

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: Thursday, May 23, 1996

1:30 p.m.

Date: 96/05/23

[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: **Presenting Petitions**

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

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of a number of businesses and a number of clients of those businesses that are located on Highway 2 immediately south of Red Deer. They have been put out of business by this government's expenditure, a needless expenditure, of \$13 million. There are 972 signatures on this petition, sir, and they demand some kind of recognition of their problem.

head: **Reading and Receiving Petitions**

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the petition I presented yesterday with respect to funding for independent schools now be read and received.

THE CLERK:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to treat Grade 1 to Grade 12 students attending Independent School the same as public school students, in regard to instructional grant funding.

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

MR. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that the petition I tabled in the Legislature yesterday with respect to opposition to amalgamation of Catholic and non-Catholic school boards be now read and received.

THE CLERK:

We the undersigned, residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to urge the government of Alberta to maintain Catholic school boards and to oppose any move to amalgamate Catholic and public school boards.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

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

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table six copies of Keyano College's 1994-95 annual report and six copies of the Alberta College of Art and Design annual report for 1995.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I have four documents to table. The first one is a copy of a letter to the hon. Premier

from a human rights activist named Doreen Spence, who would be well known to him, registering her opposition to Bill 24.

Next is a letter from Georgia Black, chair of the Outreach Committee, Scarboro United Church, indicating her concern with the government's stand on Bill 24.

There is a further letter dated May 17 from Martin S. Bell of McKinley Rise S.E., Calgary. This is a copy of correspondence to the Premier indicating his concern with Bill 24.

Then finally, correspondence from the Epilepsy Association of Calgary dated May 16, the original having been sent to the hon. Premier, urging the government to reconsider this Bill since "the Human Rights Commission needs to be independent."

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

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table copies of two letters. One of them is dated May 6 from the German-Canadian Association of Alberta to the hon. Premier regarding their extreme disappointment with the elimination of funding to heritage language schools in our province, and secondly, a letter from Rosemarie Nahnybida of Sherwood Park titled "Multiculturalism an advantage for Albertans," which expresses the concerns of the writer against Bill 24 and is also an article that appeared in the *Journal* on May 21.

Thank you.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to table with the Assembly four copies of a letter to the director of the Alberta Law Reform Institute. The letter relates to a question asked by the Leader of the Official Opposition yesterday regarding a paper prepared by the Health Law Institute in Alberta.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, the Chair would like to bring it to your attention that seated in the members' gallery this afternoon is a group of grade 9 students from the Rockyford school in the Drumheller constituency. They are accompanied by their teacher Mr. Robert Procter and his assistant Jolayne Christensen. It is my great pleasure to introduce them to the Members of the Legislative Assembly, and I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the members.

The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you a business administration student from the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology who's gainfully employed as a STEP student in Calgary-Varsity and is also an athlete in her own right in the synchronized swimming field. I'd ask Leslie Ring to stand in the members' gallery and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: **Ministerial Statements**

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

International Missing Children's Day

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, hon. members. When a child goes missing, it is a tragedy for the child, the family, and for the community. When a child goes

missing, it is felt by the entire community. The RCMP has over 50,000 names of missing children in their Canadian registry. Most of these children have been abducted by a parent or a stranger. Others may have run away and been reported missing by their parents.

In Alberta we care a great deal about children. Across the province over 7,000 people are already involved in the redesign of services for children and families. Communities are working together to make sure that children are safe, healthy, and happy. All Albertans play an important role in keeping children safe. Organizations such as Child Find Alberta are working with children, families, and the community to keep children safe. When a child is missing, Child Find Alberta works with the family and the community to try and find the child and return them safely to their home. Of the families that have registered a missing child with Child Find Alberta, there is a 92.5 percent success rate in finding these children. Child Find attributes their success to the contribution and commitment of the community in working together and supporting their efforts.

May 25 is International Missing Children's Day, set aside to rekindle hope in the search for missing children. I urge all Albertans to recognize the efforts of Child Find Alberta and our communities in working together to protect our children, to reduce the number of children who go missing, and increase the number of children who are returned safely to their families.

Thank you.

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

MS HANSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's often been said that the future of tomorrow lies with the children of today. Unfortunately when a child goes missing, it is felt by all of us because it is a tragedy that simply should not happen. Whether a child is abducted by a parent or a stranger, it is a terrible loss to both the family as well as to the community in which the child lives. Today as we reflect on International Missing Children's Day, we must both support and encourage the organizations that are dedicated to finding children, and we must look towards finding solutions to prevent children from enduring such misfortune.

Children deserve our protection and our guidance, and they need to know that they are safe. We must do everything in our power to ensure that the objectives of organizations like, in this case, Child Find Alberta are supported. Organizations like Child Find underscore the responsibility of governments to safeguard the well-being of children and of the vulnerable in our society.

Thank you.

head: Oral Question Period

1:40

Support for Families

MS CARLSON: Mr. Speaker, the true symbol of a responsible government is revealed in how it takes care of the vulnerable members of our society: our children, our elderly, and those dealing with sickness. This government has chosen to follow another symbol, that of protecting its friends and supporters at the expense of the vulnerable. For instance, in Alberta this government is willing to pay over \$3 million in health care fines, money that could help Albertans, all in order to protect a few wealthy individuals. All of my questions are to the Premier. Why is there no more money for health care, even for families fighting to receive experimental treatment, yet there is enough money to keep

paying fines for contravening the Canada Health Act?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, with respect to the latter situation, I understand that in one of the situations the appeal board has ruled that the young person involved will in fact be double-listed and will be eligible for treatment at the expense of Alberta health care in the United States.

Mr. Speaker, the whole issue of facility fees is still being discussed. As the minister has indicated, this government is willing to give that up, providing we can have some resolution as to whether physicians can operate outside the system and inside the system. That is being negotiated.

Mr. Speaker, this has absolutely nothing to do with friends. Anyone who happens to support this government – and the majority of the people in this province support this government – are referred to as these special friends of the government. Well, we have a lot of friends in this province, a lot of friends. As a matter of fact, the latest poll shows that 65 percent of Albertans are indeed our friends and our supporters.

MS CARLSON: Not enough friends to pass the Redwater test.

Mr. Speaker, why is it that families in this province have to embark on a media blitz in order to access needed medical health care treatment?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals and I think the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora pointed out yesterday that these decisions should be in the hands of physicians, those people who have the medical expertise to make the right decisions. On that point I agree with him.

MS CARLSON: Mr. Speaker, can the Premier tell us if families being forced to sue the government in order to receive health care or families being forced to sleep in vans are examples of a government that takes care of its vulnerable citizens?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister of Family and Social Services has gone out of his way to investigate that particular incident, and I will have him supplement as to what is being done in that particular case.

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

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much. Of course, Mr. Speaker, we do work very hard in Alberta to restructure the social support systems, and you can be assured that our intentions are good. I would also advise Albertans that we do have the best programs as far as children's services in North America. All we are trying to do in redesigning these programs is to make sure we improve the delivery systems to the most high-needs areas, and that's children. I believe that the direction we are going is the right direction. We've managed very successfully to reduce the supports for people that want to get back into the workforce and training programs, which allowed us to redirect hundreds of millions of dollars over to the high-needs areas, such as children's services.

Specific to the incident in Alberta, it's very unfortunate that incidents of this nature happen, Mr. Speaker, but we have to realize these are very sensitive areas. We have over 800,000 children and young adults that are under 18 years old in Alberta. Only 1 percent are provided some form of social support subsi-

dies. Most Alberta children and families and young adults are doing very, very well, and they are to be commended. There are very few incidents of this nature. When families move across Canada, we do have to be concerned as to how tax dollars are utilized. In this particular case the families had financial support in other jurisdictions. When they hit Alberta, we will support them as much as possible to reach their destination. That's exactly what we did, and we'll continue doing that.

Redwater By-election Brochure

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Speaker, the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth is apparently not the principle which guides this government when it talks about health care in Alberta. An election brochure circulated by the Conservative candidate in the Redwater by-election claims to tell the real facts about Alberta's health care system. Now, the real facts turn out to be nothing more than half-truths. Will the Premier please confirm that despite what the Tory campaign sheet says, real spending on health care has not tripled when adjusted for inflation and that in fact Alberta now spends the lowest per capita of any province in Canada on health care?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, all I can say is that if anyone should know about half-truths and distortions, it would be the Liberals because they've been doing it in this city and the surrounding region now for almost three years.

MR. MAR: Half-truths are what you'd expect from the half-wit.

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Speaker, point of order. Stick around, Minister of Community Development. Stick around.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier please confirm that, contrary to the statement made in the brochure, Alberta is in fact no longer "Canada's leader in programs for seniors" and in fact has cost seniors millions of dollars by making them pay for health care premiums, increased user fees for medical equipment, and increased prescription charges?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, indeed through the public consultation programs with seniors the seniors themselves said: if we can afford to contribute something, if we can afford to pay, we will do so. It is the policy of this government to look after and to look after very well and with a tremendous amount of care and compassion those seniors who cannot fend for themselves.

I will have the hon. minister responsible for seniors supplement.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

MR. MAR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In examining seniors' programs through the lengthy consultations that we've had over the last three years, clearly a number of themes emerge, and those themes and those principles have been incorporated in the Alberta seniors' benefit program as well as the special needs assistance program. Seniors were indeed saying: if we're in a position to help ourselves, that's what we'd like to do, because we choose to live our lives independently and free from the confines of government programs if we're able to do so. Individuals would clearly choose to live on their own. They were looking for all kinds of choices as far as the types of accommodations that they live in.

The principles of reducing costs and streamlining administration and putting money towards those people who need it the most

were clearly principles that were enunciated by seniors themselves. If you have a limited amount of money, clearly you would dedicate that money towards people who need it the most. That does not mean that we could any longer have universal programs assisting all seniors. Instead we chose to concentrate our resources to those people who need it the most, and that meant doing so on an income-tested basis. As a result seniors have looked at these programs, and they understand them better now. We also have made accommodations for individuals who were falling through the cracks through the special needs assistance program, which has assisted many, many thousands of seniors in the province of Alberta.

MR. SAPERS: No wonder seniors don't trust this government, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier please set the record straight and confirm that in spite of the claims made in the Tory brochure, health care spending in Alberta has in fact been cut by more than one-half of a billion dollars in the last two years with more cuts still to come in lab restructuring and other very essential parts of the health care system?

MR. KLEIN: There's no doubt about it. About a half a billion dollars has indeed been removed from health care. I don't think that's unreasonable in light of the fact that health care costs have been skyrocketing over the past 10 years in particular, that the system is now being challenged to cut down and reduce overlapping and duplication, to cut down on administration, to reduce the amount of abuse and perhaps overuse of the system that is now taking place, to de-emphasize institutional care, especially when home care is available and can be delivered.

Mr. Speaker, that is indeed true. Health was challenged, just as Education was, just as advanced education was, just as Family and Social Services was, just as virtually every area of government was to find new and better and more efficient and more effective ways of doing things.

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

1:50 Delivery of Farm Implements

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All businesses, big or small, rural or urban, who use specialized equipment can be held hostage by their parts suppliers, who might provide high cost or slow service. This is part of business risk. The market has remedies for such poor business practices. Firms who behave this way are often sued, have poor reputations, are reported to better business bureaus, lose customers, and, thankfully, go bankrupt. Yet this government in almost Orwellian fashion has passed Order in Council 218/96, which under the agricultural implements Act provides for penalties of up to \$2,000 if repair parts are not available within 72 hours of the request being made by a farm implement owner during the normal season. This government is now directly in the business of regulating business practices. My questions are to the Premier. How can a government that claims to be getting out of the business of being in business, that states that it is committed to regulatory reform, pass such an order in council without public debate or, for that matter, using the Law and Regulations Committee to see what the public would think of such intervention in business practices?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to have the hon. minister of agriculture supplement. This order in council was brought

about as the result of concerns being expressed by farmers, especially this year when seeding is late, that any kind of delay would result in disastrous results relative to the loss of crops. There has to be some guarantee that they're going to get those parts so they can continue their work in the fields.

I'm amazed that this question was not asked prior to the by-election in Redwater. I think that the hon. member withheld that question, Mr. Speaker, for fear of offending the farmers in Redwater. After the by-election there's no fear whatsoever of offending those hardworking farmers.

THE SPEAKER: The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development wishes to augment.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that perhaps a proper foundation, a proper background to this process be given. This was a recommendation that came about as a result of a Farm Implement Board recommendation. The groups that constitute the Farm Implement Board are manufacturers, dealers, and farmers. These are the groups that constitute the Farm Implement Board. The manufacturers actually are represented there and recommended this, the dealers actually are part of this and recommended this, and the farmers are part of this process and recommended this. So this is a group, the whole group, that is making this recommendation.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's unfortunate that our urban Liberal members don't recognize the needs of the rural community. There are many times that 72 hours constitutes the good weather for a whole harvest season in this province. Seventy-two hours and that's your whole ability to obtain a year's work, and to be held at ransom because someone is not delivering that particular product.

The other element of this and the key element of this is that it's only parts that are key and fundamental to the operation of that piece of equipment. These are not some of the supplementary parts that can be obtained by jobbers. This also only pertains to the busy season. It's when that particular piece of machinery has to be used during the harvest season, for example, if it's harvest equipment or seeding season if it's seeding equipment. So it's very specific. It's been recommended by all segments of the industry.

DR. PERCY: My question is to the hon. Premier. Is it now going to be government policy to directly intervene in business relationships in other sectors to specify turnaround times for repairs, billing practices, who you can do business with? I mean, it's shades of Glen Clark.

MR. KLEIN: Glen Clark? If anyone has the shade of pink, it's the people over there. Mr. Speaker, I heard the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre allude to this order in council as being communism. If anyone knows anything about communism and left-leaning attitudes, it's the Liberals. As a matter of fact, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Belmont is sitting on this side of the House because of the left-leaning attitude of that party. The Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul is now sitting on this side of the House because of the left-leaning attitude of that particular party. Just today the Member for Edmonton-Norwood is now sitting on this side of the House because of the left-leaning attitude of the Liberal Party, and I welcome him.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Premier explain the government's priorities when they're willing to pass an order in council that guarantees 72-hour turnaround for parts for agricultural implements but there's no bill of rights for patients guaranteeing their accessibility to the health care system in a timely fashion?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, again, we support our farmers. It is indeed the engine that drives and sustains our economy. I will have the hon. minister supplement.

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

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I commend the members of the Farm Implement Board because it was the dealers, the manufacturers, and the farmers that have come together to recognize the acute requirements of the industry.

It's so sad and so tragic that we have members making analogies that indeed are totally unrelated to the needs of the major industry of this province. There's no economic input whatsoever from the hon. member's suggestions as far as growth in this community is concerned, as far as recognizing the actual requirements of this industry. What has been recommended here is indeed to recognize the limitations that the farming community in Alberta works under. In Saskatchewan, for example, in the neighbouring province, they have taken the step that indeed every implement agency has to locate a parts depot in their province. It's rather strange that the socialist-leaning tendencies of that particular group haven't asked for that as well. What has been asked for here and what is being delivered is the fundamental requirements for the industry to allow it to carry on and to allow it to continue to grow. [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Order. There have been many contributors to the noise, on both sides of the House.

The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Disclosing Criminals' Identities

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the hon. Minister of Justice. A new law in the United States will allow communities to be advised when convicted sex offenders move into their areas. How does this law compare to components of the new crime strategy announced by the Minister of Justice on April 18 of this year?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I understand, the American program would see every convicted sex offender being identified as soon as that sex offender moved into a community, and it only deals with sex offenders. The program that we've initiated in Alberta as a protocol is based on a case-by-case analysis. It involves the chiefs of police, the commanding officer of the RCMP, First Nations police, and Corrections Canada working together with the Department of Justice to identify risks when individuals are released from custody, whether they are sex offenders or whether they are other dangerous and serious offenders, and then determining, by using the expertise of those bodies – the policing organizations and Corrections Canada and our own people in Alberta corrections – an appropriate response

and an appropriate way to identify these individuals to the community if they do in fact pose a substantive risk. I think our program, quite frankly, is more proactive and is more responsive to individual cases. I think the Americans perhaps could learn something from what we've initiated here in Alberta.

2:00

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister explain what factors are considered in deciding whether information about an offender will be released?

MR. EVANS: Well, certainly, Mr. Speaker, the seriousness of the offence, first of all; the number of times that an offender has been convicted; any rehabilitation that may have taken place during the time the offender was incarcerated; whether that offender took any counseling, was receptive to any counseling; and then of course a review at the time of release as to the likelihood that the offender would reoffend and pose a risk to society. So all of those factors are taken into account in determining whether or not there should be notification and how broadly that notification should occur.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: is there a risk of offenders suing those who release information about them, and what measures are in place to protect corrections officials and police officers from these types of lawsuits?

MR. EVANS: Mr. Speaker, under the protocol that we signed in April, we have agreed to indemnify the law enforcement agencies for the work that they would do on our behalf. Under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act we have a requirement to notify communities if there is a risk of significant harm to public safety. It is through this protocol that we have delegated that duty to those who are in the street, to those who are best capable of identifying issues, identifying concerns and getting that information out to the general public. We have said that if you're taking on that responsibility on our behalf as a result of responsibility we have by legislation, then we should be indemnifying you as well. So we have an indemnification in place, and we will again continue through an ongoing process to monitor the collection of this kind of information and how it gets disseminated out into communities.

