

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: Monday, August 19, 1996 1:30 p.m.
Date: 96/08/19
[The Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The prayer today is taken from the Legislature of the Northwest Territories.

Let us pray.

Our Father, may Your spirit and guidance be in us as we work for the benefit of all our people for peace and justice in our land and for constant recognition of the dignity and aspirations of those whom we serve.

Amen.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two petitions to present. The first one, signed by 47 Calgarians, urges the government "to suspend hospital closures in Calgary, and immediately hold an independent public inquiry on health facilities."

The second one urges the government to ensure that the General Hospital . . . remain open and fully operational . . . servicing the needs of the inner city, the City of Calgary and the rest of Southern Alberta

as it has for the last 100 years.

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

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by 24 Albertans, both men and women, concerned with the contents of private member's Bill 214.

head: **Reading and Receiving Petitions**

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the petition I presented on Wednesday, August 14, now be read and received.

THE CLERK ASSISTANT:

We the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to suspend hospital closures in Calgary, and immediately hold an independent public inquiry on health facilities in the city.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Bill 225 Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 1996

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce Bill 225, the Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 1996.

This Act would put into law what the government has only put into regulation; that is, a complete prohibition against the charging of user fees or facility fees by any private clinic in this province.

[Leave granted; Bill 225 read a first time]

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

Bill 221 Disaster Services Amendment Act, 1996

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a Bill being Disaster Services Amendment Act, 1996, which changes compensation paid for new structures built on a floodplain.

[Leave granted; Bill 221 read a first time]

Bill 47 Reinvestment Act

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of Bill 47, the Reinvestment Act. This being a money Bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been advised of the contents of this Bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, this implements a number of the decisions and announcements that were made as it related to the government's reinvestment announcement on June 24, 1996.

[Leave granted; Bill 47 read a first time]

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

Bill 222 Non-Smokers' Health Act

DR. OBERG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a Bill being the Non-Smokers' Health Act, Bill 222, which is designed to protect government employees from the perils of smoking.

[Leave granted; Bill 222 read a first time]

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

Bill 223 Lobbyists Registration Act

DR. PERCY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a Bill being the Lobbyists Registration Act.

This Act proposes a model based on the federal model to monitor lobbying in the province of Alberta.

[Leave granted; Bill 223 read a first time]

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

Bill 224 Education Employment Relations Statutes Amendment Act, 1996

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a Bill being the Education Employment Relations Statutes Amendment Act, 1996.

This Bill provides school boards the opportunity to renegotiate their teachers' contracts to reflect the current structure of our School Act.

[Leave granted; Bill 224 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

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

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table four copies of A Report on the Public Hearings on the Proposed Closure of the Calgary General Hospital. These are from hearings held on May 7 and 8, 1996. The sponsors of the citizens' hearings on health care were the Alberta Council on Aging; the Coalition of Parents of Children with Disabilities; the Calgary chapter, Council of Canadians; and Friends of Medicare, Calgary chapter.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I am filing with the Legislative Assembly today a news release and backgrounder regarding the Reinvestment Act, which I introduced earlier. As well, I am filing with the Assembly four copies of Revenue Forecasting Review, a report prepared by a three-member task force chaired by Mr. Harry Schaefer of the city of Calgary.

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

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a document this afternoon from a Janice Lamont of Calgary which I believe was sent to all the MLAs and in which she asks: what price a human life, Mr. Dinning?

Thank you.

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

1:40

MR. BRACKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. The first: four copies of a poll done by the newspaper *St. Albert this Week* with the results being given last Friday. The question asked was: "Is health care as big an issue as doctors and the Liberals suggest?" The poll shows that 99 percent say it is.

Also, I have a copy for the Premier and the Minister of Health: "Our 83 year old mother, Ann Kopala, is dead" due to health care cuts.

MR. WOLOSZYN: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table four copies of documents which substantiate that recent erroneous statements made in the House by the Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert have been harmful to the reputation of both the Capital health authority and the WestView regional health authority. This will be addressed in a point of order after question period.

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

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to table copies of a letter received from a constituent, Carla Henderson, one of many displaced health care workers in our province, attesting to her plight and describing her shattered life. After 10 years in the field she is now struggling to find another form of employment.

MS CARLSON: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table four copies of a memo to the Premier from a constituent, Diane Dooley. She suffers from a rare spinal cord condition which causes her extreme pain, and she has been unable to get a hospital bed for over six months.

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

DR. OBERG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table four copies of a graph that shows the actual number of cardiac surgeries done in the Capital health authority in the last six months and how it has increased by 10 percent in the last six months over the previous six months.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table four copies of a letter sent by Ireen Slater expressing her concerns about physiotherapy and the fact that now that she can't afford to pay for it privately, in the long term it will cost Alberta more money, and as a result, this will happen to lots of Albertans. She's very concerned about what's happening in physiotherapy.

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

MR. SAPERS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. With your permission today I'd like to table four copies of a very lengthy letter from a constituent in Drayton Valley who's suffering with kidney failure. To sum up, his letter poses the question: if you have an expensive system, shouldn't you plan for it to meet patient need?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think the Speaker will take the opportunity to question whether or not we're going to have a long series of tablings this afternoon. House leaders? No?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

MR. SAPERS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The second tabling of literally hundreds of pieces of correspondence and records of conversations that come through my office regarding health care, but today just the second.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, are you tabling a document as in the sense that it's a letter or a report, or are you attempting to table the gist of a telephone conversation?

MR. SAPERS: A report, Mr. Speaker, and I'll be brief. It concerns a man with cancerous tumours, two on his kidney, and he is unable to be scheduled for surgery because, he's repeatedly told, there are no surgical beds for him.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Dunvegan.

MR. CLEGG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. member for the constituency of Highwood I would like to introduce through you to the Members of the Legislative Assembly five special guests seated in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon. They are Dave Zyluk, Vicky Zyluk, Elizabeth Zyluk, Jenny Zyluk, and Maureen Close. I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly some members

of the Alberta College and Technical Institute Student Executive Council. This council represents the college and technical institute students of 14 postsecondary institutions in Alberta. I had the opportunity to meet with these student leaders today. I'd like to ask each of them to stand as I call their names: Nathan Angelozzi from SAIT, Bobbie Saga from Mount Royal College, Bryan Boechler from Mount Royal College, Samantha McWilliams from Medicine Hat College, Cory Bohaychuk from Olds College, Doug Popwich from NAIT, Karen Leblond from Augustana University College, Mark Sakamoto from Medicine Hat College, and Robin Folkins from Lakeland College. I ask all members to give these students the traditional warm welcome to our Assembly.

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

MR. HENRY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With your permission I would like to introduce some guests who are seated in the public gallery today. They are a group of 10 students who are studying English as a Second Language at the English Language Professionals' centre. [interjections] I'd ask my colleagues to hold their comments. They are studying English at a centre in downtown Edmonton in my constituency that has operated for about four or five years now and provides excellent service to new Canadians who wish to learn English. They're in the public gallery. They're accompanied by their instructor Ms Wendy Medeiros. If they could all rise and receive the warm welcome, I'd appreciate it.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you a student in political science who worked in my constituency office this summer under the STEP grant, Mark Richardson. He's here to observe the launching of the university's billion dollar fund raising in research by the year 2000. Mark is sitting in the members' gallery. I'd like him to rise and receive the warm welcome from the Legislature.

MRS. FORSYTH: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you a former staff sergeant with the Calgary city police who's dedicated a great deal of his life to the dealings of child prostitution. He's involved with a company called Street Teams, and he's also serving as a member on our juvenile task force. Ross MacInnes.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege this afternoon to introduce two very special guests who are in the gallery opposite. The first one is Keltie Van Binsbergen, who is the daughter of our colleague from West Yellowhead. Keltie is going back to Montreal this afternoon to resume her studies at McGill University, where she is a theology student. No doubt when she gets her own pulpit, she'll be able to match the kind of eloquence that we've come to expect from her father from West Yellowhead. With Keltie is her mother, Margie Van Binsbergen. I'd ask both of those women to rise and receive the usual gracious welcome of the House.

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

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you, sir, and through you to other Members

of the Legislative Assembly three individuals who are here today to watch the proceedings. They were involved with the report that I tabled earlier on the hearings on the proposed closure of the Calgary General hospital. They're in the public gallery. I'd ask Barb Baxter, Clint Moore, and Frank Reaume to rise and receive the usual welcome of the Members of the Legislative Assembly.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to introduce to you and through you to members of the Legislature two young men who are visiting our Legislature today and are observing question period. They are Mr. Jamie Osadchuk and Mr. Brandon Osadchuk. They are accompanied by their mother, Maureen, whom many of you know. I would ask you to give them a very warm welcome.

1:50

MR. DOERKSEN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and to the members of this Assembly a young gentleman whom I have had the privilege of working in my office in Red Deer for the summer. His name is Bryan McIver. I'd ask Brian to stand up and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a constituent of mine from Medicine Hat. Mr. Ron Weisgerber has traveled to Edmonton primarily to visit with relatives, but I'm very pleased that he's chosen to spend the afternoon observing the procedures here in the Assembly with us. Accompanying Mr. Weisgerber is his brother-in-law Mr. Mike Stanko from Edmonton. I don't see them in the members' gallery, so I'm assuming they're in the public gallery. I would ask them to rise and that all members give them the traditional warm welcome.

head: **Ministerial Statements**

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Korea Veterans Association Convention

MR. THURBER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure that I rise today and that I ask you and the Assembly to join with me in offering our congratulations to the Korea Veterans Association of Canada on the occasion of its national convention being held in Calgary August 23 to 25.

As a former member of the Canadian Navy I know how important it is to remember the role of the 27,000 Canadians who served the United Nations in Korea between 1950 and 1953.

This year the veterans' association has set a goal of raising \$300,000 to build a national wall of remembrance in Brampton, Ontario, that will be dedicated to Korean War veterans. To help raise funds, one veteran is even bicycling to the convention from Timmins, Ontario. André LaRivière, the cyclist I mentioned, is 62 years young and living proof that Korean War veterans remain an important part of Canadian society.

Some of you may remember that the Korea Veterans Association held their national reunion here in Edmonton in 1991. On that occasion we unveiled a cairn on the grounds of the Legislature Building dedicated to all Korean War veterans, particularly to those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

I am also happy to remind the Legislature, Mr. Speaker, that the Alberta government played a major part in convincing the

federal government to strike a Korea Voluntary Service Medal, which the veterans were awarded in 1991.

In these days, with the end of the cold war, it is all too easy to forget the debt that we owe to those who risked their lives to preserve our freedom and democracy, but we must never forget, particularly because 516 Canadian servicemen, 16 of them from Alberta, did not return from Korea.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to wish the Korea Veterans Association every success with their convention and their wall of remembrance project. I also think it fitting to end with the words that are inscribed on the cairn just outside this Assembly:

Those whom this scroll commemorates were numbered among those who, at the call of King and country, left all that was dear to them, endured hardness, faced danger, and finally passed out of the sight of men by the path of duty and self-sacrifice, giving up their own lives that others might live in freedom. Let those who come after see to it that these names be not forgotten.

Thank you.

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

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, I join with the hon. minister in congratulating the Korea Veterans Association of Canada on the eve of their annual convention in Calgary. Those who served this nation during the three-year conflict in Korea certainly deserve our thanks and our respect. It is a special honour that the city of Calgary and province of Alberta host this convention.

It occurs to me that when in the last number of years we've lauded the work of the United Nations and talked about what an important contribution Canada has made, we perhaps haven't focused enough on that very concrete and very major contribution made by the 27,000 Canadians that went to serve in that United Nations-sponsored initiative.

In my constituency there are two branches of the Royal Canadian Legion and the Colonel Belcher hospital, so I've had what's been a very important opportunity, as a result, to meet with many veterans of the Korean conflict. I think their bravery and sacrifice warrants a major memorial such as the proposed national wall of remembrance in Brampton, Ontario.

All of my colleagues join in wishing the Korea veterans a very productive convention in the city of Calgary.

Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

head: **Oral Question Period**
Health Care

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, the Premier can't have it both ways. He wants to take credit for having balanced the budget, but he refuses to accept any responsibility for the crisis that his policies have created in this health care system. To the Premier: who do Albertans get to hold accountable for their health care problems when the Premier stomps out of this Legislature and runs from his responsibility, like he did last Thursday?

Speaker's Ruling
Referring to the Absence of Members

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition will remember that on the occasion when certain members are either here or not here, the parliamentary courtesy is that we do not mention the absence or the coming and going of

members into the Chamber. To try and characterize their coming and going only adds an additional insult to that unparliamentary act. So, hon. member, would you please guide yourself accordingly and refrain from making such remarks. [interjections] Order. Refrain from making such remarks. You may even consider withdrawing them.

The hon. Premier.

Health Care *(continued)*

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, since the leader of the Liberal opposition won't withdraw his remarks, I'd like to remind him that I didn't stomp out of the Legislature. I quietly walked out of the Legislature. I didn't storm out of the Legislature, as some of the media said. I quietly packed up my books just like this, I turned around, and I quietly walked out. I blew them a kiss on the way out just to show them how much I love them. On the way out I said: I am leaving for the time being because I'm not going to put up with that kind of nonsense.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, the question remains: who is responsible for health care in this province and the problems that it's encountering if it isn't the Premier? The Premier keeps denying that it's his responsibility.

MR. KLEIN: No, I don't, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed the responsibility of this government, in particular the Premier, the Minister of Health, all members of Executive Council, all members of this caucus. Indeed it is the government's responsibility. Sir, I would suggest to you and to the Leader of the Opposition that we are identifying those concerns and we are addressing those concerns, but we're doing it not on the basis of emotion, not on the basis of trying to make political points but in a reasonable, factual, and straightforward way.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, health care is in chaos, and the Premier will not admit to the severity of the problems. Doesn't the Premier understand that the first step to recovery is to admit that there is a problem?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I take exception to this notion being promoted by the Liberals that it is in chaos. As a matter of fact, I think that there was an interesting reply given to a reporter's question by the incoming president – or maybe he's the president now – of the Alberta Medical Association where he says, and I quote: there is no systemwide crisis, only regionalized problems. Now, I thought that that was a very thoughtful statement coming from the president of the AMA. I believe the president of the AMA far more than I would believe the leader of the Liberal Party.

Health Capital Projects

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, the Capital health authority is broke, and it just lost out again. The government can find \$115 million for buildings everywhere but in Edmonton, yet in Edmonton patients must wait for surgeries, go without physiotherapy, and try to survive unclean and understaffed hospitals. How can the Premier justify \$115 million for the rest of this province and nothing for Edmonton?

2:00

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to have the hon. Minister

of Health supplement. This is something that is determined on the basis of priority, and it's also determined on the basis of requests from the regional health authorities. As I understand, for this year there has been no request from the Capital regional health authority. That's not to say that in past years money hasn't been given for capital improvements when the necessity for those capital improvements has been identified, and that will be the case when the Capital regional health authority applies for their capital requirements and their needs. I'll have the hon. minister supplement.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, the answer is that the Capital health authority had eight projects approved last year, so the largest number of projects was for the Capital health authority last year. Those projects are in process now, some tens of millions of dollars involved there, and there are three additional projects that are in the planning stages which will certainly get consideration next year or the year after.

MR. MITCHELL: Calgary had tens of millions of dollars in projects last year too, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition with a question.

MR. MITCHELL: Talking about questions of priorities, I have a question of priority to the Premier. What does it say to Edmontonians and northern Albertans about this government's priorities when they get none of this \$115 million and they still have to go to Calgary for eye surgery, Mr. Speaker?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Liberal opposition somehow equates a huge, massive capital works program throughout the province, in Calgary, and eventually in Edmonton to someone traveling to Calgary for eye surgery, which is absolute nonsense. It makes no sense whatsoever, but it's the kind of thing that they try to put out there to confuse the public. Well, the public won't be confused on these issues, because they know exactly what is going on, and what is going on here is that once we get the capital requirements and the capital needs from the Capital regional health authority, those requests will be given due consideration. If he needs to hear it again from the hon. Minister of Health, I'll ask him to respond.

