that the government is in the best position to provide the balance this issue needs. With three layers of checks in place for our timber harvesting practices, I believe the call for a fourth layer is expensive and impractical. Mr. Speaker, I will vote against this motion, and I urge everyone in this House to vote against it.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased this afternoon to rise to speak on Motion 511, as introduced by

my colleague for West Yellowhead. I rise this afternoon to support Motion 511.

I was listening intently, Mr. Speaker, to the comments made by the Member for Calgary-East about Motion 511. I just want to reiterate that Motion 511 in terms of an action statement is asking "the government to authorize an independent audit of the management of provincial forest lands." So that is the action statement, to do the independent audit. The reason for the need for that independent audit is to look at

the adequacy of current forest management . . . a critical analysis of timber supplies and the effectiveness of current policies and practices in achieving sustainable development.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Calgary-East failed to address any of those in his comments.

I heard the Member for Calgary-East talk about our extended utilization of our forests, that up until the 1980s we had under-utilized that particular natural resource in the province of Alberta. Well, how does the member define "utilize"? The whole essence of utilization of our boreal and Eastern Slopes forests is to cut down the trees. That's been the essence of the forest policy in the province of Alberta since we moved in the direction of utilizing that natural resource. Well, that's passé. The member talks in terms of the present. He does not talk in terms of the future. Indeed, I'd go further and say that the member talks in the past. He talks about utilization of the forests, but what he really means is cutting down trees. He says that the government will follow the rules in forest management practices and will ensure that those in the industry will follow the rules. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, of course they'll follow the rules, but the point of the motion is that those rules need a critical review.

Part of the motion put forward by West Yellowhead is "to examine the adequacy of current forest management" practices. So for the Member for Calgary-East to say "Well, we have the rules in place, the public will scrutinize, and there are good checks and balances" simply says to me, Mr. Speaker, that that hon. member has absolutely no vision about the future of forest management in the province of Alberta. He's simply saying: let's maintain the status quo; let's not look to the future to ensure sustainability of our forests.

The Member for Calgary-East - again, listening intently - talked about the two sides of the issue, with the government being in the middle to protect people from themselves. The member says: we're from the government; trust us; we're here to help. Well, Mr. Speaker, the member polarizes an issue that does not need to be polarized. The member says that on the one hand we have the tree huggers, those who don't want any trees cut down at all, and on the other hand we want those in control of the feller bunchers to cut the wide swath, clear-cut absolutely everything, and exchange the logs for dollars.

4:00

That's not the way it is in Alberta, Mr. Speaker. That is simply not the way it is in the province of Alberta. Groups have come together, and in the spirit of co-operation and harmony they have worked together collectively on the forest conservation strategy to find the middle ground, with a common goal: to ensure that there are sustainable forest practices in the province of Alberta. That has been the goal of the forest conservation strategy. The forest conservation strategy was created because of the need that was identified, in looking to the future, to begin the process of a better and more current and more contemporary approach to forest management than simply going in and cutting down the trees.

Sustainable forest management recognizes other values that the

forests have. The old thinking - and indeed it still exists in the Forests Act - deals only with the timber value when we look at a forest. The new thinking on ecosystem management, on biodiversity recognizes that there are many other values that our forests have. That to me, Mr. Speaker, becomes the test of utilization of our forests.

Have we, in looking at the other values, gone far enough in current forest management practices to say unequivocally that we are now doing sustainable forest management? I don't think we are. We have to look at the value of habitat. We have to look at the value of wildlife species. We have to look at the value of recreation. We have to look at the value of watersheds, of rivers and streams. We've just had the northern river basin study dealing with the rivers of the north half of this province, the watersheds in the northern part of this province, that flow through our boreal forests. The northern river basin study has identified concerns with the quality and the health of our northern rivers. Where will that fit in with a sustainable forest management practice? Well, I'm not going to give you the answer, Mr. Speaker, because that's the essence of the motion: conduct "an independent audit of . . . provincial forest lands to examine the adequacy of current forest management" practices; do "a critical analysis of timber supplies"; look at the "effectiveness of current policies and practices in achieving sustainable development." The questions are being asked, and the answer is in approving this motion to urge the government to move in that direction.

I spoke of the forest conservation strategy. The forest conservation strategy is one tool available to the government, at the government's disposal, to consider the future of forest management and the forestry industry in the province of Alberta, but it's not a single tool. The other tool that's necessary is the independent audit of the management of provincial forest lands, because when the forest conservation strategy comes to the standing policy committee on natural resources and sustainable development and from there moves to cabinet, how will we in the province of Alberta know what has been said, what has been recommended? As we know, Mr. Speaker, all of that will take place behind closed doors.

The independent audit will mean that it is a public review of the issue so that we can identify where the issues are, where the concerns are, and the strategies to move in the direction of dealing with those problems. The concern, of course, is that the recommendations of the forest conservation strategy will sit on a shelf, will not be made public, and will not be acted upon. This becomes a secondary tool. It is a tool that is worthwhile for both the conservation strategy and for the government so that those questions can be answered effectively and independently so we can move forward.

The Member for Calgary-East talked about how, in utilizing the boreal forest and forests on the Eastern Slopes, we have created a significant industry in the province of Alberta. I quite agree, but in the rush to utilize those forests for the sole value of timber supply, timber value, we have not adequately looked at the inventory of the forests that are there to determine whether or not all of the facilities and all of the plants in that region can be sustained. We've even had, Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Forest Products Association express its concern to the government that the plants are moving ahead, the plants are being built, and the timber supply is not a certainty. The timber supply is not a certainty because the inventories are not accurate.

The former Minister of Environmental Protection, now the current Minister of Justice, has admitted that the inventory that is

there now needs some work. It needs some work. This is the vehicle and this is the mechanism to do that. Let's go back and re-evaluate the inventory we're using now for future planning and make sure that if there are any inadequacies or inaccuracies in the inventory, we correct that so we are planning for the future properly and not reaching a point where we say, "Gee, our information was incorrect, and now we have to take a different path so that we can resolve the issue."

That's the essence of what this motion is asking for: proper long-term planning for the future in the forestry industry in the province of Alberta and sustainable forestry management practices. That's exactly what it is that we're attempting to do. We can't simply sit back and say that the rules we have in place currently are adequate and sufficient rules.

Mr. Speaker, if that were the case, then there would be no need to have members of this Assembly here on a daily basis working on ways to improve the province that we live in. The essence of us being here is to find ways to improve upon what we have built on in the past. Yes, we have rules that govern forestry practice. Yes, we've had problems with that. We've had logs that have been taken off public land and pirated and said to be from private land. We have issues of clear-cut logging. We have initiated the Free to Grow standards in terms of reforestation. We are always moving ahead and finding ways to improve the sustainability of the forests of the province of Alberta.

