

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Title: **Tuesday, March 10, 1987 2:30 p.m.**

Date: 87/03/10

[The House met at 2:30 p.m.]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PRAYERS

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

We give thanks to God for the rich heritage of this province as found in our people.

We pray that native-born Albertans and those who have come from other places may continue to work together to preserve and enlarge the precious heritage called Alberta.

Amen.

head: INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**Bill 14****Alberta Health Care Insurance
Amendment Act, 1987**

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce Bill 14, the Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 1987.

This Bill is designed to remove from the legislation any prohibition against private insurance.

[Leave granted; Bill 14 read a first time]

Bill 10**Court of Queen's Bench Amendment Act, 1987**

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a Bill, being the Court of Queen's Bench Amendment Act, 1987. This is Bill 10.

Mr. Speaker, this will permit the government to implement report 40 of the Institute of Law Research and Reform with respect to judicial review of administrative actions.

[Leave granted; Bill 10 read a first time]

Bill 202**Code of Ethics and Conduct Act**

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 202, the Code of Ethics and Conduct Act.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill sets out a series of conflict-of-interest guidelines covering MLAs, heads of Crown corporations, executive staff members, and cabinet ministers. As well, it establishes postemployment guidelines for such persons.

[Leave granted; Bill 202 read a first time]

Bill 11**Historical Resources Amendment Act, 1987**

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce

Bill 11, the Alberta Historical Resources Amendment Act, 1987.

The two main purposes of this Bill are to allow for the disposition of paleontological resources owned by the province and to revise the composition of the Historical Resources Foundation.

[Leave granted; Bill 11 read a first time]

Bill 230**An Act to Amend
the Guarantees Acknowledgment Act**

MR. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 230, An Act to Amend the Guarantees Acknowledgment Act.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment would offer additional support to small businesspeople and investors that are of a nature that they are not sophisticated and assist them in their obligations in their future endeavours.

[Leave granted; Bill 230 read a first time]

Bill 229**Quality Child Day Care Standards Act (No. 2)**

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 229, the Quality Child Day Care Standards Act.

This Act will establish minimum standards for staff qualifications, indoor and outdoor space, and staff to child ratios. While recognizing the need for child day care centres in Alberta, it allows for a phase-in period so that affected centres may work towards meeting the standards before they are enforced.

[Leave granted; Bill 229 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. Member for St. Albert.

Bill 208**Quality Child Day Care Standards Act**

MR. STRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was getting a workout. I beg leave to introduce Bill 208, being the Quality Child Day Care Standards Act.

This Bill will establish minimum standards which must be met by all day care operations in the province, including standards governing such items as equipment, child/staff ratios, space allotments, and staff qualifications.

[Leave granted; Bill 208 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Lethbridge West.

Bill 220**An Act to Amend
the Landlord and Tenant Act (No. 2)**

MR. GOGO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce Bill 220, An Act to Amend the Landlord and Tenant Act.

The principle of this Bill, Mr. Speaker, concerns security deposits, and this amendment would make the owner and directors of a corporate owner jointly and severally liable for the return of a security deposit.

[Leave granted; Bill 220 read a first time]

Bill 205

Environment Conservation Act

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 205, the Environment Conservation Act.

The purpose of the Bill is to reinstate the independence of the Environment Conservation Authority and to permit an impartial board to retrieve its authority to protect Alberta's environment without interference or influence by the minister.

[Leave granted; Bill 205 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Edmonton Kingsway.

Bill 206

Public Ambulance Act

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce for first reading Bill 206, the Public Ambulance Act.

The Bill will ensure the setting and enforcement of uniform and adequate standards of training for personnel, equipment, communications, and other essentials of good ambulance service provincewide. As well, the Bill will establish the framework within which the minister responsible can enter into agreements for the provision of ambulance service anywhere in the province.

[Leave granted; Bill 206 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Edmonton Meadowlark.

Bill 228

An Act to Amend the Auditor General Act

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 228, An Act to Amend the Auditor General Act.

