



Province of Alberta

The 27th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, October 22, 2008

Issue 38e

The Honourable Kenneth R. Kowalski, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 27th Legislature

First Session

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[Errata, if any, appear inside back cover]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, October 22, 2008

[Mr. Mitzel in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: Please be seated.

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 35

Government Organization Amendment Act, 2008

[Debate adjourned October 22: Dr. Taft speaking]

The Acting Speaker: Do any members wish to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Mr. Hehr: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 35, Government Organization Amendment Act, 2008. The object of this act, as put by my friends on the other side of the House, is to provide some context to what the government is saying. This legislative amendment will provide the Minister of Infrastructure with some added flexibility in the sale of land so that the government can quickly adapt to unique circumstances that may evolve in the future. The amendment only provides the minister with a similar authority already held by the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Transparency and accountability will be maintained, and cabinet oversight ensures that any use of this provision of the Government Organization Act must be well justified.

It's with this "well justified" that I have some hesitation in what this bill is actually proposing. As an Alberta Liberal Party opposition we have repeatedly raised concerns about this government giving themselves powers to make regulations or decisions that can overturn legislation or legislative authority. Clause (3)(c) of this bill does exactly that. Really, this has been a constant theme in this government, the way we tend to be moving towards these type of instruments that remove this from the Legislative floor or from the ability for us as a House to debate the issues of the day or for the public to see the decision in, I guess, the plain sight of *Hansard*, if you want to call it that, or the plain vision of the telecamera if people are, as Mr. Rodney likes to put it, listening in at home.

What we want to do is engage Albertans in the democratic process and allow them to see what decisions the government is making. By us constantly going to this type of structure, it seems to be eliminating the whole spirit of democracy in large swoops. Amendment after amendment appear to be coming forward at a fast and furious rate in even my short time in this August Assembly.

Those were primarily my comments, just concentrating on the fact that the current government has a habit of inserting these clauses into legislation that allow the ministers to enact orders in council or regulations that can trump the legislation itself, and this really is not acceptable. What passes in the Legislative Assembly is the law of the province and should be supreme over the regulations that may stem from it. This bill is one more example of that shift of power away from the elected representatives of Albertans, and it should not be passed as is.

Those are my comments, Mr. Speaker. I thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak on this amendment.

The Acting Speaker: Under the provisions of Standing Order 29(2)(a) five minutes of questions or comments are available. The hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House.

Mr. Lund: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's unfortunate that the Leader of the Official Opposition isn't here tonight because this afternoon late in the session he made a number of comments . . .

Mr. Mason: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker: It's been noted.

Point of Order

Referring to the Absence of Members

Mr. Mason: Under the standing orders it is impermissible to refer to the absence of another member during the sitting of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Duly noted, and that's agreed.

Mr. Lund: Mr. Speaker, I apologize for that error.

Debate Continued

Mr. Lund: The member that spoke last on the bill this afternoon made a number of comments relative to an issue with the Nilssons. A number of times he used the term "this government." Well, the fact is that there have been two administrations between the current government and the government that purchased – not sold; purchased – the land from the Nilssons. I wanted to get that on the record, that, in fact, it was a purchase and that the whole issue was completely different from the bill that we're talking about. If hon. members are concerned about it being handled differently in forestry under the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development versus the Minister of Infrastructure, the fact is . . .

Mr. MacDonald: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker: A point of order has been noted. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Point of Order

Question-and-comment Period

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time I would refer all members of the House to Standing Order 29(2)(b), which states: "the 5 minute question and comment period referred to in clause (a) . . ." We are to ask questions about this hon. member's statement, not a previous speaker's speech. That's not what this hon. member is doing.

Mr. Lund: Mr. Speaker, I did not complete my comments. I was going to ask him a question. [interjections]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, the hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House has the floor. He has not asked his question. I would think we'd let him finish asking his question.

Debate Continued

Mr. Lund: Mr. Speaker, my question to the hon. member is very simple: did he agree with his leader this afternoon?

Mr. Hehr: I assume that this afternoon my leader was very vibrant and very eloquent and to the point as he usually is. I would assume that my leader was perfectly correct in his synopsis of what went down. I feel very comfortable when I leave the House with the ability of my esteemed colleagues on this side of the House to carry the ball because we're used to making speeches and asking questions and doing a lot of that stuff that becomes part of the role here. Oftentimes . . . [interjections]

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Buffalo has the floor.

Mr. Hehr: Yes. Your comments regarding the nature of the sale. I don't know the specifics or anything like that, but I'm sure that the hon. opposition leader handled himself in a manner that was exemplary under the standards of this House.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House.

Mr. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was not concerned about the way he presented it. It's just that what he said was not accurate.

The Acting Speaker: Any other members wish to speak? The hon. leader of the third party.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much.

The Acting Speaker: Are you speaking to the bill?

Mr. Mason: No. I'm speaking under 29.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Okay. You have a minute and 45 seconds.

Mr. Mason: Yes. I'd like to ask the hon. minister of health about something he said a few weeks ago. [interjections] Come on, now.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the hon. minister of health if he believes that the Mazankowski report is still guiding his direction as to health reform in this province.

7:40

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, this has nothing to do with the question that's on the floor.

Next speaker. Anybody else wish to speak? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I assume we are now back in debate on Bill 35, the Government Organization Amendment Act. I would like to back up the comments that my fellow caucus member from Calgary-Buffalo had this afternoon. I listened to the debate on the audio feed, and I thought it was very good. If the hon. member from across feels that something was misleading in what was said, then I certainly would appreciate getting that in writing, just to clarify it, because I remember discussing this same issue probably a year and a half, two years ago. To me the facts sounded the same. So I would probably appreciate getting that.