This is an attempt, hon. members, in a motion brought forward by my colleague from West Yellowhead, to continue along the vein of finding ways to improve. We can't simply say that we have the forestry rules in place. We can't simply say that we will be hearing from the forest conservation strategy, which is a collection of stakeholders who have been working on the issue. That will be important, Mr. Speaker; that will not be the end of it. Indeed Motion 511 if passed and if acted upon by the government of Alberta will not be the end of it.

My hope, my view is that this is, again, part of a beginning. We go back and we reassess the inventories of timber in the province of Alberta. We look at the extent of timber that has already been allocated in the province of Alberta. We recognize that we've left very, very little in terms of a buffer, so if we're wrong, we will have created a situation of serious overallocation of timber which then, as members know, leads to competition and confrontation in getting their share of a scarce resource.

The Member for Calgary-East talked in terms of Alberta's forests being a vast resource. It would be incredible to believe that we would have to consider the boreal forest and the forests in the province of Alberta as being a scarce resource because we have so overallocated rights to those forests and that timber that industries we have promoted in the province of Alberta to harvest those find themselves in competition for the same tree or the same forest. That is not, Mr. Speaker, moving in a direction of clear, certain futures for those industries, and it will certainly not be in keeping with sustainable forest management practices.

4:10

I spoke briefly, Mr. Speaker, and will speak again on the issue of the concept of sustainable forest management. The one definition of sustainable forest management comes from – and I'll see if I can find this – The State of Canada's Forests, Natural Resources Canada, 1995, page 44: ensuring a sustainable supply of timber, while meeting society's changing demands for forests, is an ongoing challenge. Our focus has moved from harvesting trees to sustaining forests.

I speak again about the need for ecosystem management. I

speak again about the need for habitat, for wildlife species. I speak again about the need for recreation and the quality of water in rivers, lakes, and streams in our forested areas.

The concept of sustainable forest management also has to recognize the need for some components, some aspects of our forested lands to be protected from encroachment and to be protected from industrial activity. That in my view, Mr. Speaker, would be part and parcel of a full and complementary program of sustainable forest management. The Special Places 2000 program is an example of a direction to protect a tract of land, an area of land, from industrial encroachment, and that kind of industrial encroachment would include logging. Now, I won't go so far as to say all logging, because I think selective logging can be sustained in a protected area. Nonetheless, we don't have that yet for areas of the boreal forest where we have a significant tract of land that's been set aside for that purpose.

One of the issues that is gaining concern for the people of Alberta is endangered species. We talked about the Special Places 2000 program as a program dealing with endangered spaces. We are now dealing with and there is a growing concern over Alberta's endangered species. How do you protect an endangered species? By protecting the habitat that sustains that species; that's how you do that. So you cannot simply separate the two. It becomes important to protect the habitat to allow for the ongoing sustainability of those species. If they are currently vulnerable, you have to give recognition to the fact that habitat must be protected to allow those species to recover and not go the other direction, where they move from being vulnerable to being endangered species in the province of Alberta.

We have specific areas of the province of Alberta that need attention in terms of protection, but I don't mean just building a fence around the area and saying: no encroachment whatsoever. One area that I am particularly interested in is the Caribou Mountains in the north of Alberta. That area is a prime example, in my view, for an international biosphere designation. I would like to on record commit to the Minister of Environmental Protection that I will do whatever I can to work with him to try and move in the direction of maintaining and conserving that plateau and the slopes of that plateau in northern Alberta so that the Caribou Mountains are not simply left to ongoing and continuous encroachment by the forestry industry and by the oil and gas industry. If the land is made available by the province of Alberta, those who are in business will take up the cause. They will simply move in and harvest and use those resources under the current rules that we have now, but my position is that the current rules we have now aren't good enough. They don't address the issue that Motion 511 addresses. We have to use the tools that Motion 511 speaks to, and we have to change the rules so we can establish unequivocally that we are undertaking sustainable forest management practice. I would be very disheartened if in the Caribou Mountains region of northern Alberta something isn't done to protect that area from simple ongoing encroachment and if we don't look at that as a protected area.

I would say in talking about the Caribou Mountains, Mr. Speaker, that one of the other values of boreal forests is recognizing the needs and the traditional uses of forests by the aboriginal peoples of the province of Alberta. The boreal forests are an integral component of their living off the land in the province of Alberta, and their needs and their values have to form an integral part of sustainable forest management practice. It's another of the values that we have not to this point in time included in certainly our legislation in the Forests Act and in our approach to forestry

harvesting. Again, for the area of the Caribou Mountains it is essential, in fact, that nothing should or could happen unless the aboriginal peoples who live in those communities in the Caribou Mountains are part of any decision to protect that land, whether by an international biosphere designation or some other designation or by designation under Special Places 2000. Nonetheless, they must be part and parcel of that.

So those kinds of processes would have to take place, should take place as part of the independent audit being proposed by Motion 511. These are the challenges, Mr. Speaker, that I think the government faces. I think it is looking to the future; it is not living in the past. I therefore encourage all members to vote in favour of Motion 511.

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

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was interested in the opening comments from the Member for West Yellowhead on the basis that when I was reviewing the motion and making my comments, I had made very specific note to myself that this member was expressing it because of his personal interest and his personal concern with regard to not only forest management policies but indeed his own constituency, which is very dependent upon the utilization of forests. I really believed that this motion reflected those genuine concerns and was certainly not an issue that was driven by his caucus. However, his opening comments quickly set that aside in terms of my original observation.

He referred to a lot of issues in his opening comments, including the Dancik report, which I think most of us are familiar with, particularly those who have had any exposure to the forest industry in particular, and in terms of the number of recommendations that were accepted and implemented and indeed some of the controversy amongst professional foresters that surrounded the report.

I also noted with interest his point with regard to Grande Alberta Paper and when he was referring to the Leader of the Opposition today, who was then the forestry critic. I can recall very well, prior to being involved in government, back in those days coming down to Edmonton and meeting with members of the government caucus and the opposition caucus of the day with regards specifically to Grande Alberta Paper. I think it's fair to say – and I would ask you to check with your hon. leader – that you will find that he in essence supported the project, and if there was a covenant at all, a covenant that was also shared by the government at that point in time, it was with regard to the issue of timber inventory.

I want to use that as a little bit of an example in carrying through on this, because it's a very important issue and a very important subject to all Albertans and indeed to the industry. Whether we're talking about the industry or we're talking about diversification in terms of the utilization of the forest, that's a key point. I would point out that as this process has moved through with Grande Alberta Paper, indeed there has been some independent work done – in fact, not only work done but independent inventories done – that has been submitted to Grande Alberta Paper, to other parties, and to the government of Alberta. So I think the essence of the argument in suggesting that Grande Alberta Paper might be used as an example of a concern – and I agree with you. I would agree with you on any proposal, but the fact of the matter then is: how do we react? How do we handle those particular proposals? It's one thing to deal with an overall policy for the province. It's something else to deal with policies

that reflect the circumstances of that particular region and indeed in terms of the specie utilization.