This Bill would provide the Auditor General of Alberta with a mandate similar to that of the Auditor General of Canada. This Bill will cause the Auditor General to identify in his or her annual report any cases of public expenditure which were made by the government without due regard to economy or efficiency.

[Leave granted; Bill 228 read a first time]

head: TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table Order for a Return 141, which was accepted and amended on May 28, 1985.

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, I wish to file copies of a press release issued by the Premier today dealing with the major announcement on the Alberta Gas Ethylene plant for Joffe that was announced simultaneously by Alberta Gas Ethylene today at 1 o'clock in Calgary.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the annual report for '85-86 of the Alberta Attorney General.

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table two reports: the annual 1985-86 report of the Alberta Agricultural Development Corporation and the 1985-86 annual report of the Alberta hail

and crop insurance program.

head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you, 26 grade 6 students from Glenora school. I've had an opportunity to spend some time with this class discussing government, and also it's special in the fact that 26 years ago I was a grade 6 student in Glenora elementary school. The students are accompanied by their teachers Mr. Ken Kirsch and Miss Joanne Jarema, and I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MS MJOLSNESS: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to introduce to you and members of the Assembly, 23 grade 6 students from McArthur elementary school. They are accompanied by their two teachers Mr. Dame and Miss McCombie, and one parent Mrs. Baptiste. I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly, a group from the Cards ton constituency, being the Waterton Chamber of Commerce and visitors association. They have come to the city today to meet with the Minister of Tourism to discuss some exciting things that they have in mind for tourism for Waterton National Park. Their names are Brian Baker, Gerry Muza, Gordon Casey, Lil Casey, Beth Russell, Edith Becker, and Frances Hammell. They are divided between the two galleries. Four are in the public gallery and three are in the members' gallery. I would ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome from the Assembly.

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to point out what a short time ago it was that I was attending grade 6, but I would like to introduce to you and through you to the Members of the Legislative Assembly, 28 grade 6 students from Piper Creek elementary school in Red Deer South. Accompanying these students this afternoon are two of their teachers, Mr. Gordon Brown and Mr. Larry Pimm. I might point out that Mr. Larry Pimm is a senior alderman in the city of Red Deer and a person that I had the pleasure of serving alongside with for six years. I would ask that they rise and receive the warmest reception of this Assembly.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me today to introduce to you and through you, 17 terrific students from North elementary school who are with us today with their teacher Mr. Ted Boyd. I would ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of this House.

head: ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Small Business

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct the first question to the Minister of Career Development and Employment, or unemployment, however you want it. Yesterday the minister said, and I quote from page 39 of *Hansard*, that

I could go on and on about our commitment to small business and how we see small business as the role for creating jobs.

He then says:

You look at all of the departments that we have as a

government and what they deliver in terms of a commitment to small business, allowing them to expand, allowing them to create the jobs.

Now, Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is: how can he possibly justify those statements when the truth is, according to the federal Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, that the number of business bankruptcies went up some 5 or 6 percent from February 1986 and in the last six months financial failures have jumped 12 percent?

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member read on he would see that I did not say that there were not failures in this province. There are failures everywhere when there are risk-takers. I was simply pointing out that Alberta is made up of a strong contingent of risk-takers, particularly in the area of small business. I'm not here to say that there are no failures, but I am here to say that there are successes and there are ongoing successes. There are businesses that are expanding, and if he would like to take the opportunity to visit our entrepreneurship centres, some of the business incubator programs we have across this province, I think he'd see for himself that it's quite clear that small business is in fact expanding and growing in the province.

MR. MARTIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess the figures that we have from the ministry are wrong then. My question is that -- talking about risk-takers and entrepreneurs, the statistics also show declines in the number of business incorporations. That's down 9 percent for the same month, and we've had a decline that's amounted to 5.5 percent over the last six months. Would the minister now admit that their performance in job creation has been a failure, and could he outline specifically what new measures he's about to present in this session that will turn this around?