I don't have a lot to say on this, but my comment would be that my biggest problem with this government, as usual, is not so much the what; it's the how, meaning that you're going back to cabinet decisions that truly should be done out in the public. They don't necessarily have to always be discussed. They don't necessarily have to go through this House. But I certainly think that someone outside of cabinet should be looking at these kinds of decisions, particularly when it's my land that you're selling. I own that land. I'm an Albertan. I think that I should at least know, at least have some kind of an inkling ahead of time, before these decisions are made behind closed doors.

The proposed amendments that have been put forward to renumber sections 10 (3)(a)(i), (ii), and (iii) would seem to create a stricter approach to the sale of Crown property since it requires that a sale can only be made after an invitation to submit tenders or after listing

with a real estate broker, only after at least two appraisals and for an amount not less than the market value. I can understand some of the reticence behind this because when I was on municipal council, of course there were things that we did have to do in camera, and many of them did apply to land buying, not the sales but the land buying. The minute that real estate people or the people that are selling know that the government is even remotely involved, up goes the price.

Mr. MacDonald: Not in this case.

Ms Pastoor: Well, no. I'm talking about, in my case, municipal politics. This was our experience, so I can understand that. However, when you're selling my land, I want to at least know that someone else besides cabinet has looked at that and it isn't just behind closed doors.

The new provision in the numbered section 10(3) allows for a sale to be made "under circumstances authorized by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, subject to any conditions that may be imposed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council." The concern here would be, again, that cabinet could totally ignore all of the provisions of 10(3)(a) and approve a sale however they see fit. This could potentially allow for the easier sale of Crown lands either for the establishment of P3 projects or for any other project where cabinet feels that the selling of Crown lands is advantageous.

I think those words really sum up what I'm trying to say, which is that I own this land. I'm an Albertan, so I want to see it protected. I want to see someone at least taking an overlook when these lands are being sold. I certainly know – and if somebody asks me to table it; I don't have it in my hand right now – that there were some leased lands that farmers managed to get their hands on for a very nice sum of money that probably had they been offered to the general public, they certainly would have been paid a lot more for them. Again, it's not so much the what; it's always the how that I have to see what's going on.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like at this point to adjourn Bill 35. Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 9

Land Agents Licensing Amendment Act, 2008

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead on behalf of the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly appreciate hearing many of the thoughtful comments and discussion on Bill 9. To recap, this amendment means that landowners will no longer be required to hire only licensed land agents when seeking advice or representation during negotiations for access to their land.

Mr. Speaker, I move third reading of Bill 9, the Land Agents Licensing Amendment Act, 2008.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Any other members wish to speak? The hon. leader of the third party.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to briefly speak. I was speaking to this bill at second reading when the clock ran out and, unfortunately, wasn't able to be in the House at that time to resume my speech, so I just want to say a few words about this.

I travelled to Vegreville to hear the trial of the gentleman who was charged with representing a landowner against an oil company and, in doing so, acting as a land agent without a licence. I was able to hear the arguments of the prosecution and the defence. Ultimately, that individual was convicted, but I believe the judge had some fairly negative comments with respect to the law. The law at that time was very one-sided. It was clear that land agents operated almost entirely on behalf of oil companies in negotiating with landowners and very rarely or in just a few cases operated on behalf of the landowners. Of course, it was difficult not only to find these agents for the farmers, for the landowners, but expensive.

There was a long history of farmer and landowner discontent at the way the entire system was weighted against them and the tactics in many cases of the oil companies in getting their leases. So I think it certainly is important that we correct that situation because I think it was a most unfair situation where someone was convicted for simply trying to assist his neighbours in preserving their rights. It was pretty clear that we had a great imbalance, I guess, in the system. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that this act will go some way towards rectifying that situation, and I hope that in the future we will be able to see a situation in which farmers have some resources and some recourse when the big oil companies come calling, wanting to drill on their land.

I note, Mr. Speaker, that there are other aspects to this controversy with respect to oil companies' rights versus rights of landowners in this province. We've seen the emergence of this again, this time based on some alleged incidents of sabotage of pipelines in northern British Columbia. This has been an issue for some time in the province of Alberta as well, going back to the days of Weibo Ludwig and his conviction relative to committing sabotage against oil fields.

7:50

There are many people in this province who feel, Mr. Speaker, that the entire weight of the system comes down in favour of the oil companies irrespective of the rights of landowners. Particularly, there is a concern in many areas of this province about the drilling of wells and the transmission of sour gas. This has created serious issues in various parts of this province for some time. I believe that many farmers in our province and many city folks, as well, believe that there is a bias on the part of the entire system with respect to this and that the rights of oil companies are put ahead of not only the rights of landowners but the rights to health and safety of people who live on the land in rural areas, but also this issue has come up in urban areas, as well.

I think we need to find a different balance. We need to protect and enhance the rights of landowners in this province, the enjoyment of their property, and we need to ensure that the safety of the public and the health of the public in all cases comes ahead of the interests of the oil and gas companies that operate in this province.

It's a somewhat related issue, and it was raised today in question period and yesterday in question period, as well; that is, the burning of used oil for the production of asphalt at a plant in southern Alberta. I think that this is similar, not exactly the same type of situation, where the economic needs of players in the province are put ahead of the health and the safety of Albertans by this government.

If I can come back to the whole question of land agents, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that we do rebalance the situation in this province so as to give the people who live on the land the rights to protect their property and the rights to ensure that they get fair value for any activities that oil companies may want to undertake on their land. It is, first and foremost, their land. It's not the govern-

ment's land. It's certainly not the oil companies' land, even if they've acquired mineral rights.