4:20

It was also interesting listening to the Member for Sherwood Park's comments with regard to describing the essence of the motion. This is where perhaps your motion was not clear, because quite clearly in your motion you use the term "sustainable development." Sustainable development is not the same as "sustainable forest management practices," and indeed we could even get into the argument of sustained yield. So the whole issue of sustainable forest practices is a different issue, albeit a complementary issue, to that of sustainable development.

Also, the other issue, with regard to an independent audit and looking at it from that point of view. Historically – I shouldn't say historically, but I think in accepted audit practices, whether it's a law firm or whether it's a forestry firm or where there's any type of audit function, the audit function is related to predetermined conditions, objectives, and standards. In other words, what you're really saying in an audit process is: here's the standard; here are the objectives; here's the performance. You evaluate that performance in terms of measuring those objectives.

The difficulty with the motion is that it talks about auditing on the one hand, but in the supporting comments, and good comments, it also says that forestry practices and sustainable forestry practices are the essence of the motion. Well, if sustainable forestry practices are indeed an evolutionary type of process – and I accept that – then the Member for Sherwood Park is suggesting that the audit itself would answer those questions and answer those deliberations. I would suggest to you that that is not the issue. The issue is that if indeed you're constantly in a process of implementation, constantly in a process of review, constantly in a process of changing standards and policies, that's when you bring in those particular issues.

With regard to the issue of timber supply I have to assume, based on the comments from the member, that he was talking about standing timber. I also have to assume that he's referring to both conifer and deciduous timber types. I also must assume that when he talks about timber inventory, that calculation would record factors such as the rotation age, cut sequencing, the fire history, the infestation history and expectations, the allowances that are included for that, the deduction for nonproductive lands – lakes, rivers, streams – and take into account the yield curves, multipass harvesting systems, height/diameter relationships, and utilization standards. Now, we all know that those are some of the basic components that one addresses and obtains data on in terms of calculating timber inventory.

The next crucial thing in there is: how do you derive that data? The data itself comes from various sources. It includes timber cruising. It includes accepted sampling techniques, aerial photo interpretation, satellite image interpretation – which is probably something we've seen vastly used over the last five years – together with some historical records and also some strata definitions, which I think the Member for Sherwood Park alluded to.

Now, when we acknowledge that indeed those are the factors that kind of define the way you would calculate a timber inventory, if you take a look at the data collection and say, "Yeah, that's basically onside," then I think they would have to acknowledge that what we see out there today is basically what the member is suggesting. In other words, the end product as it is defined today is known as a sustained yield. That simply is defined as the yield that the forest can produce continuously at a given intensity of management.

So the question or the issue then becomes the issue of management. That's the part of the equation that over time changes. If you are going to change the forest management practices – in other words, you're going to change the standards; you're going to change those objectives – then indeed that's a fair question, to say: come on back; we'll recalculate the timber inventory. That is exactly what is happening today in terms of assessing the timber inventory either in a particular forest management unit area or indeed in a smaller area or in terms of even looking at an overall inventory within the province as a follow-up to phase 3.

The professional foresters that I know and that I have interacted with over the years I think will agree that when we talk about sustained yield and the calculation of that, we're talking on the one hand a science but we're also talking to some extent an art. Science by its exactness in terms of a lot of the specific data that we can collect, but the art then becomes the targets and the assumptions that one incorporates into that overall formula. It's like you and I saying, "Well, it should be a 15-11 utilization standard," and somebody saying: "No, no, no. It should be a 13-7." I mean, those are issues of policy, and for each set of parameters I can obviously get a very significant difference in terms of what that standing timber calculation will be and hence the annual allowable cut, much as I can say on rotation age. If I take the average rotation age and say, "All right; let's establish it at 110 years in a coniferous forest," based on certain conditions that exist historically in a province, compared to another area where it may be predominantly pine and, say, different altitudes, different soil types – again we can look at it geographically and say, "Well, that's about a 95-year rotation age." I will get completely different sets of numbers by running the same data with those different types of assumptions.

The point I wanted to make in terms of that whole issue is that I believe today that both inherently within the department of the forest and lands and also within the . . . [Mr. Jacques' speaking time expired]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. The Standing Orders provide for 55 minutes of debate on a motion. That time has now elapsed, and the question must therefore be put.

[Motion lost]

THE SPEAKER: Is it the will of the Assembly to call it 4:30?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE SPEAKER: Then we'll move on, according to Standing Order 8(2)(c), to the next order of business.

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

Bill 6
Gaming and Liquor Act

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

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Transportation and Utilities I have the honour of moving third reading of Bill 6, Gaming and Liquor Act.

THE SPEAKER: I believe it does take a member of Executive Council to make that motion.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Transportation and Utilities I move third reading of Bill 6.

THE SPEAKER: Is the Assembly ready for the question?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has a contribution to make.

MR. SAPERS: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I guess we're not quite ready for the question on third reading of Bill 6. We have spent some time debating Bill 6 in the Assembly. There has been some give and take, though not a lot of new information. In fact, I think it was yourself who said at one point that there was more heat than light being shed on this Bill.

The problem that I have with Bill 6 is that even though the minister who sponsored the legislation has provided some supplemental information as a consequence of debate, he has hardly satisfied all of the requests for information that we have sought, nor have proposed amendments been, I believe, dealt with to their fullest extent.

The more I discuss Bill 6 and its potential implications with my constituents and with other interested parties, the more I'm convinced that this Bill will not serve the best interests of the people of this province. I'd like to give just one example of a constituent.

DR. TAYLOR: I bet not one of your constituents has phoned you.

4:30

MR. SAPERS: The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat would be welcome to come in and spend some time with me in my constituency office and see how that kind of work is done on a day-to-day basis, Mr. Speaker. Notwithstanding that invitation, one of the points raised, in fact, in some correspondence with a constituent was the question of the regulations or the departmental policies regarding the sale of gaming tickets in a private liquor store.

Now, we see that the government has moved to combine the two commissions. We see that the government has a Bill that they're sponsoring known as the Gaming and Liquor Act. Obviously, the government's intent is to see these two kinds of activities being regulated hand in hand, going hand in hand. We see that the government is not making a careful distinction between the sale and distribution of lottery tickets, for example, and liquor, yet a constituent of mine who has opened up a private liquor store, trying to take advantage of the opportunity that was provided by the provincial government when they privatized sales, notwithstanding the manner in which they did that, has found that many of his customers are requesting access to games of chance, to lottery tickets at the same time they are coming in for their wine tasting or to make their liquor purchases.