MR. ORMAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, if the hon. Leader of the Opposition took the opportunity to read the Premier's press statement today, he will see that there is a potential for some 1,000 jobs created in this province through an announcement today. As far as small business goes, I also said yesterday in my response to the amendment that there have been 22,000 more jobs in 1986 over 1985. I also said in my statement that two-thirds of all new jobs created in this country are created by small business. So my calculation would add up to some 18,000 jobs created as a result of the success in the expansion of small business in this province.

MR. MARTIN: Supplementary question. Your calculations, I believe, would be called voodoo economics, but the truth is right down here. Mr. Speaker, my question then specifically: what consideration has this minister given to the effect on small business of job losses caused by government cuts, cuts to local authorities and cuts to funded agencies?

MR. ORMAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, the small businessmen in this province are quite resilient. As a matter of fact, there are a number of them on this side of the House, and I don't know how many there are on that side of the House, but we feel very strongly that the future of diversification in the province of Alberta is going to be driven by small business. It's not going to be the smokestacks, in the main, as I indicated yesterday.

If we look at the areas in tourism, in economic development, and in international trade, the areas that are growing, the service-producing sector of this economy that is creating the

new jobs in this province, it's quite evident that small business is having successes and they always will. There is no question, Mr. Speaker, that in an economic downturn people suffer, and small businessmen are the first to suffer, but they are the last ones to ask for the government to come in and give them a handout to make it through tough times. We have given a commitment to provide a stimulus as a government to small business. I classify farmers as small businessmen, and we certainly have made significant steps and continue to make significant steps in that area.

In terms of the oil and gas sector in this province, a great deal of them are small business, and we've addressed that issue too. We have a commitment to small business, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, hon. member. Leave some more room for another supplementary, please.

MR. MARTIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, the only people that aren't suffering are Tories and their friends.

MR. SPEAKER: Question, please.

MR. MARTIN: A small suggestion to the Premier. I've tried to deal with his minister and I expected the answers. My question is simply this: has the government given any consideration to legislating a guaranteed breathing space similar to chapter 11 of the U.S. bankruptcy code, which allows small businesspeople the right to negotiate and arrange alternate financing before their loans are called. I believe it's some 90 days' breathing space; at least we could do that much.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the hon. member knows that those matters fall within the jurisdiction of the federal government. I will discuss the matter he has raised with members of our government to see if there is any follow-up that we can undertake with the federal government. Other than that, I just say that, sure, times are tough, but the people of Alberta are tough, and while there have been problems, we are putting them behind us and we're going to start building for the future.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, this is to the minister. In view of the success he seems to indicate in the small business sector in providing more jobs, obviously with very little help from this government, would he be able to transmit to his Premier the fact that they had such a high job creation in reference and competition to the megaprojects that so fascinate the Premier? Could we get some of that money that the Premier wants to put in the megaprojects directed over to increasing small business?

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, I don't believe the two are mutually exclusive, and I think it would be folly to assume that the two were mutually exclusive. We do not differentiate in terms of small business and big business in terms of many of our initiatives. It's important that small business is allowed to thrive and expand. We're seeing that in Alberta small business is driving diversification in this province, and we're very pleased to see that. [interjection] I'm sorry. Did he want to finish the question or . . .

MR. SPEAKER: A question on the issue, Member for Clover Bar?

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Premier. In light of the

programs that were announced last year to assist municipalities to upgrade their sewers, water, et cetera, is the Premier in a position to indicate if any of that trickle-down effect has been felt yet in the municipalities as to relieving unemployment?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, our Minister of Municipal Affairs is not here today, but I'm sure that the hundreds of millions of dollars that will be passed on to the municipalities through that program will in fact be used to hire many contractors, many small businessmen in this province and to provide jobs throughout Alberta.