MR. JONSON: Well, I'd just like to repeat, Mr. Speaker, first of all . . .

MRS. McCLELLAN: Slowly.

MR. JONSON: Yes, slowly.

The bulk of the capital money relative to any single RHA in this province went to Edmonton last year. The planning and the preliminary construction work and so on is under way with respect to those projects.

The other thing that I'd like to emphasize is that we do have a set of criteria which the Department of Health and the Department of Public Works, Supply and Services use to establish the priority of capital projects. There are 11 criteria used. They include such things as whether the project will result in improved efficiency, the consolidation of programs, whether the project increases access to institutional and continuing care or supports community care.

MR. SAPERS: And whether it meets the government's priorities. That's politics, Halvar.

MR. JONSON: Oh, another voice heard from across the way.

These criteria, Mr. Speaker, were arrived at through a process of meeting with regional health authorities. It is acceptable to them. It'll certainly have to be reviewed as needs change in the future. This is following the normal course, and as I said, the Capital health authority has certainly had due consideration.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, how can the Premier allocate \$115 million for buildings outside of Edmonton while at the same time telling northeast Edmonton residents that they have to organize bingos and bottle drives to fund their health care centre?

MR. KLEIN: I have said no such thing, and this person knows it. Mr. Speaker, he is not telling the truth once again. He is not telling the truth. I am not saying he's a liar. [interjections] I'm simply saying that he's not telling the truth.

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order. Hon. members, you're reminded that it's question period. Opposition and private members may ask questions and ministers may endeavour to answer them. Please remember that it is not your function to then chirp through the whole time that either the member is asking the question or the minister is answering.

Health Care (continued)

MR. MITCHELL: I have here copies of a letter from a Mr. Milton Davies outlining the case of his mother's death in the health care system. On May 12 Mrs. Davies was taken to the emergency department at the Royal Alexandra hospital suffering from uncontrollable coughing, from pneumonia, and from a severe headache, but she was not admitted to the hospital for 35 hours because there were no beds available. It took three days to get X-ray pictures taken on the 12th read, and it took three days for blood work reports to be received by her specialist. Mr. Speaker, she died on May 17, 1996. Mr. Davies has asked me to ask these questions of the Premier. Why did the health care system that his parents believed in all their lives let them down and kill his mother? His words.

MR. KLEIN: I don't know that to be the case. Certainly if there are instances like this dating back to May, Mr. Speaker, they will be investigated. If the Minister of Health is asked to investigate these cases, they will be investigated, as indeed they have been in the past. The hon. minister pointed out last Thursday two cases that had been dealt with by fatalities inquiries, one that is still under investigation. This case would be investigated in the same way.

While we're on the question, Mr. Speaker, of tabling letters . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Answer the question. Answer the question.

MR. KLEIN: I have answered the question. The case will be investigated. If there is a request to have it investigated, it will be.

While we're on the question of letters, Mr. Speaker, I would like to read into the record a letter that I received on August 16, not in May but on August 16. It was faxed to my home. It was addressed to Mr. Frank Bruseker, MLA Calgary-North West, and it goes like this.

Dear Sir;

I am writing at this time to express my ongoing concern with the way in which you are representing me in the Legislature.

[interjections] Mr. Speaker, this is a legitimate answer to a question.

At present you and your party are attacking the government over how it has been dealing with the need to downsize and rationalize our health care system.

Your tactic of reading into the records, letters, articles and a list of those people who have unfortunately died, represents a very one sided and negative perspective.

I for one would ask that you [you the Member for Calgary-North West] read this letter into the record to provide a more balanced perspective on this issue.

[interjection] No, he didn't. He didn't read it into the record. Why? Because it says:

Over the past three years I have not suffered any decline in my ability to access the health care services that I require. I am still able to obtain immediate access to my family doctor, my chiropractor and specialists that I have been referred to without any undue delay. In fact I was referred to a Dermatologist and was able to see that Doctor on the same day.

I [also] have a personal friend who has been suffering from leukemia for the past year and a half and she has nothing but positive comments about the treatment she has received from the Doctors, Nurses and staff at the Tom Baker Cancer Clinic.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, if he has the Premier's home fax number, he's probably a pretty close friend of the Premier. I wonder how many ordinary Albertans have the Premier's home fax number. If you read the name of that person, you'll find he's a pretty well-placed Tory.

Mr. Speaker, my second question on behalf of . . .

2:10

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: There was a lot of noise, but as the Chair heard it, the question to the Premier is: how many ordinary Albertans have his fax number?

MR. MITCHELL: My second question, Mr. Speaker. This is on behalf of Mr. Davies. Why does the Premier pretend that this health care system is not killing the plain folk, quote, unquote, the people that made Alberta and that he was elected to govern, to protect, and to defend. These are Mr. Davies' words.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, first of all, my fax number is very, very public. Ladies and gentlemen, it's very public. The number is . . . [interjections] Listen. Listen. Write it down; you might need it. It's 246-2056. Frank knows that. He's been asked to reply many times to questions put to him by members of my family, but he hasn't had the decency to reply, just like he hasn't had the decency to read into the record this letter, which goes on to say:

In a random survey of friends and acquaintances again I have been unable to find anyone who has suffered as a result of the government's efforts to selectively and carefully reduce the expenditures in the health care area.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. I'm sure you're going to table all of that letter.

Third and final supplemental to the third question, hon. Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MITCHELL: Now that he's snubbed Mr. Davies' questions twice, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to try him a third time. Mr. Davies asks: why did it take 35 hours to admit Mrs. Davies, his mother, to a hospital bed, and three days to get simple blood work and chest X-rays diagnosed if this health care system isn't in crisis?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the answer to that question is the answer that I gave previously. It is unfortunate that these things happen, but if Mr. Davies has a specific complaint relative to the delivery of health care and how a relative of his was dealt with by the health care system, then that will be fully investigated and measures will be taken to make sure that these things don't happen again.

Mr. Speaker, it is not all negative. Again I would finish this letter from Mr. Descent, who I don't know by the way, and the conclusion to the letter simply says:

While I am sure that your focus is on the negative side of this issue . . .

That is their focus.

I would ask that you . . .

That's the Member for Calgary-North West

. . . as my elected representative . . . read this letter into the record to show that you party is prepared to put forth the views of all of your constituents.

Thank you for doing this on my behalf.

Well, Mr. Descent, you can thank him for doing nothing.

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

Social Assistance

MR. BENIUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There have been some recent stories about the city of Edmonton social service department having a \$3,900,000 shortage due to federal government cutbacks in funding. Some activists in Edmonton are asking that the provincial government replace their funding. To the Minister of Family and Social Services: what has the province done to help the city of Edmonton out in this regard?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, when the Liberals cut this funding to social services in Edmonton, there was a request by the mayor if there wasn't some way in which the province could assist in what to the city of Edmonton planners was an unanticipated reduction by the Liberals. There were meetings with the mayor and with others, and subsequent to that \$500,000 was signed over to the city of Edmonton to help them deal with the Liberal cut in funds. There were also dollars released to Calgary.

I might add, Mr. Speaker, that the province as a whole received a reduction as a result of the Liberal cuts. We did anticipate them and put them in our planning process. The FCSS program was not reduced at all because of the federal Liberal cuts. As a matter of fact, we even put those into the FCSS communities. So they were absorbed, and the city of Edmonton was also assisted.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Edmonton-Norwood, first supplemental.

MR. BENIUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is there any way that the provincial government can move to help the valuable after

school care subsidies so that working Albertans can continue to work and not go back on welfare?

MR. DAY: Well, Mr. Speaker, we're willing to help in any way we can. Actually we made it plain to the Liberals that in Alberta there is an excess of day care spaces, and in fact if they could not just blanket give some more dollars, what about trying to be innovative and look at a situation where dollars could be shifted, since we had a surplus in day care spaces, to after school care subsidies? The Liberals did not think that after school care subsidies were important, so that hasn't happened.

MR. BENIUK: Given that the Edmonton Social Planning Council is spending \$30,000 on a food bank study, can the province do anything to help the hungry children that use the food bank?

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, social workers have been informed and know and they would be happy to communicate a message – it's already been communicated, as a matter of fact – to the food bank that if there are people that are identified that are having difficulties in the area of making sure their children are fed, we would like to have those referred to social workers so that we could work with those families and with the food banks to do that. That would be something that I think would be worth while.

As to why the \$30,000 is being spent on a study of the food bank, that's not for us to address. I can say that just recent announcements of some \$50 million in early intervention initiatives are going towards addressing some of those problems, Mr. Speaker.

Mental Health Board

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Speaker, the Provincial Mental Health Board was set up to make sure that the strategic plan for mental health was honoured. The former Minister of Health pledged her support, as did the Premier. With the job only half done, however, the current Minister of Health has dismissed the board and seized back control. Why is the Premier allowing his Minister of Health to undermine mental health reform at this point by disbanding the board before its job is finished?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health is not undermining anything, and relative to his reasoning, I'll have him supplement.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Health.

MR. JONSON: Yes, Mr. Speaker. First of all, the change in the Provincial Mental Health Board to the Provincial Mental Health Advisory Board is undertaken for a number of reasons. First of all, I think there are considerable administrative savings and efficiencies that can be gained under the new structure. Secondly, in the time of moving into implementation and the integration of services with RHAs, we need to have a different mix on the board where we have some of the practitioners in the mental health care system involved. I think we will benefit from this, particularly in the specifics of implementation.

Mr. Speaker, we need to have a process in place where the regional health authorities will be involved with respect to community contracts and community placements. We need to work on the enhancement of community-based services. We do, yes, need to set some certainty and a definite target in terms of the number of tertiary beds needed in this province. There are

quite a number of very specific actions in the field of mental health that we have to work on and make sure work for the people of Alberta.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Edmonton-Glenora, first supplemental.

MR. SAPERS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are really no better informed now than they were a minute ago.

Maybe the Premier will explain why he didn't take the time to at least meet with the Provincial Mental Health Board and hear from them directly about the delicate state of affairs mental health reform was in before he fired them.

MR. KLEIN: First of all, there's a big difference between disbanding a board and re-forming a board from an active board to an advisory board. Mr. Speaker, I think that the hon. Minister of Health gave a perfectly good answer that even the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora should be able to understand.

2:20

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Final supplemental, Edmonton-Glenora.

MR. SAPERS: Thanks. Given that Alberta Hospital Ponoka is in the Minister of Health's riding and its future was to be decided by the now disbanded, dismissed board, will the Premier explain how funding decisions will not be tainted about questions of conflict of interest?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I think that most of us have hospitals in our constituencies. I don't know if the Member for Edmonton-Glenora has a hospital in his constituency, but I know that the Member for Calgary-Buffalo has a hospital in his constituency. I think that . . . [interjections] No. I'm sorry. Right. [interjections] Well, most of us do. The Minister of Community Development has a whole bunch of hospitals in her constituency. The minister of agriculture probably has two or three in his constituency. The Member for Calgary-Mountain View has a hospital in his constituency. The Member for Cardston-Chief Mountain has two in his constituency. Does this mean that because a hospital is in your constituency, you can't be the Minister of Health?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Health to supplement.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, to briefly supplement I'd just like to draw to the hon. member's attention that when I was Minister of Education there were schools in my riding. I do wish to report that this year we did get a portable classroom at the Mecca Glen school east of Ponoka. [interjections]

Mr. Speaker, just further, if he will listen . . . [interjections]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. Edmonton-Glenora, you've asked a question. You're now getting an answer. Perhaps we could all listen.

MR. JONSON: With respect to Alberta Hospital Ponoka the point is that I find it very unusual that the member across the way would be implying criticism of it. In the area of transfer of services into the community to have a working model developed where you have a working system of supporting the transfer of

former institutional residents into the community, Alberta Hospital Ponoka has been one of the leaders in this province in terms of developing this. They had their pilot projects in place some years ago. This is something that can be used for the rest of the province. So it's in keeping with the directions of mental health reform.

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

Colonel Belcher Hospital

MRS. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Health. Veterans in Calgary are concerned about rumours that the Colonel Belcher hospital may close. Could the minister inform this Assembly as to whether the Calgary regional health authority has communicated any plans regarding the future of the Colonel Belcher hospital?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding that there have been no plans announced with respect to the closure of the Colonel Belcher. It's my understanding and I am very pleased that the Calgary regional health authority has established a task force to look at the future of the Colonel Belcher in terms of programs and needs with respect to that particular facility. That is something that is under way right now, and there's been a very clear assurance given to the residents of that facility that there will be no change in terms of their circumstances until that task force report is considered.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: First supplemental, Calgary-Bow.

MRS. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Would the hon. Minister of Health tell this Assembly what the time frame is on the veterans' services task force and when the final report is expected.

MR. JONSON: It is my understanding that the task force is currently being established, currently being appointed. The date, if I recall correctly, is midfall, October 30, somewhere in that range. So there's certainly going to be a period of time for a thorough discussion.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Final supplemental, Calgary-Bow.

MRS. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some people have expressed a concern that this task force may not represent the users of the Colonel Belcher hospital. Can the minister assure the Assembly that the veterans do have appropriate representation and access to this task force?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, the Colonel Belcher task force is I believe 15 or 17 members, and of that 15 or 17, 10 of the positions are allocated to residents in care, veterans of the wars that Canada has been involved in, or from the Legions. So they're going to be very, very well represented there. It'll make it possible to have broad representation from the veterans and their associations. There are, I understand, some conflicting views even within that overall community with respect to the best future for the Belcher. Just to emphasize once again, very good representation in my view out of the total for people connected with that facility.

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

Bow Valley Centre

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On May 7 and 8 the citizens' hearings report which I tabled earlier today heard concerns from over 50 Calgarians regarding the proposed closure of the Bow Valley site at the General hospital. It seems that the only people that are in support of closing this hospital are the Calgary regional health authority, the Premier, and some of the government MLAs. In 1964 Calgary had a population of 300,000 people with three hospitals. By April 1 of next year the population will be two and a half times that amount, and we'll be back down to three hospitals. My question is to the Premier. Was the decision to close the Bow Valley centre made by the Calgary regional health authority, or was the decision made by the government and the implementation then left to the Calgary regional health authority?

MR. KLEIN: As far as I know, Mr. Speaker, the recommendation to close the Calgary Bow Valley centre was made by the Calgary regional health authority. I don't know; perhaps the Minister of Health can elaborate as to what the government's involvement was at that particular time.

I do know, having served on the board of that hospital for almost nine years as the mayor of Calgary, that there were ongoing requests to the provincial government of the day for very substantial funding to virtually overhaul that hospital. The last report that I had relative to the complete fix, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the Bow Valley centre was something in the neighbourhood of \$182 million to \$186 million.

This is a question not so much of the Bow Valley but how the inner-city needs of Calgary can be served, whether it's at the Belcher hospital, which is in the constituency of the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, or whether it's the Bow Valley centre or some components of the Bow Valley centre, which is in the constituency of the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View. These are the decisions now that the Calgary regional health authority is struggling with, Mr. Speaker.

I've talked to the chairman of the authority, and he gives me assurances that there will be at least one and perhaps two urgent care centres in the downtown core of the city of Calgary, that there will be community-based health facilities, and that the needs of the inner city in Calgary will be met and will be met before there is any closure of the hospital.

MR. BRUSEKER: My first supplemental to the Premier: why is the unelected Calgary regional health authority making this decision, as the Premier said, to close the Bow Valley centre without providing, fully public, the economic or the social reasons for this closure to anyone who wants them, assuming those reasons even exist.