It seemed like a somewhat sensible request on behalf of the merchant who was trying to satisfy his customers, but he was told, upon making an inquiry to the commission: "No, no, no. These two things don't have anything to do with each other. We simply couldn't possibly have gaming tickets sold in your liquor store." Now, of course they could be sold around the corner in the little grocery store, but they couldn't be sold on the same premise. My constituent asked why, and they said: "Well, that's just the policy. That's just the way it is. We can't have these two things. It would be unseemly. It would somehow bring the quality of life in the province of Alberta into jeopardy."

Mr. Speaker, this was an explanation that was wholly unsatisfactory. As my constituent pointed out, you can go and use a video slot machine in a licensed premise. You can go place wagers at off-track betting and buy a drink. You can go into Safeway and buy the mix for your scotch. [interjection] That would be a crime, wouldn't it, hon. member? You could buy mix, notwithstanding, for your liquor and a gaming ticket, but you couldn't actually buy liquor and the gaming ticket in the same location.

Now, my constituent was puzzled and asked me to see whether or not I could shed any light on this situation. I have tried to. I contacted the commission. I tried to get a copy of a policy that addressed this issue. I couldn't. I've written the minister. I'm still waiting for an explanation. I would like to know what the rationale is for telling a merchant who has been approved by the government, I suppose, to sell liquor that they are not somehow eligible to also sell gaming tickets. In reading Bill 6, the Gaming and Liquor Act, I find no answers to this kind of an apparent contradiction in government policy. That's just really scratching the tip of the iceberg as to what concerns me about Bill 6.

[The Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

Bill 6 would have been a tremendous opportunity for this government to demonstrate that it does listen and respond to Albertans. Overwhelmingly Albertans have said that they do not want video slot machines, video lottery terminals operating in this province. Time and time again members of this opposition, most evidenced by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, who proposed a private member's Bill to eliminate in a managed way video slot machines from Alberta, to phase them out over three years – that Bill the government defeated. The consultation, all the input that the government received through the hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler's efforts has been largely ignored in terms of the very powerful statements that Albertans have made in opposition to the presence of video slot machines.

Even members of the hospitality industry, Mr. Speaker, have told me that they would just as soon not have them, that while they do in fact generate some revenue for them, in the overall terms of their operations they would just as soon not have them, that in the overall terms of the impact they make on their communities, which they also have a stake in, they'd just as soon not have them, and in terms of the personal damage that the presence and access to these machines does to their customers, whom they would like to have come into their facilities and their premises and spend dollars in other ways, they would rather not have these machines. So do we find any response to all of that in Bill 6? No, Mr. Speaker, we don't.

What we do see is one section, one section in the whole Bill, that directly relates to video lottery terminals: section 46. Really all it does is it reinforces the government's monopoly and I suppose their addiction to video slot machines. It does nothing to talk about or to ameliorate the damage done, it does nothing to address the concerns brought forward by Albertans in the government's own consultation, and it does nothing to move us down the road of lessening our dependence on this most addictive form of gambling.

Mr. Speaker, I also have some issues that remain outstanding to do with the sections of the Bill which detail offences that may crop up as a result of this legislation. In these sections you see that there is reference made to the responsibility of the licensees, to the responsibility of occupants of licensed premises. We see

that there are sections that lay out the kinds of procedures that must be entered into by the Crown, evidentiary guidelines. Unfortunately, much of this is left to regulation.

Now, I believe at an earlier stage of the Bill I did enter into debate to discuss particularly my concern with a number of the regulations. Of course, Mr. Speaker, as you will recall, members of the opposition asked that the regulations be referred to the Standing Committee on Law and Regulations. That has not happened. We also asked that certain items to be regulated be taken out of part 6 of the Bill and inserted into the body of the legislation to make the legislation much more substantive and much more understandable to Albertans; for example, the regulations relating to the application procedures for licensing and registration, regulations respecting the relationship between liquor suppliers and the licensees. We believe these are matters that should be legislated and not regulated, and in any case these are matters which should be debated in public. These are matters which deserve to be aired in public so that the government can be most certain that it has the support of Albertans as it changes the law regarding the availability of gaming activities and consumption of liquor.

One section to do with the prosecution and evidence respecting offences has really caught my attention, and that is section 120(2). Now, what this section says is that it is not necessary to state under this Act whom the person is that liquor was sold to or disposed of if you suspect an offence. It is not necessary to state the person by whom liquor was taken or consumed. They don't have to be named in any information or in a warrant or a summons. It goes on to say in part (c) that "the person from whom liquor was purchased or received" doesn't need to be noted. In (d) – perhaps this is the most troubling – it says that you don't even have to specify the quantity of liquor that was involved. I want to quote from the section directly, because otherwise I'm afraid you won't believe me, Mr. Speaker; you'll think I'm making this up. The section says, actually, that you don't have to state

the quantity of liquor sold, kept for sale, disposed of, purchased, given, received, possessed, stored, transported, used, consumed or imported except in the case of offences where the quantity is essential . . .

Here comes the kicker.

. . . and then it is sufficient to allege that the liquor was more or less than that quantity.

So what this section permits, Mr. Speaker, is that if enforcement agents want to charge somebody with an offence under this Act and if that offence happens to relate specifically to a quantity of liquor, it's sufficient for the enforcement officials to simply allege that the quantity of liquor was more or less the amount that is germane or specific to the offence. Now, if you read that in conjunction with the rest, you're left with the conclusion that there is a disregard for natural justice or some of the fundamental principles of our justice system or in fact some of the things that we've come to expect under common law.

4:40

Mr. Speaker, I am under the impression that every individual who stands accused of an offence deserves to know what specifically it is that they've been accused of, deserves to know who it is that's accusing them, and deserves to have that information publicly aired and tried in a court. This section, 120(2), does not compel the government to specify who was involved, what was involved, when it was involved, or even what the specific issue was. It's just enough to know that an offence that was created in

part by regulation – and that gets back to my earlier comments – is alleged, that the alleged offence involved some kind of transaction involving liquor, and that it is the government's allegation that there is an accused person who can be held accountable.

I don't think that's good enough. I don't think that's appropriate. I don't think people of this province should be subjected to that kind of high-handed legislation, particularly when it comes from a government that says: "We want to get out of the business of being in business. We want to diminish regulations. We want to have smaller government. We don't want to be interfering with the lives of Albertans. We think there is too much law." This is the government that says that we don't debate things in the Legislative Assembly. This is the government that says we can do things by order in council. This is the government where the House leader has said often that the Bills are just housekeeping.

So clearly this government says one thing when it comes to the role of government, and that is that that role should be as small as possible, as minimal as possible, but then they turn around and they introduce a Bill into the Assembly that they don't want to debate, that they don't want to amend, and part of that Bill sets up sort of a star chamber approach to accusing people of committing offences against the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, it's a contradiction that is simply unacceptable. I think the government needs to be reminded of their commitment to smaller government and to being less intrusive, and I cannot see in any way how this kind of a legislative package regarding the prosecution of offences involving liquor is consistent with that commitment the government has made.