Agricultural Assistance

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to follow up with the Premier some of our discussion yesterday on agriculture. The Premier stated his government's view yesterday that marginal and inefficient producers can expect to go bankrupt. My question to the Premier is this: will the Premier advise the House how many so-called inefficient producers he has targeted for bankruptcy this year?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, try as the hon. Leader of the Opposition may, he cannot draw that statement out of my answers yesterday. I said that in any business -- and farming is a business -- there will always be some who cannot survive, and we will try always to help in every way possible. The fact of the matter is that there will always be some that cannot survive.

MR. MARTIN: Well, it's too bad. Unless they're good Tories, I suppose, then maybe we can get some help for them. My question is -- the associate minister yesterday, as she likes to, blames farmers, who are really the victims of U.S. agricultural policies, for borrowing too much money. Now, I would remind people that the Agricultural Development Corporation played a leading role in foreclosing on farmers. [interjections] They now hold some 561 quarter sections of repossessed land. May I ask the Premier, Mr. Speaker, before the backbenchers have a heart attack, has he decided now in view of these figures to order the Agricultural Development Corporation to place a moratorium on farm foreclosures at least for the coming year?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I'd ask our minister responsible for that corporation to reply.

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the question, and I'd like to correct the Leader of the Opposition. I did not say that I blame farmers for the problems that they're in, and they are only in relation to the world problems. Certainly the world problems have a disastrous effect on the overall agricultural economy of this province, and we can't begin to match the treasuries of those countries. There is no question that there are farmers leaving agriculture for many reasons. Some of them are leaving due to retirement; some, career changes; and others because they have advantageous sale opportunities. And certainly some are leaving because of financial distress; no question in my mind, but . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Give them a job in Hong Kong.

MRS. CRIPPS: Pardon?

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. minister and hon. members, this is not a

debate. Please continue with the answer.

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated yesterday, we do everything we can to ensure that [farmers] who are in financial difficulties work through those financial difficulties, and recognize that in a few cases there are people who can't work through those difficulties and who may not have an option but to exit agriculture. I'm looking forward to the report that's due from the ADC committee and don't intend to anticipate the recommendations of that committee by making judgments at this point in time.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, that's not an answer that 25 percent of the farmers want to hear. My question is: in view of the fact that ADC has become the biggest landlord in rural Alberta, some 561 quarter sections, how much more land do they want? And rather than wait for a report, would the minister declare a moratorium for at least one year? Or how much more land does ADC have to own?

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, in terms of the overall number of quarter sections in this province in agriculture, 578 quarters, I think it is, are not that many. In terms of the ownership of those quarters by ADC, yes, it's quite a few. But I'm not going to do anything at this time to prejudge the recommendations of the committee.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I hope the minister would take her duties a little more seriously than worrying about the committee. Much of this repossessed land is sold on the market now, or is trying to be sold on the market, for less than 50 cents on the dollar, and my question is: has the government at least considered leasing this land back to the farmers it has foreclosed upon under a land trust?

MRS. CRIPPS: Number one, Mr. Speaker, I am not worried about the committee; I'm worried about the health of the agricultural industry in this province. I'm the minister of agriculture and I intend to do everything in my power to assure that the agricultural people in this province and farmers have a market for their commodities.

As far as leasing the lands, certainly we lease the land, or the Agricultural Development Corporation enters into lease agreements with the land if we're doing it on the basis of good financial decisions. But to do what the member is suggesting is a write-down of debt, and at this point in time I'm not prepared to look at a write-down of debt in anticipation of the report.

MR. SPEAKER: Table officers, how many other supplementaries? Three. Thank you. Member for Lacombe.

MR. R. MOORE: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. A supplementary question to the minister. In the light of history and the disastrous debt adjustment in the '30s that destroyed the credit rating of all farmers in Alberta, could the minister tell the House here if the farmers are demanding such a moratorium that would destroy their credit rating today?