I don't think that in this province we have achieved the correct balance between those rights and the economic desires of oil and gas companies. I think it comes down to the relative weight that the oil and gas industry has in the councils of this government versus farmers who may in many cases vote for the government but who are very often taken for granted by this government. I think that that's something that's going to change, unless the government changes its attitude and begins to respect – begins to respect – farmers and landowners in this province and not just see them as simply people whose rights could be trampled in order to assist the oil and gas companies, which then, of course, give the government very large political donations and allow them to swamp the airwaves with advertising and, therefore, obscure the fact that they're not really acting in the interests of the people of this province, let alone the farmers and the landowners.

I believe it's very clear, Mr. Speaker, that major reform is needed in this area. This bill is a tiny baby step towards that. Because it is a very small step in the right direction, we will be supporting this bill at third reading tonight. I think it's a good indication of the extent to which rural folks in this province have been taken for granted by this Progressive Conservative government.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise under 29(2)(a). I have a question, please, for the hon. member.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. member was the second speaker. You can't rise under 29(2)(a) until the third speaker.

Does any other member wish to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar on the bill.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm encouraged to see the government finally come forward with a resolution or a solution for this issue on who can act and when and where as a land agent in this province. I listened to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, and I certainly listened with interest to his remarks, particularly the part where he felt that farmers feel taken for granted by this large majority. Our office is still receiving calls regarding Bill 46 and what they were told by this government and what the reality is now with this law. So I believe the hon. member is absolutely right with that statement, that this government is taking their rural friends for granted, and Bill 46 is another reminder of that.

Now, Bill 9, the Land Agents Licensing Amendment Act. It did unfortunately wind up in court. Mr. Strom was the victim in this case. This is a government that is advocating choice in private versus public health care, private versus public schools, but they were not willing to give rural Albertans a choice as to who could represent them – and I don't want to sound like Jack Layton – across the kitchen table . . .

Mr. Mason: Not the boardroom.

Mr. MacDonald: Not the boardroom table. In the country in the farmhouse it's the kitchen table

. . . and who could discuss the details, the negotiations, with an oilman – an oil person, I should say, or a land person. To be correct: a land person. So that choice is now being restored through this bill.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank officially the many people who were phoning our office leaving passionate

messages expressing their concern that this choice was not available to them or to their neighbours. I got calls from Peace River, from Vegreville, from the south end of the province, from all over.

I would just like to say that this is the right thing. I think the oil and gas industry will certainly prosper with this amendment. I don't think it's going to hinder their activities in the least, at least I hope it doesn't, and we can go a long way towards restoring trust and confidence in the whole regulatory process between landowners and the energy sector.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The provisions of Standing Order 29(2)(a) are available for anyone who wishes to comment or question. The hon. leader of the third party.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar if he believes that there needs to be more steps taken in order to enhance the rights of farmers and landowners, rural Alberta, as compared to the rights of the oil and gas companies that operate on their land.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, that's a very interesting question. One of the things that we on this side of the House would like to see is an increase in the role of the office of the Farmers' Advocate. I would much prefer to see this government increase funding for the office of the Farmers' Advocate and reduce funding for the Alberta Barley Commission, which is just a front to erode further the Canadian Wheat Board. That's one thing that we would like to see happen.

8:00

The other thing is that I notice there's a significant amount of corporate sponsorship of the land agent school that occurs at Olds College, and I think that sponsorship is out of balance. It sends the wrong message to rural landowners that the whole process is stacked against them, and that's another reason why confidence has been eroded in the whole system.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Any other members wish to speak? Hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs, under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Danyluk: That's right. The comments that were made very much intrigue me, especially the ones in regard to the Farmers' Advocate. I'd be very interested in how the hon. member opposite would enhance the role of the Farmers' Advocate when he talked about support.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you. It's a pleasure, Mr. Speaker, to hear from the hon. member. Before I get to his question, I would like to explain how I heard. It was at the Norseman Inn – there was another hon. member from this Assembly present there – when there was a discussion prior to these amendments being introduced to the Assembly. There was a discussion held at the Norseman Inn probably two years ago. It was certainly before this hon. member was put in cabinet because he was at this meeting, and it was such a significant issue that many of the farmers who had driven from all over northern Alberta to this meeting stayed past 4 o'clock. They realized they were going to get home well after dark and have to feed their stock in darkness because they wanted to talk to the hon. member.

The hon. member was late, but the hon. member was finally there about 4:30, and as I recall that meeting, he did a very good job, Mr. Speaker. He did a very good job. He went to the front, and he took the political heat from those farmers that were there. I know he's very busy. If he had gotten to the meeting earlier, one of the suggestions that was put forward was that we need to strengthen the office of the Farmers' Advocate to deal with these issues. I recall – and we're not under any parliamentary obligations – that he was in the parking lot on his telephone, and he couldn't get into the meeting because he was busy talking to constituents. But when he did get there, he did go to the front. He did take the political heat. We see the changes in the legislation now, but that was one of the suggestions, hon. member, that was made from the group that was there, and they came from all over the north half of the province.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Any other members wish to speak on 29(2)(a)?

On the bill, any other members? The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. I believe that the underlying reason for Bill 9 being put forward, which totally reverses what was formerly the case, is that I don't believe it would have survived a Charter challenge. It went against a person's rights of freedom of speech and their rights of freedom of association. Therefore, the government, I basically believe, did the right thing. Rather than getting into a protracted legal situation that could have gone all the way to the Supreme Court, the government recognized its mistakes in terms of trumping individual rights and came up with legislation after the fact to try and address the problem.

In 2001 during the province-wide Alberta teachers' strike a rule was put out which was equally offensive and equally unenforceable, and that was that any two teachers gathered at any particular location were forbidden freedom of speech. They were not to use the word "strike" in their conversations. Those dark days have passed, but unfortunately the recommendations of the Learning Commission have yet to be completely acted upon; the recommendations, for example, on class size. Most school jurisdictions are still struggling to reach the Learning Commission's class size objectives for the primary grades, grades 1 to 3. The other recommendation is on optional full-day kindergarten and half-day funded junior kindergarten. Of course, that's something I bring up on almost a daily basis and suggest that that would be a terrific investment.