2:30

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Calgary-North West tabled the results of public hearings. There are all kinds of reports on this particular facility. Some of those reports recommended as long as 10 or 15 years ago that that hospital be closed instead of spending huge, huge amounts of dollars to go through a restoration project. It's all predicated on what is best overall for the health care system in Calgary and the tertiary needs certainly of southern Alberta. These are the tough decisions that have to be worked out through the Calgary regional health authority. Certainly when their budget requirements are asked to be met by the government, we take all of these factors into account and

make our decisions based on good planning, and we trust the RHA to do that good planning.

MR. BRUSEKER: My final supplemental: with the relatively small savings that will result with the closure of the Bow Valley centre, will the Premier direct the Calgary regional health authority to keep this vital inner-city hospital open rather than knocking it down and building a new one in southeast Calgary?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, is he talking about the whole hospital, every single component of that hospital? Is he talking about some components of the hospital? What components of the hospital is he talking about? And what needs need to be served? Does this hon. member know precisely the needs that need to be served in the inner core? Is it full emergency care with follow-up trauma and hundreds and hundreds of acute care beds? Well, I think not, and I don't think he thinks that that's what is required. Is it urgent care? Is it community health? Do we need only one urgent care centre in the central core, or do we need two? Where should the focus be?

This is what the challenge has been relative to the restructuring of health, Mr. Speaker. It's not about bricks and mortar anymore. It's about people and how we most effectively and efficiently deliver the service to meet the needs of people, not the needs of electricians and plumbers and so on who need to go in there and do the repairs but people.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury.

Corrections Facilities Population

MR. BRASSARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A recent report by a task force of federal, provincial, and territorial justice officials indicated that if sentencing practices and trends continue, the adult convict population will increase by 21 percent and the youth convict population by 38 percent. These figures appear quite alarming and indicate a significant overcrowding situation in our jails and therefore are cause for serious concern. My question is to the Minister of Justice. Just what is the current convict population situation in our jails?

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

MR. EVANS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. It's a good question. The count in our corrections facilities changes, of course, on a day-to-day basis, but when this report became public last week and there were some concerns raised about it, I did a check on a couple of different days. We have a bed capacity in our adult and young offender facilities in this province of about 4,000 on a daily basis. On the two days that I checked last week, the count was about 3,000. In other words, there were about a thousand beds that were left unoccupied. So we're certainly not in a crisis situation in the province of Alberta. We have excess capacity.

MR. BRASSARD: My second question, then, is to the minister. I'd like to know: just how reliable are these forecasted figures, and have they been anticipated by this government?

MR. EVANS: Well, Mr. Speaker, the forecast was based on some of the history of prison populations, but as the hon. member indicated in his preamble, it's based on existing sentencing

practices not changing. There are initiatives that are being proposed, both at the federal level for conditional sentences under Bill C-41 and in this province as well with our serious and violent crime initiative, that would see fewer individuals who do not pose a threat to society generally because of a threat of violence or serious criminal behaviour moving into a community corrections model rather than finding their way into a prison.

I for one believe that the best place to learn how to be a criminal is in a prison setting with those who are repeat offenders and know the system well. So we're trying to look at alternatives to incarceration for individuals who don't pose a threat to society. I believe that moving in that direction at both the federal and provincial levels will ensure that the demographics change and that these forecasts are not correct.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Final supplemental, Olds-Didsbury? Okay.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Calgary Bethany Care Centre

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, thank you. This government has slashed funding at Calgary's Bethany care centre, forcing the layoff of another 47 licensed practical nurses. This leaves the Bethany with only 19 nurses to care for 442 residents, a job that in 1991 was handled by 100 nurses. Now, the residents of the centre are understandably scared. They feel abandoned by this government. So my question would be to whichever minister answers in lieu of the Premier. My question would be this: what does this spokesman for the government, whoever he or she may be, say to the residents and families about the lack of qualified care providers when one person is left to put 20 different residents to bed?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding that at the Bethany care centre they operate with a number of types of qualified staff. You have the nurses, which have been reduced in numbers as I understand it and which the hon. member outlined, but in terms of the overall staff mix with respect to nurses, licensed practical nurses, and support aides, services are being delivered at the Bethany, and there is an adequate level of staff.

MR. DICKSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, surely the response time is the question. What does this minister say to those residents of the Bethany care centre and their families when their calls for assistance routinely go unanswered for up to an hour because the Bethany is short staffed?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, if there are those cases and they are drawn directly to the attention of the regional health authority, I am sure that they will be investigated and followed up. Likewise if they come to my attention, I will certainly work through the RHA in that regard.

MR. DICKSON: My final question to the hon. minister would be: will he show leadership by immediately investigating to determine what the needs are, determine what the shortfall is in terms of services, and come up with an immediate plan to address that shortfall in service?

MR. JONSON: Well, I think the hon. member is aware that we also have in place the Health Facilities Review Committee. Mr.

Speaker, given the different types of circumstances that have been brought forward over the last couple of days in question period, I do think that we should give consideration to a body such as the facilities review committee because we do need to have an investigation and a review with respect to these circumstances if individuals in the facility are not in their view receiving adequate care.

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

Children's Services

MR. SHARIFF: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the spring session this Assembly passed a new Child and Family Services Authorities Act. This Act will allow communities, in partnership with the Alberta government, to set up authorities to deliver services to children and families. My question is to the minister responsible for children's services. What is the current status of the implementation of this Act and the progress of this initiative?

2:40

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. minister responsible for children's services. [some applause]

MS CALAHASEN: Well, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, since November of 1994, when the initiative was first announced, there have been over 10,000 Albertans who have been involved in the initiative, and that has been through different opportunities. One has been through focus groups. We've had about a hundred focus groups that we've been working through. We've also had what we call working committees. There have been 238 working committees that have been going throughout the province of Alberta. We have approximately 17 steering committees who are now in the process of designing a preliminary service plan, and we presently have two being presented to the province. Throughout the province of Alberta there certainly have been many, many people who have been involved, and I'd like to commend those people today.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, first supplemental.

MR. SHARIFF: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe the minister responsible for children's services has toured Alberta and sought feedback from various service-providing agencies. Can the minister apprise this House on the findings of her mission?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Madam Minister.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, to date I've met hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people, which include civic leaders, leaders from First Nations, leaders from the Métis nation, and the Métis general council. I've also met with focus groups, working committees, steering committees, and many, many individuals. Of all those people that I've met, generally they have been very positive about the initiative. There's still a lot of work to be done, and I know that they're going to be involved, and I'd like to encourage more Albertans to become involved in this initiative.

MR. SHARIFF: Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering what assurances the minister can provide to Albertans that the services that will be

provided won't vary significantly from region to region.

MS CALAHASEN: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's a question that has two sides to it. We must have it so that there are two different things that need to be done. One, the reason why we have this initiative is to ensure that the different regions will be able to provide their input and be able to design services that will cater to their needs. The second one is that we believe there's got to be input from the people in order for them to be able to have their services delivered the way they want. I know that with all the work that's been going on, we'll continue to do that. I'm looking forward to looking at what it is that each specific region will be bringing forward to ensure that their needs are being met, and I'd like to encourage more Albertans to be involved in this initiative.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Home Care

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ann Nelson of Grande Cache is quadriplegic and needs eight hours of home care per day. Unfortunately, her regional health authority, the Mistahia RHA, only has the funds for two hours per day, and that is because of the funding cuts by this Progressive Conservative government. Unfortunately, Mrs. Nelson now has to pay for her own private home care, and she's running out of funds. My question is to the Minister of Health. Can you explain why our once so-called efficient public health care system now requires Mrs. Nelson to pay for her own home care services?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the allocation of hours of home care, I think it has been the case for some time that where people have the financial ability and wish to hire or purchase home care beyond the given allotment, that has been possible. That would not be a change which has come necessarily with either regionalization or with reductions in the budget, which incidentally have, as the hon. member knows, come to an end. A few months ago it was announced that an additional \$40 million of last year's budget was going into long-term care in this province. In terms of the specific circumstances of the case, once again if I have that particular letter or concern in my office, it'll be followed up and investigated with the regional health authority.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: First supplemental, West Yellowhead.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I went public on this because it's taking so much time, Mr. Minister, and the lady is running out of funds. So what do I tell her?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I will assure the hon. member that there will be a reply from my department or directly from my office with respect to this particular case.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Mr. Speaker, once again to the same minister. After all, we've just racked up our umpteenth surplus by this government, so perhaps he could consider putting more funding into this particular medical service.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, since we're getting into a general item from across the way, I would like to remind the hon. member that some months ago the Premier indicated that there

would be no further reductions in the overall health budget, and since that time there has been a considerable injection of additional funds, particularly, as I indicated, in the whole area of long-term care: the \$40 million that was set aside and then allocated in that particular direction. In addition to stopping the cuts, as they're called, and putting a significant infusion of money into the system, we as a government are also covering some \$300 million in reductions that we're facing from the federal government in terms of support for this key area and others. So I think the government, in terms of making a financial commitment to health care, is moving quite significantly.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The time for question period has now expired.

We do have a point of order. It seems to me it was the hon. Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services.

Point of Order Tabling Documents

MR. WOLOSHYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My point of order is under Standing Order 23(i) and (l). The Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert tabled a letter on August 16, '96, outlining concerns of a family member who wrote from out of province. I'd like to bring to your attention that the member tabled the same letter of the same date by the same author to the same editor on March 12, 1996. I table four copies of page 489 from *Hansard* of March 12, as well as four copies of the letter previously tabled on that date.

Also, Mr. Speaker, on March 12, 1996, the same member made a member's statement regarding the WestView regional health authority. In her member's statement the Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert made disparaging remarks about the WestView regional health authority and again used the patient mentioned in the letter to the editor as an example of alleged problems within the WestView region. I also table four copies of the member's statement from page 497 of *Hansard* of March 12, '96.

Mr. Speaker, what the member from across the way failed to mention when she tabled this letter for the second time was that this situation had been resolved to everyone's satisfaction a full three months ago. The member should have known that the subject, through the efforts of the WestView regional health authority, was transferred to Stony Plain months ago. In fact, she was placed in Stony Plain on May 15, '96, as per the wishes of her family.

The member's statements have misled the House and the public. The subject was admitted to the University hospital, cared for, and released to a Capital Care facility. As she and her family preferred that she live in Stony Plain, she was placed on a waiting list at the extended care facility there. Upon the availability of a bed she was transferred to Stony Plain, where she was admitted on May 15, 1996, a full three months ago.

How many times, Mr. Speaker, do the Official Opposition's inappropriate tablings mislead the House by digging up old files and presenting them as new revelations? [interjections] This also raises the question as to . . .

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. The order the Chair is calling for is for people to cease and desist all the noise, not for the hon. member to sit down. If the hon. minister could complete his statement.

2:50

MR. WOLOSHYN: Very briefly, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. This also raises the question as to how many other cases presented by the Official Opposition as part of their fear mongering are as incomplete and out of date as this one.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to bring to your attention that this is not the first time the Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert has presented incomplete information to this House. On April 22, 1996, in a question to our hon. Premier she presented another case of alleged impropriety in our health care system. I also table four copies of page 1249 from *Hansard* of April 22. Please note that the Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert did not follow up on that case either. If she had, she would have informed this House that the patient received good care in the system. His needs have been tended to, and the outcome of his treatment has been extremely excellent.

Mr. Speaker, I feel that in order to resolve this unfortunate situation, the Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert should apologize in writing to the Capital health authority and to the WestView regional health authority for the inaccurate, disparaging remarks made against them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert on the purported point of order as raised by the hon. minister.

MRS. SOETAERT: It is a purported point of order. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to reply to this ridiculous tabling today. I want to address a few things that the minister has put forward today. First of all, we tabled several – several – cases that day to make a point. We were all back in session after a rather short summer, and it was an opportunity and our duty as opposition members to make this government realize the flaws that they have created in this system. So that's why we tabled – and that letter was tabled once again to make a point.

Further to that, the daughter of the woman mentioned had been in my office because she could not get satisfactory results from all the routes she had gone through. That's why she came to me, and it's funny how things happen when the opposition gets hold of it.

The second point referred to another constituent of mine whom I mentioned in this House. In fact, it was Mr. Herb Goertz I was referring to, and just two weeks ago Mr. Goertz was in my office thanking me for my intervention because he said he would have died waiting for this government to do anything. I believe he said he'd even take a sign in the next election, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I even saw him Saturday at the parade, and he waved to me and he said: "Go for it, Colleen. Keep after 'em."

When I referred to the WestView health authority, it was certainly not the care providers in that system. Certainly not. The board has been bound by this government, without money in WestView, so they've not been able to do the job they should be doing. So if I referred to WestView in that way, well, that's too bad. What I'm replying to is the fact that they don't get enough money to properly do their job.

Now, the minister, the Member for Stony Plain, is obviously just out trying to make political points. Well, they won't make points for you, member.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to reply.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Chair thanks both members for their points of view on this point of order and will review the

Blues and consider them and endeavour to respond at the earliest possible occasion.

head: **Orders of the Day**
 head: **Government Bills and Orders**
 head: **Second Reading**
Bill 46
Electoral Divisions Act

[Adjourned debate August 15: Mrs. Black]

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, to conclude my remarks on second reading of Bill 46, the Electoral Divisions Act, again I really want to stress that I believe in good conscience that it is time this province leads the way once and for all to find what effective representation truly is. I think it's critically important not only for Alberta but for all of Canada. I think the courts have been left with a vague definition, which has been referred to by a number of jurisdictions, and it has arrived out of questions as to what effective representation truly is. So I would ask that hon. members, after we have gone through this Bill, not forget that the question of effective representation still has not been answered.

Thank you.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thanks very much. I probably have 10 or 15 minutes worth of comments I want to make, Mr. Speaker, on this Bill, and I want to start off by going back to some first principles, because I think at second reading that's sort of the appropriate way I ought to approach this Bill.

We've heard debate about some competing values and some competing objectives. We've heard a lot about the importance of an independent assessment of boundaries, and I certainly acknowledge that that is an important principle. We've also heard discussion about the principle which is embodied in section 3 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms that guarantees every Canadian citizen the right to vote in provincial elections. Then we have the benefit of the Supreme Court of Canada and the Dixon judgment, the D-i-x-o-n variety though, Mr. Speaker. We have the Alberta Court of Appeal reference. [interjection] I was just reminding the Minister of Education that the orthodox spelling of Dickson is without an X. The English spelling likes to take the shortcut. [interjection] It was, but in fact the case was decided by Madam Justice McLachlin. The applicant was D-i-x-o-n, hon. minister.

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

The point I was attempting to make, Mr. Speaker, is this: when we look at these competing values, we may have to order them in terms of deciding which principle has primacy, because you simply can't balance all values. It seems to me that as important as an independent assessment is – and it clearly is important – that speaks to more a question of process. The substantive right is that guaranteed by section 3 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. That's been interpreted by the courts to talk in terms of effective representation, that each one of us and each Albertan is guaranteed, afforded the right of "effective representation." The hon. Minister of Energy expressed some dismay a moment ago that that still hasn't been defined, that it still hasn't been interpreted in a

practical way. To some extent it has not, but I think what we do have from the court is a confirmation that this right belongs to individual citizens. It doesn't belong to legislators, not to MLAs; it belongs to individual citizens.

When I look at the report that's come forward from the Electoral Boundaries Commission, I see the acknowledgement that there is hard evidence that would suggest that the city of Calgary – for example, because of its very rapid population growth the argument could be made that there should be four additional seats in the city of Calgary.

I want to develop that argument a little further, but I come back and say that I've always accepted the argument that had been put forward when the opposition introduced a private member's Bill, Mr. Speaker, that proposed to reduce the number of electoral districts in the province of Alberta from 83 to 65. I spoke in support of that initiative, I voted in support of that initiative, and I continue to believe that we don't need 83 MLAs. We don't need more than 20 MLAs for the city of Calgary, but unless and until the government is prepared to countenance a reduction in the overall number of MLAs, we have to make sure that every Albertan has effective representation.