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, I've had some farmer come to me with those kinds of proposals, this write-down of debt, the postponement of debt payments. I've also had other farmers approach me who have said, "You have to stand back and let the marketplace do its work." So the answer is not the write-down

of debt. If I take a look at many of the problems that we have in agriculture -- and I'm talking now about the financial situations -- many of those people have not made a payment for the last three or four years. So if they, in effect, have had a loan interest free and principal payment free for the last two and three years, if they can't make it on those terms, they're not going to be able to make it at lower interest or at no interest for another year.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, also to the associate minister. I think her answers have exhibited why the Alberta Agricultural Development Corporation is the most cruel and heartless lender that any farmer can face. Has the minister talked with her federal counterparts about granting the federal farm debt review plan -- the federal one; that's the only one that is standing between the farmer and bankruptcy in many cases -- more authority to stretch out payment terms and to reorganize repayment schedules?

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Speaker, I know that some cases have gone before the federal debt review board. I also know that in at least 50 percent of the cases that have been reviewed in the province of Alberta by that board, they have determined in conjunction with the farmer that his best interest would probably lie in exiting farming. [interjections]

Mr. Speaker, I certainly don't want to make light of the stress that there is in agriculture, as some of these members are, due to financial difficulties. But I must say to the leader of the Liberal Party that before ADC does any quitclaims or foreclosures, they look at alternatives, which are refinancing arrears, postponing payment, total refinancing, arranging increased finances with ADC, FCC, or other lenders, extending operating capital on the loan . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, hon. minister. Answers are indeed quite considerable. Thank you. Member for Little Bow.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the associate minister. Could the minister indicate the more precise date when the report of the Alberta Agricultural Development Corporation committee will be submitted to the minister and to the Legislature so that policy can be in place before the spring of 1987 and have some effect on those farmers, and as many as possible that are in trouble right now, today?

MRS. CRIPPS: Soon, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Forgive my laughter at the brevity of the answer. The Chair recognizes the leader of the Liberal Party.

Federal Agricultural Initiatives

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to continue the questions on agriculture in a little different vein. This is to the Premier. The Premier is probably aware that farm incomes in Alberta are predicted to fall by 64 percent this year. He's also likely aware that there's no mention in the February 18 federal budget of any federal initiatives to assist western farmers in the coming year, specifically no mention of repeating the \$1 billion deficiency payments. Has he personally spoken with the Prime Minister about the lack of federal assistance to western farmers, and can he tell us what reasons the Prime Minister gave to him why western agriculture was left out of the federal budget?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't try to guess the various reasons why the federal government does certain things. But I would say to the hon. leader of the Liberal Party that he shouldn't buy all those predictions, because the people of Alberta, the farmers and ranchers of Alberta, are tougher than that and are able to do a far better job than some economist making predictions for him to use in the Legislature.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, they have to be tough if they're going to have this government. But maybe I could switch over to the Minister of Agriculture. Can the minister share with this House the results of any discussions with the federal Minister of Agriculture as to whether an announcement from the federal government is expected guaranteeing Alberta farmers another deficiency payment similar to the one announced last year?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Liberal leader must have the same individual doing his research for him as the New Democratic Party. In both instances they're wrong. In the throne speech from the New Democratic Party they indicated that net farm income was going to drop 64 percent; the Leader of the Opposition said yesterday 29 percent. I would suggest that they get their own act in order, because they don't know what they're talking about. If they want to -- and they've asked for some new things. If you'd pay attention instead of just mouthing your concern, you would realize there has been a number of significant new things introduced. We announced in the Speech from the Throne an additional \$50 million commitment to the agricultural sector through the farm fuel allowance. We just recently announced an additional commitment of some \$25 million to Farming for the Future. We have our farm credit stability program, the announcement as it relates to the agricultural research institute. This government is committed to it, and it's shown by its actions rather than by the hypocrisy that's displayed on the other side. [interjections]

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, it sounds like feeding time at the zoo again over there.