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

Support for the Poor

MS HANSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week a little girl burned to death in a bus in Calgary. In the face of this tragedy we have department spokesperson Bob Scott contravening the Child Welfare Act by revealing to a Calgary radio station that a child welfare investigation of this family is under way. My questions are to the Premier. Mr. Premier, can you explain why Bob Scott breached the confidentiality requirements that this family is entitled to in Alberta under the Child Welfare Act?

MR. KLEIN: That is an opinion being offered by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Beverly, Mr. Speaker. I'll have the hon.

minister supplement. To present the facts relative to this very unfortunate incident, I'll call upon the minister.

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, truly this is a very unfortunate incident. I said earlier in the House today that we are restructuring the services to children and families of course and doing our best in designing a system that will improve the services to children and families.

Specific to this issue, Mr. Speaker, the press has asked me personally in the last two days in fact to see if there is an investigation going on. What I said to the press was that there is not an investigation but there is a review, just like any new application that comes into our file. I've always indicated that there is a review done, an assessment of the family needs so we can determine how we may assist the family.

The press asked me in return: is that an investigation? I said: no, it is not an investigation; it's a normal review that's done for every application that comes into contact with our workers. Therefore, nothing has changed. We will continue with the policy where we will review each application that comes in and assess the needs, to determine how we may assist the family to become independent and self-sufficient. That's all we've done in this particular case.

What the press may have asked the individual staff member may have been different than what the policies are of the department, Mr. Speaker. I stress the fact that, yes, we assess each application that comes in and do a complete review to determine how we use taxpayers' dollars to assist these families. I know the Liberals would do differently.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MS HANSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Scott's words were very clear on the Calgary radio station.

My second question is to the Premier. Why is it that this family has no rights of protection of personal privacy in Alberta when just four days ago your government agreed to accept the changes in Bill 24 to protect the poor from discrimination?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I have to reiterate that this was indeed a very, very unfortunate incident, but to my recollection – and perhaps I stand to be corrected – it was not the government or the Department of Family and Social Services that went to the media on this particular matter. Again, I'll have the hon. minister supplement.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, when we get into contact with families of this nature that are moving across Canada, for an example, to seek to improve their lifestyle, we assess the situation and try to assist the family as much as possible to reach their destination safely. In this particular case there was an unfortunate accident. We tried our best in relation to assisting the family, and we will continue doing that. We are sincerely trying to design programs that will accommodate the needs of families.

The issue of poverty in Alberta was mentioned. It is unfortunate that there's poverty anywhere. When you look at the statistics as far as poverty in Alberta, back in 1989 the poverty rate in Alberta was 15.5 percent, in 1992 it went up to 19.4 percent, and in 1994 that dropped to 15.9 percent. So the poverty

rate is being dealt with by various new initiatives in Alberta.

When you look at other jurisdictions in Canada where these families may have come from, Mr. Speaker, the poverty rate in Nova Scotia, for an example, which is a Liberal province, is at 17 percent. Newfoundland, which is another Liberal province, is at 19 percent.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I've asked the Liberals opposite to come up with some decent recommendations on how we may restructure services to children. Their report has been reduced now. Their latest report is down to four pages from six pages. I expect their next report to be two pages. [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Order. The hon. Member for Pincher Creek-Macleod.

Municipal Government Restructuring

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Municipal government restructuring, particularly for small towns, villages, and hamlets, is a reality that all jurisdictions, both big and small, are addressing. Small town councils in my constituency and the people who live in these fine communities not only have different views on restructuring but do not necessarily understand the process and feel that they are being mandated to do something that is against the public will. My question today is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Why are municipalities examining dissolution or amalgamation, Mr. Minister?

MR. THURBER: Mr. Speaker, as we're all aware, municipalities do exist to govern a community and to provide services to residents in those communities. Change is occurring constantly in our societies, and we have to recognize and acknowledge that some municipalities in the formal sense of the word may cease to exist across this country in the future.

2:10

Several of the reasons that they are considering dissolution in some cases in the small villages in particular is that they're concerned with their tax levels, they're concerned with their debt loads, and there's been a massive restructuring going on under the removal of the Western Grain Transportation Act and some of the things that have happened there whereby grain companies are closing a lot of elevators. In the case of a small municipality, say of 300 or 400 people, if they happen to take two or three of the elevators out or all of the elevators out, well, it basically cuts their assessment base in half.

Their tax levels certainly have to go up in order to provide the money to provide the services. There's no doubt that the reduction in the grants from the provincial government has added to that, but these municipalities basically come forward to us and ask to have us participate in these.

MR. COUTTS: The supplemental is to the same minister. Would the minister provide the House information on the process used when a municipality is considering dissolution?

MR. THURBER: Well, certainly, Mr. Speaker, we have asked the councils in these various municipalities to do up some business plans, do some forward thinking, and to try and recognize whether they're in trouble or not before they actually get there. It is always at the request of the council of that municipality that we get involved as Municipal Affairs.

Then we go through a process called a dissolution study, which

basically points out what the future holds for them, and they provide us with the information. Then it goes from there to a vote of council. We have some funds available to try and restructure, to help them along with this restructuring. Basically we're there to facilitate.

MR. COUTTS: What is the provincial government doing to assist municipalities such as my town of Granum and the public in that town who wish to examine municipal restructuring?

MR. THURBER: Mr. Speaker, that's a good question. After they have asked us to become involved in it, to help them through the restructuring process – and it doesn't always mean dissolution. It could be amalgamation with another municipality or a variety of different scenarios that deal with their servicing and the provision of those services. Our emphasis is basically on trying to make the systems work. We provide information. We make sure that the public is fully informed through the council. We try and point out to them what the advantages or disadvantages are of the direction that they want to go.

In the final analysis, we do facilitate the process of either dissolution or nondissolution. In some cases, in spite of the fact that their taxes may be reduced by up to 70 percent, they have decided to stay as a small village.

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

Seniors' Programs

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's seniors are fearful of what the future holds for them. This Premier promised the seniors in his 1993 campaign brochure, and I quote: we will continue our support of those people who built today's Alberta. Seniors' benefits and programs have been virtually and literally shredded. Property taxes for those seniors in some cases doubled, prescription drugs now cost 50 percent more than they did before, and now they face the highest inflation rate in Canada. My questions are to the Acting Premier. The deputy Premier seems to have disappeared somehow. When will you live up to these promises to support the people who have built Alberta's future?

MR. DINNING: I will ask the Minister of Community Development to respond, the minister responsible for the Alberta seniors' benefit program.

Mr. Speaker, for the Member for Edmonton-Mayfield to stand in his theatrical way, allegedly theatrically caring way, and pontificate to Albertans about seniors and the seniors' benefit program makes a mockery of representation. I believe that what the minister will tell us is that we remain the province with one of the most comprehensive packages of benefits that are payable to seniors in this province, people whom we care for and value very dearly on this side of the House.

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier this afternoon in question period, there are a number of principles that have been incorporated in the Alberta seniors' benefit program. Clearly seniors were saying: for those people that are in greatest need, that's where we want to concentrate our resources. That's what the Alberta seniors' benefit program does.

We're also concerned about people who are falling through the cracks. We're happy to say, Mr. Speaker, that those make up a very small number of seniors in the province of Alberta, but we do have this special-needs assistance program. I'm very proud of

staff from my department. They've gone out of their way to help people and help find people who are falling through cracks. People from my department have physically gone to people's homes in an effort to track them down to provide them with the assistance that they are entitled to.

I don't think you can ask any government department to do more than that: to actually go out and track these people down and get them the assistance they're entitled to. Many of these people, in fact, did not know they were even able to access things like guaranteed income supplements or old age security. So through the efforts of people in my department we've actually gone out and helped these people access programs they didn't even know they were entitled to.

With respect to things like prescription costs, Mr. Speaker, it's true that prescription costs for some individuals went from 25 percent to 30 percent of the cost of the prescription, but that was a necessary thing to do in order to cap the costs of high-cost prescriptions. What the opposition members fail to say is that many people who have high-cost prescriptions are now actually paying less than they did before because the purpose of the program was to protect people who had very high-cost prescriptions and put a cap on their prescription costs of \$25.

Mr. Speaker, there have been a number of things that have been done to help improve the lot of seniors in the province of Alberta and protect those people that were in the greatest amount of need.

MR. WHITE: Mr. Speaker, again to the Acting Premier: in view of the Acting Premier's answers, is this Acting Premier telling the seniors of the province of Alberta that they are better off now than they were three years ago?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, what I've said is that a number of seniors across this province have said to the Premier and have said to all Members of the Legislative Assembly that they knew we had a problem with respect to a deficit that was growing out of control, that they saw that was a problem that was not only going to cause them problems but more importantly cause their children and their grandchildren problems if it went unchecked. They said to us that where they could carry some of that burden to reduce and eliminate that deficit and begin to pay down the debt, they felt it was their responsibility to do so. We value that support. They're helping us to carry that burden, and we will continue to be sensitive to their needs.

I'm sure the Minister of Community Development would want to respond even further.

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, it's very difficult to answer the hon. member's question in this sense. There are approximately 275,000 seniors in the province of Alberta, and it's very difficult to assess the individual cases because each individual has to be looked at on a case-by-case basis. That is the nature of the Alberta seniors' benefit program. Very clearly our emphasis has been to help out those people at the lower end of the income scale, and there are no ifs, ands, or buts about it: those people are better off.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of changes that have been made to seniors' programs over the course of the last three years. We're sensitive to that. Frankly, we recognize that because we've gone from a universal program in some of these areas to an income- or needs-based assessment, some people who are at higher income levels will clearly lose their universal benefits. So we've been sensitive to that, but we note that more than 50

percent of seniors in the province of Alberta access the Alberta seniors' benefit program. A number of them will receive cash benefits pursuant to the program. A number of them will have no health care insurance premium paid. Their health care insurance premium is paid for pursuant to the Alberta seniors' benefit program.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental?

MR. WHITE: No supplemental. My questions have been asked and answered. [interjection]

THE SPEAKER: Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

2:20

2005 World's Fair

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta advantage is not confined only to our economic position in Canada; it's about our presence on the world stage. In just a very few days Calgary is about to step onto that international stage and present its bid to host the world's fair in 2005. My questions today are to the deputy Premier. Could he please give us a progress report on Canada's 2005 exposition project and its good news?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is absolutely correct. This is an exciting Alberta initiative led by a group of Albertans mainly located in Calgary who are taking Calgary, taking Alberta, and taking Canada to the world by submitting a bid to the bureau of international expositions in June. Calgary and Canada will ask to host the world at an international exposition in 2005, which happens to be our 100th anniversary.

While the province has provided a modest contribution to their efforts, more importantly it is the over 500 volunteers who are taking on this project with the enthusiasm and gusto that you would expect of Albertans in taking on this kind of a challenge. It's reminiscent not only of the Commonwealth and Universiade Games here in Edmonton in 1978 and 1983, but it's reminiscent of the 1988 Winter Olympics in Calgary and of annual events that take place, whether it's the Ponoka stampede or the Calgary Stampede or Edmonton Klondike Days. It's that same kind of enthusiasm that is gripping this project as it tries to take Calgary and take Alberta and take Canada to the world.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MRS. BURGNER: Yes. Again to the Acting Premier: could you please tell us who is actually making the presentation to the Bureau International des Expositions?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, while the bureau itself is made up of government representatives, the actual presentation is not made by government. It's made by these over 500 volunteers to the bureau, saying that this volunteer-directed corporation in the city of Calgary wants to make this bid and seek the opportunity to host the 2005 international exposition.

The Premier is unable to attend because of the Western Premiers' Conference and the important agenda there, so he has provided a video tape presentation to back up Mr. Perraton and his committee. As well, I will be attending on behalf of the government in Paris, where the official bid will be launched to inform the bureau of our bid. The Member for Calgary-East has

served on the bid committee. As well, Calgarians have taken that exceptional step of reaching out and asking Councillor Robert Noce from the city of Edmonton to participate as a representative as well.

So this isn't just a Calgary thing, Mr. Speaker. It's not even just an Alberta endeavour. It's Canada. Ottawa, the federal government, made the decision to allow Calgary to be the Canadian bidder for this important exposition.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental.

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you. For my final supplementary I would like to clarify for Albertans what we can expect following the presentation in Paris. [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Order please. The time for question period is scarce. This has been a rather exotic question to begin with, not really clearly a direct responsibility of the provincial government.

Therefore we will now move to the hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Special Places 2000

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year the government promised that it would protect environmentally significant areas in the province under the special places program. Some critical areas that the public has nominated, such as the Little Smoky River area, are presently suffering new damage from oil and gas drilling and logging while the selection process is taking place. My questions are to the Minister of Environmental Protection. What will the minister do to stop further commercial incursions into the Little Smoky River area, which is classed as a provincially significant area and contains the core range of a dwindling caribou herd while the special places process is under way?

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, the Special Places 2000 program has been moving along very well. Of course, we have in place a provincial co-ordinating committee. They have received many, many nominations. As a matter of fact, in some areas like the old Bow-Crow forest reserve there's only a very small portion of it that is not nominated. We also set up what we term an interim committee, and it's the responsibility of that committee to look at the nominated sites. If in fact within one of those nominated sites there is an area that has some international significance, we would in fact look at ways that we could in some way protect the area until the provincial committee has had an opportunity to look at the entire nomination and determine whether this area is one that is necessary to fill the gaps that are still in that region. We must remember there are six regions within the province, and from a scientific point of view it's been determined that the mountain and the montane are in fact represented in the current protected areas. So the interim committee would also take that into consideration when they look at a particular site.

THE SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the minister this then. He spoke about interim protection for internationally significant areas. What about interim protection measures for provincially significant areas that have been thus declared by your own committee?

MR. LUND: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's very important. Maybe I have to go over the part that the hon. member maybe missed in my first answer. The situation is that in much of the Rocky Mountain and the montane – in that region within the province out of the scientific side – that area has no gaps. That doesn't prevent nor does it stop us from looking at other areas within those regions, and we plan on looking at those areas. The fact is that the interim committee would take into consideration, when they are looking at a nomination, if in fact there are still gaps within that region from a scientific point of view. I have told the provincial committee that even though that region is full, doesn't have any gaps, we will be looking at some areas that have had a lot of attention drawn to them and would expect some portion of those areas to be identified and eventually would receive a designation as a special place.

THE SPEAKER: Final supplemental?

The hon. Member for Three Hills-Airdrie.

Economic Outlook

MS HALEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last night in Calgary the Liberal Prime Minister said that Canadians will probably have to live with high unemployment. He also said that since the Liberals took power, unemployment remains disappointingly high.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism: what is this government doing to ensure that a Prime Minister's promise of high unemployment for Canadians does not affect Albertans?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

MR. SMITH: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Unlike Liberals, unlike federal Liberals, unlike provincial Liberals, we know in Alberta that a deficit-free environment in fact does create jobs. We have the lowest unemployment rate in Canada at 6.8 percent and a deficit-free province. We don't want made-in-Ottawa policies to run this economy. We want this economy to mirror private-sector growth to create the environment that allows the private sector to grow. In fact, they've come through in spades.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Give me more, more, more, Murray, more, more.

2:30

MS HALEY: You want more, you got more. Could the minister of economic development explain to the House what government policies and private-sector decisions have led to our growth?

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, in fact we've stated very clearly that taxation and deregulation are the key strategies to move towards fiscal and economic growth. If you take a look at the initiative put forward in the incremental reduction in the machinery and equipment tax, in fact the challenge to the private sector to put their money where the jobs are – and they're coming to Alberta. They're coming in terms of Union Carbide relocating in Joffre. As a matter of fact, in the wonderfully vista-like constituency of Lacombe-Stettler there's a \$2 billion investment.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, here's a good headline: "Work begins on a \$120 million plant at AT Plastics Inc." That's in Edmonton. In fact Inland Cement, a \$16 million expansion to support the

private sector who are putting people to work and the lowest unemployment rate, the highest employment rate in Canada.

MS HALEY: My final supplementary, then, to the minister is: if the private sector's doing such a good job, why are you looking at a new economic development strategy for Alberta?

MR. SMITH: Absolutely a great question, Mr. Speaker, because in fact what you do when you've blown through the envelope, when you've surpassed targets and you've succeeded, as Shakespeare said: a man's reach, a woman's reach, should exceed their grasp or what's a heaven for? That's in fact why we're starting to create a new economic development strategy, so the children of the people, of the members here and of the members in the press gallery can go out and find meaningful employment, places where they can work in a Lomond or in a Carmangay or an Edson and they can make \$50,000 a year in a pulp plant, in a forestry project. They can participate in the great tar sands growth of this province. That's why we need an economic development strategy that reflects what the private sector is doing in this great province. [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Order. Well, question period ended with a bang.

Before moving to Members' Statements, might there be an agreement in the Assembly to revert to Introduction of Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

head: **Introduction of Guests**
(*reversion*)

MR. BRASSARD: Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure today to introduce to you and to this Assembly Mr. Jerry Sherman. Jerry is known to all and friend of many in this Assembly. Jerry and his wife, Carol, and family have been transferred to Ottawa. We ask that he rise and receive the best wishes and sincere thanks of this entire Assembly.