What we see is very much an inequality of farmers' rights. While Bill 9 addresses a degree of that inequality, today and tomorrow the circumstance that led to Kevan Chandler's death in a grain silo is being discussed. What that brings to mind is the fact that in terms of the oil and gas and farmers' rights, the oil and gas employees who would potentially be injured while drilling for oil on a farmer's land receive workmen's compensation, but the farmer or the farmer's employees aren't able to access that compensation unless the landowner takes that workmen's compensation out.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, we're talking on Bill 9. I'm sure you're going to get to the point on this.

Mr. Chase: Yes. We're talking about rights, and we're talking about land agents' rights, and that's what I'm referring to.

We have given rights in terms of advising. Anyone now can provide advice, so the whole idea of a defined land agent has been changed, and that's the point that I'm trying to make. While this addresses one of the problems with farmers' rights in terms of their

freedom to seek advice from wherever they choose, they still do not have the opportunity for further rights such as workmen's compensation. That's the point I wish to make.

At this point I would like to suggest adjournment of Bill 9.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 11
Insurance Amendment Act, 2008

Ms Evans: I think that at the last juncture, when we heard from members here discussing second reading and Committee of the Whole, we moved it as far as third reading. I'd like to move third reading.

I was quite pleased to note the degree of accommodation from the members of the opposition. It seemed to me that there were a lot of the issues that we had resolved. I can only credit the work of my friend from Lethbridge-West and others that have been working with due diligence on this bill. I just commit it to the Assembly this evening.

The Acting Speaker: Any other members who wish to speak? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I will be brief, following the words of the minister of finance. There are so many good things in this bill. Again, I just wanted to register my usual reservation. How will this really be merged with the B.C. insurance bill when, in fact, that hasn't even been introduced to the House and probably won't be until the spring session of the B.C. Legislature? That to me is still a big concern.

There certainly are some good things in here. I'm glad that we are going to adopt the cooling-off period. I'm glad that they have replaced the word "specific" and are using: for all crops.

Well, those are just a couple of the points, and I have spoken on second before. I would also compliment the Member for Lethbridge-West because we have spent time talking on this bill, and he's brought me up to speed on many things. I've appreciated that, and I know that he has worked hard on it.

Thank you.

8:10

The Acting Speaker: Any other members wish to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Mr. Hehr: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, too, shall be fairly brief this evening. [some applause] I'm glad that meets with everyone's approval here this evening.

I, too, would like to say that some of the changes in this bill are really quite good. It modernizes the legislative framework of insurance contracts, and it allows for electronic transactions to be used in addition to a written document, which will save time, money, and aggravation for many individuals who previously had to do their insurance contracts. It will give new regulation to give authority to levy the insurance industry for annual operational expenses of the superintendent of the insurance office, which I also think is a good move.

I also note that this bill incorporates some of the changes that were mandated in the Supreme Court decision, that needed to be done by our courts here. The decision was KP Pacific Holdings and Guardian Insurance. I also note that this bill brings into unison a two-year limitation period for people to be able to file suit under an insurance-based dispute. That brings it in line with the regular two-

year rule of suits, and it eliminates a lot of confusion that people had previously when dealing with their legal rights under the Insurance Act. This is going to be greatly appreciated by both the legal profession as well as by litigants who are faced with insurance challenges and whether they're going to sue, whether that is a victim of a car crash or other types of things. It's a very good amendment.

The one caution here – and it was already brought up by my colleague from Lethbridge-East – is how this is going to be incorporated with TILMA. In fact, we brought in this legislation at the same time as our counterparts in B.C. did, assuming that on a lot of things that's going to be the way we now do business in both this province and in that province. We sort of see the ramifications of that coming up relatively quickly. Already in this session we're having one bill that looked like it was supposed to march along in unison. Now we go ahead, and hopefully they'll catch up. Hopefully, they won't make any changes that we disagree with, and we won't have to scuttle the whole business, but that remains to be seen.

Other than that, I'm supportive of the bill, just with those few hesitations on how this bill is going to be affected by B.C. being delayed in implementing their bill. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a) provisions are available for anyone to question or comment for five minutes.

Hearing none, does anyone else wish to speak? The hon. leader of the third party.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 11, the Insurance Amendment Act, 2008. There are a number of changes in this bill. There are large sections of the act that have been rewritten, including part 4, Market Conduct, and part 5, Insurance Contracts. That doesn't mean everything in this bill is new. I find that, for example, section 577 on nuclear energy liability is the same as the current act, and there also do not appear to be changes in the automobile insurance and rate board sections of the act.

There are some changes dealing with fire insurance, group life insurance beneficiaries. Policyholders will now have two years to initiate legal action, and it provides a 30-day grace period for policyholders to make a late payment. There are changes to hail insurance, electronic transactions, cease-and-desist orders, self-evaluative audits, and there's a section with authority to levy the insurance industry for operational expenses of the superintendent of insurance office. By and large, Mr. Speaker, the bill has a number of positive changes that I think are worthy of support.

I want to talk, though, a little bit about the situation with respect to auto insurance. Now, there are no significant changes that we could identify with respect to that, but I do want to just have us cast our minds back a little bit because I think there are some changes that could have been made, especially with respect to the Automobile Insurance Rate Board. If we go back a few years, there was a very significant jump in automobile insurance rates, which created quite a political storm in this province being as we are the only western province that doesn't have public auto insurance.

Mr. Liepert: Good.

Mr. Mason: Certainly the minister of health is very pleased that Albertans have to pay more than other provinces for automobile insurance, but where I'm actually going with this is not to get into an ideological debate with the minister of health but to talk about what happened at that time.