My concern when I look at this report is that the commission has gone further in terms of trying to address geographic challenges than they have in terms of addressing some of the other challenges that confront MLAs. I'll just start off by saying that when I've talked about redistribution before, I've said and I continue to believe that it's really tough representing a sparsely settled, geographically distant rural constituency. That's obvious. I think what happens is that we tend to get too caught up in looking at geographic issues and challenges. You know, how many elected bodies does a particular MLA have to deal with? How far does that MLA have to drive to get from one end of the constituency to the other? We tend to give short shrift, too little attention, to some of the other variables that I think make the job of representation equally challenging.

3:00

I wish that we weren't so hidebound and so committed to looking at simply physical geography, and I wish we could spend a little more time looking at social geography. I think it can be argued that if you have an inner-city constituency and were to have a town hall meeting, you may need six different interpreters. That's a particular kind of challenge. That means that if you have too large a population in one of those urban constituencies, you defeat and frustrate that principle that the Supreme Court of Canada has defined of effective representation as effectively as requiring that one rural MLA to drive considerable distances to get from one community to the other.

When I look at the report from the commission, which of course is the basis for Bill 46, there is a comment made by Professor Peter McCormick on page 11. He said:

The more a country is possessed, not just of social diversity, but of significantly different groups that occupy different geographic areas, the more it will be necessary to operate the formal governmental structures in a fashion which acknowledges and responds to these diversities.

The concern is this. As we get an increasingly multicultural character, particularly in the larger urban centres, as we get a concentration of more and more people that have trouble addressing or accessing government services, we have to understand that presents as important and as big a challenge to effective representation as anything, as anything that physical geography poses to somebody representing a rural constituency with a much smaller

population base. I think we fall into a bit of a trap. The Alberta Court of Appeal, with respect, may have given short shrift to what I call the urban challenge. It's clear that the Electoral Boundaries Commission in their first report paid too little attention to that kind of social geography and put too much stress on physical geography.

They had originally come up with a matrix with, I think, nine different variables, and it seems to me that when I looked at it, all but two of the variables specifically focused on rural representation. Only two of the variables focused on some of the challenges posed in terms of urban representation, and that's been addressed because I see in the final report they've taken and reworked the matrix somewhat and then reduced it to six different variables. What I still find is that there's this kind of imbalance, this kind of inequity, which in my view frustrates what Madam Justice McLachlin said in the Saskatchewan reference, that the section 3 right to vote in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms embraces effective representation.

I've heard it said by members in debate on Bill 46 that it's okay; we're operating within a 25 percent variation. I think that completely misconstrues what the courts said when they looked at this and tried to give some direction to legislators. I'm particularly impressed with what's happened in those provinces that have said, "We're going to take this challenge, and we're going to set some outer limits in terms of deviation from the norm." Saskatchewan, I think, adopted a 10 percent outer limit. There was another province which had also followed that kind of direction and set a much more aggressive limit. I think it was 15 percent. [interjection] Yeah. I can refer members to page 78 of the final report from the Electoral Boundaries Commission. Manitoba and Newfoundland require "all electoral divisions to be within . . . 10 percent of the provincial quotient, with exceptions for remote, northern constituencies." Saskatchewan allows only a 5 percent deviation from the norm. The tolerance is only plus or minus 5 percent. Now, Saskatchewan and Manitoba are also prairie provinces with a couple of large population centres, and then the rest of their population is dispersed, particularly in the northern parts of those provinces.

I have to wonder, Mr. Speaker, why it is that Manitoba and Newfoundland feel that they can live with an outside limit of 10 percent and Saskatchewan can live with a population tolerance of plus or minus 5 percent. They make provision for a couple of northern electoral divisions with particular problems, but other than that, they set a much higher standard. It seems to me that it's not right that Albertans, particularly those Albertans living in the city of Calgary, which has the fastest population growth, continue to have a vastly more limited kind of representation. Effective representation for them becomes much more difficult than in provinces like Manitoba, Newfoundland, and Saskatchewan, where they've taken a higher standard. I wish that had been accepted by the commission. The problem with the commission not accepting it is: what do we do when this Bill comes into this House? It's always a compelling argument for people to say that we wanted an independent review of electoral boundaries. We've got the report. That should be the end of the question. As I started out saying, it seems to me section 3, the right to vote, as interpreted by the Supreme Court of Canada is an even more important principle because it speaks to the rights of individuals, not simply a question of process because it speaks to basic rights. Either Bill 46 passes muster and provides that kind of effective representation, in which case every member should enthusiastically support it, or if it falls short, whatever the mechanics were

in terms of how that was arrived at, then it ought not to be supported and it should be defeated.

The concern I have, Mr. Speaker, when I look through this report is that I see time and time again the Electoral Boundaries Commission saying: we don't think that what we've come up with will unfairly dilute the right of urban voters to have effective representation. To anybody who reads through the report, I think one is forced to conclude that in many respects there is a denial of effective representation.

The Electoral Boundaries Commission – and I paraphrase here – said: "Well, we've heard all kinds of claims that there are some places where there's a huge number of single parents and other places where there's a whole lot of different multicultural populations. There are language issues, and there are all kinds of other problems." What the commission in effect said is: "We've heard that, but that's just too darn difficult to factor into a matrix. It's too much of a challenge to bring into the equation when we're trying to decide how we're going to configure electoral boundaries."

It seems to me that the short answer to that is: sure it's tough; sure it's difficult when you're dealing with social geography. Physical geography doesn't change very much, and it's really easy to factor that in. But is that reason not to try and do it? Is that adequate justification for ignoring part of the reality that we know exists? What if you have an MLA in northeast Calgary who, when calling a town hall meeting, needs four or five different interpreters there to ensure that every constituent can get the information in a language they can understand? Is it realistic to simply ignore the fact that in some constituencies there's demonstrably higher use made of MLA services as ombudsmen or that you have in some parts of the province some people having more difficulty accessing government services and need to call on their MLA to assist in that respect? I think those are fair questions. I think that the Electoral Boundaries Commission did not do justice to those questions, and in the final result we end up with a redistribution which is altogether too timid. It's too modest.

3:10

I think, frankly, that simply one additional seat for the city of Calgary isn't adequate, Mr. Speaker. I don't think it respects the right of Calgarians to have effective representation. I think it denies it, and I think there will be a lot of Calgarians who will be really concerned about how many MLAs in the city of Calgary are prepared to raise their concern and do what they can to ensure that Calgarians have truly effective representation. It's going to be an interesting challenge.

I'm looking forward to the balance of the debate, both at second reading and at the committee stage on this Bill. I have to say with regret that while I appreciate the process and how difficult the job is, I still think that at the end of the day what we've got is a Bill which will deny, at least until 2003, some Calgarians effective representation. That's not acceptable. It requires change. I expect there are other Calgary MLAs and perhaps other MLAs that for other reasons will have a similar view. I look forward to hearing those comments in the course of the debate, Mr. Speaker.

Thanks very much.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Three Hills-Airdrie.

MS HALEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very glad for this opportunity to get up and make comment on Bill 46, the Electoral Divisions Act. I'd like to talk about it from the

perspective of the Three Hills-Airdrie riding, which in 1979 – it was a town at that point, but the now city of Airdrie and Three Hills were joined together. So we've been together for almost 20 years.

That's not to say that there haven't been changes to our riding. It's been nothing but change right from the 1979 period on. In 1985 they altered our north and south boundaries, they altered the east and west boundaries, but they left the core of the riding together. This occurred again just a few years ago when they put the top and the bottom of the riding back in that they had taken away before, and they shifted us to the east. So we picked up part of the Drumheller riding and lost part of our west side to the Olds-Didsbury riding. So while the Three Hills-Airdrie portion of it has stayed in the same riding, everything else around those two main communities has shifted.

Here we go again. With the latest electoral boundary report the municipal district of Kneehill, along with about 10,000 people, has been taken out of the Three Hills-Airdrie riding and put into the new Olds-Didsbury riding. The new part for the Airdrie riding – the Airdrie-Rocky View riding, I'm hoping it'll be called one day – will in fact pick up, according to the Electoral Boundaries Commission, about 10,000 people. I find the population statistics remarkable for their inaccuracy. There are probably more like 20,000 people in that new area. Between Airdrie with a very high growth rate – Chestermere has a very high growth rate; Bearsaw has a high growth rate; Crossfield certainly has a high growth rate. The entire urban fringe coming around the east side, the north side, and part of the west side of Calgary will now be all in one riding, so the entire area is going to be impacted by high growth. That's not necessarily a negative; it's just a reality. That riding will border 16 other ridings. The diversity of the 16 other ridings is quite enormous.

I've listened to all the other speakers talking about, "Well, maybe there aren't enough MLAs; maybe there are too many MLAs." I think what we need to get to as an Assembly is how we know when we have the right number of MLAs and what effective representation is.

In 1901 to 1911, when Alberta first developed its own government, we had 25 MLAs. Each MLA had a population of about 2,920 people in their ridings. Perhaps in those days a riding really was a riding: it was something that you could ride across in one day on a horse. By the years 1935 to 1940 we had 63 MLAs in this Assembly, and they had an average of 11,613 people. It was a part-time job, and I don't think anybody should have any illusions about the difference in workload now compared to what it was perhaps 20 or 30 years ago.

I don't know if 83 MLAs is the right number, but as a strong rural representative I will never sit back and allow the number of MLAs in rural Alberta to be lowered without a corresponding lowering of the number of MLAs in Edmonton and Calgary. When my constituents call on me, they call on me about social issues, the same as any urban. I have a city in my riding, so I get the same kinds of calls as other MLAs from Calgary or Edmonton or Grande Prairie would get, on AISH, on social services. I even handle calls for my local Member of Parliament when people are having problems with a federal program that somehow they think maybe we can help with. We help direct them to the right places.

So I get the same types of things as everybody else does, but I also get a tremendous number of calls on intensive livestock operations, on grain programs through the Agricultural Development Corporation types of calls. I get calls on manufacturing. I get calls about factories, as do other of my rural counterparts.

We have the environmental problems. We have people who don't like where a gravel pit's going to be located or people who aren't happy about the level of water in a specific lake that's impacted by an irrigation district. We have irrigation problems.

You are expected to learn about and be able to speak knowledgeably about such a vast, vast variety of topics as a rural MLA. Prior to our colleague Harry Sohal's death, he and I would talk a lot because his riding of Calgary-McCall and my riding bordered each other. He would laugh because on the very north edge of his riding there were a couple of farms that were just on the inside of Calgary's boundary after it had moved its boundaries north to the Balzac hill. They had picked up some farming land, and Harry Sohal had a couple of farms in his riding.

He would come to me because one of the people who lived out there would call him and say, "We've got a problem, you know, Harry, and you're our MLA, so you should be dealing with this." He would come to me and he'd say: "I have absolutely no idea how to deal with this person. I don't know anything about agriculture, and I don't even know how to learn about it at this stage of my life." He would talk about his riding being made up of houses. There weren't a lot of businesses in his riding. There weren't schools; there weren't hospitals. It was a residential area. The difference when we would talk about our respective ridings was just phenomenal. It doesn't mean that he didn't work hard or that he didn't do a good job or that he didn't represent his constituents; it just means that his job was very, very different from mine, which is a riding that encompasses 4,500 square kilometres.

While it may say in here that I have 27,000 people in my riding, I know for a fact that I have over 31,000 people in my riding and have had since about 1992. Even prior to the last Electoral Boundaries Commission the population stats were out: Airdrie has grown by over 3,000 people just in the last two years. So when we talk about statistics, it can get pretty interesting, because everybody has a totally different perspective on what it means.

3:20

Before we all get carried away with our great move to reduce the number of MLAs in this House, I want to know what the right number should be. I want to know what effective representation is. I don't want to be told that there are more MLAs than there are aldermen in Edmonton and Calgary because, frankly, I don't care. What is the right number of MLAs for Edmonton and Calgary? What impact does that then have on the rest of this province where the rest of us live, where we are the hewers of wood and the drawers of water, where we produce the milk and the grain and the oil and everything else that makes this province go? How many MLAs is enough?

I'm not going to sit back and let rural MLAs feel guilty, because we're trying to do a good job. I think it's imperative that before we come up with any quick and easy numbers, whether it's 65 or 75 or 26, we clearly understand what the impact will be on development in this province. Whether it's economic development or cultural development, we need to understand it. I hope that all of you, as we go through this process and on into the next one, will leave the clichés at home. I don't get a lot of calls in my office telling me there should be less MLAs. As a matter of fact, I've never had a call in my office saying there should be less MLAs. I've never had a call saying there should be more either, but you know my point. My point is that it's not a big issue out there and don't make it into something that it isn't just because it sounds expedient.

You can look at places like Ontario, where they have a lot more people in a riding than we do. They also have constituency offices that cost over \$200,000 a year compared to ours at \$39,000, so there's a price to pay. If you have less MLAs, you're probably going to end up with more staff, and at the end of the day are you really going to have saved any money? Or are you just going to cut effective representation down even more?

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

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

MR. BRACKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured to rise and speak to Bill 46, the Electoral Divisions Act. I want to thank each member who has spoken so far, the Member for Little Bow and the Member for Three Hills-Airdrie, for their eloquence and for I guess what the main point is: what is fairness? I believe that as a government, as a Legislative Assembly, we have to come up with that.

I just want to start with my own constituency and the concerns in St. Albert. By the year 2004 we will probably have more than enough population for two constituencies in St. Albert. This is a concern to my constituents because they feel it's not as fair as it could be or should be. However, it's a very big issue and concern, and there are many differences across the province. Some of these have been spoken to already.

To me there are three types of constituencies. In a small urban constituency like mine, St. Albert, which I can jog across in 15 minutes or roller-blade or bike across in 10 minutes, it is easy to get to any place. I can drive in five to 10 minutes. I have the tremendous advantage of being 15 minutes from the Legislative Assembly, so I can drive here, go back out to the constituency for constituency events even during session. That's a tremendous advantage for me, so I appreciate that and I understand that. If you're farther away, you may not have that opportunity. It's much more difficult for those, whomever they may be, outside of this area to get home. Also, in my constituency I have the advantage of knowing all the groups: from the boards, school boards, city council, to the sports groups, the culture groups, the FCSS groups, the service clubs, the different churches, the volunteer groups, and the population as such. For me, I believe I have the ideal riding. Ridings like Red Deer, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and probably Grande Prairie would be similar because they are based on a similar situation. Because of that, it is important that I look at and understand the other parts of the province.

The second type of riding is the rural riding, which has great distances from border to border. Some of the students in these ridings travel two and a half hours to school one way, so that's five hours on the bus a day. That takes a lot out of a student's studying and ability to perform perhaps at the level an urban student can when they're five minutes from home. However, in the rural ridings, too, you can get to know your different groups – your municipal boards, your school boards, your FCSS groups, the service clubs, the agricultural boards, and so on – so they do have that advantage. As mentioned earlier, they get to know many of the people personally.

The third type of riding is the large urban riding, like Calgary and Edmonton. It's small in size. You can drive across it easily in 15 minutes. But, you know, it's extremely difficult. There may be only one group in that community that you get to know. It might be the community league, and some community leagues

are stronger than others. So in order to make contact with the voters in your constituency in a large urban riding, you have to go door-to-door, which is much more time consuming than meeting with the different groups, and they can also communicate what you have to say to others.

So there are the three types of ridings: the small urban, like mine, the large rural, and also the large urban ridings. The advantages and disadvantages of each have been mentioned eloquently by other members here, the concerns that when you have to have a translator for five or six different ethnic groups, it becomes more difficult.