Thank you.

head: **Members' Statements**

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

Salvation Army's Women's Health Centre

MRS. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to tell the Assembly about one of the success stories in the restructuring of our health care system. The Salvation Army Grace women's health centre, which has relocated to the former Foothills hospital's nurses residence, was officially dedicated on Monday, May 13, by the Minister of Health, the hon. Member for Chinook.

Mr. Speaker, this dedication was a celebration to honour excellence and to salute this true centre of excellence for women's health. Cost-effective, contemporary, and caring, the Grace sets the example for all other community health facilities and personnel. The relocation of the Grace's health centre's program will lead to provision of improved services for women through collaboration and co-operation with other partners on the Foothills hospital site, building truly a seamless delivery of women's health programs in the Calgary region.

The focus on those unique characteristics of the caring, compassionate, and supporting philosophy of the Salvation Army has been maintained in this new centre. This is truly a community health program with a holistic approach that includes the physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual needs of women. This resource centre is a valued service where women find the tools to balance their many roles in today's complex society. A very unique program that is there is the comprehensive breast health centre.

As a Calgarian I'm extremely proud of this excellent centre, which is located in Calgary-Bow. I would like to congratulate the Salvation Army for their vision of women's health – truly they are pioneers in this field – and the Calgary regional health authority for their commitment to women's health and for facilitating the integration in such a way that the integrity of this unique program has been retained.

I would like to make special mention of Phyllis Kane, who is the vice-chair for the Calgary regional health authority; Caryl Miller, who is the chair of the Salvation Army health council; and especially the Grace staff who have ensured that the standards of quality of care will continue to be delivered in the same compassionate and client-focused way. Congratulations to all, for it's truly a world-class centre of excellence.

Government Accountability

MS CARLSON: Mr. Speaker, Members of the Legislative Assembly are elected by the people of Alberta to represent their views and interests. The duty of each member is to scrutinize the activities of the government and to call them to account for their actions or inaction.

The government of Alberta is responsible to the people and must act and be seen to act on behalf of all Albertans. In view of these responsibilities, it is curious, then, that this government refuses to allow a full debate on issues such as the Individual's Rights Protection Act in the face of considerable opposition from Albertans throughout the province. The government refuses to consult with Albertans and aggravates the situation by invoking closure and not allowing the duly elected representatives of the people to speak on behalf of Albertans.

Their refusal to listen to the people is just as apparent in the government's mishandling of our health care system. The so-called restructuring initiatives of the government are nothing more than a way of introducing a two-tiered health care system, one for the rich and one for everyone else. The government seems more interested in the health care needs of Americans than Albertans.

The government's disregard for the spirit and the letter of the Canada Health Act puts the entire health system at risk. This government fails to listen to the people and also thwarts the efforts of the Liberal caucus to make the government accountable. The members opposite continually avoid questions and deflect issues. Mr. Speaker, what is the government afraid of? What is it running from? Rather than acting responsibly, this government arrogantly limits debate on issues important to Albertans and their future.

Alberta is a great province. Its people are strong, hardworking, fair, and compassionate. It is time for this government to listen to the people. It is time for them to be accountable to all Albertans. It is time for this government to act responsibly and serve all Albertans regardless of their geographic location, their heritage, or their beliefs.

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

Calgary Inner-city Health Services

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Community health centres are a key platform in our health restructuring in Calgary, and they are vital to our capital plan. But I would like to speak today not on the closure of the Bow Valley centre, where the focus of discussion has been located. I would like to speak about the vision of the needs of our inner city and the health opportunities we have for them.

Mr. Speaker, inner-city health is not a concept. It is a process. At a time when change is available, we must look at the opportunities. We cannot lose sight of the distance, the journey, or the goal to articulate and meet the needs of inner-city health. The diversity of Calgary's inner city is as complex as the health care system itself.

I am pleased that the regional health authority has announced a task force, chaired by Bruce Dunlop, to deal with communities and make recommendations for change in health care resources and services.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that we embrace this full potential. Communities are more than their boundaries. They are malnourished children, immigrant mothers, and isolated seniors. Their health needs are impacted by prenatal classes, appropriate management of medication, oral hygiene, and immunization, residential services for the disabled, and community support for the mentally ill. It's respite care for caregivers, it's education, it's training for those who work in geriatric fields, it's community foot clinics, it's blood pressure testing, it's socialization, and it is pastoral care.

Domestic violence, poverty, and substance abuse should not characterize a neighbourhood but must trigger a co-ordinated response from all levels of government, health providers, and social agencies.

The question is: how do we shift our focus from a facility-based model to a community-based one? The key solution is the involvement of the communities. That process should be expanded. It should involve all communities, be they Bankview or Inglewood. Communities must be involved in identifying their own needs and developing their own programs.

I urge the regional health authority to continue to expand the representation of all communities on their task force process in the establishment of community health centres in Calgary.

head: Projected Government Business

2:40

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

AN HON. MEMBER: Come on, Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: What's the point? [interjections] What are we doing next week?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, when the House does adjourn today, it shall do so pursuant to Government Motion 15, which was passed by this Assembly on April 3, 1996. I would suggest that the proper business of the Assembly will be conducted in the constituencies of this great province next week.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mayfield had a point of order. We'll deal with it and then the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mayfield.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

MR. WHITE: Well, thank you, sir. It's not with a great deal of pleasure that I rise today to deal with this point of order. I do believe that the rules were breached when the Acting Premier was in the Chamber. It's unfortunate that he's missing this now. He's the same member that catcalls and hoots and generally degrades the honour of this House, sir, which you have been doing your level best to uphold. Then he gets to the point of having to lower himself to actually accuse this member of false motives.

I can tell you, sir, that there's not one person in this room that does not have the same motives I have when speaking out for Alberta seniors. Every single member in this House, in this Legislature, has seniors that are in difficulty. Every single one. When that member stands in this Legislature and says that this member is acting or is somehow or other building some kind of theatrical performance just to get the point across, Mr. Speaker, that is wrong. That is in 23(i): imputes false or unavowed motives to another member.

I say to you, sir, that it lowers the esteem of this House every time a member does something like that, particularly when it deals with the motives of all the members that are elected to this Legislative Assembly. I believe it's a prima facie case, and there's really no justification for it. It's a shame that he's not here to withdraw it.

Thank you, sir.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, today we've seen many examples of what the Chair would say was inflammatory language from both sides. The Chair thinks it ill behooves . . . [interjection] Well, the Chair wouldn't think that the word "theatrics" was the worst word that was used in that exchange. Nevertheless, I think all members of this Assembly could well consider their words. We have provocative words like "half-truths" that we use, which I'm sure the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora is going to say something about in a minute. I'd suggest that the hon. Provincial Treasurer was not compelled to use those words, but the whole tone of question period today the Chair would characterize as being rather provocative on both sides. Perhaps the hon. Provincial Treasurer will have the summer to consider this matter, and maybe in the fall he may wish to recharacterize his words.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

MR. SAPERS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. You may have thought that I was going to rise and perhaps quote Standing Order 23 and talk about the increasingly juvenile behaviour of the Provincial Treasurer. That was at the point when I called my point of order, but it is on another matter, and it does relate to the document, as you anticipated. In the preamble to my question you'll recall that I did use the phrase "half-truths," and that was of course about statements made in a document that was circulated outside of this Assembly. Specifically, what I would like to draw your attention to is a statement that was made inside this Assembly by a member directed at another member. I do think there's an important distinction. So I do rise under Standing Order 23 as well as *Beauchesne* 485 and some other relevant sections of *Beauchesne* as well dealing with unparliamentary language.

What I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, is this question: do you feel that using the phrase "half-wit," that degree of insulting name-calling, constitutes unparliamentary language? I will point

out that it has been declared unparliamentary, for example, to use words such as “idiot” and “stupid.”

MR. HAVELOCK: How about “goof”?

MR. SAPERS: No, Calgary-Shaw, I don't believe “goof” has been declared unparliamentary yet, but it may be on its way.

MR. HAVELOCK: Okay. So why don't you sit down, you goof?

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Speaker, what I would ask you to consider then is whether or not, when the Minister for Community Development yelled from his seat across the floor of the Assembly the phrase “half-wit,” he was using insulting and unparliamentary language. If in fact you rule that this was insulting and unparliamentary language – and I'll note that this is not a unique case in terms of the debate in this Assembly, particularly from the hon. Minister of Community Development. [interjection] He has taken, as he did just now, to intervening in debate only from his seat and never by standing and stating on the record his interventions.

So I would simply ask you to determine whether or not this phrase uttered by that member is unparliamentary and insulting and therefore unfitting for debate in this Chamber. If you find in that regard, Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you direct the Minister of Community Development to finally stand in his place and retract the statement and apologize to this Assembly for bringing it into disrepute.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora was referred to *Beauchesne* 485. The Chair has to rely on 486(4), which states:

Remarks which do not appear on the public record and are therefore private conversations not heard by the Chair do not invite the intervention of the Speaker, although Members have apologized for hurtful remarks uttered in such circumstances.

The Chair has to say that it did not hear any of this exchange. The Chair would say in this hypothetical case that if the Chair had heard the words, the Chair would have intervened at classifying those words as being unparliamentary.

The Chair would like to deal with an outstanding matter.

Privilege Freedom of Speech

THE SPEAKER: On Tuesday, May 21, 1996, the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti raised a question of privilege. The basis for the question of privilege is a letter dated May 17, 1996, that the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti received from the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffer. The Chair invited the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti to briefly state his question of privilege, and then the Chair deferred further discussion on the matter until yesterday, May 22, 1996, so as to allow the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffer to properly respond to the matter.

2:50

The Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti and the Member for Calgary-Buffer presented their respective arguments yesterday. The hon. Minister of Justice and the hon. Member for Fort McMurray also spoke to the question of privilege. As a preliminary matter, the Chair finds that the matter was raised at the earliest opportunity and that sufficient notice was provided pursuant to Standing Order 15(2).

A letter from the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffer deals with an issue that was raised in the Assembly on May 16, 1996. On that day the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti asked the hon. Minister of Justice during question period whether the minister would “confirm that he [would] not bring forward legislation to protect convicted criminals, as suggested by the Liberal opposition.” The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffer took exception to the question and raised it as point of order. The Chair ruled that there was no point of order, only a point of clarification. The matter did not however end there.

On May 17, 1996, the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffer faxed a letter to the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti demanding an apology. The last two paragraphs of the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffer's letter are at the heart of the question of privilege. Those two paragraphs read as follows:

I respect your right of free speech but I cannot ignore your outrageous comments. I request that you forthwith apologize for the defamatory statements you made on May 16, 1996. Failure to do so will result in further action without notice to you.

Please govern yourself accordingly.

The basis of the question of privilege brought by the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti is that the letter is a threat and a form of intimidation. In a technical sense, an obstruction or the attempted intimidation of a member is considered to be a contempt of the House and not a breach of privilege. However, since these matters are closely related, they are often considered to be a breach of privilege.

The classic statement on contempt is found in *Erskine May*, 21st edition, page 115, where it is stated:

Generally speaking, any act or omission which obstructs or impedes either House of Parliament in the performance of its functions, or which obstructs or impedes any Member or officer of such House in the discharge of his duty, or which has a tendency, directly or indirectly, to produce such results may be treated as a contempt.

Griffith and Ryle, in their book *Parliament: Functions, Practice and Procedures*, state the following at page 92:

Such obstruction or impedance is essentially restricting freedom of speech in the House (for example by intimidation of those who might speak) or freedom of its proceedings.

Erskine May at page 126 clearly states that “to molest Members on account of their conduct in Parliament is also a contempt.” Examples of molestation constituting contempt are “correspondence with Members of an insulting character in reference to their conduct in Parliament,” and “threatening a Member with the possibility of a trial at some future time for a question asked in the House.”

Threatening a member is clearly a contempt or a breach of privilege in Alberta. Section 10(2)(b) of the Legislative Assembly Act lists as one of the acts that constitutes a contempt or a breach of privilege as follows: “obstructing, threatening or attempting to force or intimidate a Member in any matter relating to his office.” One may think that the references cited above contemplate threats made against members only from persons outside the Assembly; however, in the past this Chair has ruled that serious threats made by a member against another member are also forms of contempt.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray stated that it would be a breach of privilege if, for example, one member were to say to another member, “If you don't stop talking, I'll cut off another kilometre of pavement.”* The hon. member is incorrect on this issue. On September 23, 1993, at page 463 of *Hansard* the Chair ruled that threats made by a minister about action that might be taken in response to another member's statements or actions constituted a prima facie case of contempt. Of course, the matter

*See page 2104, right column, paragraph 8, lines 1 to 3

did not proceed as the minister withdrew his remarks.

The hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo* stated that his letter was not intended as a threat that he would commence any action outside the Assembly; rather, it was only intended to put the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-*Wapiti* on notice that the hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo* would resort to whichever Standing Orders are available to allow him to challenge what he felt were false and misleading statements unless the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-*Wapiti* apologized. If that is what the hon. member intended, then he should have stated that clearly in his letter. Given that the member had already raised a point of order, the Chair cannot imagine what further action could have been taken in the House. This reinforces the view that the reference to taking "further action" meant taking action outside the Assembly. The Member for Grande Prairie-*Wapiti* believes that the words constituted a threat.

The Chair recognizes that there may be some ambiguity over what is meant by the words "failure to do so will result in further action," but this is fairly well-known legal language, which includes the possibility of initiating a court action. This is especially so when the author of the letter is a senior lawyer. As the hon. Minister of Justice put it: the Member for Calgary-*Buffalo*'s letter "is a formal demand. It implies to any lawyer . . . that further action will be taken, normally civil action."

In making his case, the hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo* also referred to Joseph Maingot's text on *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* and in particular a passage on page 13, which reads as follows:

To constitute "privilege" generally there must be some improper obstruction to the member in performing his parliamentary work in either a direct or constructive way, as opposed to mere expression of public opinion or of criticisms of the activities of the members (for example, threatening a member for what he said in debate, contemptuous reflections on members, allegations of improper conduct during a proceeding in Parliament, or allegations that a chairman was biased).

The hon. member suggests that what this passage says is that a threat to a member for what he says in debate from another member is not a point of privilege but only a point of order. In the Chair's view it says just the opposite, that behaviour such as "threatening a member for what he said in debate" is an example of a breach of privilege and not merely an expression of public opinion.

The Chair is rather disheartened by this whole matter, especially since this Assembly recently dealt with a similar issue involving an individual outside the Assembly who threatened to bring legal action against the Leader of the Official Opposition for comments made in the Assembly. The Chair also finds repugnant the whole idea of members writing to other members to complain about what was said in the House. If a member has a valid objection to what was said, then raise a point of order. Matters arising in the House should be settled in the House. In this instance, there can be no excuse that the Member for Calgary-*Buffalo* is not well versed on the subject of privilege.

After reviewing all of the material and arguments, the Chair finds that the letter written by the hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo* constituted a threat to the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-*Wapiti*, which amounts to a contempt. Accordingly, the Chair finds that there is a prima facie case of privilege. Pursuant to Standing Order 15(6) if the Speaker rules that there is a prima facie case of breach of privilege, "any member may give notice . . . of a motion to deal with the matter further." The

Chair would also add that a complete and unequivocal apology by the hon. member will invariably close the matter without the necessity of doing anything further.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, I'd ask for unanimous consent to be able to respond very briefly and take you up on the invitation that you proffered a moment ago.

THE SPEAKER: Is there consent of the Assembly to allow the hon. member to proceed?

MR. DAY: Just a brief clarification, if I may, Mr. Speaker, of the intent as I heard it. The member is standing because he wants time to fully and unequivocally apologize. If I could have that clarification that that's what is about to happen, not reopening the debate.

MR. DICKSON: I hadn't intended on engaging in debate; I was following up on the invitation that I thought was being offered by you, Mr. Speaker.

3:00

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

MR. DICKSON: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I clearly acknowledge the ruling of the Chair, and I'm certainly prepared this afternoon to apologize, since my letter to the Member for Grande Prairie-*Wapiti* apparently has been found to have created an impression that I was threatening any action against him which would occur outside the Assembly. That was not my intention, and I certainly apologize, sir, for crafting a letter in a fashion that could give rise to that inference or that conclusion.

THE SPEAKER: Just for the record it would appear that the Chair left out a word in reference to the hon. Member for Fort McMurray's intervention. The Chair should have said, "The hon. Member for Fort McMurray stated that it would not be a breach of privilege." The word "not" was omitted in the original delivery.* The Chair apologizes.

The Chair thanks the hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo* and the Assembly for allowing this matter to come to a conclusion.

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

Bill 24
Individual's Rights Protection
Amendment Act, 1996

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move third reading of Bill 24.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

THE SPEAKER: Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Oh, the hon. Member for Edmonton-*Avonmore*.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to make one final attempt, as it seems evident here, to try and convince the government to relook its intention with regard to pushing through to the inevitable conclusion Bill 24. I think that over the last

*See page 2103, right column, paragraph 7, line 1

couple of weeks since the debate was permitted on this particular Bill, we have seen a lot of discussion take place in the community or at least get started, and we've seen a number of those points raised here in the Legislature as well, primarily, I say, from this side. Nonetheless, in being as aggressive as we were with regard to the shortcomings on Bill 24, in particular the shortcomings with regard to the multicultural aspect, we have scored some success along the way. I want to share that success with the multicultural community, who did a lot to keep the government's feet to the fire on this issue, as well as with the heritage languages group, who also put forward a lot of good items for debate on what I termed an ideological assault on multiculturalism by the government through the ushering in of this Bill and also through their attempt to abolish the Alberta Multiculturalism Act.