Now, the interesting thing is that even though auto insurance rates went into the stratosphere rather suddenly – I think this was about

six or seven years ago, Mr. Speaker – there was no corresponding jump in the accident rate and no corresponding jump in the amounts that automobile insurers were having to pay out as a result of accidents. It really was curious why these rates were going through the roof. They were rising in other places as well, in other less progressive provinces that also didn't have public auto insurance.

We looked into this, and there was some public debate around this, but the basic situation when it comes to auto insurance is that the insurers don't make their money from collecting the premiums on automobile insurance. What they do is that they collectively pool those. They pool those premiums, operating as a large sort of socialist cartel – that was for the minister of health's benefit – and they operate together co-operatively to invest in the stock market. Of course, at that time there had been a considerable loss in value in the stock market. What the insurance companies were doing, Mr. Speaker, was simply attempting to recoup their losses on playing the stock market, and they were passing those costs on to automobile drivers in this province and in other provinces across the country, so they jacked up the rates for auto insurance.

Now, the relevance of this, I think, is that, as everyone should be aware, there has been a rather dramatic loss in value on the stock market, perhaps twice as severe as the correction that took place six or seven or eight years ago. What I want to, I guess, just throw out for the government is that it's very likely that we're going to see another spike in auto insurance rates or very much an attempt on the part of the automobile insurance industry to once again jack up the rates because they've taken a bath on the stock market. Anybody that has RRSPs will know that there has been a very significant loss in value, so you can imagine that the losses in the insurance industry run into the billions and billions and billions of dollars.

8:20

Mr. Speaker, they're going to want that money back, and all the people of Alberta have standing between them and an unconscionable increase in their car insurance rates is this insurance rate board. I think that this bill should have gone a lot farther to spell out exactly the responsibility of that board to make sure that the insurance companies do not once again try to gouge the drivers of this province because they've lost their shirt on the stock market. That, for sure is exactly what's happened, and that's exactly what's going to happen.

I wish I had confidence that this government would stand up to the insurance industry and make sure that they don't get gouged once again. It took an awful outcry from the public and an awful effort from the opposition parties, including the New Democrat opposition, to force the government to do anything to stop this gouging the last time, and the losses of the industry were minor compared to what they are today.

So I want to just use this opportunity to sound a bit of a warning for the drivers of this province that it's very likely indeed that the insurance companies are once again going to try and crank up their auto insurance rates for no reason other than that they've lost money on the stock market. It's not because we have worse drivers, not because we've had more accidents, not because the insurance companies are having to pay out more in claims but because they want to make up their money that they've lost by gambling on the stock market.

Mr. Speaker, those losses are their responsibility, and they need to account to their shareholders for those losses, but they'd better not come to the people of Alberta and the drivers of Alberta and demand higher rates. If they do, we will be holding this government accountable by standing up for drivers and not standing up for the insurance industry, which is, of course, who they really would like to support.

Mr. Speaker, with those comments I'm pleased to conclude my remarks with respect to this otherwise satisfactory bill. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), provision available for comment or question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two questions for the hon. member. The first one is in regard to the comments from the hon. minister of health, who earlier in your debate suggested that public auto insurance was socialism. Do you consider, hon. member, the fact that this government owns and controls a bank to be socialism?

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much for that question, hon. member. Do I consider it to be socialism? No. I think that it's prudent. For example, if I can just use the example: if the big banks had the field all to themselves in this province as they do in some other provinces, would there be financial institutions in small towns in rural Alberta? No. The banks left those long ago. In my own constituency, which is an inner city and in some parts lower income constituency, the banks abandoned the people that I represent 10 to 15 years ago, but the Treasury Branches have stayed and have served the people well. So if that's socialism, hon. member, I think it's a good thing because it has really helped the people.

I take the same approach to auto insurance. Public auto insurance is a proven way of delivering lower rates to drivers than the competitive, free market system favoured by this Conservative government with its ideological bent. It's, in fact, this government's dogmatic free market approach that is hurting the people of Alberta, particularly those people who struggle to afford things like car insurance or who need a bank in their community.

The Acting Speaker: Any other members with to speak? On 29(2)(a) the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Allred: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Just a comment, if I might, to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. If you wish to gamble, you go to a casino. If you wish to invest, you invest in the stock market.

The Acting Speaker: The leader of the third party.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much. I think there are different types of investments. You know, you might invest in a poker game, but it's a bad investment.

The Acting Speaker: No one else wishes to speak? Anyone else wish to speak?

Any member on the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar on the bill.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you. Certainly, with Bill 11, following the debate, the last speaker I thought made some very good points regarding this bill and auto insurance and how it's delivered. But as we go through this bill, I certainly hope that the issues that were brought forward by the Insurance Brokers Association of Alberta have been addressed. I hope that the issues around B.C. and TILMA have been addressed by the officials from the department of finance.

When we look at this bill and we think of the insurance industry and the sale of insurance products in Alberta – and this is the second portion of the overhaul of the entire Insurance Act, which goes back, I believe, to the first days of this province, the first days of this

Legislative Assembly. This was one of the first statutes that would have been debated and passed into law. This Insurance Act and the insurance industry are certainly as old as this province and probably in a lot of cases older. I think overall this bill is a step in the right direction.

Earlier in debate we talked about the whole issue around consumer protection, and that will over a period of time be judged on whether we did enough with this legislation or not enough. Consumers in the past, Mr. Speaker, have been very suspicious of the rates that they were charged, particularly for auto insurance. Certainly, auto insurance premiums are significantly higher than the provinces that offer public insurance, whatever method of delivery there is. I know they're all different, but I know they're cheaper than what we have in Alberta.