However, St. Albert is my priority and one that I make my first priority. I also consider the province of Alberta my riding, from north to south. As critic for Municipal Affairs, ALCB, and seniors' social housing, I meet groups right across this province. I have the time to do it. I make the time. I have a job to do as critic, and I make sure I do that job or else I wouldn't be here. So what we have to look at is: what is effective representation?

I pleaded with this government on two occasions in *Hansard*. The front bench, the Minister of Health was there. They looked at me like I was from another planet.

DR. WEST: You are.

MR. BRACKO: At least I wasn't for open liquor in vehicles, Mr. Minister. You get to squeak up every so often from your seat. Stand up and speak up. You know, I always enjoy you. [interjections] Anyway, I know it.

People are upset when the boundaries are changed, whether education, health, or so on. I said to the government, to the front bench – and you know, some of the Tories have even said that the Member for Barrhead-Westlock has more brains than the whole front bench. I didn't say that – that was a Tory – but then I don't agree with that. You know, it's interesting to hear that from Tories alone. They said: why would they ever put that member in the second row?

Anyway, to get on to the point I'm making, the fact that when we did the boundaries, I pleaded with them to look at the total picture. Now, I'd like to have a screen here so we could have overlays and show it, but of course we're backwards. The government hasn't got to the point where we can illustrate and make a point so that it's not only hearing and others but it's visual, so everyone can learn better, with overlays. The health boundaries: if you put up the health boundaries, it would show certain areas. I pleaded that we have coterminous boundaries for all of these. Put up the health boundaries. The education boundaries: you put them up next, and they're not the same. I pleaded to make them the same, coterminous, or have several in one in different regions. At least regionalize and have the same boundaries.

3:30

I also asked that the social services boundaries be in the same regions. If you put up the social services boundaries, they're different again, Mr. Speaker. Why?

Justice, the same: the justice boundaries are different. Why? Why do we have this waste of tax dollars, incompetence, when we should have done it right the first time?

We look at child services, and again these boundaries are different. The child services boundaries are different than the health boundaries, different than the education boundaries, different from the justice and social service boundaries. Why? Why wasn't that thought through? I mean, we gave them the

information. We asked them to do the research. Take six months, delay it, and make sure we do things right, but no.

We can carry on. Senior housing, the senior lodges: same thing. The boundaries are different again. You put the overlay on the screen and all you're seeing is a disaster up there, all different boundaries. How can you have effective government, effective services if the boundaries are all different?

The next one: social housing. Why weren't they the same regions as health, education? Why weren't they all the same?

Looking at mental health, again I make the illustration. Prior to the changes there were three mental health boards in one health unit region, which didn't make sense. It duplicated services; it cost more money.

Also, transportation routes and patterns should have been looked at so you could decide who goes where. In St. Albert, with St. Albert Centre, 80 percent of our people, or up to that number, come from the north and shop. They don't want to go into Edmonton. They don't want to drive through Edmonton, but they come into St. Albert for the health services, for the shopping, for other items that they need. They feel very comfortable doing so, but they won't go into Edmonton. So these patterns should have been looked at.

Economics and trade patterns, too, and constituency boundaries should have been looked at in the regions. They should have been all tied together. We have a system called the geographic information system – this was out six or seven years ago – a system that could have tied these all together. The technology is there, the programs are there, and I don't know why the government refused my request and the request of the Liberals to look at it. What used to take four people four months to do on traffic patterns or flow now takes 20 minutes on a computer. This could have been done by the government, all of this together, so you have coterminous boundaries in regions. That would be cost-efficient, services would be more effective, and it would be easier for members to serve.

I also say that the federal boundaries should be looked at at the same time so they can coincide if possible.

I know it's not going to be a perfect system, but it's a lot better than the system we have now. Then you could sit down, all members of a region – whether it's six or eight or 10 or 20 MLAs, as you have in the cities, they could sit down with the different groups. One day a week meet with all the municipal councillors so they can have the concerns of all the councils in that area or that region. The health concerns, the education concerns, the seniors' concerns could all be looked at day after day. Within two weeks all members – and even the federal members could sit in on this. Do it at a time when municipal council members could sit in so they know the problems of the regions, and then together they could fight for the area, fight for what is needed in that area. But this seems to make too much sense. I'm not sure why they didn't do it.

I want to illustrate the point with a story. It's from my good friend the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose. I know he likes little stories every so often. It goes like this. There was a mouse, and this mouse was terrified of cats. His guardian angel changed him into a cat so he wouldn't be afraid of mice. Well, the cat was afraid of dogs. The dogs scared and terrified him, so the guardian angel changed him into a dog to help him along. Then the dog was scared of cougars, so the guardian angel changed him into a cougar. Then the cougar was scared of man, the hunter with the gun, so the guardian angel changed him back to a mouse. He says, "You have the heart of a mouse, and you will

always be a mouse." In the same way, the government has the brain of a mouse. It's not willing to look beyond, to look at the bigger picture, to save taxpayers money, to have effective representation. So to me this shows that we have to see what's happening here.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: On a point of order, the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Point of Order Clarification

MR. HAVELOCK: You're right, yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just wondering if the hon. member could define for the Legislature the term "ascared," because it's not familiar to me.

Thank you.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Are you asking, hon. member, if he would answer a question?

MR. HAVELOCK: It's a point of clarification. He's using a term that I'm not familiar with in the English language.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Would you care to clarify that term, please?

MR. BRACKO: I just want to comment back by saying that, you know, if he's squeaking up now, maybe he could speak up later on the electoral boundaries. Why waste my time and the taxpayers' time by asking a ridiculous, foolish question like that?

THE ACTING SPEAKER: It's not your job, hon. Member for St. Albert, to decide whether it's a silly question or a good question. Do you want to answer it? Yes or no? No other comments are needed. So you don't want to answer it? Go on with your remarks, and stay on the topic, please.

Debate Continued

MR. BRACKO: The next point I want to make is that there has been no research done by this government or by the Legislative Assembly on effective representation. We look at the federal ridings. They represent 90,000 to 100,000 people. Ours represent – was it 30,000? Are you telling me the MPs are better able to represent 90,000 people than the MLAs? I don't believe that, but this is what you're saying. The research should be done to show what the problems are that the MPs have to deal with, what the problems are the MLAs have to deal with. The comparisons should be made. If an MP can handle 90,000 or 100,000 constituents, why are MLAs only able to handle 30,000? Research should be done so there are facts, so we're not going by emotion and feeling only. That's important too – we need a balance – but you have to look at what is right.

I appreciate the point the Member for Three Hills-Airdrie made that their constituency budgets at the federal level are \$150,000, or she may have said \$200,000. They may have more offices, but we also must look at what they spend that money on. Is it spent on servicing the constituents, or is it spent on their mail-outs? Is it spent on information that's needed to go out? Itemize it, analyze it, and show us what the differences are. That needs to be done before we can come up here and speak and say that one area should have more, that one should have less.

Their sessions are much longer than our sessions here, and they're away. They're only there for a short time in their

constituencies on weekends, and they travel six or eight hours, some more and some less, from the different places to Ottawa and back.

Also, are we making the wisest use of our technology? Some surveys and research should be done. Are we using the RITE line? It's here. Members can phone the different groups in rural Alberta. You can phone regularly. When you're driving across your constituency, you can phone different groups and keep in contact with them. This is easy to do. Are we doing it?

These questions have to be answered, not just say, "Our distance is greater," or whatever. Let's get the information, let's get the facts, and let's help each other serve our constituents at a much better level.

Also, the time spent by MLAs. When the election comes, they should declare whether they're going to be a full-time MLA or whether some other occupation is going to take their time. MLAs should declare how much time they spend so their constituents know. I was talking to one of the ministers, and he has to put in 2,400 acres of seed in the next few weeks. Well, is he spending his time serving his constituents or looking after his own business? I'm not against that, Mr. Speaker. I'm not saying that's wrong. I'm saying: let us have integrity.

3:40

MR. DAY: A point of order.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader on a point of order.

Point of Order Second Reading Debate

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, *Beauchesne* references to second reading of Bills are very clear: it's to the principle of the Bill. If the member's talking about amendments, things which aren't in the Bill, then by all means it should be addressed at the committee stage. I wonder if we could talk about the principle of this Bill, which is boundaries.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: On the point of order, hon. member.

MR. BRACKO: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I am. Effective representation is the key to the heart. It was mentioned by the Member for Three Hills-Airdrie. It was mentioned by the Member for Little Bow. It was mentioned by every member who spoke to this Bill so far.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader has a point of order. I have been listening extremely carefully to the hon. Member for St. Albert, and although we do talk to the principle of the Bill in second reading, I would have to stretch my imagination that you didn't wander far beyond that, hon. member. So please keep on the principle of the Bill. You were everywhere but where you should have been. Hon. member, continue with your comments.

Debate Continued

MR. BRACKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we look at it, I think the Member for Little Bow and myself are strongly of the opinion – and he can correct me if I am wrong – that in order to understand how another riding or MLA works, rural or urban, they should switch places for a time so there is an understanding. [interjection] You didn't say that? I apologize for my . . .

MR. McFARLAND: They wouldn't have you.

MR. BRACKO: They had in fact invited me back time and time again when the Minister of Health tells me not to come back to her riding again because she doesn't want me there. [interjections] Yes, three and half days there, listening to them. So back up your comments by facts. In fact, I've been to councils twice, and their member hasn't been there once. He canceled the trip, Mr. Speaker. I've been there, and they invite me back. So have some facts, and come with me. Come with me. I'll take you by the hand. Listen to what your own people say. He gets up in the House here and he says: let's put pressure on the grain elevators.

Speaker's Ruling Relevance

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Hon. Member for St. Albert, I don't think the House is very interested. We are on the principle of the Bill. I'm not prepared to sit here and listen to whether they want you in Little Bow or whether they don't want you in Little Bow. All that kind of discussion is not on the Bill. Please stay on the Bill. We could go on with that discussion another day, but it's not on the Bill, hon. member.

MR. BRACKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was just responding. I apologize for being drawn in to it by the government members, but they always like to know the truth, and the truth shall set them free.

Debate Continued

MR. BRACKO: So what we need for effective representation is fairness, whether it's in urban Alberta, whether it's in rural Alberta.

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

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I find sometimes that being the speaker on deck, you have a tendency to listen to the person immediately before you. I'll try not to ever make that mistake again. [interjections]

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Order.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In addressing the principle of the Bill, I find it not only extremely difficult but somewhat unusual in this government Bill 46. Heretofore what we've had under the government that I represent has been public consultation. There have been many opportunities for task forces, for committees, for MLAs to go out into the community and ask questions of the people and listen to what the people say. Then the information comes back to us; we have the legislators then develop a Bill and bring it forward. This case, this Bill, is obviously different because, I want to say, the principles of this Bill are based on the report of a commission that went out and did not hear what the people said. In any of the meetings that I attended and in the media reports that I've read of the particular areas, I do not find in any of those places where specifics of the commission's report were stated to them. We can't find anywhere that anybody agreed that the constituency of Taber-Warner should be amalgamated with the constituency of Cardston-Chief Mountain. So where did this come from? This was an independent

commission, so you have to respect the fact that they are to go out there on an independent . . . [interjection]

You know, I got the strap one time for interrupting my teacher. It is beyond me – and I learned a lesson from that. I thought, then, that all teachers would probably be the same, that when somebody was talking they would sort of live with their own means. She has not heard a word yet that I've said about the teachers. For three years now, going on to three and a half maybe, I've had to sit and listen to that teacher from that constituency, which is too long to even remember the name of, continue to go on interrupting, chirp, chirp, chirping. She never shuts up, just goes on and on and on all of the time.

MRS. SOETAERT: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Have you got a point of order, Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert?

**Point of Order
Relevance**

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Relevance. To the member: if he doesn't know the name of my riding, I'll gladly provide it in big capital letters, Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, one of the best – in fact, the best – ridings in this province. If we're talking about staying on topic, talk to the parameters of the Bill, talk to the boundaries.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: On the point of order, hon. member.

MR. DUNFORD: Well, you know, for someone who was earlier chirping about a reference, we have a chirper here without a reference, so I say there's no point of order. No reference; no point of order.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Well, this is obviously a disagreement. However, the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert has a little habit of continuously trying to interrupt the House. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West was just trying to give his remarks on this Bill. That's what every member of this . . . [interjection] Order. I've been here for over 10 years, and it's everybody's privilege to give remarks on any Bill they want if they stay within the scope of the Bill. [interjection] Order. Hon. member, would you like to stay in the House?

MRS. SOETAERT: Yes.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Or would you like to leave? Because I have no intention of putting up with steady interruptions.

There's obviously disagreement between members and maybe within their own party members, but let's have the courtesy to listen to everybody, regardless of what side of the House, on their remarks on such an important Bill as Bill 46.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

3:50

Debate Continued

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In talking about the principle of this particular Bill, then, I find myself in that situation where, in addressing the principle of the Bill which has been brought forward by the government, I want to be supportive. These are my colleagues; I am part of this government. But here we have a situation where, again, the principles are not based on anything that I can determine or based on what the people had to

say. So it becomes very, very difficult, and I want to listen closely to meaningful debate, then, as we continue to go on not only through the principles but certainly into committee and then to third reading.

We must, I think, be cognizant of and be aware that in the future we must have at least some understanding and some expectation that the Bills that will come in front of us are what the people said and what they were hoping the government would do. This commission, this five-member independent commission, has gone out, has traveled, possibly extensively, throughout this province and has come back with an extremely long and I guess very detailed report, but as you try to run your hands through this thing, the essence continues to be: where did they get this stuff from?

I'm speaking today, hopefully, Mr. Speaker, without any particular vested interest. The boundaries of Lethbridge-West have not changed one iota, but certainly the people of Lethbridge are very, very concerned about the fact that again an independent body could go out there and could come back with a determination that effectively takes two rural ridings away from southern Alberta. I realize that one of them goes into Calgary and that Calgary is certainly part of southern Alberta, but no one here of course is going to even suggest that Calgary might be a rural riding. Calgary is a highly cosmopolitan, highly urbanized city that happens to sit in the middle of the bald prairies.

MR. HAVELOCK: I've got an elevator.

MR. DUNFORD: That's right. My honoured and esteemed colleague from Calgary-Shaw does point out to me that, yes, he has an elevator in his constituency. Indeed he does, because as I drive back and forth to the Legislature sessions, coming and going I pass by his elevator every week. I've been noticing lately all of the large signage that he has on that elevator that says: please, please, please elect John.

Now that we're on Calgary, one wonders why a city as extensive and as urbanized and as cosmopolitan as Calgary is – and for that matter, as Edmonton is – seems to be able to operate with 14 aldermen and a mayor yet now needs 21 MLAs to represent them. It seems that we need to seriously get to this question of effective representation.

One of the things I did agree with my colleague from St. Albert on in his speech was that we do not have a definition of effective representation. When we don't have that, then the Liberals are free to use their Americanized, two-tiered voting system called representation by population. While it came from America – and I know they are such friends of the Americans – one would ask out loud whether something from the late 18th century and then of course into our situation in the mid-19th century, one man, one vote, is proper in terms of effective representation. Speaking of one man, one vote, by the way, colleagues, I'm surprised that the feminist movement has not already put that one into the history books.

Getting back now to this commission report, I want to be on the record as indicating that I think it's a bad report. I think the commission's report is bad because it did not listen to the people of Alberta.

[Mr. Herard in the Chair]

It does, however, put this government in a very interesting and difficult situation. We as the government recognized that in order

to review the boundaries, we would need an independent body to do this. So an independent body was put together. They reviewed whatever it was they reviewed, and they came back with a unanimous report. It's that unanimity now that has brought, I believe, the difficulty that this government now must face.