We have scored a small victory in getting the government to relook its position with response to the word "multiculturalism," and I note with some pleasure that they have at least popped the word back into the title of the Bill itself as well into the new name of the forthcoming amalgamated commission. While I am very much opposed to that amalgamation of the Human Rights Commission with the Multiculturalism Commission - I am opposed to that - I do recognize that the government obviously had some difficulty with that as well but in the end found it in their wisdom to proceed. We did manage at least to get the word "multiculturalism" put back into the Act, and I notice that one of the amendments that I tabled back on May 6 for the House was included in its entirety, that being one of the main principles underlying the concept of multiculturalism in this province. So I'm pleased that that one was put in, that being:

Whereas multiculturalism describes the diverse racial and cultural composition of Alberta society and its importance is recognized in Alberta as a fundamental principle and a matter of public policy.

Unfortunately, there were three or four other recitals that I had hoped the government would also put back in. It seems they were quite selective in going through the original Act to only put in one or two references from the original preamble, and I'm curious to know why, because the other ones that were left out were the ones that started to demonstrate some action being required by the government. I refer specifically to the fourth recital on one of my amendments which said the following:

Whereas it is fit and proper for the Legislature of Alberta to make a commitment to a policy that recognizes the multicultural heritage of Alberta and the contribution made by ethno-cultural groups to that heritage.

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

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

Point of Order Third Reading Debate

MR. HERARD: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Relevance. When we're in third reading, we have to deal with the contents of the Bill, not amendments that didn't carry or things that we'd like to have seen in the Bill. We have to deal with what is there. I would just like the hon. member to stick to the contents of that, please.

THE SPEAKER: Well, the Chair would remind the hon. member of what was said last night from *Erskine May* about third reading debate. It's not the same as second reading.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member is

exactly right, and that's why I quoted exactly what the government's own amendment was. I quoted that directly. That's in there, and I'm expressing some happiness over that. It's exactly from the hon. minister's own hand, if you will. But at the same time, there were a number of things that were excluded, and I think it's important that we remind ourselves that they were.

THE SPEAKER: It's not important to deliberate on what was excluded. It's what's in the Bill, hon. member, not what might have been in the Bill. No comments on what might have been in the Bill.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Debate Continued

MR. ZWOZDESKY: The other amendments that are now included in the Bill deal with the words "awareness" and "appreciation," which also were two words that were included in my amendments. I'm happy they are now included in the Bill itself because I think that awareness and appreciation are very critical to the understanding that is necessary for our multicultural fabric in this province.

One other amendment of mine which was included in the Bill and which will now be there is the following: to encourage "respect for the multicultural heritage of Alberta." I'm pleased that that part was able to be included as well. It doesn't cause the government to launch any action, as such, and I suppose that's still something that will be forthcoming. With regret, that part isn't included in the Bill. Nonetheless, we've got the word "multiculturalism" back into the Act, and I'm grateful for that. The inclusion of the word "multiculturalism" in the title now, Mr. Speaker, sends a positive message, even though it doesn't yet go far enough, because we used to have the self-standing Act. That's in the new Bill: to abolish the self-standing Act. Nonetheless, we do have that included there, so there's a sense of recognition.

Mr. Speaker, I have said that what must underlie the principles of a Bill such as this, especially in the area of multiculturalism, are four things. One is awareness, which we have included in the Bill now. Another is sensitivity toward people from a different culture. Now, that's not immediately evident in the Bill, but there are some words that perhaps could be construed as catering to the term "sensitivity."

Then we have the two key words, which I would really like to focus on, that are there, but we'll have to see how they get applied later, Mr. Speaker. One of them is "understanding." We can never move forward in this province as a diverse, cultural group of people until we have some fundamental understanding that belies all of what's been said. That fundamental understanding crystallizes in the form of respect wherein people are not only allowed to practise their own cultural traditions or their own cultural beliefs or their own religions or whatever have you, but there is a respect from others as well, from government, where the leadership should stem from, for those cultures to in fact be practised to whatever extent the individuals wish. What we see through this Bill is the possibility for that to happen entirely on its own but without any real support from government.

3:10

Now, some would argue that that's how it should be and that there shouldn't be any public funding going to this area. Well, the thing is, Mr. Speaker, that there isn't any and hasn't been any, quote, taxpayer dollars going toward this particular aspect of

our Alberta for many years now. We're talking strictly about the lottery dollars here. If you remember the report that was done by the hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler, there was a response that was very interesting in that particular report that referred to something that's covered in this Bill. The multiculturalism aspect was addressed, and they said that they would consider that funding to now be placed under the taxpayer funding scenario, removing it, in other words, from the lotteries scenario.

Well, I don't think anybody's going to fool us into thinking that multiculturalism would receive any support whatsoever in funding from the taxpayer purse. It had somewhat of a better chance here, yet through this Bill what is happening is that we are seeing all the money that was available for multicultural programs being chopped by 50 percent and that money being moved over to the human rights section in what they call the educational fund. Now, there's nothing wrong with putting moneys into that, Mr. Speaker. What's wrong is that there's nothing left specifically dedicated for the multicultural purpose.

We have based most of our arguments on philosophy, concept, and principle. Never have we really focused on the funding side. You see, if you believe as I believe that there is a public culture in this province and in this country, if you believe that there is something larger than any single culture, then we should be pledged somewhat to the development of that public culture, and we must take a careful look at how it is that we support that or don't, because it's critical to my final point on acceptance.

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

Once you've developed the understanding that it's a critical building block to harmonizing ourselves with others, you then move to acceptance. I want to stress the word "acceptance," because it's not enough to just understand that someone is from a different culture. You have to accept them as if you were accepting your own family members. That's what developing a public culture is all about. No one has ever said: let's transplant wholesale cultures here. That's impossible to do, and it's not something that we've tried to do. I don't think it's the intention of this Bill to do that either. What it is, on our side, is an attempt for us to have pointed out to the government where its shortcomings were. Its shortcomings are in fact that they have walked away from some of the important principles while popping in a few tokens along the way. It just simply doesn't go far enough.

Mr. Speaker, the other point that I wanted to comment on with regard to Bill 24 is the issue of systemic discrimination. I looked through the Bill to see if we could find evidence of what was going to be done in that regard, and it is with some disappointment that I have to express that nothing surfaced in that regard. It seems that the Bill ignores some critical recommendations in that regard. That's another reason why I was hoping the government would have taken the summer to reassess its position with regard to this Bill. It's not just the multicultural side, it's not just the human rights side but the whole of society that is really affected in this Bill. Systemic discrimination I thought would have had a place on the government's agenda. They should have addressed it or at least put it in the form of an amendment for it to come forward. I know that my hon. colleague from Calgary-Buffalo has that at his side as well.

Looking through the Bill a bit further, I see also that we have some sort of a reality that is being run away from here. It's as if to suggest that there is something wrong with the issue of human rights and the independence of the commission, which we talked

about briefly yesterday. I'm sure others will want to comment on that particular issue. If there was nothing else that the government was able to do over the summer other than to fix that particular aspect, that would have an overriding effect and impact everything else in the Bill and would have, I think, pleased a lot of people, if they have been able to change that reality and make the commission much more independent.

In recapping those four points, some of which are in the Bill and others perhaps are inferred in the Bill, I just want to stress that awareness, sensitivity, understanding, and acceptance of people from other cultures, from other religions, from other nationalities is critical here. That is why when the Bill talks about amalgamating the two commissions, Mr. Speaker – I tried to make the point before, and I'll try to make it one more time – that has such a damaging and diluting effect. That's what's in the Bill at the moment.

I would hope that the government would still in this 11th hour of the debate – and I use that figuratively because we all know it was only four and a half or five hours that the Bill was allowed to be debated. Nonetheless, in this final, desperate attempt I would hope that the government would at least have found a way to separate the two. I have no problem with them being under the same ministry. I think there is some argument that can be made that they belong in the same house, but I think clearly the Multiculturalism Commission has as its charge the promotion of the positive ideals of our cultural diversity, the positive ideals and the contributions that our groups have made and the freedom that they all have to practise. Those are things that should be celebrated. That's what this great diversity of our province is all about. So with the Multiculturalism Commission having had a track record of some 10 years now and prior to that the old Alberta Cultural Heritage Council having done a good job at promoting certain ideals in that same respect – that was an organization, Mr. Speaker, that dealt with the proactive side of the agenda.

We hear frequently that the government sees this Bill as an Act to help eliminate or to help prevent racial discrimination. Well, Mr. Speaker, if you're going to amalgamate it all into one and deal with the human rights side of it – you're dealing with the complaints portion. That's what this Bill serves to do: deal with the complaints portion. I would say that more emphasis should be put on the prevention of those types of discriminatory practices. Then the government could legitimately claim that, yes, they are really serious about doing something before it gets started. This way they're looking at it in a reactive sense. They are diluting the purposes of both, and when you try to serve two masters, you frequently wind up serving none or neither very well at all, and that is a major downfall in this Bill, to me, that they have merged those two commissions.

The other shocking part, to me, is that only after we had exposed what Bill 24 was really all about did the government then start on any kind of public consultation, as limited as it was. I'm sure a few people must have come forward and written to the government, that we weren't aware of, and perhaps some people may have even visited the government. The point I'm trying to make is that without any public consultation into this, how could the government claim that it has come up with the best possible version of the Bill? Now, I really want to flag that. I think they could have avoided a lot of embarrassment, saved the House a lot of time, and come forward with a Bill that we all could have and would have supported.

It is a constant amazement to me that we can't find better ways

of co-operation between government members and opposition, not only in this province but perhaps across Canada. Specific to this province, we have never tried to get in the way of some of the things that the government had wanted to do when we were advised in advance what the government's intentions were, and we had an opportunity to do that here. I have discussed other things before with the hon. Minister of Community Development, and we have found that we agree on many of the things under his portfolio. He knows full well, because we've been at public forums together, that I have supported many of those things, Mr. Speaker, and I really did try and really did want to do the same thing here. I would have welcomed that opportunity to have worked with the government to come out with what is best for Albertans.

The tragedy of it, Mr. Speaker, in having gone about this the way that they have gone about it, is that what I'm finding is that we have again put the whole system at some sort of public risk, if you will, because the general public feels that we should be working more co-operatively on this, especially on something as important as human rights and multiculturalism, which affects everybody in this province. Yet that opportunity was lost through the particular methods that were engaged in by the government.

3:20

So I say in sort of wrapping up here, Mr. Speaker, that we have done everything that we possibly could given the time constraints that were forced upon us and given the difficulties that were put upon us by the constant adjournment after adjournment of debate during second reading and during committee. Nonetheless, we have done as much as we could possibly do under those constraints to bring the government to a halt on this Bill because we firmly believed that there was much more to be gained and a better Bill could have resulted if they had allowed a little more time with it in the community and particularly with the Official Opposition. Only through those kinds of methods would we ever hope to really succeed in what the government purports to be one of its agenda items: to help really further the cause of human rights and the issue of multiculturalism in our province.

Mr. Speaker, I will take my chair shortly, but I just want to conclude by once more emphasizing the point that I have emphasized before; that is, the more we know about each other, the less we fear our differences. I would hope that now that the government is ramming this Bill through, they will find a way to bring about some positive actions that will impact in a very positive way the future development of this province either from the human rights side or from the multicultural side. It's far too critical an issue to go unguarded. It's far too critical an issue for the government to have curtailed debate on.

I want to just stress that my greatest feeling for this Bill is really summed up with the concept of a culturally pluralistic society where we all live harmoniously together, share together things in the home, in the workplace, here at the Legislature, on the street, in the community, in our places of worship, or wherever in a respectful way that does not infringe on anybody's rights or freedoms or their right to express whatever parts of their culture they wish to. I would hope that the government would take that message and do a little more to promote it, to encourage it, and where possible to get involved with it. That is the best solution to our problems for seeking to have as harmonious a province as we once did. I hope this Bill doesn't set us back in time more than it is attempting to advance us in furthering those great concepts.

Mr. Speaker, with those comments – I see my time is up – I

will take my place and urge the government once more in a final plea to please take a step back, take the summer, rethink this Bill, come back, and we will all try to support it in a different version.

Thank you.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to say that I'm pleased to rise in debate at third reading on Bill 24, but that wouldn't really be accurate. I think that we reached this stage with too much work undone, too many Albertans unheard, too many points of view not adequately presented. I'd want to make this general observation. It seemed to me that the government had an opportunity here to follow one of two different roads. What we had done was to set out, actually before the Bill even got to second reading stage, a set of amendments. We detailed them, 16 amendments, the changes that we thought had to be made to the Individual's Rights Protection Act to make it congruent with the unanimous recommendations of the Premier's task force. We had done that so that there would be no surprise, so that the minister would have ample opportunity to review them, to consider them, and to consult.

I don't know what sort of internal machinations go on within the government caucus, but rather than trying to work with those draft amendments and committing as much energy to try to negotiate or find an accommodation between the unanimous recommendations in the Equal in Dignity report, as reflected in the draft amendments I'd tabled on April 2 or April 3, 1996, the government chose a very different course. This was the other option. That was to take I think maybe two of the amendments we put forward on the human rights side, one after a fashion, some amendments to address the multiculturalism issue, and then to stifle debate, to shut debate down on this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, I've read in the media that the hon. Premier has said that we had to invoke closure because it looked like the opposition was just going to drag this out interminably – my words, maybe not his, but that was the gist of his comment. The reality was that at that time there had been less than five hours of debate in this Legislative Assembly on the Bill. Less than five hours of debate. In fact, I think it was four hours and 33 minutes. Now, I acknowledge that there were many questions put to the hon. Premier and the hon. Minister of Community Development in question period about Bill 24. There were certainly news conferences, and there were things that went on outside this Chamber, but actually in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, less than five hours of debate. Who would consider that less than five hours of debate would be sufficient, would be adequate, on a Bill that affects every single Albertan?

Unlike some of the misconceptions that one hears popularized so often, we're talking about a piece of legislation that protects individual freedoms and basic human rights. This isn't something for visible minorities. This isn't something for disabled Albertans. It's not something just for people who have a religion that's very different than the mainstream religion. Human rights speaks to every Albertan. It's a protection for every single Albertan. Just because I happen to be Caucasian and part of what we might call the mainstream community today, tomorrow or sometime I may find myself in a position where I'm in one of those groups that's numerically smaller in number. I may find that I'm suddenly experiencing kinds of discrimination in basic ways, discrimination in terms of trying to find a place to live or trying

to find a job or keep a job. Being an elected Liberal in Calgary, one might argue we encounter discrimination all the time in that city, every four years.

Seriously, the concern would be this. This is a Bill that I think affects more Albertans than almost any other piece of legislation that we ever see in this Assembly. The Individual's Rights Protection Act and the work of the Alberta Human Rights Commission is something that is important for every single person in this province, not just those people, not just visible minority groups. It's something that ought to speak to every one of us. Because of that, I think it would just be ludicrous to say that four and a half hours of debate is all that's warranted, all that's required.

Particularly is that the case when you look at the task force that the hon. Premier created. Why? Because he said in this Legislative Assembly – and I specifically recall asking him the question; I recall his response – that we have an old model; we have a statute that's existed since 1972, and like all things it needs review; we've got to find out if a model that was created to deal with the problems in 1972 is still the adequate model and appropriate to deal with issues of discrimination in 1994, when this process was started. The Premier got his answer. He handpicked the people that were on that panel. Some might quibble over why certain people were on that panel and why certain others were not, but you know, the Premier got elected to run the government, and he had the responsibility to choose those people, and presumably he had good reasons for putting every one of those people on that task force. When they went around gathering opinion, that was presumably because the Premier trusted those people to bring their own life experience, their own understanding of discrimination and human rights to bear on this question.

3:30

I recall the torrent of briefs that came in; 1,700 written submissions were made to the Premier's task force to talk about, in some cases problems people would experience with our human rights regime, in some cases their hopes for what could be a better human rights regime in the province of Alberta. I think it was something like seven months of public hearings, well advertised, a great deal of public attention to this.

At the end of all of that the government's task force in June of 1994 produced their report entitled *Equal in Dignity*. When I looked at that report, I was pleased to see that virtually every one of the submissions I had made on behalf of the Alberta Liberal caucus on February 15, 1994, was consistent with the unanimous recommendations in the *Equal in Dignity* report. I'm not claiming, sir, that just because my caucus made those representations, that's the reason they were reflected in the recommendations. I'd sooner think of it as: members of the Alberta Liberal caucus saw, as did this huge number of people around the community – and when I say the community, I mean the province of Alberta – problems much the same way. They identified that if you have a Human Rights Commission that is seen as being under the thumb of a single minister, people will never invest the kind of confidence and the kind of support in that agency that's warranted by the important work of that agency and that's required for that agency to be able to do the vital service that they provide for Albertans.