Now, that means one of two things. It means they really don't mean what they say about that commitment to smaller, less intrusive government or they don't recognize the dangers in this section of this Bill. I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that if it's because they don't mean their commitment, that presents significant problems to the people of Alberta, and we should be concerned about that. If it is as a result of them not understanding the implications of their own legislation, I would suggest that that presents significant problems for the people of Alberta and should not be acceptable.

So when it comes to third reading of Bill 6, I would urge my colleagues on both sides of the Assembly to reflect on all that has been said about this legislation: all of the questions, answered and unanswered; all of the issues raised about the regulatory regime and how inappropriate it is; these sections which seem to violate the normal course of justice in this province; the concerns about video lottery terminals and the concerns about gaming regulation in general. I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that if all members reflect on those concerns and on those issues, they will not support the government and they will vote against Bill 6 on third reading, as I know I will.

Thank you.

MR. HENRY: I was almost imitating the Member for Calgary-Shaw, Mr. Speaker, but I am here and I would like to speak to third reading.

MR. HAVELOCK: What were you doing?

MR. HENRY: The Member for Calgary-Shaw wants to know what I was doing. I almost missed the cue here. I did want to speak to third reading of Bill 6. [interjection] The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw assures me, Mr. Speaker, that even though his eyes are closed, he's hearing every word that I say, and I

certainly appreciate that. I know that he will value my words.

On a more serious note I do want to express some concerns about this Bill. For the life of me, Mr. Speaker, I can't figure out what this government is doing with regard to liquor in this province and where it's going. The ideological or philosophical thrust in terms of the government's actions on liquor and in particular this Bill are totally inconsistent from one move to the next.

First, two and a half, almost three years ago the government said that what it wanted to do was get out of the business of being in business, that it wanted to let the free market prevail and let market forces do what they will, so the government decided to privatize all of the operations with regard to the sale of liquor. Without notice to municipalities, without concern for communities the government, through closure, forced a Bill that allowed the government essentially to sell off its liquor sales and the assets.

So what we saw all throughout this province and certainly in my constituency, downtown Edmonton, was a rapid proliferation of private liquor stores. The municipality was rushing to catch up to try to get in appropriate zoning, because that sort of business, while legitimate and while legal, has its place in our communities but not in every neighbourhood and not at every corner. It credited out to the municipalities, then, who did rush and try to get in some sort of regulatory system at that point.

The government wasn't fully straight with us about that. Although they said they wanted to get out of the business of selling liquor and beer and wine and they wanted to deregulate and let market forces prevail, after all of these liquor stores got through the hurdle of their development appeals and found locations and were able to set up operation, the government decided that it was going to open up the sales to let any entrepreneur be involved. Then they reversed that decision and decided that, no, they wanted to have control. Through Bill 6 they wanted to have control with regard to who sold liquor and where it was sold and how it was sold.

Well, I don't want to go into all of the problems we had with regard to how the government sold off its assets and what sorts of losses they took when they did privatize liquor sales, but I do want to point to one inconsistency. On one hand, the government says, "We want to have free market principles prevail, and we don't want the government running everything," and I wholeheartedly agree. I think there was a strong case, albeit it was not very strongly made, to say that perhaps the day had come that we didn't want government to be actually selling the liquor, that instead we want government to take a backseat to that. I'm not going to go into all the problems and the reasons that I couldn't support that Bill at that time, but I do want to say one statement, which is: had the government shown it could manage that transition in a responsible way and had it consulted and worked with communities, perhaps they would have gotten more support for that proposal.

The government won't let me as a citizen of this province go into any liquor store or grocery store and buy my liquor. What they want is free market forces to prevail, but when the large grocery chains decided they wanted to be involved in liquor sales, the government immediately backpedalled and said: "Oh, no, no, no. We want free market, but we want to protect some people." It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that if we're going to have government out of liquor sales, which I don't disagree with, and we're going to have free market principles prevail, which I don't disagree with, we should allow that to happen.

4:50

Specifically in terms of Bill 6, part of the problem is that it gives a lot of power to the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission. This commission will have the power to determine whether a major grocery chain can start selling wine or beer – you can pick up your wine and beer when you're picking up your apples and oranges – or whether indeed we'll stick with the inconsistencies of the current government with regard to the regulation of liquor.

Specifically in Bill 6 there are some problems with regard to the video lottery terminals. Of course, our caucus is very clear on the record with regard to the existence of video lottery terminals. I don't want to go into that at great length, but this Bill obviously is not supportable because of the government's stand on all of this.

Again, this particular Bill appears to me, from my reading, to reduce the levels of appeal for somebody or some body who applies to the Gaming and Liquor Commission for a licence. It doesn't allow recourse to the courts, and I have some problems with that. It seems to me that individuals and companies who aren't pleased with a decision should have more recourse than is allowed for in this Act.

This Bill has a funny inconsistency as well in that the Bill will allow sales of bottled liquor or contained liquor on election day but won't allow bars and lounges to be open on election day. I find that puzzling. I mean, it seems to me there's a principle here, that either we should say that on voting day, on election day, we're not going to have liquor available for purchase in any way or we should say, yes, we will have it open. Again we have an inconsistency from this government whereby on election day an individual is going to be able to go in and get a bottle of wine or a bottle of liquor or a bottle of beer and sit on the back porch or front porch or in front of the election station and drink it, yet they won't be able to go into the particular lounge or bar across the street and do exactly the same thing. I'm having trouble understanding that inconsistency. I've read the *Hansard* for those who participated in this particular debate, and I haven't found where that's been adequately dealt with. That's another concern about this Bill.

This Bill also requires an annual report of the commission to be created, and I'm pleased about that. I want to go on record as congratulating especially the Minister of Health and other ministers for improving the time frame between the end of a government agency's particular year and the tabling of its annual report in this Legislature. It wasn't that long ago in this Legislature when the hon. Treasurer was the Minister of Education and the minister of community health as well. I can remember when that hon. minister two years after, three years after a year-end would table a report, and he was part of that government who did that. I can remember the hon. Minister of Labour in his previous incarnations, when he would bring forth reports and we would have these reports two or three years after the year-end.

I'm pleased that in Bill 6 there's a requirement for an annual report to be distributed, but what I'm concerned about is that although the practice of the government – and I want to be clear – I believe has improved dramatically in this particular regard over the last couple of years, there is no time frame for the production of that annual report. So we could be sitting here in the year 2000 looking for the annual report of the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission for 1996 and still be waiting for it. There would be no recourse. There would be no requirement. There would be no way for the opposition to stand up and ask the

minister responsible for the commission: "Where is the report? How come you haven't outlined the annual report?"

It seems to me that in the legislation there should be a requirement not only for an annual report, which I acknowledge is here, but there should be a requirement for the contents of that annual report, what should be in the report, especially given the nature of this particular commission, as well as a time frame, whether that be six months or nine months after the fiscal year-end, when that report should be produced.