How could we possibly not accept a report that has come back from an independent board in a unanimous format? If we do not, then we run the risk of never having citizens of this province ever decide to join, to become part of a task force, a commission, or a committee ever again. This would be a clear signal to every Albertan that we will call you independent at the outset, but if you come back with a report that we don't like, then we are not going to accept it. How could the government put itself in that position? I think there is the situation that all of us are faced with.

I fortunately have been given the flexibility by the association that I report to in my constituency to listen to the debate, to evaluate all of the different points that are made in that particular debate, and then to vote according to the principles, then, that I would internalize after that debate. I want to publicly thank that constituency association for doing this, ladies and gentlemen, because this is a constituency association that spoke not once, at the initial stage of the public presentations, but at the interim report stage and spoke very, very strongly against what it perceived that the commission was doing. I refer again to the removal of two rural constituencies from southern Alberta but more importantly to the removal of a rural constituency that bordered the city of Lethbridge.

We in the city of Lethbridge are not unaware of which side our bread is buttered on, and that is agriculture. In Lethbridge and region we do not enjoy the plentiful oil and gas that many communities enjoy in this particular province. While we have a long history as a manufacturing base – as a matter of fact, we were the first industrial city in western Canada in that manufacturing grew up around the coal mines in the last century – over the period of years we have not seen that manufacturing sector expand, I guess, in equivalent terms to the population of the particular city. So we recognize ourselves as a service centre for a large, highly productive agriculture base, and it pains us and it hurts us to see the removal of a rural constituency from our borders.

We know – I'd better qualify that – we believe that the five members of that commission did not hear from anybody in southern Alberta that they ought to be combining the constituency of Taber-Warner and the constituency of Cardston-Chief Mountain. They didn't hear that from southern Albertans, and they certainly didn't hear that from the citizens of Lethbridge. So where does it come from?

4:00

In their hearings on the interim report, prior to them presenting the final report, when I was making my presentation to them, they reacted somewhat negatively and aggressively when I made the allegation that I felt there was another agenda that was happening there. I didn't know what that agenda was then, and I don't know what it is now. But I will say once again for the public record that in order for them to make a decision in the manner that they did, to combine those two constituencies and effectively remove one rural constituency from southern Alberta, there was another agenda, and that agenda had to have been that we need to change the power base in this province from a rural to an urban situation.

Now, if that is the case, then I want to support my colleague from St. Albert in suggesting that, yes, we in this Legislative Assembly do not know the definition of effective representation,

but I would make this assertion to all of my colleagues and certainly to myself and to my constituency that we'd better get to know what effective representation is and in a big hurry.

There are coming the results of a 1996 census. I don't know what the results of that will be, but I'm sure that we will have seen the continued movement of people from the rural area to the city, and there will be the continued pressure, especially by the Liberal Party of Alberta, who have already indicated their position earlier today through their speakers, for more seats in those urban areas. In fact, we had a call earlier today from the Member for Calgary-Buffalo for four more seats in the city of Calgary. Four more seats in the city of Calgary probably equates, then, to four more seats in the city of Edmonton, and you talk about effective representation.

Mr. Speaker, I walk back and forth from this Legislature to the hotel that I live in, and I meet people on the street and I meet people in the elevators. I ask, "Where are you from?" and they tell me where they are from. I ask them, "Who is your MLA?" They don't know. They don't know who their MLA is. In Fort McMurray they know who their MLA is, and in Lethbridge they know who their MLA is.

MRS. BALSILLIE: They know in Redwater.

MR. DUNFORD: I bet in Redwater they even know who their MLA is, and if they don't now, they soon will, because we all know the MLA from Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, and you, my honoured colleague, are starting to show the traits already.

MRS. BALSILLIE: You ain't seen nothing yet, buddy.

MR. DUNFORD: I know, Mr. Speaker, that I should restrain myself from making comment, but I would simply indicate to my new colleague – I should give you some advice that an old-timer in this House gave to me, and that is that there will be more people talk their way out of here than talk their way into here. You possibly could be one of them. [interjections]

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Hon. member, excuse me. I think this is a good example of what happens when members use language that is likely to entice this kind of reaction. So I would urge my hon. Member for Lethbridge-West to perhaps proceed with the debate on the Bill and for others as well to refrain from all of the catcalls that we've been hearing.

Thank you.

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess I did encourage some of that. I'll try to behave myself.

Debate Continued

MR. DUNFORD: The point I was trying to make is that you have a situation in the major urban cities of this province, i.e. Calgary and Edmonton, where the people don't know who their MLA is, and then we have a call for four more of them in each of these particular centres. So I think we clearly can demonstrate that effective representation is simply not, then, the numbers.

I appreciated another point about the speech from my colleague for St. Albert. Although I have trouble envisioning him on in-line roller skates, be that as it may, he did point out that he could get across his constituency in 15 minutes. I can do that as well, and

I would believe that every MLA from Calgary or from Edmonton perhaps could do the same thing. The Member for Little Bow cannot do that, the Member for Athabasca-Wabasca cannot do that, and the Member for Bow Valley cannot do that and certainly isn't going to be able to do it with the new lines that have been drawn.

While you may want to discredit the geography, the time that is required, there is some consideration of effective representation that's going to have to go into that debate. I don't know what the formula should be, but I think that if you took constituencies and you used little coloured flags to perhaps identify where every group of 10 constituents resided, clearly then in any urban constituency you'd see a nice little gathering of these flags in whatever colour would be used. But when you go into a constituency such as Little Bow or you go into a purported new constituency now – whatever it's going to be called, Taber-Cardston or Cardston-Taber – you'll find those flags will be dispersed throughout that area. It's going to be extremely difficult to provide effective representation for those folks, and they deserve it.

Point of Order Clarification

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Before recognizing the hon. Member for Fort McMurray, I just want to clarify the record of August 14 at page 2165 of *Hansard*, where the hon. Member for Fort McMurray rose on a point of order with respect to certain things that the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat was stating. In *Hansard* I agreed with the points made by the hon. Member for Fort McMurray but misspoke myself at the end of it by saying that I didn't believe there was a point of order. I should have sustained the point of order, and I apologize to the hon. member.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray.

Debate Continued

MR. GERMAIN: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, most of the speeches today have discussed the issue of effective government and have dealt with the issue from two emotional breaking points: does effective government connote a legal term in the context of making sure that everybody has equal say in the important decisions of the province, or does effective government denote an adjective describing performance and the ability to perform on the part of an MLA?

[The Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

The hon. Minister of Energy, herself glowing from the recent award that the *Sun* newspaper gave her as being the best dressed female Member of this Legislative Assembly, asked that rhetorical question. It is disappointing that that mischievous purveyor of news, the Sun Publishing Company, did not focus on the minister's intellect, her sensitivity, her struggle to break through a glass ceiling but instead saw fit to point out her clothes and in fact ignored the rather sartorial appearance of the hon. Member for Fort McMurray, thereby doing double insult to two Members of this Legislative Assembly. But I digress, Mr. Speaker.

4:10

I wanted to point out that the hon. minister had raised the issue to start today's debate in her closing comments about effective representation. Another speaker, the hon. Member for Three Hills-Airdrie, said that she would fight, that she would draw the

line in the sand – those are my words, not hers – at any attempt to reduce the size of this Legislative Assembly if it did not cut just as hard at Edmonton and just as hard at Calgary. Every speaker who has ever spoken about reducing the size of this Legislative Assembly has not spoken in terms of disproportionality. At best they have spoken in terms of fair proportionality and a smaller Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this Bill is to enshrine for the next eight years, at least, the fact that there will be 83 ridings in the province of Alberta. That is in fact the first paragraph. The commission that studied this matter and that traveled the province extensively indeed did, contrary to the comments of the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, in fact travel to southern Alberta for extensive consultation. That hon. member must remember and accept that the fact that people did not come forward and talk about one specific riding in terms of shrinking and amalgamation might be the implicit comment when others come forward and present their arguments in support of various other ridings in the province of Alberta, because as the Hon. Minister of Energy herself commented, changing boundaries does set off a domino effect.

Every one of us in this Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker, had an opportunity which we missed, and that opportunity was the opportunity to reduce the size of this Legislative Assembly to at least 65 members. We missed that opportunity. I do not care, with the greatest of respect, that some MLA offices indicate that they have not had feedback on this issue. The fact and the reality are that with the exception of matters such as gun control, with the exception of controversial issues, with the exception of health issues, with the exception of booze in car issues, the MLA is elected by his constituents to make day-to-day decisions, to make hard decisions.

DR. WEST: You passed it.

MR. GERMAIN: One of the decisions that we could have made, one of the decisions that we should have made . . .

DR. WEST: You had a chance to make amendments and never picked it up.

MR. GERMAIN: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism will get his opportunity, I know, Mr. Speaker, to comment.

The point that I am making now is that we had an opportunity to shrink the size of this Legislative Assembly, and all of us collectively here, including the hon. Member for Fort McMurray, will have to take responsibility for the fact that we did not have the courage, that we did not see the opportunity, and that we were not prepared to grab the opportunity to reduce the size of this Legislative Assembly by the same 20 percent the Premier himself has asked all public service and public service sector groups to expect, that level of shrinkage. We were not prepared to do that.

We were not prepared to do that because some people say that they're not effective, that they won't be effective in a bigger riding. The hon. Member for Athabasca-Wabasca has one of the largest ridings in the entire province. The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake has a large riding. You don't hear people picking up the phone, Mr. Speaker, and phoning the Premier and saying that they're not effective in their ridings. They do what they have to do to get the job done. They are effective if they are going around and getting the job done and representing their constituents.

So to say that it would make the ridings too large, in my

respectful estimation, was a cop-out. We should have had the courage to reduce the size of this Legislative Assembly. I am proud to be able to say that many of my Liberal colleagues voted time and time again in this Legislative Assembly, first by bringing in a Bill, then by bringing in amendments to a government Bill, and now positively again speaking about this issue, that we should reduce the size of this Legislative Assembly and it will work better. It will be less crowded. People will have more activity to do. The bickering and the catcalling, I suspect, will drop and decline because we will have a smaller group of people focused on and dedicated to the province of Alberta and putting the province of Alberta's interest first before their own.

Time will judge this Legislative Assembly harshly, Mr. Speaker, for not having the courage to stand up and say, "We're prepared to vote against our own self-interest, prepared to vote against our jobs," even though it might have meant that 20 or so of the members sitting here would not be returning in the future. They would have voted to eliminate their own jobs. Now, very seldom in the history of mankind does an individual, excluding a war environment, have an opportunity to do so much for his country that he's prepared to give up his or her job to make a principle and to solve a problem. We failed to do that, and I think the Members of the Legislative Assembly ought to be concerned about that. Frankly, they ought to vote against this particular Bill on that point alone.

Now let us talk specifically about some of the other issues that came up in this particular Bill. First of all, up in the area that I represent, we wanted a larger territory. We actually wanted a larger territory. The people that came to the public commission said, "Look; working with the hon. minister of transportation, who spearheaded it during his time, his tenure as Minister of Municipal Affairs, with the local municipalities and the local improvement district, we went through an elaborate scheme to cut down government barriers, to slash away the top." When people say, Mr. Speaker, that they want less government, they're not talking about nurses and health care workers; they're talking about the model of government itself.

We worked very hard in the northeastern area of this province to slash away those boards and those districts and those areas. It would have made sense if the riding that I represent, the riding of Fort McMurray, had also disappeared and had been replaced with a larger riding called the riding of Wood Buffalo with boundaries that are coextensive with the existing boundaries, that fill the same boundary as the health unit, that fill the same boundaries as the school boards, that handle the same grant allocations and CFEF applications and community enhancement funds, all of those particular programs handled for one riding representing common interests and common areas.

Why could that not happen? Well, there were two reasons, Mr. Speaker. First of all, we had shackled this commission into having only 83 ridings and no more or no fewer. Secondly, it would have disproportionately made the new combined riding close to 40,000 people, and that would have been a no-no. But nobody said that it was inappropriate up in the north country. They all said: it makes great sense. Some of them even had the courage to say publicly that the MLA that serves that area would be more than a match for those increased numbers of people and would provide an equal level of service. History will judge whether they were referring to the member as providing good service or bad service, but they felt that the service would be the same.

I look to my predecessors, Mr. Speaker. I look to the hon.

retired member, the hon. Norm Weiss, who for many years represented a seat right there in the front row. He represented Fort McMurray plus that surrounding rural community. He did that, and the Premier of the day found a small cabinet position for him to also occupy his time with. He did that. Nobody picked up the phone and said that he had too big a workload: don't give the man any more work; he's got too much.

When we asked for a larger riding in Fort McMurray to do what was right, to match the boundaries of our municipality, the commission said, with the greatest of respect to them, that their hands were shackled because it would create such a positive variance for that community that the numbers would be skewed. So that is one definition of effective representation. The other definition is simply the one individual, one vote definition. Now, between those two, which is the compelling standard? Which is the compelling standard?

We're going to talk a minute more about effective representation, because it was personified and personalized here today. You know, on effective representation my colleague the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert-Sturgeon – they'll get it right in *Hansard*, Mr. Speaker – was out here today. She was here this last week fighting for health care in this province. The hon. minister of public works, who as a socialist NDP member used to believe, I believe, in health care, was throwing sand in the eyes of someone who was looking for the answers. That's the definition of effective government, sir. We saw an example of it today. Since we are never going to be able to resolve all of those subjective factors that the hon. Minister of Energy raises – that is, can you deal with your constituents effectively? can you represent them? can you travel your riding? – in a way that meets a harmonious definition, then we are caught leaning and directing the bias back toward the legal meaning of effective representation, which is in essence that the votes must go where the population is.

4:20

Now, by saying that, Mr. Speaker, I do not, as my hon. colleague for Lethbridge-West did, try and criticize Calgary and use the objectives that he did about Calgary. I do not criticize women, as he did, but I say to you that what we will have to do, since we will never agree on the subjective criteria of what makes effective representation, is go back ultimately to the objective test, and that is that the votes and representation must be where the population is. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West was simply expressing that point of view today.

I urge all members of this particular Legislative Assembly to at the appropriate time send this report back to this same committee by hoisting this particular Bill and ask the committee to come up with the boundaries that they would come up with if they were not shackled by 83 seats and if they were not shackled to try and divide the province into those 83 ridings. In answer to the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, the hon. Member for Three Hills-Airdrie, and in response to all of the hon. members who have stood up and have criticized this report today, I think you would find that a different proposal would come forward, one in which MLAs would feel that they had a proper complement of constituents to represent, where they were not overworked, and that they would in fact be doing something significant in the government that is unprecedented in recent history of parliamentary reform; that is, reducing the size of government.

In the final analysis, Mr. Speaker, when the hon. Member for Three Hills-Airdrie went back in time and talked about the Legislative Assembly as it was constituted at the turn of the century, when Alberta became a province, she ought to have gone

further back in time and remembered that all government is simply an evolution from groups of people bound together for one particular reason, whether it be geography or whether they belonged to the same tribe or the same human interests, sitting around a campfire and making the decisions and passing them on to their elders, who would put the policy into effect. That is all that government has evolved from.

Instead of us all coming from across the province and setting up a big bonfire where the pond now is out in the Legislature and all voting on every issue, we select every few years somebody to come and put their hand in the air to represent our hands that are back home doing our jobs. If you go back that far into the analysis of the concept of Parliament and the concept of democracy, then you will see that there is only one definition that can possibly survive this debate, and that is that representative government means fair and equitable government in which people more or less, subject to minor narrow rules, are equally represented in the Legislatures of this province and all across Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members of this Legislative Assembly to at the right time hoist this particular Bill and send it back for further consultation and perhaps reduce the number of seats from 83 down to 65. I know that there are more people who want to express their views on this, Mr. Speaker . . .

MR. DAY: Why not do it now, if you're serious? Stand up and do it.

MR. GERMAIN: . . . so I will not accept the invitation of the Government House Leader himself, who will undoubtedly want to see some merit in that suggestion, and do it.

Thank you.