There are other forms of insurance and other outfits that are anxious to deliver insurance. Now, the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East talked about the credit unions. Well, maybe it's time the credit unions sold insurance if we're going to be in this competitive free market. I know people in the insurance industry may have a lot of issues with what I'm saying, but if we're going to live in a free enterprise society and we're going to adhere to free market principles, which I admire, maybe it's time to allow the credit unions to sell insurance products. I don't know what's going on. Maybe the minister of finance can fill in the members of this House and the public throughout the province on this, but maybe it's time to give the banks – the big banks – more of a role in selling insurance and insurance products.

An Hon. Member: They already do.

Mr. MacDonald: They already do. Absolutely. If you get behind any Edmonton transit bus, you can see the sign. I'm not a pitchman for Toronto-Dominion, not in the least, but you can see where there's a direct link between the bank and an insurance outfit making their sales pitch. That's on the side and the back of a transit bus. So the door has been opened very slowly.

8:30

Now, earlier we talked about the Treasury Branches. I would draw the attention of the House to the annual report from Alberta Finance 2007-08, and we see where there is ATB Insurance Advisors Inc. I'm looking at the financial statements, interestingly enough, for the 16 months ended March 31, 2008. This is a branch of the Alberta Treasury Branches. It's

a wholly owned subsidiary of ATB Financial . . . established for the purpose of selling wealth management related insurance products to customers of [Alberta Treasury Branches Financial] and its subsidiaries. The continuing operations of ATBIA are dependent upon ATBF's ongoing financial support.

It's obvious to me that the Alberta Treasury Branches has an interest in insurance just from this subsidiary that they have.

It's not off to a very good start, I note. Mr. Speaker, I'm looking at the statement of cash flows on page 391, and the net loss for the period was . . .

Mr. Hancock: Is this insurance?

Mr. MacDonald: This is insurance, hon. member, yes. I'll have to get back on this, but I think it's a little over a million dollars. This is, hon. member, an example of the interest that other financial institutions have in insurance and insurance products. With Bill 11 I don't know if we're adequately dealing with this whole issue of who gets to sell insurance and what kind of insurance, where in this province. Maybe that will be in the regulations. There certainly are

lots of opportunities for the government to draft regulations. In here they can draft, virtually, a regulation to do anything they want without any further discussion in this Assembly.

There's also another form of insurance that we need to be looking very carefully and very closely at in this province, and that is, unfortunately, health insurance. I don't see any items listed in the front of this bill that will control the sale of health insurance. Now, why, hon. members, would I say that? Well, we have to be very careful about this government's plans and this government's intentions toward public health care. What's public health care got to do with this bill? Well, with this bill in a couple of years, a couple of months Albertans could be buying health insurance.

Now, I heard a few laughs from across the way, but one of the discussion papers that was floated by the government two years ago around the third way, Mr. Speaker, was a proposal to have health insurance. The whole idea was promoting long-term sustainability and flexible – flexible – funding operations. I think flexible would be depending on the size of your wallet. That would be the definition of your flexibility. We need to be very, very cautious here because the government would like us to take out our own health care insurance. If we look at the whole issue of health insurance, some would see that as an untapped market, and it's a market that they want to get access to. Not only do they want to get access to people's illnesses and make a profit on that, but they would also like to make a profit selling health insurance.

Mr. Hehr: Well, why would our own government want us to buy health insurance?

Mr. MacDonald: Why, hon. member, would our government want us to buy health insurance?

Mr. Hehr: When we have public health care.

Mr. MacDonald: Well, that's a very good question. To ensure that the health care system is there for Albertans in the years ahead and to give Albertans more options, this Conservative government is looking at ways to pay for services like prescription drugs and continuing care. It may mean that Alberta consumers, young and old, sick and healthy, can buy insurance for things like taking care of loved ones in long-term care.

Now, here's a benefit that's promoted by this government with this scheme. This scheme is very similar to this patient-focused scheme that we talked about earlier in question period. Not only will purchasing insurance give Albertans more options to plan for the future, Mr. Speaker, but it will make the system more affordable in the long term. Then health care won't eat up so much of the provincial budget, and government will be able to spend more money on other things that affect our health.

That, I hope, answers your question, hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo. That is my concern. This government is planning to increase the use of private health insurance by Albertans because they're unwilling or incapable of planning their health care system to protect the public interest and our public health care system.

Now, I certainly hope that the future of Bill 11, the Insurance Amendment Act, 2008 – and I'm not going to confuse this with the original Bill 11, hon. member. I hope they're not related, but I think they are. Unfortunately, I think there is a connection.

An Hon. Member: There's a connection going on there.

Mr. MacDonald: There definitely is a connection because this bill will certainly, without a doubt, facilitate the opening up of the market of private health insurance.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I will cede the floor to another hon. member of the House. In conclusion, it's been a privilege to participate in the debate on this bill. There is a lot more these days to insurance than auto and hail and fire and other forms. Unfortunately, in this province we're going in a new direction with this government, and that's toward health insurance in a big way.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a), provisions for comments and questions. The hon. leader of the third party.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to just first make a comment, and then I have a question for the hon. member. I don't think that it's because the government can't plan the public health system that they're moving towards having Albertans depend more on private auto insurance. I think it's because they're under intense pressure from these insurance companies, who, of course, fund much of their political campaigns as well, to do so because there are billions and billions of additional profits that these corporations can make if they're allowed to sell private health insurance for things that are currently covered by our health care system.

Now, I have a question also for the hon. member, Mr. Speaker, and it's whether or not he thinks that the Mazankowski report was influenced by the fact that Mr. Mazankowski was, of course, on the board of Great West Life and is a director of one of these major insurance companies that very much desires to increase their share of the market at the expense of public health care.