I'm puzzled as to why the government hasn't seen fit, and I'm wondering if it is part of the overall strategy and approach of the government to have less accountability in this Legislature and to have more business done in the government caucus or in the cabinet room, where information was just kept there. That's a trend that I've noticed with some worry over the last three years: the diminishing respect for this Legislature by the government, the diminishing value that it puts on the purpose of this Legislature.

Again, I'd like to see in this legislation not only a requirement for an annual report but for the specific contents of the annual report so that we can rely on there being certain kinds of statistics issued every year with regard to consumption, with regard to revenue in gaming, with regard to number of licences, with regard to who gets the licences, what sort of group and that sort of thing. As well, there should be a requirement in the legislation that would dictate when that annual report would be produced and released to the public. It isn't in the legislation, and it's something that wasn't supported by the government.

The other problem I have – I remember in committee the government members defeating an amendment that would have fixed this problem, and I never did see a rationale that made any sense to me – is the exclusion of liquor information from the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. It seems to me that one of the things Albertans are going to want to do over time with this is make sure that we have adequate information about consumption trends in terms of liquor and gaming in our province. It seems to me that individuals should be able to have the right to access information about gaming in our province, about the level of gaming, about the relative proportion of total revenues from gaming that is actually going to the charitable and other community purposes it's designed for.

With respect to this particular Bill liquor information would not be accessible. If I were an entrepreneur and wanted to look at importing wines from particular countries, there would be no requirement under this Act, when I went to the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission, for the commission to give me a breakdown by country of imports of wine and sales in terms of the liquor information that is excluded from the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. It would not be available to the public. So if I wanted to find out what countries we've imported wines from and what regions in Alberta they have sold best in, information that should be available to the general public, the commission could deny me that information under this particular piece of legislation because there's a specific exclusion from the freedom of information and protection of privacy legislation in Bill 6.

Again specifically on Bill 6, I have a concern that every time we see a piece of legislation whereby there's a public concern and there would be a want by members of the public potentially to access information, we're seeing repeatedly this government putting in clauses that exclude certain information from the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Either we have a freedom of information Act in this province or we don't.

I mean, if the government wants to put a clause in every second piece of legislation that comes in that says, "This particular piece of information is not available to the public under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act," then why don't they just come back and amend the legislation, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, or even get rid of it altogether, if that's their wish?

5:00

It's a disturbing trend, and it seems to me the government is trying to play politics with this issue. The Premier is running around the province waving his hands and saying: I'm the guy who brought in freedom of information and protection of privacy. But you don't see any of the 50 members across the way running behind him and saying: except, except, except, except, except. Oh, no, they're just sitting on their hands and doing what they're told, because of course we know that's how it operates over there.

So, Mr. Speaker, I do have some concerns about the exclusion of liquor information from that Act. Again, as an opposition member I can recall that shortly after being elected as an MLA, an individual who runs a small business in my constituency and with whom I've had some dealings over the years in fact came to see me because he was applying to get a licence to import wine for his restaurant. He wanted to sell specifically to restaurants, and he wanted to bring it from Greece. He had been denied that permission by the liquor board at that time, and that responsibility is now with this particular commission, the Gaming and Liquor Commission. At that time he asked me if I could intervene, and I said, "Well, as an opposition member I can try." But I made it really clear that I couldn't ask the liquor board and that I wouldn't want to ask the Gaming and Liquor Commission to break any rules or regulations but that what I could do was advocate and make sure that he was treated in the same way anybody else would be treated. That's my responsibility as an MLA: to ensure that the system is treating everybody equitably.

Under this particular Bill, if I wanted in this situation again to go to the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission and ask them how many people have applied for licences to import wine and how many of those were approved and how many were not approved and what were the reasons and give me some categories, I should be able to access that information as an MLA to then be able to go to this particular individual who had a complaint or a concern. Perhaps I might say to him: "Well, you know, only one out of 10 ever gets approved, and here are the kinds of reasons. You fit into one of these reasons. Therefore, they probably made a judgment, whether we like it or not, a judgment that was fair and that was treating you the same as anybody else."

However, under Bill 6 that particular information would not be available to myself or to anybody else under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. So I wouldn't be able to go and say with confidence to my constituent: here is the reason – and it's a legitimate reason – that you've not been approved. Now, I do want to put on the record that indeed I did talk in this particular case to the liquor board and to the individuals and asked them on what basis they made their decision. They were very up front and told me why they made the decision. I looked into it a bit more, and it occurred to me that perhaps they didn't have all the information in front of them. So I made sure that that was provided to them and asked them to reconsider, which they did. This fellow did get a licence and is now importing wine from Greece and supplying several very good restaurants in Edmonton-Centre and in other ridings.

I daresay that I'm sure many of the members across the way

here who at least temporarily live in Edmonton-Centre go to restaurants, certain restaurants in their constituency, and I want them to know – and the Member for Calgary-East is sitting there. I want him to know that when he goes to a restaurant and orders a good bottle of Greek wine, he can thank the Member for Edmonton-Centre because there may be a chance that that particular bottle . . .

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

Point of Order Clarification

MR. AMERY: Mr. Speaker, I don't drink.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The point of order is not specified, but the hon. member wants to assure for clarification, Edmonton-Centre, that he does not drink, his religious convictions.

MR. HENRY: Mr. Speaker, I certainly didn't want to imply – I do know that about the member. I would apologize if I inferred anything. I was thinking of a situation where perhaps after a Thursday afternoon, when we've worked really hard and what not, the hon. member would come across the way and say: Member for Edmonton-Centre, let's go out and have dinner together, and I'll buy you a bottle of wine. If he wanted to buy a bottle of wine for the Member for Edmonton-Centre in a Greek restaurant, he may be able to do that, and he might pick one that was there because the Member for Edmonton-Centre did his job and asked that board.

Debate Continued

MR. HENRY: In summary, Mr. Speaker, if I may, I do want to say that while I appreciate the downsizing and the efficiencies, I'm going to have trouble supporting this Bill because I think it's poorly drafted and doesn't address some of the fundamental issues that we've asked to be addressed.

Thank you.

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

MR. SEKULIC: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to make a few comments on Bill 6 in its third reading. I'm going to try to keep the comments brief because I know that others of my colleagues wish to speak yet to this Bill.

Now, I'm one who's often stood and spoken in this Legislature about amalgamation and streamlining and attempting to eliminate duplication and increase efficiency. Even on this occasion I will remain consistent with those beliefs that we should. So from that point of view the principle, I believe, of the Bill overall is a good one. However, when I have gone through the Bill and attempted with my colleagues to put some amendments through to try to improve the Bill, we ran into a brick wall.