In any event, we had that report *Equal in Dignity*, we had the unanimous recommendations, and we then waited for the government's response. We waited and we waited and then we waited longer. Then finally – finally – a year and a half later, in December of 1995, the government produced a document entitled

Our Commitment to Human Rights. This was after the authors of the *Equal in Dignity* report had made at least two presentations to the Conservative caucus. This was after the caucus had had a chance to I guess beat each other up or whatever the caucus process was to go through this and decide what the response was going to be.

We saw in *Our Commitment to Human Rights* some curious things. We saw the government that initially said: six months is ample time to make a complaint; we refuse to extend the time. I thought that was strange. Many other Albertans thought that was strange as well, because it was inconsistent with what the government's own consultation told them. The reasoning made absolutely no sense. We saw for the first time this notion surfacing that somehow in our human rights legislation we want to be able to hammer anybody who makes a frivolous complaint or a vexatious complaint, without taking the time to ask the chief commissioner or the past chief commissioner or the past past chief commissioner, all three gentlemen who have been on record in a very public way saying: we have never had a problem; we simply haven't had a problem with frivolous or vexatious complaints. Why? Because there was the machinery in the Act before, as there will still be the machinery in the Act in the future, to dismiss complaints, to dismiss complaints that are found to be without merit.

Mr. Speaker, once again those Albertans that made submissions to the *Equal in Dignity* report and the authors of the *Equal in Dignity* report were surprised. We might have expected in the December 1995 publication entitled *Our Commitment to Human Rights* to find a more thoughtful analysis, a more considered discussion of why this government and this government caucus opposite were prepared to say: "We know better than those people. We see what they've told us, and we see it was unanimous, but because we've been elected, we're going to tell these people what the problem is. They're not going to tell us."

What we see in Bill 24 is one of these Bills that somebody has sort of brought down off the mountain, and it's been sort of hewed out, chiseled into the stone that the Conservative caucus sees Alberta in a very narrow way, in a very one-dimensional kind of way, and they're not going to let into their perspective that much broader view that came forward from the government's consultation, the broader view that's reflected in the host of Liberal draft amendments that I tabled at the beginning of April.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you that one of the biggest concerns I've had is the fact that when our human rights legislation was reviewed, we had an opportunity to recognize that we spend an enormous amount of money and resources on what is a pretty inefficient system. When you think about it, this old beaten and battered 20-year model we use for human rights protection really says that it's driven by an individual complaint. It doesn't matter that every member in the Human Rights Commission – the Member for Lesser Slave Lake will recall from her time when she was involved in the Alberta Human Rights Commission, I think at one time as a commissioner – sits back there and they wait for an individual Albertan to come forward and say, "Look; I'm the subject of discrimination, and I'm going to file a complaint, and I'm going to do it within the prescribed six-month period." Then and only then does the commission sort of swing into action, and you have this huge cumbersome policeman kind of machinery that attempts to sort out this individual's problem.

Well, I think what we've learned in the intervening 20-odd years is that there is such a thing as systemic discrimination. I don't know why it took us so long to recognize that. Why did it

take us so long to recognize that if you've got this gross over-representation of natives in your justice system, in your provincial jails, there's some kind of a problem there? Do you really have to wait for somebody to come forward within six months and file an individual complaint before the machinery swings into action? There's a problem in the taxi industry in the city of Calgary. There's a problem where there are taxi companies that you can phone up and say, "I want a Caucasian driver," and they will send a Caucasian driver. [interjections] Mr. Speaker, that's a reality. Constituents in Calgary-East tell me that, and I expect they've told their own MLA that. So why would he now be shaking his head and insisting that discrimination doesn't exist?

It sounds a little bit like the Member for Barrhead-Westlock, who the other night said: we have no problem in Alberta; there is no discrimination; we have this wonderful province where all is sweetness and light, where absolutely everybody is treated fairly on their own merits and nobody starts off either ahead or behind the starting line. Well, that's contrary to my experience. I suspect it's also contrary to the personal experience of many of the other members in this Assembly irrespective of what party they represent.

What we've got in this Bill is a Human Rights Commission that's still complaint driven. What they've found in Ontario and what the Mary Cornish task force report found was that you can spend an enormous amount of resources being reactive when really what the ideal Human Rights Commission ought to be able to do is identify areas where there's systemic discrimination and ought to be able to start making recommendations in terms of how we deal with that, how we break that down. I have an opportunity in the constituency in downtown Calgary that has the largest number of recent immigrants of any constituency in the province. One of the opportunities I have to see on a regular basis is the kinds of challenges that new Canadians face – and there are many – and the kind of discrimination that too often surfaces. I don't suggest that most Albertans practise discriminatory activity. I think it's clearly a small minority. But does that mean that it's not a problem that the government of the province of Alberta ought to be addressing? I think it continues to be an important problem.

3:40

I had hoped that our Human Rights Commission would be able to offer advisory opinions on issues concerning tolerance and racial and cultural diversity and human rights protection. I'd hoped that our Human Rights Commission would be able to identify areas of systemic discrimination, develop educational programs in a proactive way, programs that would be designed to eliminate discriminatory practices. I regret, Mr. Speaker, that that isn't what we get in Bill 24.

The frustrating thing is that the government came along and in their amendment package after the Bill came forward suddenly went from saying that six months was ample time to file a complaint to accepting one of our initiatives and bringing forward an amendment that we had requested to extend the time to one year. Now, is that because the government suddenly got some new information it didn't have before? I expect it was done because they wanted to take some of the heat off and they wanted to be able to say, "Well, we budgeted a little bit in this area." Why didn't they take the same perspective and deal with the question of independence of the Alberta Human Rights Commission?

Mr. Speaker, why would it be that the Minister of Community Development continues to go around the province asserting that

our Human Rights Commission is independent – independent, he says – when the commission is absolutely invisible in any kind of a public advocacy way, when the Minister of Justice muses about chaining inmates to work in roadside ditches beside major highways? Why is there no one speaking about discriminatory practices that happen with respect to new Canadian children that can't access necessary English as a Second Language programs? Why is the Human Rights Commission so silent when we look at native-born children, children born in the province of Alberta in a family that can't speak English? Those children are disintegrated from government support for ESL, English as a Second Language instruction.

Many more problems, Mr. Speaker, but I expect others can join the debate.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

MR. EVANS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 24.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General has moved that we adjourn debate on Bill 24. All those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Opposed, if any?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Carried.

**Bill 39
Environmental Protection and Enhancement
Amendment Act, 1996**

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Justice.

MR. EVANS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View I move third reading of Bill 39.

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

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 39, the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Amendment Act, 1996. I guess I'll start my comments by recognizing that what this Bill is, as many Bills in the Legislative Assembly have been, is an amendment Bill to laws and legislation that currently exist. It's important to recognize that fact, because the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act was a law that was enacted in the province of Alberta in 1993, that was the result of a tremendous amount of public consultation, the result of some drafts coming forward, the result of draft regulations getting the benefit of discussion.

It was a lengthy, planned kind of process to put environmental protection legislation into place in the province of Alberta. It was actually heartening to see that kind of process take place in the development of legislation. When you do develop legislation like that, there will always be issues of debate as to whether or not the Bill does certain things or does not do certain things or goes far enough in certain things. Nonetheless, it has had the benefit of

full public consultation, and it has had the benefit of input into the development of that law.

[The Speaker in the Chair]

The government itself, with respect to the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Amendment Act, certainly prior to an amendment last year or the year before perhaps and the amendment this year that is currently Bill 39, spoke highly – and perhaps well they should have – of the Act that came into force as a result of that whole public consultation process. But as we see with a Bill like Bill 39, being an amendment Act to that Act, this is a serious erosion of a piece of legislation that was pretty good legislation. As I say, there was and continues to be of course in the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Amendment Act areas where there is concern because of things like, for example, far too much discretion left in the hands of the Minister of Environmental Protection. But having said that, the Act I think could stand up to other legislation in Canada and could be seen to be reasonably good legislation for environmental protection.

Bill 39 is another of a series of changes that have taken place in a very short period of time since the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act came into force, being only three years ago, in fact less than three years ago, Mr. Speaker, in that that legislation came into force in September of 1993 and we are at this point not as far into 1996 as that particular month. So it's been less than three years since that legislation came into effect. The minister, whether by way of regulation or by way of amending legislation, has done considerable damage to environmental protection laws in the province of Alberta and through his wholesale deregulation of his department has eroded what was for a very short period of time in the history of this province some good legislation.

The Bill, Mr. Speaker, in one component, recognizing that there are a number of components to this Bill given that it is an amendment Act, deals with the creation of conservation easements in the province of Alberta. Now, conservation easements have been a topic of discussion for a considerable length of time. I know that certain municipalities have been addressing the issue themselves as it is an issue that concerns residents who make inquiries of municipal authorities about the possibility of conservation easements within the borders of that municipality. It has been the topic of conversation at a number of conferences and seminars. Essentially what it is intended to do is to allow private landholders to set aside and preserve in its natural state land that is privately held. Land that the government holds on behalf of the people of Alberta is essentially in the hands of the government to decide the future of those lands. In the case of Alberta we have the Special Places 2000 program. Some of the problems that that comes with – as the Member for West Yellowhead pointed out today, that program is not working well with respect to public lands in the province of Alberta, but the amendment legislation before us is including the ability for private landowners to conserve land in its natural state by way of a conservation easement.

One of the specific provisions of the Bill, Mr. Speaker, is a component of the conservation easement portion that really nullifies any positive impact that this change could have brought about. Yes indeed, the conservation easement approach is better than what currently exists in the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act, which was at section 22 of that Act, but what the minister has done is that by virtue of the amendments, the

changes he's putting forward in Bill 39, he is reserving unto himself the right to cancel a conservation easement made between a landholder and a grantee of that landholder.

3:50

Now, by the minister's own words he has indicated that in his discussions with Albertans there are private landowners in the province who will object to what their neighbour does with their land. If they were to conserve that land in its natural state, a neighbour may take issue with that, and by this change that the minister is putting into the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act, that individual can come to the minister and ask the minister to terminate that conservation easement.

That, Mr. Speaker, changes significantly what the role of the government is. The minister is not, by this change he is proposing, going to work in terms of a broad-based policy that deals with individuals equally and on a collective basis, where a decision of the government in terms of a policy is either something you can like or not like but is nonetheless applied equally to all people in the province of Alberta. The minister here is saying: take me out for dinner and I can cancel the conservation easement, if that's your wish. It is in this instance that the minister is saying: I am prepared to interfere with a private contract made between two private contracting parties and will advocate for one Albertan over the other Albertan. An amazing change in the way government deals with the people of Alberta. The role of government is to establish policy that is broad-based and equal, and here the minister is saying: I'm going to choose sides, and I have far more clout than the other side of the issue. You simply can't fight, as the old saying goes, city hall when the minister reserves unto himself the right that he has given himself under the conservation easement legislation.

I will say again, Mr. Speaker, that no Albertan in their right mind would ever conserve land by conservation easement under these provisions, and we'll have to fall back to some other approaches or remedies they have through restrictive covenants and so on, which are more cumbersome. Nonetheless, when the minister puts the whole conservation easement plan in jeopardy by the power he reserves unto himself, it's simply impossible for the public to rely on that and expect the Minister of Environmental Protection not to ever invoke that kind of power where he would choose sides amongst Albertans. Now, I don't say that every Minister of Environmental Protection would take that position, but we do have this particular Minister of Environmental Protection on the record as saying that that's indeed the motivation behind this section, that if a landowner disagrees, he will then come forward and assist that through the power and the authority of the law of the province of Alberta.

I want to move, Mr. Speaker, to the issue that has caught the attention of most Albertans, and that is the change to the Environmental Appeal Board, which is an inclusive body designed to allow Albertans an opportunity for input into environmental decision-making in the province of Alberta. The provision that has caught the attention of the public – and I think perhaps I'll observe at this point in time that I don't think it has caught the attention of the public as much as it ought to. Once the minister, through the powers of majority in the Legislative Assembly, has moved this Bill past third reading, I think some Albertans will come to life and recognize what exactly has been done with the inclusion of what is called a privative clause in the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act relating to the Environmental Appeal Board.

What is interesting about this privative clause, Mr. Speaker, is

that even with the government amendment that was put forward, which was merely an editorial change and did nothing to change the substance of the privative clause, this kind of wording in a privative clause would be what you'd call the king of privative clauses. It covers the entire spectrum – width, breadth, and depth – of exclusion of the public of Alberta from ever questioning or challenging in any way, shape, or form a decision of the minister or the Environmental Appeal Board.

Normally, Mr. Speaker, a privative clause relates to an administrative tribunal that has some autonomy, so what will happen is that the courts will not be clogged by applicants not liking the decision of the administrative tribunal and then going to court to have that decision reversed. The approach, of course, that has developed is that individuals who do not believe they have been treated fairly in the administrative tribunal will go to court and ask for a judicial review in that the hearing they received at the administrative tribunal was not a fair hearing. It's not so much the substance of the decision as it is the process being due process and following the principles and the rules of natural justice in receiving a full and fair hearing of the issue you bring before that particular administrative tribunal.

Now, with the wording that is contained in the privative clause at the new section 92.2 proposed by the minister, what that means is that if the Environmental Appeal Board deals with a decision in a way that is biased, if they deal with an issue that is in some way unfair, or if they deal with an issue that in some way creates undue influence on either the parties or the board that in any way, shape, or form results in an unfair hearing to that particular applicant or appellant, they have no right of recourse to the courts of the province of Alberta for a judicial review even if it is a totally, totally unfair hearing.

When you look at section 92.2, one has to ask the question: why is the minister putting in a privative clause that will not allow the normal route of appeal to the court when there is an indication that you have been treated unfairly in an administrative tribunal process? There is simply no answer to that question, Mr. Speaker, other than to say that what the minister and what the government of Alberta want to do is exclude the public of Alberta from involving themselves in Environmental Appeal Board processes. Since there is no review from the Environmental Appeal Board and since there is no check or balance as to whether that hearing is going to be fair or unfair, whether there will be bias or undue influence, anyone considering appealing a matter to the Environmental Appeal Board would probably look at the privative clause and say: "Well, what's the point? If I get an unfair hearing, there's nothing I can do about it." So the result that one must take and the conclusion that one must take from that is that the government is simply putting forward this roadblock to encourage Albertans to stay away from environmental decision-making in the province of Alberta.

The privative clause is not the only part of this component of the amendment Act dealing with the Environmental Appeal Board. The minister is throwing up yet another roadblock or at least showing the public of Alberta that he's flexing his muscles in that he is reserving unto himself the privative clause, which, as I've already indicated to you, Mr. Speaker, is normally only given to an administrative tribunal. It is never given to a minister of the Crown. This is the first time ever that we've seen a minister included in a privative clause. So not only is any decision of the minister not questionable, not reviewable, not challengeable in any way, shape, or form, but the minister can take that same order that is not challengeable in any way and can file it in the Court of

Queen's Bench as if he were a judge or justice of the Court of Queen's Bench and make it an order of the court.

4:00

Now, the two clauses together that are contained in Bill 39 mean that if the minister makes a decision and he then files that decision as if it were an order of the Court of Queen's Bench, one would think that that order would take on the same attributes as an order of the Court of Queen's Bench – and any order of the Court of Queen's Bench has an appeal process built into it – but the minister, by virtue of these changes he is proposing, is going to file his order in court and then tell the world that there is no avenue of appeal. What's the message? The message to the people of Alberta is: "Stay away from Environmental Protection issues. That is between me as the Minister of Environmental Protection, the government of Alberta, and the industry that we support."

Industry, as we know, Mr. Speaker, are full participants in the wholesale deregulation of the Department of Environmental Protection. The minister is on record as saying: well, at some point in the future we'll actually ask the public for their input, but as the deregulation process takes place, industry is a full participant in the deregulation of the Department of Environmental Protection.

The deregulation reform plan that is under the direction of the Member for Peace River and industry participants only, with no other input whatsoever, is coupled with the kinds of changes that are coming forward in Bill 39.

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

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

Point of Order Clarification

MR. FRIEDEL: Yes. Just perhaps a correction, Mr. Speaker. The statement that was just made by the member is incorrect. There are members from all parts of the private sector, not just industry.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll stand corrected that it is a number of individuals from the private sector. There is no public involvement that is not part of the private sector. So I stand corrected that the Member for Peace River is correct, but I'll also accept from that statement that there is no public involvement; there's private-sector involvement.

DR. WEST: So there's a difference?

MR. COLLINGWOOD: To the Minister of Transportation and Utilities, there is indeed a difference. Indeed members of the private sector are members of the public, but the public at large has not been invited to participate in the wholesale deregulation of the province of Alberta. The minister himself has put on record in *Hansard* that, sooner or later, at some point in time he'll actually ask the public to participate, who are not what the Minister of Transportation and Utilities would have to classify as a special interest group, one being the private sector, although I don't think the private sector believes that they are a special interest group.

Debate Continued

MR. COLLINGWOOD: So what we're waiting for, Mr. Speaker, is for an opportunity for severely normal Albertans to be invited to participate in the minister's wholesale deregulation of the province of Alberta, just like those severely normal Albertans were invited to participate in the creation of the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act. So, on the one hand, they're invited to create the document, the law. On the other hand, they're not invited when the law is destroyed through the process of amendment legislation such as what we see under Bill 39.