8:40

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that question. I think the hon. member is absolutely right, and that observation, in my view, would be correct. That's why we need to have a lobbyist registry act or the whole system set up and working before we go ahead with any of these private health care initiatives that the government is contemplating.

If we have a Lobbyists Act that works and is open and transparent, the public can see first-hand whether it's Great West Life or whatever insurance outfit that is promoting health insurance products or other lobbyists who are promoting private hospitals. Hon. member, I couldn't agree with you more. Many corporate entities see this province and its 3.3 million plus people as a market that they don't have access to to sell health care products and services as they see fit. They see themselves excluded from this market, and they're lobbying aggressively to get access to this market. That's why I think the Lobbyists Act should be put in force before we do anything to dismantle our public health system.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Any other members wish to speak on 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Chase: Yes. Thank you very much for that clarification. While the night is young, I'm having health care nightmares. I'm hearing of insurance companies whose intent is profit over individual support. It seems to me that among the various insurance companies that have been mentioned . . .

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, are you speaking on 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Chase: Oh, beyond a doubt, which has to do with Bill 11 and insurance.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, you're speaking on 29(2)(a), to the comments of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Chase: Yes, of course. It was the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar who brought the demons out from under the bed. Among those demons that surfaced [interjections] – and the ghouls are popping up from all over.

My concern is that, basically, we're being sold down the river and there's no one there to prevent us from, you know, crossing that line from public to private. Do you share these concerns? They've obviously troubled you. Aon, Great West. The Copeman clinic is offering for \$4,000 that'll ensure its members get in the line more quickly. Is this a nightmarish scenario that you're seeing as well?

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, Mr. Speaker. To the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity I would certainly say that I'm disappointed that the government is not putting the public interest first and foremost in this policy discussion. Last winter there was no talk . . .

The Acting Speaker: Any other members wish to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, to the bill.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. Yes, very directly to the bill. With Bill 11 we've been playing tag with B.C. over TILMA. B.C. discussed it first in its Legislature, where it had a thorough debate. We followed B.C.'s lead with limited discussion. With the B.C. election about to occur, the alphabetical order and natural order, ABC, has been restored. Hopefully, B.C. will be able to generate more interest in its election participation than Alberta has demonstrated both provincially and, recently, federally.

With that, I bring this nightmare to its ghoulish end by calling for the question.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. leader of the third party on 29(2)(a).

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to ask the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity what he thinks overall about the TILMA agreement between the Progressive Conservative government of Alberta and the Liberal government of British Columbia.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, we're talking about Bill 11. We're not debating the philosophies of any particular party in any particular province.

Anything further?

The hon. Minister of Finance and Enterprise to close debate.

Ms Evans: I think it's all been stated. I'm very grateful for the vigorous debate we've had on this bill. Hopefully, we will get it passed.

[Motion carried; Bill 11 read a third time]

Bill 20

Agriculture Statutes Repeal Act, 2008

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West on behalf of the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Weadick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and move third reading of Bill 20.

The Agriculture Statutes Repeal Act, 2008, will repeal three acts. First, it'll repeal the Agricultural Societies Amendment Act; secondly, the Gas Distribution Amendment Act; thirdly, the Federal-Provincial Farm Assistance Act. The first two are amendment acts that have not been proclaimed into force, and further amendment as proposed by members opposite is not needed. We do not foresee a need to proclaim the acts at any point in time. We will provide a brief overview of each of the three acts in response to comments received during Committee of the Whole consideration.

The Agricultural Societies Amendment Act deals with the collection of citizenship information and has been reviewed in the context of the current agricultural societies program. The Gas Distribution Amendment Act was made redundant by the Gas Utilities Statutes Amendment Act, 2003. The relevant section of that act is also planned for repeal through Bill 20. The Federal-Provincial Farm Assistance Act is now addressed through provisions in the Government Organization Act.

I appreciate the support received from many hon. members and anticipate their continued support at third reading. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you. I appreciate that from the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West. The hon. member stated that we're amending three acts.

The Acting Speaker: You're speaking to the bill.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Bill 20, the Agriculture Statutes Repeal Act. Could he clarify for me, please, that we're also amending section 1 of the Gas Utilities Statutes Amendment Act? I would like this clarified before we move on. I'm of the opinion that we are, but the hon. member stated that we're repealing three statutes.

Mr. Weadick: Correct.

Mr. MacDonald: That's correct.

The Acting Speaker: We're not on 29(2)(a), hon. member. We're on the bill. Do you wish to continue to speak?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, I'm just looking for a clarification from someone on that side of the House regarding this bill as presented by the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

The fourth item: "Amends chapter 5 of the Statutes of Alberta, 2003. Section 1(3) . . . the Gas Distribution Amendment Act." If that is what is listed here under the citation, Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly satisfied with it.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Any other members wish to speak? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. I will be very brief. I have never since I've been here, actually, had a bill like this, so it's really quite interesting. I was pleased when my fellow House colleague from Lethbridge-West ran through what is unproclaimed legislation. I was just very pleased to see that it wasn't one that I had sat up all night to pass, so it wasn't my time that was wasted putting these through in the first place.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for anyone who wishes to comment on the last speaker.

Anyone else wish to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

8:50

Mr. Hehr: Thank you very much for allowing me to speak on this. I just sort of want to point out that it looks like this is just a house-cleaning bill, a bit of unproclaimed legislation here. It looks like some of this was passed that maybe wasn't supposed to be passed in the first place.

I hear the comments of my colleague from Lethbridge-East, that it may have kept her up a little bit later, but that's what democracy is. Sometimes it keeps us up a little bit later, and that's all right if that's what we're here to do. We're supposed to discuss these things in the light of day or into the night, but we're supposed to discuss them. I guess that's why we're here: to engage in democracy and to allow for all the discussion that we can, even on bills that sometimes don't necessarily get used.