Mr. Speaker, in particular, I have at the request of a number of organizations in my constituency distributed this Bill, because many of the nonprofits in my constituency, in Edmonton-Manning, were concerned that there would be implications or potentially negative impact upon their organizations with regard to gaming. So I have distributed it for their consumption and for their feedback. However, this is a fairly detailed and fairly comprehensive Bill, and it's something that's quite difficult for volunteer organizations to go through quickly. I'll have to just

put forward some of the concerns which remain or which, when I was in discussion with them in meetings, they put across to me with their first read of this, just their overview of this legislation.

In particular there was the issue of registration of gaming workers, Mr. Speaker. It's getting more difficult in Alberta to get volunteers, to recruit new volunteers. Although Albertans are very much a giving people, there's only so much recreational or leisure time that they have. You know the work/leisure equation: the more you work, the less you have for leisure. As you know, most Albertans are putting in extra hours, working harder, so it's quite taxing on them then to utilize their leisure hours to provide time and effort for nonprofit activities.

Now, section 39(2), which you'll note is registration of gaming workers, refers to exactly that: the registration of workers.

No person provide gaming workers to a gaming licensee unless the person is registered to provide gaming workers or is a facility licensee.

Now, the difficulty that some of my constituents have with this, in particular those involved with nonprofit organizations, is: will this section in any way hamper or alter the way in which their volunteers are signed up as gaming workers? I haven't heard yet in the Assembly from the government or from the hon. minister of transportation and lotteries any assurance that in fact this process of recruiting gaming workers won't become more cumbersome and more difficult, whether there's any additional burden now upon those organizations.

One of the fears was that there are the criminal records checks – I think they cost \$15 per individual – and these nonprofits were concerned. Now, would they have to do criminal record checks on all of their volunteers in order for them to qualify under section 39(1)? I couldn't assure them, and I haven't heard any assurance from the government on this issue yet. So that was one of the areas that I thought was potentially contentious, and I would even at this point like to hear from either the sponsor of the Bill or, for that matter, any government member who was briefed in caucus on the issue some assurance that this in fact won't become more cumbersome for those Alberta volunteers, who are working so hard in making Alberta a better place to live. In fact, I would define them as the Alberta advantage.

5:10

Mr. Speaker, the next section that I had some difficulty with was the entire area of registration of gaming supplies. Now, so often you hear hon. members rise in this Assembly and speak against the Big Brother syndrome, and I know my hon. colleague from Peace River is one who is, I guess, cautious in introducing any more regulation. In fact, he has the role of trying to taper off the number of regulations that we have in Alberta which don't serve a purpose or which in fact duplicate. But here's an area where we're now attempting as a government to register the providers of gaming supplies: registration of gaming supplies. So we're telling the marketplace who may and who may not sell or distribute gaming supplies and under what conditions they can do that.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I've had the opportunity to walk through a few of those suppliers who sell and distribute gaming supplies, and what I saw on the shelf wasn't at all dangerous in any way. Yet here we have government, a government who otherwise would remove themselves from overregulating or overburdening the marketplace or, for that matter, from intervening in the marketplace, directly intervening in the marketplace. It seems like if it's not a direct protection of some sort of monopolistic environment, certainly it's the tendency towards it. Maybe I'm

reading too much into that, but certainly I do fear that there's a little too much Big Brother in that. It's not regulating the suppliers of some of this equipment, but it's regulating the activity of gaming that government is most appropriately located in. So I think the focus is slightly misplaced. However, having said that, they seem to be putting the regulation of gaming at a greater distance from itself while somehow grasping control of the distribution of gaming supplies. It just seems a little bit ironic to me that that would occur.

Mr. Speaker, on this past Saturday I had the privilege of opening up a bottle of Cabernet Sauvignon, which I had made at my father's place earlier in September. Now, this is important because this pertains . . .

MR. DINNING: Did you pay the tax, Pete?

MR. SEKULIC: No, the Treasurer couldn't get any component of my expenditures in that area, although he was eager to, Mr. Speaker. [interjections] I'm trying to answer the hon. Treasurer's question.

It was a fine bottle. In fact, I purchased the grapes at Frank Spinelli's at the Italian Centre downtown. Good grapes they were. I then took the grapes to my father's place because it's tradition, it's custom that we'd make wine at my father's place.

MR. DINNING: Then blame it on your father; we'll get him.

MR. SEKULIC: This has happened over the course of many years. Mr. Speaker, this is where I in fact may have broken . . .

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Provincial Treasurer, you're invited to be next on my list once the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning completes his talk on this important Bill.

MR. SEKULIC: Mr. Speaker, having opened that fine bottle of Cabernet Sauvignon, the grapes having been purchased in Edmonton from a local supplier, and having taken those grapes to my father's place and made the wine there, later in the process, maybe two months down, we transported the wine or part of the wine back to my place. Now, this has been ongoing for many years. I know I do it, and I know many other people in this city and other cities across Alberta do that. They make wine together.

When you take a look at section 83(1), a section which I was not previously aware of – and consequently the only thing I can plead with regard to this law is ignorance because I wasn't aware it existed – what does it read? “An adult may make, in the adult's residence, wine, cider and beer up to a quantity permitted under the regulations.” Now, the catch is here because I made some wine at my father's place, not my place. So here I am an adult making wine in someone else's place. I appear to be in contravention of this law. Mr. Speaker, then I also made wine at my own residence, a different batch – it was a Merlot – but the total was the quantity. Now, I made a total of 120 litres, so I'm unaware of whether I have violated any of these laws. My concern is that there are many Albertans out there to whom this could be in fact a law that is a hinderance and doesn't need to exist. If it has been on the books for a number of years, then maybe we should revisit this. The Liberal caucus did attempt to introduce some amendments which would have remedied this problem, but without any debate they were rejected.

Now, I have a concern here because I may have violated a law. I don't know yet. Certainly I don't expect that if we did change

the law, there would be a retroactive exemption for myself. Certainly if I've violated the law, I must pay the fine. But here's the kind of problem we're setting up Albertans for.

So I would like to see that prior to this Bill passing, we take a look at hoisting this Bill, permitting the broader community an opportunity to look at some of the implications on, as I mentioned earlier, in my constituency some of the gaming workers, Mr. Speaker, and on the second issue, in terms of home brewing, where people make wine, cider, and beer, we revisit this right now in the current session so we don't have to revisit it this fall. That certainly would be a waste of taxpayer's money. Not addressing this issue, on the other hand, I think is somewhat irresponsible, because clearly many individuals in my community of Edmonton-Manning and in the broader community of Alberta partake in these activities and may unknowingly be in contravention of existing Alberta statutes.

Mr. Speaker, with those comments I would ask that my colleagues in this Assembly review this very closely and don't permit this Bill, Bill 6, to go any further until we address these critical concerns.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I want to add to comments made by the last speaker, particularly with respect to section 83 of the Act.