Mr. Speaker, one of the major aspects of Bill 39 is the inclusion of a privative clause into the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act. It is a total erosion of democracy, and for that I simply cannot support this Bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to third reading of Bill 39. It's with regret and sadness that I will not be supporting this Bill. I've always felt that within the province of Alberta when it came to public health and protection of our environment, we were indeed leaders. It saddens me to see what's happening within Bill 39. Instead of continuing that move forward, we're actually taking steps backwards. Within this Bill the democratic process has once again been threatened. I've stood in this House many times and supported government legislation that's been brought before this House because I've always perceived that when you see good legislation, you support it irrespective of where you sit in this House if it's going to serve Albertans well.

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

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

Point of Order Clarification

DR. TAYLOR: Yes. The member opposite said she stood in this House on many occasions supporting government legislation. I would suggest to you and to her that it would only be occasional occasions.

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to reply to the member – and I won't say honourable in this instance – from Cypress-Medicine Hat. I will say that I will mention the Franchises Act, the Real Estate Act, and most recently the condominium Act. I felt they were strong pieces of legislation. I don't think it's excessive in saying that I supported those Bills of good legislation. I could mention others, but I'm not going to use up my 20 minutes listing the pieces of legislation I've supported in this House.

Debate Continued

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Unlike the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, I have a sincere concern when I see governments through legislation becoming autocratic to the point that there's dictatorship there, that they're all-powerful. If you look at section 92.2 on page 16 of this Bill, the privative clause should abhor all Albertans. Now, if you look at the definition of the word "privative", it says:

Consisting in, marked by, the loss or removal or absence of some quality or attribute . . . denoting privation or absence of quality.

That's exactly what this clause does: it removes quality from the protection of our environment. It removes and makes to my mind the word "enhancement" . . . [interjections] You know, when they do these sort of catcalls and the noises from that side of the Assembly, it's not the Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan they're insulting; it's this Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

In addressing this clause which makes the minister all-powerful, that alone should be enough to defeat this Bill, Mr. Speaker, because no one, no one within a democratic society should have that kind of power, particularly when it comes to the area of the environment, where we're stewards. We're the trustees of this great province that we live in, not this minister over there through this clause that makes him all-powerful, makes him above the courts of the land. I mean, how presumptuous can you be? That's exactly what Bill 39 has done.

Now, when you look under the whole public health system and what the department of the environment has done, under strong pieces of legislation we have been moving ahead in protecting our environment. What we're now seeing happening is that process being seriously threatened. We know that without strong legislation and people who are going to be good stewards of our waterways, of the soil, of the air, of the food we eat, we are going to run into serious difficulties. We went through the debate on the Aurum dump, and with this legislation I would suggest that we could have a significant landfill site sitting near our North Saskatchewan River, because it would use this to get rid of some of the political headaches. That's what's behind this Bill, and I find that really sad.

I'm not quite clear from the legislation that's been brought forward here whether indeed the paramouncy of the Public Health Act is going to be paramount in the future. I think we could be seeing that be threatened. I see the Minister of Health shaking her head, and I hope that she will be the steward to prevent this minister overruling through this clause our environmental health officers or the technicians who would say that certain landfill sites should not be put in certain locations. I would sincerely hope that the Minister of Health will take paramouncy over the minister of the environment. Through this clause, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that indeed that may not happen, that this minister of the environment or a future minister of the environment may indeed suddenly be God when it comes to making major decisions on the protection of our environment.

4:10

You know, Mr. Speaker, when you remove the right of people to appear before the board under this Bill or notification of that public process, that's another nail in the whole area of democracy. It's a death knell once again to the democratic process in the province of Alberta. You know, it's ironic that in the very areas where we should be strengthening, we're seeing them being weakened. Yet at the same time – and I'll take my hat off to the Provincial Treasurer. He has actually brought legislation in here that protects consumers, protects Albertans, and there's an acknowledgment in the marketplace in certain areas where we were not protecting people. The condominium Act was one example of where we're seeing greater consumer protection through ownership of condominiums. If you look at the Franchises Act, you are protecting the marketplace and the small businessman through that Act. So it's ironic. On one hand, we're bringing in strong legislation in some areas protecting segments of society, and then on the other hand we're bringing in

legislation that undermines this great province that we live in: our air, our water, and our soil.

I find that just atrocious, that here in 1996 this is what Bill 39 is doing and nobody on that side of the House is standing up and speaking on behalf of Albertans. You know, the minister of the environment sits there and leaves the impression that he indeed is protecting our environment. How can you do that when you know that you're selling us down the river, that special interest groups are being protected through this Bill?

It was interesting when we were talking about regulations and the Member for Peace River stood up and said that the representation was all-encompassing. It's in no way all-encompassing because the very fact that Official Opposition members in this Assembly are not part of that deregulation process tells me there isn't true representation during that process. The other is that the ordinary Albertans of the Premier – and I question whether we're talking about the same normal Albertans – are not represented in that. They came in at the tail end of the decision-making process, and it's tokenism at its worst. That's what you're doing through Bill 39. And the arrogance of any government – it doesn't matter what political philosophy you follow; it eventually catches up with you. It caught up with you when it came to fiscal responsibility, and now Albertans have to pay that price. I would suggest that five years from now or less we're going to be paying the price for this Bill, Mr. Speaker.

So I stand here and make one last attempt to get through to government members that this is a shocking piece of legislation and doesn't deserve the support of this House. I would say to stand up and be counted, not just for the land, air, and water but for your grandchildren and future generations. Stop protecting the big multinationals and the people who benefit from this kind of legislation so that they can increase their profit margins and not necessarily increase job opportunities in this province. The minister of economic development stands up there and goes on about all the billions of dollars of investment in this province. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the little individual Albertan, the entrepreneur who invests maybe a million dollars, probably creates a lot more jobs than all the billions of dollars that buy the expensive dinner tickets to leaders' dinners, whether it be the Prime Minister, Premier, whoever. It's the ordinary Albertans that create jobs, and it's not the billion-dollar investments that come in and look for breaks to increase their profit margin.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 39 read a third time]

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

19. Mr. Day moved:

Be it resolved that the debate on third reading of Bill 24, the Individual's Rights Protection Amendment Act, 1996, shall not be further adjourned.

[Motion carried]

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Maybe over the summer you might have a chance to get your ears, you know, checked, and I'll work on my vocals so you can hear them a little better.

Mr. Speaker, it's actually sad and it's disappointing today that we're left with, oh, an hour to speak to Bill 24, which this government has brought closure on. It's a pretty sad statement of where this government continues to head. Obviously, they're running scared because they know that we're right on Bill 24 and that it is a terribly, terribly flawed piece of legislation that they've once again pushed through. It's time that this government learns how to work with the opposition and gain some knowledge, because as they continue to push flawed pieces of legislation through, they learn nothing. There's always hope that we can teach them something.

So on this third reading of Bill 24 I'd like to speak to some of the issues that disappoint me in this Bill. I think the independence of the commission under Bill 24 is questionable. With all due respect to the Minister of Community Development – that's rare, but I try once in a while – he's virtually become the czar for human rights and multiculturalism.

AN HON. MEMBER: The last emperor.

MRS. SOETAERT: The last emperor; that's right. This gives him far too much power, and just earlier we heard him heckle across that power is such a wonderful aphrodisiac. A sad, sad statement from the czar of multiculturalism.

With the independence of this commission or the lack thereof I have real concerns. This minister may not always be the Minister of Community Development. In fact, I'm quite sure he won't always be the minister of multiculturalism. Then what if someone else steps in and doesn't feel the same way about issues as he does? Once again those issues that affect each one of our lives are in jeopardy because a new czar is in the chair. I want to speak for a moment about how disappointed I am that many of the recommendations, especially from human rights champions, in fact Jack O'Neill being one of them . . .

4:20

MR. BRACKO: From St. Albert.

MRS. SOETAERT: From St. Albert; I think in my riding of St. Albert. In fact, I saw him last night at a meeting held in St. Albert where Lois Hole, a very respected member of that community, spoke about the Quality of Life report. The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar talked about the Quality of Life report and what's been happening to FCSS and hard workers in our community who work so hard . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: What's that got to do with the Bill?

MRS. SOETAERT: I'll get there. I'll get to the Bill.

. . . for our communities. The whole evening was a sad statement on where Alberta's going when we care so little about the most vulnerable in our society. Here we are discussing a Bill that has been pushed through, rammed through which obviously has flaws. This government is pushing it through, and it's another sad statement on where we're heading in Alberta.

MRS. LAING: Ask normal Albertans.

MR. BRACKO: They don't know what normal is.

MRS. SOETAERT: They don't know what normal is. It's sad and it's true.

The government has even in the past told the commission not

to deal with certain complaints. Now, that's appalling, and if the minister keeps his czar's hand on this, that kind of thing could continue, and that's wrong.

The government has refused to require that commissioners refrain from overt political activity on behalf of the Conservative Party. Well, imagine. Imagine, Mr. Speaker; that's appalling. That should be totally independent of the political parties, whether it be Liberal or Conservative. That should be totally separate.

MR. DICKSON: It should be like a judge.

MRS. SOETAERT: It should be like a judge, separate and independent from political parties, just like our constituency offices. We help everyone who comes through our door. We don't ask – well, certainly this side of the House doesn't ask what political stripe they are. We help them if they need it.

So I am very concerned about the independence of this commission. What about the significant number of complaints against the government of Alberta? Now, if the commission is so tied to the minister, where can people go? This commission is not independent, and I'm very saddened by the lack of addressing that in this Bill.

I want to talk about the education part of Bill 24 for a moment. I'm glad there's an education fund, because all of us know that the best way to address racism and discrimination is through education. It's good that we have those programs, but what scares me about that is that the moneys are managed by the Provincial Treasurer totally. Once again the czar of multiculturalism has total control over it because these funds – and it does define how they can be spent. Educational programs: excellent. I've seen that work in schools; I know it works. Kids are much more forgiving of people's differences, and they're very accepting – accepting – of people's differences. That's where we talk to kids. That's where we teach them that differences are healthy, that we are all different in one way or another, and that's what makes us rich in Alberta, all the differences we can offer.

The second thing in this educational program is services related to any of seven purposes, including advice to the minister. Then the last one is grants authorized by regulations. There again we have that word "regulations." Now, does that mean the minister could maybe spend that money on a defunct computer? We've seen that happen in here. I just really question that word "regulations" and the total control of the czar of multiculturalism, because that's of great concern. As he said, power to him is an aphrodisiac, and unlimited control could be – I'm not saying it would be, but it very well could be his own personal slush fund as to how he wants to spend that money. [interjection] I didn't say it would be; I said it could be. I'm so glad you're back.

Now, I want to talk for a moment about the complaint procedure. I was pleased to see that the time limit for that was extended to a year. That's good. In fact, it probably even could have been two years.

AN HON. MEMBER: It's never enough for you; is it?

MRS. SOETAERT: No, it's never quite enough, but we always aim to improve and help the government do better what they do so poorly. [interjection] Yes, that's leadership. We try to guide them along.

I don't think people understand how difficult it is for someone to talk about being sexually harassed or discriminated against. When people come forward with those issues, sometimes it takes

them awhile to work out in their minds, in their hearts, and with people close to them whether it's worth bringing forward, because it is quite a risk. You become very vulnerable when you bring out an issue like that. People can't always resolve it within six months or a year and in fact keep it hidden a long time. So I am pleased with the extension to one year, and I honestly feel it could even be longer.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Would you like five?

MRS. SOETAERT: You may make light of it, Stony Plain, but I don't think you've experienced sexual harassment. I'd probably put money on that one. So don't speak on what you do not know about.

I want to say for a moment that the O'Neill task force had recommended employment equity. I'm disappointed that this was not addressed in here. It's something that I think needs to be addressed in this province, and I would encourage that.

So, Mr. Speaker, if I may right now put in an amendment on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Buffalo to move that the motion for third reading be amended by striking out everything after the word "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 24, Individual's Rights Protection Amendment Act, 1996, not be read a third time because the government has not demonstrated that the legislation will protect human rights for all Albertans or promote and maintain multiculturalism in the province.

Mr. Speaker, I would urge all members to support this. I know that we're all tired. It's been a long session. We've all worked very hard, and I know they want to get away for the summer. I know Calgary-Buffalo is willing to debate Bill 24 until summer, and I'm sure we'd all support him in that from our side of the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Where are your members? Where are all your members?

MRS. SOETAERT: Well, it only takes three of us to hold them at bay anyway, Mr. Speaker. It only takes a few of us to hold them accountable.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is a bad Bill. This is a bad Bill. It's time to rethink this Bill. In fact, we debated doing a hoist amendment or a reasoned amendment. Hoist wasn't enough. We didn't want to hold it over for six months. It's lousy. Scrap it; get rid of it. That's what this reasoned amendment says. Start again. Consult all the groups for a change instead of doing the arrogant, powerful, aphrodisiac move that we so often see in this government. We want this Bill scrapped. It's time to look at it. You can just all vote for the amendment, we can go home for the summer, and you guys can have a few more discussions with the groups you should have in the beginning and create a decent piece of legislation.

One more thing before I leave this. I'm very disappointed that this Bill took out the women's secretariat. I spoke of that last night. It's another squelching of the voice of women in this province, which they continue to do. [interjection] Mr. Speaker, speaking to the amendment, maybe in a new Bill that is rewritten, they might think twice and leave the secretariat Act as part of Bill 24. But of course the czar of multiculturalism and women's issues thinks that's not necessary.

4:30

MR. DAY: That would be Czar Mar.

MRS. SOETAERT: Czar Mar, yes.

AN HON. MEMBER: It has a nice ring to it, don't you think?

MRS. SOETAERT: It's an appropriate ring, most definitely. I love to wake them up on a Thursday afternoon. We call it the graveyard shift, and I'm glad they're awake.

Mr. Speaker, I voiced some of my concerns over Bill 24. In all sincerity this is not good legislation. This is not good for all Albertans. I would urge people to support this amendment and hope that we can end this session on a very positive note, saying: "We care about Albertans. We care enough to go back to the drawing table on this piece of legislation and start over again and make it a decent piece of legislation."

Thank you very much.

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

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will certainly support the reasoned amendment. I haven't participated in the debate on Bill 24 to any extent, but I've watched it very closely. I've certainly watched the response of the public very closely. In my various opportunities I've talked with a lot of people who have expressed to me their grave concerns about what this Bill is doing. They are from very diverse backgrounds. They are, I think, the normal Albertans that our Premier likes to talk about, who have said, "Why are you doing this?"

Mr. Speaker, you know that we're all lumped. If there's legislation before us, we're not perceived as government and opposition; we are perceived as passing legislation. Why are you doing this? What is the purpose of this? I think it's a question that really has never been answered to my satisfaction. I see the purpose of it is to save money, I suppose, but more critically and more painfully the purpose is to take control and to quell at the outset any potential objections. That, I think, is a very regressive sign in this government at this time in our history. I think it means that Alberta is out of step with the rest of the country. Here's our chance. If we want to open up this legislation, let's do something right.

When I look at why we need the amendment, I try to think about who's objecting to it. Well, certainly the general public is objecting to it. As the Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert mentioned, last night we were at a meeting in St. Albert, and there was a tremendous amount of interest in this Bill, people very concerned. These are the severely normal Albertans, Mr. Speaker.

The ones that the Premier describes as special interest – the Dignity Foundation is a foundation of I think 75 different groups which are members.

MR. DICKSON: Over 80 now, Bettie.

MRS. HEWES: Over 80 groups are part of this, who are saying: "Don't do this, government. Don't pass this Bill. This is not a Bill that benefits us. This is not a Bill that benefits human rights in Alberta. This is regressive. Don't do it. Get rid of it. Start again. Go back to square one." So the Dignity Foundation with Senator Ghitter – he's been very compelling, Mr. Speaker, very persuasive in his arguments about it. He represents not just himself and his own particular background, but he represents all those other groups who have expressed their concerns.

I think about the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce. Now, I guess this is a special interest group, Mr. Speaker. The Edmonton Chamber of Commerce objects to this Bill, saying, "Government, don't pass this Bill." Now, if the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce speaks, wouldn't you think this government would listen? Apparently not. They're going to push it on through.

Then we have the multicultural groups. The Member for Edmonton-Avonmore speaks very, very strongly, very vehemently, very passionately about the multicultural groups. They are offended, Mr. Speaker. They're offended because they see what was in a former government, a flagship Bill enshrining the importance of multiculturalism in this province, going down the drain.

Women are asking us to end this Bill, to get rid of the Bill. [interjection] Mr. Speaker, could I remind the minister of Standing Order 13(4)(b).

Mr. Speaker, women's groups are offended by it. It is working against their rights. It is removing a secretariat that has been in place for some years, that has been gradually decreasing in its strength in the government.

Children's advocacy groups are against this Bill. Children's advocacy groups have spoken to us at great length about the UN convention on the rights of the child, which this government still hasn't ratified. Mr. Speaker, that is a source of great embarrassment to me as a member of this government and as an Albertan, and I hear it all across this country. It is an embarrassment to me.