I know the minister envies anybody that can read, but will the minister indicate to the Assembly whether he is satisfied with the formula used to calculate the size of the federal individual deficiency payments, or will he ask for changes in calculating it next year if they go ahead?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, we have indicated our concern as it relates to the payout. We feel the irrigated areas in southern Alberta have been neglected, as are we concerned with some of the areas in the Peace country whereby they have gone to an acreage formula, and we have conveyed that concern. The federal minister has indicated he is open to receive representation for changes. In addition, he has also established an appeal procedure. In addition to that -- and we haven't received an agenda for the meeting yet -- the agriculture ministers will be gathering, as I indicated for the hon. Member for Little Bow yesterday, in Ottawa on March 30. I would assume it is to have some initial discussions as it relates to a future deficiency payment. That I honestly don't know, but once we have the agenda, I would be more than happy to make it public.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, to the minister again. That's good news. Now, maybe he could tell the House whether he considers the size of the billion dollar deficiency payment announced last year to be adequate. And is he prepared to go to

Ottawa to ensure that any package put together for western farmers this year comes closer to meeting their needs than last year's program?

MR. SPEAKER: The first part of the question is soliciting opinion; the second part may be answered.

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I'm more than happy to leave with the House the assurance that we're going to fight on a continuous basis for the agricultural sector. And it's noteworthy that had it not been for our Premier and the Premiers from western Canada first advocating a deficiency payment, it probably never would have come about.

Provincial Agricultural Initiatives

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Could the minister indicate whether the province is considering a provincial version of the deficiency payment for the farmers of Alberta?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, we are considering on an ongoing basis a number of avenues as best to support the agricultural sector, as I just indicated in our ongoing initiatives, as it relates to this number one way of life for Albertans. We're open to any suggestions. I am not about to propose any until we've had an opportunity to sit down with our counterparts from across Canada, because in the event that it is the deficiency payment, it would have to be on a Canadawide basis.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, as the minister well knows, there is a difference between realized income and net income; at least I hope he does. But my question has to do with a major court case in Ontario which said the high interest charges by the banks from the 1970s to 1982 -- and it ruled against the banks. My question is: is the Minister of Agriculture working with farmers to see if there are farmers in this position, so that they can recover their excess interest charges levied by banks?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I might have misunderstood the hon. leader of the New Democratic Party yesterday, but I understood him to say net realized income was going to be down by 29 percent. If that was not correct -- but I should point out in fairness that the throne speech document that the New Democratic Party released is totally inaccurate in its figures. It's time that they got some accurate researchers to do their work. The document says that net realized income is going to drop by 64 percent, and it's totally wrong.

Let me indicate, as it relates to the borrower's advocate, Mr. Speaker, that we have had discussions with the banking institutions; they have left us with the assurance that they're willing to look at any farmer's books in the event that they have been overcharged. They're more than happy to make concessions to them to counteract any difficulties that might have taken place, and they will do so at no charge, unlike the \$500 charge that is presently being assessed by the borrower's advocate that I understand is being supported by the New Democratic Party.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Speaker, for the Minister of Agriculture. He has mentioned just some of the Alberta agricultural programs to assist Alberta farmers. Does he have any idea at this time of the injection of funds by Albertans to the rural economy or the reduction in cost to the average farmer of just two

programs, the farm fuel rebate program or the fertilizer price protection program?

MR. ELZINGA: Yes, Mr. Speaker. The farm fuel allowance program injects somewhere in excess of \$3,000 per average farm. It's been in excess of \$100 million a year allocation to the agricultural sector within the province of Alberta. On the farm fertilizer protection plan, it accounts for roughly 7 percent of the fertilizer cost to the individual farmer.

Agriculture Ministers' Meeting

MR. R. SPEAKER: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture as well. The Canadian Wheat Board advised Canadian farmers that the 1987-88 crop prices would be reduced as much 20 percent. The agricultural ministers are meeting on March 30. Could the minister indicate what position the Alberta government will take with regard to that price slash?