MR. HENRY: Tell us about your wine, Laurence.

MR. DECORE: I guess I'd better take the protection of the Canada and Alberta evidence Acts before I make these comments. Thank you, hon. member, because yes, I have made wine.

MR. FRIEDEL: It doesn't do any good in here anyway.

MR. DECORE: That was a joke, hon. member.

I have made wine for a number of years. The point is, Mr. Speaker, that Italians, Portuguese, Ukrainians – at least in the communities that I travel in, there are many clubs, there are many families that get together and make wine and beer. I think the hon. Member for Stony Plain probably knows a few people in a family that do that.

MR. KOWALSKI: They called it moonshine, Larry.

MR. DECORE: Moonshine. You're right. He'd better take the protection of the Canada and Alberta evidence Acts too.

The point is, Mr. Speaker, that there are clubs in this city, there are clubs in the province that have people coming to a residence or a place where with great glee and with terrific scientific aplomb they go after the making of wine and cider and beer. To say, as this section says, that you can only do it in an adult's residence and the adult must be the person that does it, means that the nephew or the cousin or the grandfather or the third cousin or the member that's part of a wine club or a beer club can't participate in this.

Mr. Speaker, there are many instances where a family can't afford the kinds of presses that are needed for the making of wine. Some of these presses are \$200 or \$300 or \$400 in cost. It makes sense for a family to buy one press and to do it at the father's home or at the nephew's home or wherever.

I'm asking that hon. members on the other side draw this provision back, clean it up, and allow for what has been taking place in Alberta for years to continue. Mr. Speaker, I think this is a serious blemish in this particular Act.

Thank you.

5:20

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

MR. DALLA-LONGA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I feel I need to say a few words as well, particularly as it relates to the liquor section of this Bill. I watch with interest how members from this side are getting up and addressing this Bill, and no one from the other side seems to have any interest in this. They're just going to get up and, I guess, vote for this Bill. They just sit back in their chairs and just don't do anything. I guess it's proof that pet rocks can get elected. [interjections] They're starting to come alive now. It's just about quitting time, so they're starting to come alive.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, the Bill talks about the ability to . . . [interjection] I never knew pet rocks could talk.

I'd like to speak to 83(1) as well coincidentally enough. I think that this section is one that is going to be very difficult to enforce. I know that in my case I have a very good friend who makes wine for me, and he makes it in his residence. I think, if I read this Bill correctly, it's going to put me offside. I mean, I can't go over to this fellow's house, help him make wine, and then take this wine back to my house. What's the sense of that? Obviously, the government is endorsing the wine-making equipment industry because it's going to compel me to go out and buy my own wine-making equipment. I don't think that's really the business the government should be involved in. I think I should have the freedom to go over and make wine at a friend's house, take that wine back to my own house. Why should I be forced to make it in my house? Why should I be forced to go out and buy the equipment? Now, maybe members on the opposite side don't understand this because they don't make wine.

AN HON. MEMBER: They make a lot of money.

MR. DALLA-LONGA: All they do maybe is make money or more likely spend money, but, Mr. Speaker, I think, particularly in certain cultural circles, that this is a very important tradition to people. I think this is an infringement on their tradition. [interjection] No, not making money, hon. member, making wine.

I can appreciate that some people don't drink. Some people don't have any interest in that, but really if we're to have – and I guess maybe this cuts across Bill 24 – respect for other people's culture, this section offends that. As the Member for Edmonton-Glenarry talked about, there are clubs that get together in someone's garage or some specific meeting place where they can make this wine, get together and make wine as a group. It's a social event.

Here we have a section of the Bill, probably drafted by someone who doesn't drink or doesn't know anything about making wine, who says, "You have to make it in your own house." Well, suppose, Mr. Speaker, that I don't have a basement in my house. Suppose I live in an apartment. This is going to preclude me. Do I have to make it in my bedroom? Do I have to spend the money to have the residence? What's the significance of making it in your residence? This is going back to the olden days where you had all these archaic rules.

We've got an important change here, though, Mr. Speaker. We've got an important change here. Now, where is that? It's in here. It says that you'll now be able to drink on election day, but they're still going to keep bars closed in here. I guess that's because they're worried about some of their voters not showing up on election day. What's the significance of now allowing

people to drink on election day but not allowing them to make it in their residence? We're back to the archaic rules. I think what may happen here, Mr. Speaker, is that there's probably some fear that there's going to be some revenues lost or something.

Mr. Speaker, I just felt compelled to speak to that. I'm sure there are a couple of my other colleagues that would like to speak on this side, because I know the pet rocks on that side are just going to sit back and get up and vote when they're told to.

Thank you.

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

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a couple of comments on Bill 6 as well. The indication is that there are a lot of places in the Bill where inequities are created which result in how different people are handled under the same situation, how different conditions exist that provide for discrimination in terms of how the same kind of issue can be addressed. We've heard a lot of talk in terms of the election day impact. It's the handling of sales of liquor by the different organizations, also the approach that they take to gaming in terms of the access they have under the licence. So when we start to deal with how different Albertans are treated, we have to deal with it from the perspective of that equity issue. This Bill doesn't address that.

Another issue that I wanted to speak briefly on is the openness that's provided by the reporting capacities of the Bill, that's provided by the freedom of information aspects of the Bill. Then we have to have a look at how the type of information that's provided fits into these concepts of openness and accountability that exist within the concept of the Bill.

We look at some of the issues that come up in terms of section 66, where it talks about a double kind of standard that exists in terms of both the firm, the premise, the person holding the licence for a facility being responsible for the conduct of the people on that premise, and in the same vein the people themselves are also responsible for their conduct. Then you end up with issues that come about in terms of who is ultimately responsible when those kinds of issues do come up.

The same comes up in the section that deals with sales to minors in the sense that the owner of the facility licence carries responsibility for the supervision of that, yet we also then go in and make the minor responsible for not purchasing. Yet when we look at it, how do we have the option to deal with the enforcement when we're dealing with a minor? How do we deal with that? The parameters and the mechanisms are not outlined in terms of dealing with that, talking about the minors.

The final point I want to just address briefly is that as I go through the Bill and look at a number of different sections, it seems that what we're having is that everywhere we look at this Bill there's another class of licence, another process licence, another access licence. So what you end up with is this seeming like the government is creating a whole set of new mechanisms to raise money.

We've heard a lot of talk about section 37 and whether or not we can make wine at a friend's place and then transport it to our own home. If we look at the second clause of that section, where it deals with the issue of a licence, in essence there the clubs that produce wine as a recreation issue are going to now have to have a licence so that they can get two or three people together to combine and make liquor or wine for their own consumption. This is in essence going to create another process. How do we

make sure that people are aware of the issues that are addressed by the licence and . . .

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Under Standing Order 4(1), the Speaker does leave the Chair until 8 this evening.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:30 p.m.]