So I say to myself: well, all right; who's offended? Well, chambers of commerce are offended. The United Way of Calgary is offended. The Dignity group is offended. The Quality of Life organization is offended. The ethnic groups, the multiculturalism groups are offended. Women are offended. Children's advocacy groups. Mr. Speaker, I am offended. I am offended by this piece of legislation.

I would remind members of the House that in June of 1994 the report of the Human Rights Review Panel was given to the government. It's called Equal in Dignity and Rights. Now, we all know, Mr. Speaker, that this review panel was appointed by this government because there had been concerns expressed about human rights in Alberta and about the work of the commission. So the government quite properly appointed a blue-ribbon panel to go about the province, find out what was happening in Alberta, what people were thinking about it. Government does this from time to time. Whether it's young offenders or boundaries or whatever, we have a commission. They go around and they seek out opinions, and in proper form this blue-ribbon panel did just that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it's an excellent report. It has – what? – 75 or 77 recommendations in it, and these recommendations make a lot of sense. They say to us that this commission should be separate from government. Well, what do we find in Bill 24? Quite the contrary. We find that this commission is now going to be tucked under the minister, responsible to the minister. The problem in the past, as the review panel found out, was that there was ministerial interference. The panel said: "This has got to stop. We've got to end that because that is not fair. That's not in the spirit of human rights legislation." So they told the government, "Remove this." What does the government do? It pays no attention to that. In fact, some of these recommendations that are made by this blue-ribbon panel, their own appointees, are simply rejected by the government out of hand, with excuses that are patently thin and unacceptable to me.

4:40

Mr. Speaker, the legislation not only allows the minister extensive control over this commission, but it says that requests for review can be thrown out for frivolous or vexatious reasons and that a fine can be levied. Well, what does that do? If I am someone who believes that I have been discriminated against or harassed at work and perhaps have a very modest income, I can't afford to lodge a complaint. So once again we have two tiers. We have two tiers in health care in this province, and we have two tiers in human rights in this province.

Mr. Speaker, multiculturalism was a flagship Bill of this government in years past, and it has now gone down the drain. As I said, I think the multicultural groups, the ethnic groups have every reason to be hurt and to be in pain as a result of this, and they have communicated that very strongly to all members here. They've communicated it through this opposition, and I know they've communicated it to the Premier and to the government, to no avail.

Let me just speak for a few moments about the women's secretariat, which is something of particular interest to me. Last year the realization dawned upon us that the women's advisory council was nearing its termination, its sunset clause, and of course the minister pre-emptively ended it eight or nine months ahead of its termination date.

Before they were terminated, they did a very good report on what had happened during their tenure. It's called Breadmakers and Breadwinners: The Voices of Alberta Women. They made a number of recommendations, Mr. Speaker, that I think really bear our close consideration. The first one is that

the Government of Alberta develop methods and tools to help analyze how legislation, policies and programs differentially impact women and men.

Well, we've not only lost the advisory council, but we've lost the potential to do what they're recommending to us. We've lost the potential because we no longer have a secretariat that will review and look at and ensure that legislation that's pending, programs that are pending will not offend or in any way jeopardize women or put them at risk.

Mr. Speaker, the second recommendation is that

the Government of Alberta implement the use of the tools and methods for gender analysis in the formulation of public policy, programs and legislation, and monitor their use and make adjustments as required.

Well, if that doesn't speak to the function of the women's secretariat, I don't know what does, but that is being turfed out in this piece of legislation without really any opportunity for sincere consultation with groups that are offended by it. It hasn't happened. The government has not only ignored the work of their advisory council; they've ignored their secretariat. If I were part of that process, I would be seriously resentful. As a woman I am offended by the legislation in total, and I am particularly offended by this being removed. Everything we are being told is that the cuts in Alberta have a differential impact and a negative impact on women, and they need to be looked at very seriously.

The report goes on further to say that one of the strategies should be to

integrate the gender analysis process within existing government processes (eg. policy analysts in key departments, Legislative Planning Branch activities)

Well, if that's not the women's secretariat, I don't know what is.

Now, I have spoken to those many groups that are angered by this legislation, that believe this is an arrogant piece of legislation, that this is a regressive piece of legislation, that this is a backward

step, Mr. Speaker, that it is out of step with the wishes of Albertans, Albertans whom we respect, Albertans who pay their dues in this province, Albertans we should be listening to. Who is it that supports it then? Who is it that supports this or asks for this legislation? Well, it's a government bent on taking control. The government speaks piously about communities, about pushing decision-making down into communities. This works in reverse. This pulls all the control back into the hands of the minister.

Mr. Speaker, I submit to you and to members that this is a bad Bill. It should not be dealt with at this point in time. This Bill should be shelved, should be shredded, sir, if I can use that term. I think this is exactly the kind of thing that the government ought to shred, instead of some of the things they do. Shred the Bill. Get rid of it. If the human rights legislation needs to be reviewed, pay attention to what your very own commission said. Listen to women's groups, listen to the advocates on behalf of children's rights, listen to the multicultural groups, and get a piece of legislation that's appropriate. Get it right for once.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, the amendment before us certainly introduces a great deal of latitude into the discussion on human rights and the protection of same. I appreciate the fact that you've allowed that latitude, because it's really questioning whether there has been any demonstration at all that this reflects true human rights and the value of those human rights.

I might first ask the question and then let members think about it and make a determination based on the question: is there a measurement that can be applied to human rights legislation? Is there something very fundamental that we can hold up as a measuring stick, as it were, and say: does this truly reflect a human right? The challenge to us not just here in the Legislature but around the world over the centuries is to raise the discussion to a level where you can in fact ask yourself the question: is there something which determines whether a right is really worthy of being protected, even enshrined in legislation, even to literally go to war for, as Canadians have in at least two major conquests and certainly Korea and others just in this century alone? Is there something that can be measured and applied and used to influence the development of human rights that raises it above the level of strictly the political and the partisan? It's a very necessary question.

When we look at the former Soviet Union and their human rights legislation, it's laudable in its verbiage in that it really does stand for human rights, but in the practice of it we know and history only too painfully records that in fact human rights were minimal at best and trodden on at most. We understand that in China in their written reflection of human rights there is clearly a nod of assent towards the importance of human rights, but we only have to think of Tiananmen Square and we know that because of the politics of the particular jurisdiction human rights were not in fact upheld.

We need to ask ourselves if there is something on a higher plane that we can use to hold up as a mirror, to reflect and say: does this human rights legislation and in fact the actions that flow from it truly reflect a human right that is worthy of protection? I'd like to suggest that there is a higher plane which we can look to for that reflection. As a matter of fact, I'd like to put something before the members, a characteristic that I believe is so fundamental that, if overlooked, results in human rights only being upheld to the point of whoever happens to be in power, with no other influence or persuasion in any other way. That goes not just for Alberta but for any jurisdiction.

4:50

If members would look to the historical record of the development of human rights, we heard an eloquent presentation from the Member for Barrhead-Westlock not too long ago on the issue of recent history here in Alberta. I believe there's a fundamental characteristic that can be upheld and used across jurisdictions, across political lines, across partisan lines, and down through history by which rulers, be they dictators or elected people, can actually be held to account. A fundamental measurement. It comes from asking the question: what is the fundamental source of our dignity as humans? From that dignity, then, there are certain rights that are recognized. Where does that source come from? What is the initial source?

In some of the most emphatic studies of this we know and we have a belief that certain rights that we have are based on our nature, our nature as creatures of free choice. In fact, down through the last 2,000 years of development – and it has been that long. You can predate that and go back to Greek discussions and studies on this. But if we just take the last 1,500 years of the development of human rights, there's a recognition accepted by most, if not by all, down through the ages that we are created beings of a higher being, a creator.

Now, some of us identify in a very specific way to the name of that creator and to the relationship that can be had. But it is the recognition that because we reflect, somewhat dimly at times, the nature of our creator – and the most fundamental aspect of our nature is that we have freedom of choice given to us endowed by the creator. The other traits we have that reflect the nature of the creator are so important that we should never become alienated from those characteristics. In fact, much of the language down through the centuries speaks directly to inalienable rights.

It is when they are reflected upon, those rights that come from a creator who has created us in that image, that we have the ability to cross political lines, to cross jurisdictional lines – it can even be held before kings and queens and dictators – and say that we have certain rights that are inalienable, that should not be alienated from our nature, and, handed down from the creator, are therefore worthy of being protected at all costs. That forms the fundamental instrument by which we can measure whether this is truly a right that reflects our dignity as humans.

We go back 500 years AD to the period of the Justinian rule in the Roman Empire, and history records that that was in fact the pinnacle of the late Roman Empire, the pinnacle of freedom for people, the move away from barbarism. In fact, we still reflect today on the Justinian code that really set the tone for that era, and this was a tone of dictators; this was a time of caesars. At the risk of sounding bilingual, the Justinian code, as my lawyer friends would be able to articulate, is: *honeste vivere, neminem laedere, suum cuique tribuere*; live honestly, harm no one, and give to each his own. That's the basis of the Justinian code. Justin himself, the emperor, in his reflections said that he came to a realization of those basic rights on his embracing of the reality that there is a creator who has endowed us with certain rights. That was at the point of his embracing the Christian faith in the year about 525 AD.

Mr. Speaker, it's very important to note that the last part of that great code, *suum cuique tribuere*, give to each his own, is also found emblazoned on the iron doors of one of the death camps in Buchenwald, coming from the time of the Holocaust. There was an example of a jurisdiction that did not reflect that those rights primarily came from the creator, and therefore took part of the Justinian code, which is a reflection of a ruler's embracing of the

Christian faith, albeit imperfectly, eliminated the divine aspect, and left it strictly up to human interpretation, with no regard whatsoever for a reflection on whether this did in fact reflect the nature and the revelation of the divine.

When we look at the great step in terms of the limitation of the size of government and in fact the limitation on the divine right of kings and we look at the Magna Carta, we see there that particular fundamental guideline or measuring tool being held up before King John, informing him that he did not have the divine right, for instance, to arrest people without cause and hold them forever. Today we still celebrate the legal freedoms of habeas corpus. It's no mistake, Mr. Speaker, that the instrument that was used was a reflection on the divine character of the creator and therefore the nature of men and women and what should be protected.

The architect of the Magna Carta, again as I'm sure some of my legal friends know, was Cardinal Stephen Langdon. I mean, eight centuries later we reflect on his writings, as he recognized what should be the fundamental measuring instrument in terms of the protection of human rights. It was a recognition that there is a divine creator, and he has imparted to us certain elements of our nature from which we should not be alienated.

Just as we still reflect and read the Magna Carta, in many churches around this world they still sing the song that he wrote: *Veni Sanctus Spiritus, Come Holy Spirit*. It was that recognition, his embracing of the recognition of the existence of the divine and the creator thereby passing down certain rights, which resulted in some jurisdictional policy which gave freedom to men and women. That again was reflected so clearly in the Reformation, as Martin Luther even challenged within the church the removal of certain rights and spoke to the freedom that men and women have as they reflect upon the nature of the creator imparting certain inalienable rights to them.

It's no secret of history at all, Mr. Speaker, that from that flowed the great movements of the Dissenters and the Protestant Reformers, not referring to the political party there, the Congregationalists, the religious rights movements that then carried over to what is now North America, based on that same recognition. They used the same measuring tool of what is a right that should be protected that every leader, every ruler, every government body should be held to, and that prime underlying characteristic is the recognition of a creator and the fact that we have been endowed with certain rights which should be protected.

When John Locke wrote his contract theory, which talked about the freedom of people to contract with each other – and we've heard about that even today here in this Legislature – those freedoms which are espoused in and around the world today, it's no mistake that his prior writing was the reasonableness of Christianity. Again he is reflecting that though you can't impose any one religion on a society, you can reflect and society can reflect on the fact that a creator has endowed certain rights of freedom which allow for and can be used to measure whether these rights are worthy of protection.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for St. Albert rising on a point of order.

Point of Order Questioning a Member

MR. BRACKO: Would the member entertain a question?

MR. DAY: Yes. Right after I'm finished, I'll entertain a question.

Debate Continued

MR. DAY: To continue. Do you think, Mr. Speaker, it is any mistake that those who wrote in 1789 the declaration of the rights of man reflected on these very things of which I'm speaking today, that there are certain rights that are endowed by the creator and that those indeed are worthy of protection? That's clearly where they continued the flow of history.

Jean Dunant was the inspirational founder of the Red Cross, one of the key bodies today which holds up human rights around the world. Was it any mistake that he, too, was reflecting on the fact that a creator had endowed us certain rights that needed to be protected at all cost in all jurisdictions regardless of political persuasion? He went on to found the Geneva convention of 1864. This is not a mistake. It's a fundamental characteristic of what has to be embodied in our reflection today on human rights.

As we continue, in the foundation of our very country we see and we know that the founding fathers at the Charlottetown conference established a motto for this country, a motto that is here in this Chamber somewhere, that reflects the revelational writings of the Psalms, Psalm 72:8 as a matter of fact. It is there above the Speaker's very head, that this dominion shall be from sea to sea. So it's a reflection of the divine impartation of certain qualities to humans that need to be protected at all costs, at all times. When the Charter of Rights and Freedoms combined with the BNA Act as our present Constitution, it's no mistake that in the very preamble, what does it say? It talks about reflecting on and respecting "the supremacy of God" in all our dealings.

5:00

Mr. Speaker, as we look to the 1948 United Nations declaration, also mentioned today by the member opposite, the chief architect of this was René Cassin. Mr. Cassin himself said that this is no more than a reflection of my understanding of the 10 commandments themselves, again showing and reflecting the quality of rights that should be protected, rights that reflect the divine creator imparting upon humans certain qualities which allow certain freedoms which should at all costs be protected. The religions of the world embrace that in various forms.

So I want to ask this question before I sit down, Mr. Speaker. Recognizing that it is from that fundamental source that we can engage in this particular discussion, how can the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, for instance, propose an amendment, as he has done and as he did in second reading – not just here – that in fact flies in the face of 2,000 years of development of human rights? The great religions of this world have all held to certain aspects that reflect divine nature and divine law, and it is argued – it has been argued here and will continue to be argued – that at least one of his amendments is in contradiction to the understanding that millions of Canadians have of the reflection of divine nature and divine law. How, then, can the member opposite plea for sensitivity when in fact he has not solicited from the religions of the world, I'll call them, the Christian religion, the Muslim religion, the Islam religion? Certain aspects of the divine creator reflecting certain aspects to his creation give us a certain nature, and many of the adherents of those religions say that some of these amendments fly in the face of recognizing the divine nature and the divine law of nature.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would conclude not by making the statement boldly here that Bill 24 reflects every aspect of the divine nature. As a matter of fact, I question that myself. But as individuals here, as we look at human rights legislation and the discussion of it, can we use as one of the reflecting tools the fact that we are

here on this Earth as the result of the grace of a divine creator who has imparted to us certain qualities of the divine which give us a certain nature and therefore certain freedoms which should always be protected?

Our human rights legislation should reflect the nature and the law of nature and the creator of the law of nature when we look at what should be protected, what should be instituted, and what should be enshrined in legislation. All of these recognitions have long-term consequences. Society itself will be affected by what type of human rights legislation we have. It is that type of reflection that will raise the discussion above and beyond strictly party, partisan politics. It will raise it beyond jurisdictional levels, and it will hold to account all rulers, be they elected or nonelected.

As they realize there are certain inalienable rights, those ones should be enshrined and protected. Other elements are strictly freedom of choice. That should be permitted in a society, even as the creator allows freedom of choice. But to enshrine certain things in legislation? It is one thing to tolerate and to allow people to have certain choices. It is clearly another thing to actually enshrine something in legislation as a human right that needs to be protected. Can we use this as a measurement, as one measurement and I think a significant measurement of what indeed is a human right? Does it reflect the divine nature, and does it reflect the fact that those qualities have been imparted to us by a creator and therefore we should never be alienated from those qualities? These are inalienable rights.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, I respect the fact that the Government House Leader . . . [interjections]

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

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

Point of Order Questioning a Member

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I'm always subject to the wishes of this House. The Member for St. Albert had asked earlier if I would entertain a question. I hadn't been told that my time was up, so I was sitting down to allow him – I'd said that at the end of my time when I sat down, he could rise, and he seems to be agitated. I would entertain that question at this time.

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

MR. BRACKO: I had a question earlier, but I want to speak. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Order please. For the enlightenment of the Chair, when the hon. Member for St. Albert did not rise to ask the question when the hon. Government House Leader sat down, Calgary-Buffalo was recognized, as he's entitled to be, because he can speak again as we are now in the adjourned portion of the debate and the amendment is before the House. The hon. Member for St. Albert now gives indication that he wants to speak. Sorry. The Chair has recognized the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Debate Continued

MR. DICKSON: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'll try and be sufficiently brief so that other members yet can be heard on Bill 24. Speaking in favour of the reasoned amendment, I respect the fact that the Government House Leader has some very strong values, and he's certainly shared them with us now. I would never suggest that the amendments I proposed as we've dealt with this Bill represent any sort of divine sense, any sort of religious-based values, because it seems to me that in this province we have people who are atheists, we have people who are agnostics, and we have people who are Buddhists. We have people who subscribe to an enormously broad range of faiths and religious beliefs. One of the powerful and wonderful things about human rights legislation is that it respects all of those. It respects all of those, and that includes the right not to have a religious belief. Most importantly, it says that you don't discriminate against anyone because they have a particular religious faith or they have no religious belief. It's a neutral factor when it comes to being able to find a place to live, a job, or in terms of advertising for employment.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to support this amendment for another reason. I think one of the most serious kinds of discrimination we deal with in this province has to do with racial discrimination. I'll just quote what the Ontario Cornish commission found when they were dealing with discrimination on the basis of race.