On that note, I will call for the question.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Hearing none, the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West on behalf of the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright to close debate.

Mr. Weadick: Thank you very much. I will only say thank you to the Member for Battle River-Wainwright for doing so much work in this area and carrying this bill forward. I would close debate and call for the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 20 read a third time]

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading (continued)

Bill 35

Government Organization Amendment Act, 2008

[Adjourned debate October 22: Ms Pastoor]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. leader of the third party.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to take this opportunity to offer a few comments with respect to Bill 35, the Government Organization Amendment Act, 2008. The bill proposes an amendment to the Government Organization Act which would give the Minister of Infrastructure additional flexibility when addressing unique, in quotes, situations regarding the sale of Crown lands. The government sees this as a way to look to the future, as they always claim to do, and to be prepared to deal with any situation not mentioned in the act currently.

The issue which concerns me the most and which I want to put on the record is that it would appear to me in the context of the government policy of the day with respect to public-private partnerships that these changes may be used to facilitate the sale or transfer of Crown land to companies that are successful in obtaining a P3 agreement with the government. If this is the case, in fact, it certainly causes us a great deal of concern. The basic situation allowing these things to be transferred with tenders is, in fact, providing additional opportunity for the government – what I'm concerned about, Mr. Speaker, is that we will be giving away public land and then having it leased back. Now, if I am wrong on this, then I would invite the minister to go on the record and set me straight.

I want to indicate for the record that we do not believe that P3s are the best way to proceed in meeting the infrastructure deficit of this province. We think that the government is making a serious mistake with regard to P3s and that land is a key component in almost all of these projects. Particularly, things like roadways but also, you know, large buildings, even government buildings, school sites, and so on potentially could be impacted. To have public land lost to private companies as part of the government's scheme for P3s simply worsens the situation and increases our fears and the fears of others who believe that the P3 approach is essentially selling out the people of Alberta and the future of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, the research that we have done is almost uniform in concluding that P3s are naturally and in most cases practically more expensive in the long run for the taxpayers than conventional financing. There are two main reasons for that. The first one is that government can obtain financing for capital projects at a lower rate than private business, so there's a saving. Also, when government builds these projects itself through conventional financing, it does not have to take a profit, so there's an additional opportunity to save taxpayers money. There are also things like fees and so on that increase the savings of conventional financing. So why are we moving in the direction of P3s?

There has been quite a bit of pressure, including from the accounting profession, to more properly account for the costs of P3s because we are incurring significant debts when we go into one of these agreements. Other governments have hidden their borrowing from their citizens through the use of P3s because it did not appear previously on the government's books as debt but, rather, comprised part of the ongoing operational costs of the government. So it was transferred from the capital budget into the operating budget.

Now, accounting bodies internationally have moved to eliminate this because it was clearly an abuse, and it was clearly a misuse of this kind of financing in order to enter into debt without properly disclosing that on the books. I think that there's been quite a bit of progress in correcting that. Nevertheless, there's no question in my mind that P3s will cost the taxpayers more money. If, in fact, this bill is intended to give the flexibility to the government to transfer public land assets to successful bidders on P3 projects, then those losses will be magnified. It is an abuse, in my view, of the role of the government as a trustee of public lands to allow our public lands to be put into this situation.

I had a direct experience dealing with a P3 at the time that I was a councillor with the city of Edmonton. The mayor at the time wanted to build an indoor soccer centre, badly needed in the city of Edmonton, through a P3. There were negotiations with people who wanted to provide this soccer facility. It was interesting what they wanted. First of all, they wanted the city to put up the land. That's important, and that's relevant to this bill. Secondly, they wanted the city to provide the financing, or if they had to provide their own financing, then they wanted to use the city land to secure it. I would be concerned if that was going to be the case here.

I asked the administration several questions. The first question was: who has the land? It was the city. Secondly, who has the expertise in the design and construction of recreational facilities? Again, it was not the consortium that wanted to bid on the project; it was, in fact, the city. It was the city and the city administration that had the experience and the knowledge in the construction and

operation of recreational facilities. So that would have to be provided to the consortium that wanted to build the P3. Finally, who has the money? Well, of course the city had access to the money. The city had the expertise. The city had the land.

9:00

The question ultimately was, Mr. Speaker: what did the P3 proponents, the consortium making the application, bring to the table? Frankly, the answer was: nothing at all. The project was built, financed by the city of Edmonton, and it was operated by the Minor Soccer Association, not by the city, because in this case the Minor Soccer Association had the best expertise in the operation of an indoor soccer centre. So there has to be some flexibility as well.

Quite frankly, I think there's little or no benefit to P3s, so it begs the question why the government is so determined to proceed in this direction notwithstanding very negative cases that we've seen in other places.

But if I can come back to the land question, Mr. Speaker, I'm very concerned that we ought not to be disposing of Crown land generally except if there is a significant benefit to the province, and that includes development. There are lots of good reasons to dispose of Crown land, but in each case there needs to be a clear set of criteria for determining if Crown land should in fact be sold. I object to this because I think that it creates too much opportunity, too much flexibility for the disposal of Crown land in a way that does not represent the public interest in the long term.

Unless I can get a convincing explanation from the minister that convinces me that I'm wrong – and it is very occasionally a possibility – then I will not be supporting Bill 35. Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Any other members wish to speak?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, I'd move that we adjourn the debate on Bill 35.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a) prior to adjournment?

Mr. Hancock: Oh, yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm wondering if the hon. member would consider moving adjournment of the debate on Bill 35.

Mr. Mason: I would indeed be prepared to do that. I wonder if the hon. Minister of Infrastructure might want to take a couple of minutes under 29(2)(a) before I do that, though. No? Then I'll move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that we adjourn until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 9:04 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]

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