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

MR. LANGEVIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to speak to second reading of Bill 46 this afternoon. In speaking to Bill 46, I'd like to mention that I will be speaking on behalf of my friend and my colleague the hon. Member for Pincher Creek-Macleod, who is presently attending a convention of the CPA, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. He is representing this government, and because of his commitment to this convention he asked me to represent his views on this issue. As I speak, I will personalize the statement, and when I use the word "I", I would like you to take it as coming from the hon. Member for Pincher Creek-Macleod.

Today I would like to speak to the principle of Bill 46 here in second reading. To start, the Bill itself is absolutely verbatim of the final report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission. In other words, the boundaries in the Bill are how they were defined by the report. My reason for wanting to make a few comments to Bill 46 is to give a perspective on the implication that the changes in the boundaries have on the electorate in the region.

I look at it from a perspective that I happen to represent the constituency of Pincher Creek-Macleod, which was made up after the boundaries review of 1992. After this review, the small constituency of Pincher Creek-Crowsnest had added onto it a part of the old Macleod constituency. This included the towns of Claresholm, Granum, and Fort Macleod. After 1992 the town of Stavely was taken out of the old Macleod constituency and put into the constituency of Little Bow. As a result, Stavely, which itself was at the heart of the constituency, was all of a sudden

finding itself on the border of the new constituency of Little Bow. They felt at home in the Macleod constituency, so immediately changing constituencies presented a problem.

When the new commission was appointed, I said at the hearing that our impression was that they were to be reviewing the boundaries from the 1992 boundary changes. The boundaries commission came up with an interim report which they presented in March of 1996. This report brought Stavely back into the traditional trading area and back into where they were happy, as part of the Macleod constituency. The people of the area applauded the report and the fact that it fairly represented their wish to be back in the Macleod constituency. More importantly, they saw that it made sense for Stavely and Nanton to be included back in the Macleod constituency, because then the MD of Willow Creek and the Livingstone Range school board would be in one constituency. Although there were two RHAs in the area, Stavely commonly goes to Claresholm for all of their health needs, so Stavely was quite content and didn't see the need for any changes. The interim report by the boundaries commission went unopposed because the people were content.

Then the final report came out in June of 1996, and it was significantly different. It took Stavely and Nanton, who were content with the coterminous boundaries, and sent that portion of the MD of Willow Creek into the new constituency of Highwood. This was probably based on the fact that the commission heard of a petition that was put forward by the Nanton residents and presented here in the Legislature by the hon. Member for Highwood. They reacted to that as being a significant enough reason to take that portion of the population and direct it to Highwood, a move which was completely different from the interim report.

In order to make up the population difference, the commission then added the Blood reserve to the Macleod constituency. Personally, I would be very proud to represent this community, having a lot of experience dealing with both reserves that Fort Macleod borders on and having a clear understanding of the issues which are involved.

4:30

More importantly, when the commission went south to include the reserve, they used the Belly River for the southern boundary of the constituency, which affected a small pocket of residents which had initially been with the Cardston constituency. This is the area formed between the Belly River and my present southern boundary, which is the Waterton River. This pocket is now supposed to come into the Livingstone-Macleod constituency. What happens then is that you have an MLA dealing with an additional MD and an additional school board. In the north the Member for Highwood would also be getting an additional MD and another school board to deal with. These are some of the problems and concerns included in the second report.

I know that the commission didn't follow their own guidelines, specifically the use of existing boundaries, as listed under the redistribution rules in the report. It was made clear to Stavely by the final report that, as Nanton, they should put forward a petition reflecting their wish to be included in the proposed Livingstone-Macleod constituency. This petition was tabled in this House on August 15, 1996. The town of Stavely held a special council meeting to address what they thought would be an opportunity for them to make their feelings known to this Legislative Assembly. I am pleased to table two copies of their resolution and their reason for wanting to stay in the Livingstone-Macleod constituency, as per the interim report. Specifically, they would like to see the

town of Stavely and the surrounding MD of Willow Creek south of township road 150 included.

One of the reasons that Stavely would like to stay is that the residents receive many of their services from the town of Claresholm. Claresholm is the economic and agricultural base for the Stavely region. Many residents are employed in Claresholm. The town is serviced by the Claresholm detachment of RCMP. When needed, Stavely relies on the ambulance and hospital from that community. Also, Claresholm is where the nearest nursing home is and the social service offices are. Overall Stavely relies on Claresholm for trade, protection, and health.

A similar example is the request by the communities of Glenwood and Hill Spring in the presentation of a petition and resolution from their town councils. These communities feel the same affinity to the town of Cardston as Stavely does to the town of Claresholm. I would be proud to represent the people of Glenwood and Hill Spring if that were the case.

As constituencies grow in size, I have stated publicly that I would do my best to live up to the challenges of a larger constituency, with the increased traveling time, more MD councils, town councils, and schools boards to meet. However, it would seem consistent with the boundaries in place, and the interim report may have been the best solution for all rural MLAs.

As far as some of the comments I have heard from the opposition in the earlier part of the debate, the Member for Edmonton-Manning has said: I don't want to be part of drawing my own electoral boundaries. [interjections]

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: There seem to be several people wishing to speak at this time. I would remind all hon. members, including the two that seem to be engaged in cross-court debate, that we are hearing for the moment the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul and no others.

Debate Continued

MR. LANGEVIN: I have heard from the Member for Cardston-Chief Mountain and from the people of Stavely that they don't want the MLAs to draw their own boundaries. They have given an indication that they were pleased with their trading and service areas as mapped out in the interim report. Changing boundaries to accommodate population differences affects the MLA's ability to effectively represent a constituency in terms of more work and dealing with more councils.

On the topic of effective representation the other thing we have heard from some of the urban MLAs is that there is a difference in dealing with rural and urban issues. From my own experience, having a completely rural constituency, when it comes to social services, workers' compensation, and access to other government programs, many constituents use the MLA's office a great amount for these services. Out there it isn't a simple matter of catching a bus or a taxi across town. In some instances it means a 40-mile drive to get to the Peigan reserve, to a social services office in the Crownest Pass, or an hour and a half drive to get from Crownest Pass to Lethbridge to visit the workers' compensation office. Constituency offices are used extensively as a go-between for these services. Unfortunately we don't have the luxury of having those kinds of services available on the main street of every rural community.

There are differences, and I believe that even though this Bill may pass verbatim through the Legislature and into law, as I

mentioned in my opening remarks, there is a need for better understanding. Representing a completely rural constituency is very different than representing an urban constituency, which the boundaries commission didn't address in their final report. Therefore it is important that the matrix, giving a plus or minus variation, in city ridings could be and should be different than the population variation in a completely rural riding.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, it would be my hope that in the future, before we send out a commission that is based on the reaction of a court decision, we in this Legislature need to address some of the inconsistencies and do a better job of looking at the issue of what effective representation means and have a full debate on that before we go to a commission. Hopefully, then, we may avoid a situation like we have now, where Albertans are feeling that they had no input in the final report, which was so different from the interim report they agreed to and were quite happy with.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This concludes the remarks from my hon. colleague.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Chair was wondering whether you wanted to speak yourself, as the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

MR. LANGEVIN: No, not at this time.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Leduc.

MR. KIRKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I welcome the opportunity to speak to the Electoral Divisions Act, Bill 46 as it's known. As I often do, I'll speak positively to some aspects of the Bill.

I've heard other members indicate that they thought the independent or, as I've called it, balanced committee was a sound concept. I would also indicate that that's the case. As we know, there were two Liberal appointees, two Conservative appointees, and the chair, I believe, was appointed by the Premier. There was also further direction that the rural and the urban should be represented on that particular committee. So I would suggest that it was a positive start to that particular outing, and I would suggest that it was a good balance that served all Albertans, as well as one could expect it to serve without becoming too unwieldy as far as a larger and bigger committee is concerned. I would encourage the government to look at more of those balanced committees, because I think the decisions that come forth certainly represent the views of most Albertans.

Now, speaking to Bill 46 and the principle of it – and I'll try to evaluate it against the Leduc constituency, which I'm very familiar with – there were some previous concerns raised by the Member for Calgary-North West and also Calgary-Buffalo, I believe. Those concerns were articulated in the form of the censuses that were based on 1991 population. They had some concerns about that, Mr. Speaker. I would suggest that if we look at a census that drives this particular Bill that originates in 1991, we are really starting behind the problem. I would suggest that if we start with flawed data, we will end up with a flawed outcome.

4:40

Now, as I look at the Leduc constituency and I attempt to extrapolate those projected growths, the problem of constituency inequity or constituency representation in my submission, Mr. Speaker, will continue to exist when this Bill is implemented. I

looked at the Bill, and it struck me. To use their figures, the committee members acknowledged that there was a 10 percent urban growth factor and about a 7 percent rural growth factor, if I recall correctly.

In applying a projected growth to Leduc, if we commence that particular extrapolation of those figures from 1991 and we take it to the year 2004 – and as I understand it, that's when the next Electoral Boundaries Commission review is planned – there is potential, Mr. Speaker, for that Leduc constituency to double its population, and this is based on an 8 percent projection of growth in that particular area. So by 2004, as I understand it and as I project it, we would still have that serious inconsistency or that inequity as far as representation existing, and I would suggest that would not be fair to Leduc constituents, nor would it be fair to any constituents that would be impacted in a similar fashion.

The reason the Electoral Boundaries Commission was initiated was to overcome that inequity, Mr. Speaker, and just as I tried to apply it to the Leduc constituency, it doesn't appear to travel a path that will provide the solutions required. I would submit that they have not addressed the real problem; they have simply deferred it by not starting with 1995 census figures or taking, as one member indicated, a projected growth, which in today's world is very easy to ascertain. So I would respectfully submit that the electoral boundaries review commission failed to find a solution to fill the direction the Court of Appeal had suggested that they should seek.

I also heard the Member for Calgary-North West illustrate the point that if we looked at the 1995 Edmonton population, it warrants some 20 constituencies or electoral divisions. Presently they have only 18. I believe that when we look at Calgary, there is a similar discrepancy there. Presently Calgary has 20 constituencies, Mr. Speaker. If we looked even at the 1991 census, it suggests there should be 23. If we look at the 1995 census and population figures, as the Member for Calgary-North West indicated, it really could warrant very easily 24 electoral divisions. Now, that may cause some alarm in the minds of the rural constituents – and I consider myself to be one of those – however, I think we cannot lose sight of the basic democratic principle, and that is that there should be fair representation.

Now, as I further project that parity for all constituency boundaries and look at the recommendations of the electoral boundaries review commission, I suggest, Mr. Speaker, it will fail to do that, just simply due to the fact that they started with the 1991 population census. It did not take into consideration growth factors. Thereby, I would suggest that effective representation for all constituents in Alberta will not prevail. My support for Bill 46 wavers seriously when I see that that challenge has not been met or in fact that we haven't applied good population data to overcome it. It strikes me that if we are to correct a problem that has been identified – and that one is of representation inequity – then we should do it correctly at this particular opportunity. Now, I would suggest that Bill 46 fails to achieve that.

So with those comments I would ask all to give serious thought and consideration. I know the Member for Lethbridge-West indicated that if we did not support the Bill, we were giving a rather ominous message to independent committees that bring forth recommendations to the Legislature. There's another side to that particular discussion, Mr. Speaker, and that is that if we accept a recommendation from an independent committee that perhaps does not serve all Albertans well, that, to me, almost is a message as ominous. It's unfortunate. The committee has won a considerable respect for working well together as an independent

committee. However, because they're an independent committee does not necessarily mean that their suggestion is absolutely correct or that it will overcome the problem that stood before Albertans some many years ago when the Court of Appeal suggested that if we wanted to continue to view our province as a democracy, we would have to address that inequity in the number of constituents living within the electoral divisions in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all, when they look at that – and certainly I am also somewhat supportive of the Member for Fort McMurray's comment: have we got the right number of constituencies in Alberta? That is an ongoing debate. I think we've seen lots of data, be it Saskatchewan or be it the province of B.C. or even Ontario, that on a per capita basis we seem to be somewhat overnumbered as far as MLAs are concerned, and it's unfortunate that the independent committee had its hands shackled in that particular pursuit. I myself would certainly support less MLAs through the province of Alberta, even though I know that it would contribute to an increased workload in the Leduc constituency.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would suggest that though I have praise for the co-operation that the independent committee exhibited in their deliberations, I have a concern that they did not solve the problem that they initially were struck to resolve. I would suggest that if we look at the projected time frames and the population growth, by the time that in fact the Electoral Boundaries Commission reviews one more time, we will have a larger inequity than we presently do today, and I would suggest today that it'll be challenged long before that.

With those comments I would take my seat, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury.

MR. BRASSARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't want to get too basic here. There's been an awful lot said in this Assembly about representation in the form of electoral boundaries and so on, but I just want to point out a few things, recognizing that there are few things as sensitive to a politician or his constituents as the altering of their electoral boundaries.

Politics is about people, and politicians are about representing people. It would be a great world if people in all of these little communities came in nice, neat, tidy, little, equal packages, but they don't, and there's nothing more illustrative of that fact than the map of Alberta. We're spread all over the place. People are divided into communities for a whole variety of reasons, and there are an awful lot of very strong attachments – some necessary, some by choice – that are made within those little communities and constituencies.

The relationship becomes a significant part of the way of life of the residents within those communities, and consequently the role of the politician in that area is to represent those interests to the best of their ability. Altering and dividing a community, a trading pattern, or access to support services and other issues of common interest has a significant impact on the constituents. If the division is unavoidable, so be it. If the boundaries are established based solely on numbers, then that line of thinking, Mr. Speaker, I feel is wrong.

I welcome the residents of Three Hills and Trochu and Acme as well as Torrington, the gopher capital of Alberta. I welcome all these people and all the people in between. I think it's great, and I'd be very happy and honoured to represent them in this Assembly. However, I do resent, Mr. Speaker, the removal of Sundre, because their trading pattern, their entire community of

interest is to the east with the town of Olds, in that area. There's seniors' access to long-term care there and vice versa. I could go on. Their relationship is well established and has been in effect for many, many years.

The residents of Crossfield have the same kind of an interest with the residents of Carstairs and Didsbury as that between Olds and Sundre. Heavens, I can remember the athletic programs. The schoolkids at Crossfield interacted with those in the county of Mountain View, a totally different county, simply because of their relationship with Carstairs and Didsbury. If it makes sense from a people standpoint to move these areas to another riding, then I would certainly support the move. If it is done simply as a numbers game by applying a calculator as a basis for representation, then I object.

You know, the first draft copy of the report had little effect on my riding, and consequently we were lulled into an attitude of complacency. There were going to be a few people change places, and that was to be expected, but that was it. We seemed to be listened to. Our presentations were heard. The final draft, however, came back moving a third of my constituency away. As I said, it appeared as if it were solely based on the use of a calculator. Their final report had little or no resemblance to the first, leaving the residents in my constituency with absolutely no recourse.

4:50

While I fully support these decisions being made by an objective, independent body, I do feel sincerely that they wandered far afield from their original mandate. I recognize that equal representation has been the criteria subscribed to in the preparation of this report and would be subscribed to by an awful lot of people, but in my humble opinion this report was done at the sole expense of fair and equitable representation.

I don't want this to sound like an urban/rural argument, but when I leave this Assembly tonight, I will immediately step into the riding of one of my Assembly colleagues. My riding is two and a half hours away. We listened to my colleague from Little Bow tell about the many hours every year that he spends driving around his constituency, hardly representing anybody, just simply getting from point A to point B. [interjections]

Let me rephrase that. He wasn't representing many people while he was in the car driving from point A to point B. I think I said that.

MR. McFARLAND: In a truck.

MR. BRASSARD: In a truck. I apologize, Member for Little Bow. I know how hard this man works, and he's got to work doubly hard because he spends so much idle time in that car getting from point A to point B. It's got to be frustrating.