Race cases are some of the most challenging to prove at a Board of Inquiry. Rarely is any direct evidence of racial discrimination found for complaints of this type.

In many race cases, Commission investigators must attempt to piece together the underlying racial bias by probing vague and subjective evaluations and by rigorously scrutinizing explanations for inconsistencies.

This process has been compared to constructing a large, complex jigsaw puzzle without all the pieces. The challenge is to fit together enough of the pieces so that the Board of Inquiry gets the picture.

The importance of this amendment is because with the legislative package that's currently before the Legislative Assembly, we're not going to be able to ensure that the commission gets that whole picture.

Of all the kinds of discrimination, I respectfully submit that it's discrimination on the basis of race which is the toughest to prove. It's the most likely kind of complaint to a Human Rights Commission to be rejected or found unprovable. We've come in some respects a long way and in other respects not very far at all from the time that Frederick Christie entered a tavern near the Montreal Forum to order a glass of beer. The waiter refused to serve Mr. Christie because he was black. The case went to the Supreme Court of Canada in 1936, and the court found that the discrimination was admitted and deliberate, but it wasn't illegal. That was 1936. Part of the problem before the Supreme Court of Canada in 1936 was the difficulty then in proving intention on the part of the employer or the service provider.

5:10

The Supreme Court of Canada in a couple of cases, O'Malley and Bhinder, in the early '80s and then the Canadian human rights tribunal decision in *Action Travail des Femmes* finally determined that discrimination does exist irrespective of intent. The effect of those two rulings was that the focus then was to be on the effects of the act complained of, not the intent, Mr. Speaker. I think as a nation we've come to understand that there are widespread effects of discrimination which flow from unconscious and

apparently neutral practices. This has led to this whole development of what's called adverse effect discrimination. We have too many visible nonwhite minority members not participating fully in the society of this province. Too often visible minority members are, in the words of the special committee on visible minorities in Canadian society, quote, the invisible members of our society.

If you're an Albertan and non-Caucasian, it's too often assumed you're from a different culture even if you were born here. How many times do we see examples of that? Now, many will believe that you won't fit the structures of our public and private institutions if you're not white, if you're not part of the apparent mainstream community. There are many other problems that relate to that. We have problems such as informal barriers: word-of-mouth recruiting, culturally biased tests. We have some more formal kinds of barriers: limited exposure to new job openings, too many new Canadians and people of different racial backgrounds relegated to low-status, low-income jobs. That's a problem in Alberta in 1996.

Slowly human rights commissions across Canada have started to look at statistical evidence, empirical evidence, and we're not so much dependent on the circumstantial evidence that's come before commissions in the past. What we need in 1996 is a human rights commission which allows for complaints to be brought by persons other than identified victims. I talked about the taxi industry in Calgary. There are a host of other kinds of discrimination that continue on that basis.

Mr. Speaker, time runs short, and I know that there are some other members that want to join the debate. I say that because the amendment package that this government has put before us is not going to enable us to deal with those kinds of race discrimination that exist in the province of Alberta, that's the reason I'm supporting this reasoned amendment.

Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. BRACKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm really happy to have one minute to speak to this Bill.

AN HON. MEMBER: You'll have more than that.

MR. BRACKO: More than that? Twenty minutes? How much time do I have, Mr. Speaker? Till 5:30. Thank you.

There were times I would have liked to have spoken to this Bill, especially in Committee of the Whole, but my right to stand up and speak was cut off. There are a lot of things that I want to talk about, but there's one that I will do today, and that is protection of children, or the lack of it.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member must realize that this just isn't entirely a free-ranging debate at this stage. We're on an amendment.

MR. BRACKO: I agree. I'm supporting this amendment, because there is no provision for protection of children.

Mr. Speaker, I'll follow up on the Minister of Labour's saying. If he wants to quote scripture, I can do the same too: whoever offends one of my little children, it would be more merciful for him to have a millstone hung around his neck and be drowned in the sea. This is what we are allowing to happen not only in our province but around the world by not protecting our children.

I had the privilege of traveling around the world, to Asia, Africa, and back in the '70s I had other privileged times. We look at what is happening to our children. We look at the sex trade in many countries, at children not protected because this government will not stand up for the spiritual and moral values of protecting our children.

For the members I'll table four copies of this, Mr. Speaker, from the *Journal* and just make some comments. These are children, not adults. We see girls performing obscene acts – beautiful girls, not women, and not just girls but children too – and the attention of hundreds of men. Unbelievable. There's no protection against this by this government. The things that go on would make anyone sick. We also look at where you have boys raped or taken advantage of by men in different parts of the world. It's the sex trade. The protection of children is needed. We need to stand up, speak up not only in our country but throughout the world. There are millions of children involved in this trade, and we're not speaking up for them. This is something that should be inscribed. This is why I'm supporting this amendment: because it's a poor Bill. It doesn't address the issues out there, issues that are needed.

We look at others, at children. I've been traveling, and nothing made me sicker than to go into a hotel room and have a knock at the door and an adult coming with a child asking if I wanted to have sex with this child. I said no. Three minutes later they came with three young girls, a choice. It was really sickening, sad, very perverted. This is the type of situation that goes on. If I didn't have self-discipline, I'd probably be in a jail in one of these Asian countries. It was offensive. It is values and morals that are needed, that we need to hand down to the next generation. We need to speak up for these values. We need to speak up for children in the world today. Now, that is one aspect of it.

The other is the slave trade in children. I want to table this with the House. It is from the Government House Leader when he had a grandchild. He was proud of his grandchild, wanted him protected, wanted him looked after, but he is not willing to look after and protect other children in different parts of the world, not willing to stand up for children in different parts of the world. We see that there are millions in forced labour, slave labour, in different parts of the world, and we're not speaking up against it. This should be included in the Bill, where we recognize protection of children.

This is a spiritual value. This comes straight from the creator, as the Minister of Labour has said, and this isn't included in it. You can tell that one person did stand up. He gave world-wide recognition and stood up and fought against some of the evils of child labour, of slave labour in different parts of the world, and he was killed. They said that it was an accident, but anyone who's involved knows that if you have slave labour, you're not willing to risk losing it freely.

Another event. It took one Canadian, 13-year-old Craig Kielburger of Toronto, to confront the minister in India or Pakistan and force him to stand up and speak up for the protection of children in different parts of the world. A leader, a 13 year old, has done more than this government has done in the last 25 years to protect children. It's shameful.

What should the protections for children be? There are three basic protections. The right to survive: provision of food, shelter, clean water, and health care. This doesn't take away from the rights of parents in any way. I don't believe that the government is a poor parent; the UN would even be a poorer parent. This should be a right and provision for our children.

The right of protection from neglect, abuse, exploitation. This doesn't take any rights away from parents, unless it's an abusive parent, and then maybe that right should be taken away.

The right to develop as a young adult through education, health, and so on: this is needed. The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar brought this up in Bill 207 in an earlier session. It was voted down. This government was against protection, against the rights of children, against the protection of children. That should be included in this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, there's a lot more on this. We should be fighting for it. We should be leaders in this province in doing it. Our greatest resource is our young people, and we're not willing to stand up for them. Not willing.

5:20

I just want to bring a couple more examples in. I know what it's like when some of our students have been raped, males and females, and the therapy, the counseling that's needed to bring them back into the normal flow again. We actually prevented some from committing suicide because they were caught in time. When you have the rights of children violated, whether it be through slave labour or through violation of their body many times in a day, it's unbelievable that we won't stand up to fight against that type of situation, Mr. Speaker. The Liberals will, but the government won't. They figure that it's okay to do nothing.

You know, if he wants to use Scripture, I can use Scripture too. It says in *Revelations*: if you're lukewarm, you'll be spitted out of God's mouth. You know, lukewarm, where you don't care. By not doing anything, you are promoting it. Because you're not saying anything, you're saying it's okay. You're saying it's proper. You're saying you want to see children used as prostitutes around the world, that you want to see them used as slave labour, that you want to see them lacking and not developing as our creator wants each one of us to develop into the people we should be, using our talents and our abilities and using our resources wisely. This is again a very important part that we should be promoting, that we should be fighting for.

Just because we live in a developed country, we don't see beyond. Maybe the government members haven't been outside of Alberta. Maybe they don't know what's happening in different parts of the world. I'll take them with me. Some of them have been, I know, and they've seen what's happening. It's important that we get around and see and that we're not led by a small group who have misinformation. They use Scripture to follow their beliefs.

We also had the member saying, you know, that it's the right Bill because it's inspired from God. Yet you had nations going to war in World War I and World War II. You know, God was on every nation's side when they were killing each other off. We've had the religious wars.

MR. SEKULIC: According to their military leaders.

MR. BRACKO: Yes, according to their military leaders. You know, it's unbelievable. As we look at it, more people were killed from religious wars than any other wars in the world. Religious wars: Christians fighting Christians. They all were inspired from above.

You know, there's a basic spiritual truth: you shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free. That's what we want to see happening. To say that this is the right Bill – this is a Bill that we need to work on, to look at the total picture, to send it back, to redo it, to listen to all groups. The bottom line is: let's listen to

everybody. They didn't do that. They're pushing it through. I get a few minutes to speak, and I had to fight for that, Mr. Speaker, because the members on that side not only brought closure, but they stood up and spoke for 20 minutes to kill time so that we don't get the opportunity to speak. It's really important that we do it, important that we look at it and talk to different groups.

I've worked even here in our own country with international students as they have come to Canada to study. This is over the years. We'd find them homes and places to stay. I remember phoning up and finding lodging for some foreign students. They said: yes, we have a room; we have two or three rooms. So I said: we'll be right over. As soon as I brought some Africans, it turned ugly. I've never seen a more vicious person in my life. You could tell the verbal communication was there: we don't want you. The discrimination, the abuse was right there. This is shameful. I was ashamed to be a Canadian that day. We've come a long way. That's just one example.

You know, the other thing I want to mention: one of my best buddies was in a town. He went to three hotels in that town and couldn't get in because he wasn't Caucasian. So he phoned me from this town and said that he couldn't get in. So I phoned the hotel back, and I said, "Do you have any rooms?" "Yes, we've got lots of rooms." I said: "Well, my buddy's there. Give him a room, or I'm going to phone the RCMP and take it to human rights." So he got a room, but it took that to do it.

This is our province, and there are some here who figure it should be strictly a white society when in fact our diversity, our difference in culture is what enriches us, what makes us a great province, what makes us a people set aside. We can be leaders in the world, as we should be, leaders in this province, not sit back and drag everything down, taking us to the lowest common denominator, leaders for the world. They could point and say, "Alberta is a leader." This Bill doesn't allow us to do that.

Another example is a survey done a few years ago. It was sent to a hundred hotels, Mr. Speaker. One name was Smith, Ron Smith or somebody; the other was Joey Little Bear. They both applied to stay at these hotels. The answers came back: Ron Smith, 98 percent of the hotels accepted him; Joey Little Bear, 23 percent. They were sent out on the same day at the same time.

So there is a need to look at what's happening out there, to know that it's important that this Bill doesn't attack the basis of it. Let's put in the different values, talk to the different communities, the different religions, the different cultures.

At Banff at Christmas for 30 years we've put on a varsity Christian fellowship, where we've had people from 50 different countries: different languages, different cultures. This was a touch of heaven because we worked together at Christmas time. We cared about each other, we listened to each other, we learned from each other, and we came back greatly enriched. We followed this through. You know, many of those foreign students that came with us from 50 different countries said that the five best days of their lives that they spent in Canada was international Christmas. This is what we need in a Bill: to bring people together and take us to the highest common level instead of the lowest common denominator in this type of thing, Mr. Speaker. This Bill doesn't do it. This Bill fails. [interjections] Women too. You know, it's unbelievable. It takes away our strengths, the multiculturalism. Women should have a say in it.

Any members across this province: you talk to them and you hear them. Listen. You should come with me. I'll take them on a tour in their own constituencies to hear what they have to say,

Mr. Speaker. I've been there. They've been sitting here under the dome, and they had some lawyers make a Bill that they figure is important. Get out in the real world. Go out there and see what's happening. It's unbelievable. But it's improving.

I want to conclude. The best grade 10 class I had was one that had students from 20 different cultures and ethnic backgrounds. We sat down, and we were considerate. We learned from each other, and we moved forward. That was a class with students from Lebanon, Africa, Asia, and China, and they got together. This is the type of situation we need to include in this Bill and not in one that takes away from the groups that can add and build this into a greater province, as they have over the years: the different multicultural groups and the women of this province who can only help make it better.

It's unbelievable, Mr. Speaker, that we have to sit here and not even get a chance to speak more than once.

AN HON. MEMBER: Five and a quarter hours.

MR. BRACKO: Yeah, five and a quarter hours to put through one of the most important Bills this province will ever have. You know, we can look at the physical, we can look at the monetary, but this is human needs, human needs of our province. They don't care about human needs. All they care about is pushing it through, and it takes place in a minimum amount of time.

5:30

So, Mr. Speaker, it's important that we go forward, that we march, that we look at the situation, that we have more consultation with the different groups. How many groups have been consulted? The Member for Calgary-Buffalo has had letter after letter after letter, phone calls, and meetings with the different groups who are opposed to this Bill. Why is the government so afraid of delaying it until the fall – I mean, what is the risk? – and consulting with these groups? What is this? Unbelievable. Look at it and get the input. Listen to your constituents wherever they are right across the province. Look at rural Alberta, their concerns. This government is bent on not listening to rural Alberta. [interjection] Yes, all the letters that have been tabled throughout the years.

You know, we listen to the Minister of Labour speak about divine law with regards to his government's legislation, Bill 24. I only have to offer the caution: beware of false prophets. Many acts of violence and many acts of negligence have roots in false prophets voting for this amendment. Unbelievable, Mr. Speaker, the things that have been done. And evil. There is one statement: you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.

So we need to take more time to consult, to go around the province, hear what people have to say, look at the amendments proposed, and sit down with the Member for Calgary-Buffalo and work through the amendments. Tell us why you don't want certain amendments we have. Speak to people.

Mr. Speaker, my emphasis is not just adults, not just women, but the most vulnerable: the children of the world. We look at it, and what happens is that we are defined as a society by how we treat those who do not have power, who are weak. This could be the different ethnic groups. This could be a gender group. This could be a religious group. This could be women's groups. This could be aboriginal groups that are taken advantage of. As I go around this province, I've met with people. I've met with aboriginal groups who feel they're taken advantage of. They're forced upon by what the government does, and they're given no say. They don't have a say. If they don't do it, then they're

penalized. They don't get money. They don't get other things. This is something we have to look at, so we need to move forward.

Why are you afraid to listen to the concerns of others? You can tell them in the fall: you're wrong; we don't agree with you. The United Way: you know, those whom the Premier says are not normal Canadians. Well, if chambers of commerce members aren't real Albertans, what do we have? If women aren't real Canadians, if ethnic groups aren't real Albertans, then who is? If my students and our children aren't real Albertans, then who is? Everyone we know.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Order please. Due notice having been given by the hon. Government House Leader under Standing Order 21 and pursuant to Government Motion 19 agreed to this afternoon under Standing Order 21(2), which states that no member shall rise to speak after the hour of 5:30 if the adjourned debate has not been concluded and that all questions must be decided in order to conclude debate, I must now put the following question: all those in favour of the amendment to the motion for third reading of Bill 24, Individual's Rights Protection Amendment Act, 1996, proposed by the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE SPEAKER: Call in the members.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:35 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Abdurahman	Kirkland	Sekulic
Bracko	Leibovici	Soetaert
Collingwood	Mitchell	White

Dickson
Henry
Hewes

Percy
Sapers

Zariwny
Zwozdesky

Against the motion:

Amery
Beniuk
Brassard
Burgener
Calahasen
Cardinal
Clegg
Coutts
Day
Doerksen
Forsyth
Friedel
Fritz

Gordon
Haley
Havelock
Herard
Hierath
Hlady
Jacques
Jonson
Laing
Langevin
Lund
Magnus
Mar

McFarland
Mirosh
Renner
Rostad
Shariff
Smith
Stelmach
Taylor
Thurber
West
Woloshyn
Yankowsky

Totals:

For - 16

Against - 38

[Motion on amendment lost]

[Motion carried; Bill 24 read a third time]

5:50

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, before the Assembly adjourns, the Chair would like to bring your attention to the fact that Mr. Earl Evaniew, who's been on secondment with us for almost a year from the law firm of Emery Jamieson, will be completing that secondment on June 30. On behalf of all hon. members the Chair would like to say that we've appreciated your presence with us, counsel. We hope that you won't forget us too quickly when you return to the crass commercial . . . [applause] The Chair would like to say that as far as it's concerned, it's been a pleasure working with you, and I'm sure all hon. members have had the same experience. [applause]

Hon. members, the Chair will miss you all but looks forward with great anticipation to the fall session.

[Pursuant to Government Motion 15 the Assembly adjourned at 5:51 p.m.]