Getting back to my speech and the fact that I can step into a riding almost immediately as I step out of this Assembly, I look at the Athabasca-Wabasca riding, which is currently 125,000 square kilometres. The proposed boundaries for Drumheller-Chinook are going to be approximately 328 kilometres by 168 kilometres, a huge area of representation. To prepare a report regarding the representation of people without taking these anomalies of distance into serious consideration has got to be questionable, Mr. Speaker. It goes without saying that before any consideration can be given to the reduction of the numbers of members of this Assembly, as was brought up by the Member for Fort McMurray, before that can anywhere be considered, we must discuss the effective versus equal representation, because we'll

just exacerbate this whole question.

Mr. Speaker, I have no problem representing more people. That's not the weakness of this report. The thing that's wrong with the report, which is the substance of this Bill, is that little or no thought was given to severing communities and trading patterns. As I pointed out earlier, representation is about people and their common interests and concerns, and to think that effective representation can be achieved by the simplistic application of a calculator is a disservice to the residents of Alberta and certainly to those in my constituency. So I reject this report.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I perhaps should start out by saying that I am not personally affected by this report and therefore by this Bill in the sense that not one square kilometre has been taken away or added to my riding and I haven't lost any communities or anything, which pleases me greatly because after – what? – a good three years I've grown to like every corner of my riding and the people in it. So on that basis my remarks are perhaps somewhat more academic than for most.

I am, however, in a bit of a quandary with this Bill, Mr. Speaker, because there are so many different philosophical points of view that it's been trying to come to grips with. First of all, the representation by population item, which I think is dear to all our hearts, at least in theory – we profess time and time again that that's the basis for democracy and so on. This Bill is still a far cry away from achieving that particular notion of representation by population.

The second item that I'm somewhat perturbed about – it's been mentioned before – is the basis on which this report has been made. The commission's report has been based on the census of 1991, which of course is vastly outdated and will certainly be outdated by, say, the end of the next government term. So we could well be seven to eight years away from now, and who knows what the numbers will be then?

Through the matrix the Electoral Boundaries Commission has attempted to explain the disparities between the numbers of residents in urban and rural ridings, and that matrix I think is a good attempt to provide an explanation. I'm not sure that it is all-inclusive though. First of all, the specific rural factors of distance and population sparsity and dealing with different councils, et cetera, et cetera: it makes sense that that's being looked after, that that's incorporated. In my own riding, for instance, I've heard several distances being mentioned. My riding is about 225 kilometres by 225 kilometres, or for those of you who still measure distance in miles, that would be about 175 miles by 175 miles, which is vast, but I suppose there are vaster differences and distances.

As some of the members have pointed out, though, this matrix does perhaps not do a fair job to include the difficulties that one finds inherent in urban ridings. I'm not an expert at all. My only, one might say, electoral venture into an urban riding was in Calgary-McCall in 1994 when I did some door-knocking on behalf of the Liberal candidate. I found it a very edifying exercise when I knocked on doors and the lady or the man of the house would say, "Well, is there an election?" and I would say, "Yes, there's a by-election." "Well, why?" "Because your member passed away, unfortunately." "Oh." "Did you know his name?" "No."

"Do you know the name of your riding?" "No." I thought: gee, that to me is a difficulty that I don't encounter in my riding. So again as rural members we tend to think that we have all the difficult factors. I think there is one in an urban riding that I would find hard to deal with. After knocking on a whole bunch of doors and running into people who didn't have a clue as to why we were there, I came to the conclusion that I'm certainly blessed representing a rural riding. So that matrix does not include those items.

Now, on the other hand, I must say that as a rural member I am sort of reluctant to wholeheartedly embrace any notion of diluting rural influences in the Legislative Assembly. This is a purely academic statement I am making, of course, because I know very well that at this particular moment rural areas are mostly represented by government members, not by members of the opposition. We'll attempt to change that in the next election, Mr. Speaker, so let's not be desperate.

5:00

Now, another shortcoming of this Bill, a point that bothers me somewhat – again, it has been mentioned before – is the fact that the commission was kind of straitjacketed into the numbers game. They were not allowed to come up with a reduced number of MLAs. I would have liked to have seen them have the freedom of coming to grips with that, which is really even more so dealing with the notion: how does one effectively represent a group of people? That wasn't done, and I think that probably it's been mentioned before as the only area in which this government has not seen fit to cut with the customary 20 percent. Of course, the number of ministers has quietly crept up instead of being cut further. So there are a couple of contradictory items there.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have some reservations about Bill 46. In the final analysis it represents a limited attempt to address the concerns about the present electoral boundaries as expressed by the courts. As such, I think it does the job. It is not a perfect document by any means. It is not a perfect proposal by any means, but it goes some distance towards solving some of the problems to some extent. If that sounds a little half-baked, then that's the way it is, unfortunately, but perfection is rarely ever achieved and certainly not in one single step. So maybe there is a job reserved for future commissions 10 years hence or so to grapple with all these items once again. I'm very much of the opinion that because I favoured the establishment of an independent commission, after we certainly argued hotly for that particular item for a long time on this side of the aisle, I therefore feel compelled to accept this report.

Thank you very much.

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

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure this afternoon to enter into debate on Bill 46, the Electoral Divisions Act. I want to make my comments with respect to some of the comments made by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West in talking about how it is that we come to have Bill 46 in front of us this afternoon. Yes, indeed, this Bill is in essence the result of significant public consultation conducted by the Electoral Boundaries Commission throughout the province of Alberta. I think that I would have to say and put on the record that this particular commission did travel the province, did give significant opportunity for Albertans to have input into discussing how the electoral boundaries of Alberta ought to be dealt with.

Not only did we then have the preliminary report, but there was opportunity for input in the second round prior to the report being tabled with the Legislative Assembly. While we may have some differences of opinion as to whether or not the Electoral Boundaries Commission actually heard what the people of Alberta said, I think we have to recognize that that commission had an enormous task ahead of it in that it had to deal with previous case law from the Supreme Court of Canada, from other provinces in Canada – Saskatchewan, British Columbia, and so on – as to what has been decided to this point constitutes effective representation and some of the real problems that we have experienced in the past here in the province of Alberta in terms of effective representation and parity of voting.

In that regard, Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Calgary-Buffalo in his comments referred members to page 78 of the proposed electoral divisions report, June 1996. In fact, as I reviewed those pages as referenced by the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, I looked at the graph on page 80 and would refer members to that graph at the bottom of page 80. We have had to do a significant amount of work in the province of Alberta to get to a point where there is equality in electoral divisions within the province of Alberta. With the proposed boundaries coming forward in Bill 46, when you look at what is referred to as the Gini index, the proposal would put us at an index figure of 0.062. That's significantly better than where we have been in the past, looking back through 1970, 1977, 1985, 1993, and 1996.

I would have to say though, Mr. Speaker, looking at that particular graph, that where there is reference to zero on the scale as being absolute equality and 1 on the scale as being absolute inequality, recognizing that 0.050 would be the middle-of-the-road figure, anything below that figure would be closer to equality and anything above that figure would be closer to inequality, we still haven't come as far as we need to go in that we are still more unequal than we are equal.

So I recognize that the commission had an enormous task ahead of it. It had to deal with the direction from the Court of Appeal. It probably ought not to have been the case that this commission had to deal with the issue at this point in time, but it was because of the boundaries that were created for the 1993 general election in the province of Alberta, that were referred to the Court of Appeal, wherein the Court of Appeal said that it becomes necessary to justify boundaries, and it becomes necessary for Alberta to change its electoral boundaries if it wants to consider, to call itself a democracy. Now, these are very strong words from the Alberta Court of Appeal. It became incumbent upon the government, Mr. Speaker, to deal with the issue because we could not simply go into another general election in the province of Alberta with the boundaries that we had.

The issue, of course, that the commission was attempting to deal with is the issue of parity and the issue of effective representation. We've had some interesting debate this afternoon as to what constitutes effective representation. Some have suggested that we can look at it from a legal perspective or we can look at it as an adjective as to whether or not a member is particularly effective in the Legislative Assembly.

Now, I listened intently to the debate, Mr. Speaker, and I heard some comment from a member across the way when the question was asked rhetorically – someone who meets a constituent or passes someone on the street and is talking about politics or the political process and somebody asks the question: who is your MLA? The answer that was suggested by a member across the way was: they have no idea. In fact, I think that is sometimes

reality. Sometimes it is not, but I think that in a large section of the population that would indeed be the answer, that most people do not know who their MLA is. But they still accept and appreciate the need for effective representation.

So is effective representation to that segment of the population someone who is effective in the context of the adjective or someone who has a vote on matters of public affairs in the Legislative Assembly of the province of Alberta? I would submit and suggest to members that for those Albertans, for that segment of the population, effective representation can be equated to a voice and a vote in the Legislative Assembly of the province of Alberta. It may not necessarily equate to the size of the riding, the population of the riding, the distance from the Legislature. It is simply based upon the population. The population of a particular riding is the same, relatively speaking, as the population of another riding so that the voice and the vote in the Legislative Assembly of the province of Alberta has reasonably equal weighting factors.

5:10

We got into the debate: how can you define the subjective elements of effective representation? Recognizing that those criteria become increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to wrestle to the ground and reduce to writing, we are then caught in the objective or the measurable criteria to determine effective representation.

Now, there have been many comments this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, in the Legislative Assembly that have been critical of the report by the Electoral Boundaries Commission. I'd like to go on record as indicating that I think the commission did an excellent job, given the daunting task and the difficulties they had in realizing the subjective versus the objective elements of how to deal with this whole issue and in actually developing the matrix to address the concerns of the Court of Appeal and to address the concerns of the Supreme Court of Canada. So for all of those elements, for all of those measurable areas that the Electoral Boundaries Commission incorporated into the matrix, I felt that was a very innovative approach to attempt to quantify how members can be effective in their representation in the Legislature, given all of those other variables. I think the report clearly attempts to say that population, while it is probably the most important element, is certainly not the element, is not the only element that has to be considered as you go through what constitutes effective representation by Members of the Legislative Assembly.

When you look at the elements that the commission deals with, I think they have captured very well the kinds of obstacles that Members of the Legislative Assembly have to overcome in dealing with what we will all, what every member will subjectively consider to be good, effective representation for their constituents. For some, the subjective side of this is that they need to be in their constituencies and meeting with people at various functions or with various organizations within the constituency. So there is an element of travel for those Members of the Legislative Assembly who are in the rural ridings, less so for members who are in urban settings. For myself and for a Member of the Legislative Assembly who would be representing the constituency of Sherwood Park it is a very confined constituency with very distinct boundaries following the urban service area of the specialized municipality of Strathcona county. So it is probably easier from that perspective to effectively represent constituents than for someone who has a rural riding and must travel significant distances to meet with their constituents.

Now, that has to be tempered with the fact that we are now in an electronic age that allows us to communicate with one another through all of the technological advances that we now have at our fingertips, including electronic mail, certainly a much more highly technical telephone system, many ways that we can still communicate, even if it may not always be person to person, in our various constituencies. Nonetheless, it's an important area for the commission to have considered, geographic area, population, population density, number of households, elected and appointed bodies, distance from the Legislature.

For myself, Mr. Speaker, while again I recognize the very good work the commission did in tackling this whole issue, the areas that concern me the most in the way the Electoral Boundaries Commission dealt with the matrix and dealt with the elements that make up the matrix is the weight that has been given to the population of a particular area. We have heard from other members in debate this afternoon that one of the things that the commission did not take into account is the element of population growth.

Now, it would not be fair to say that they have not even addressed their mind to the issue, because in fact they have and have decided that even with the population growth anticipated for communities that are in high-growth areas, they can be absorbed in the plus/minus model that the commission has offered to us in its report and which is reflected in Bill 46. There are those who would disagree, and certainly, Mr. Speaker, speaking on behalf of my constituents, I think my constituents disagree. The population growth rate of a constituency like Sherwood Park could not simply be absorbed over the next number of years to a point where effective representation by virtue of a vote and a voice is maintained in the Legislative Assembly in the province of Alberta.

You know, to that extent, Mr. Speaker, in reading the report again I looked at table 9, Populations of Cities and Urban Centres in Alberta. Sherwood Park itself is listed as one of the major urban centres in the province of Alberta. If you look at the 1995 population census figures, the population of Sherwood Park is 39,614. From the 1991 census figure, that figure is up over 4,000 in the last four years. I think that growth rate is going to continue in our particular community.

DR. WEST: It's just a hamlet.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Oh, now, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism says that it's only a hamlet, but the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism knows for a fact that we are now a specialized municipality. The hamlet of Sherwood Park no longer exists. I have to tell the hon. minister that Sherwood Park is no longer a hamlet, and I'm really saddened that the minister was not aware of that. For all hon. members we should be clear that Sherwood Park, one of the most important and vibrant communities of the province of Alberta, the home of the most significant refineries in the province of Alberta, is not a hamlet anymore. It's part of a specialized municipality of Strathcona county. So I just wanted to ensure that the minister – incredibly, when he was the Minister of Municipal Affairs I thought he knew that. Just so he's now clear on what the status of Sherwood Park is so that he will know that for future reference.

We are now and were as a hamlet some time ago the largest hamlet in the province of Alberta, in 1991 a population of 35,576 individuals. Growing enormously. In 1995 we're a community of 39,614. Now, that's the '95 population figures, Mr. Speaker.

The Electoral Boundaries Commission itself said that when you take the population of Alberta based on 1991 figures and divide that by 83 electoral divisions – because they were shackled with the 83 number, as my colleague from Fort McMurray indicated – the population average would be 30,780. The commission goes on to say that with a plus 25 percent variance, the highest number that would be possible for an electoral district would be 38,475.

Well, I just read to you, Mr. Speaker, that the population of Sherwood Park in 1995 was 39,614. So it's larger than what would be permissible by the Electoral Boundaries Commission itself in its own report. The problem that the commission had that it could not deal with is that it stuck to the 1991 census, so all of the calculations are based on 1991 figures. All you have to do is read table 9 to know that the 1991 census population figures are irrelevant. They just don't belong, or at least the weighting should have been taken into consideration. Where population figures are known today, they should have been incorporated into the matrix model so that you don't have a community like Sherwood Park, where it's already outside of the variance that was suggested by the commission and is one of the fastest growing communities in the province of Alberta. By the time we get to the next . . . [interjections]

5:20

Now, Mr. Speaker, other members of the House are saying: ah, but my community is bigger; my community is bigger. I would refer hon. members to the fact that there are, I believe, going to be three constituencies under the proposal that will have a higher plus/minus variance than 15 percent, and those communities are Sherwood Park, Calgary-Fish Creek, and Calgary-Glenmore. The largest constituencies in the proposed boundaries will be Calgary-Fish Creek at 15.9 percent, Sherwood Park at 15.6 percent, and Calgary-Glenmore at 15.4 percent.

Now, I do not believe, Mr. Speaker, when you take into account the growth rate, recognizing that Calgary has a significant

population growth projection, Sherwood Park has certainly a high growth projection, that any of those three constituencies are going to be able to fit the bill, as it were, in what the commission is attempting to justify as not unreasonable dilution of effective representation by population and will not be able to come back to this report and say that it continues to be justified in the later years before the next census and before the next electoral boundaries are taken and before the next election where there are clear, effective figures.

Mr. Speaker, with that I will leave that for hon. members. I have some other comments that I will make about our particular unique situation, but at this time I would move that we adjourn debate on Bill 46.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is moved that we adjourn debate on Bill 46. All those in support of this motion, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Carried.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Assembly stand adjourned until 8 o'clock tonight in Committee of Supply.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader has moved that the Assembly do now adjourn and that when we meet this evening, we will do so in Committee of Supply. All those in favour of this motion, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Carried.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:23 p.m.]