MR. ELZINGA: Just a few days ago, as I indicated to the hon. Member for Little Bow yesterday, I sent off a telex to the Hon. Charlie Mayer indicating our concern with the reduction as it relates to the amount that the grain farmer will be getting for his product. We are looking forward to a discussion in this area because there is some concern as it relates to simply having a large deficit within the Canadian wheat pool accounts. We're hopeful that some method can be developed, whether through a deficiency payment or a reduction of input costs, but we recognize that there has to be a further injection even though we haven't outlined any specific areas as to how to go about that.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the minister. In the last crop year the deficit by the Canadian Wheat Board was some \$200 million. Is the minister looking at a recommendation that would repeat that kind of a loss or that kind of input from the federal treasury towards supporting prices of grains?

MR. ELZINGA: Just to underscore what I indicated earlier, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Member for Little Bow, without attempting to confine myself to any options off the top of my head, it would be suggestible, I would think, that it would be better to have it by way of a deficiency payment rather than through a deficit in the Canadian wheat pool account.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. Across Canada in the various provinces, there's a myriad of various farm programs and policies. One of the needs is co-ordination. Would the minister consider, in his presentation to other provincial ministers as well as to the federal minister, some type of a Canadian farm Bill that would co-ordinate a number of these different programs that exist now in Canada, some in conflict and some working well in tandem?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, we agree totally with the intent expressed by the hon. member, and we have been working very actively towards that. That was underscored in our signing of the national agricultural strategy, whereby we believe that the programs should be more national in scope. And that's why we have been so instrumental with our commodity groups within this province in supporting the tripartite stabilization program on a Canadawide basis. Because we agree totally with the hon.

member; we would like to have less balkanization within our country.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, to the minister. I'm pleased to hear that he is searching for alternatives. To that end, could the minister tell me whether he or his head of staff has instructed the staff to read the latest Alberta Liberal green paper on negative income tax for farmers, and when does he think he could implement it?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, we have reviewed the hon. member's paper, but as is his tradition, he usually addresses federal concerns rather than provincial ones even though we are in a provincial Chamber, and as he is aware, that would require federal action.

Provincial Agricultural Initiatives (continued)

MR. PIQUETTE: To the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Speaker. Would the minister please indicate to farmers in my constituency and the rest of Alberta whether they should be seeding a crop this spring, in view of the price decrease of about 29 percent which will be facing farmers next fall?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, that is a decision for the agricultural community to make itself. What we are going to do is outline in a very forward way the support that we are going to be forthcoming with as it relates to the agricultural sector. We are going to continue with our strong commitment in reducing input costs and establishing that safety net as best we can, but that's a decision left to the individual farmer, and I would hope it would continue to be left with the individual farmer. As long as this party is in government, the individual farmer will be making those decisions.

MR. HERON: Supplementary question to the Minister of Agriculture. It has been reported that Alberta farmers have been singled out by income tax investigators in an effort to obtain back taxes on equipment traded in at inflated prices. Are you aware of this situation, and has representation been made to Ottawa?

MR. ELZINGA: Yes, Mr. Speaker. We had a number of farmers approach us on this base, so we did make representation to Elmer MacKay, the Minister responsible for National Revenue. I notice he has indicated that he has put a stop to those re-examinations of the investment tax credits.

Coal Marketing

MR. BRADLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct my question to the hon. Premier. There's been considerable concern expressed by Alberta coal mining communities in my riding and that of the Member for West Yellowhead with regard to increased markets for Alberta coal because of the current downturn in the coal industry, which has been caused by international market forces, and the resultant effects on the employment in those communities and the economies of those communities.

On February 27 the committee of concerned coal mining communities met with the Premier to discuss ways of increasing coal shipments to Ontario. [interjections] Mr. Speaker, I understood that we had the opportunity to have some preamble, and I

only had my two preamble sentences.

AN HON. MEMBER: Yours are kind of long though.

MR. BRADLEY: So are yours at times.

MR. SPEAKER: Order. The Chair interprets indeed that the member is really finishing about his second sentence, and the Chair has been allowing two to three sentences for the introductory question; therefore I would ask the House to indeed allow the member to finish his case. I'm certain there will be a question mark at the end of this sentence.

MR. BRADLEY: Mr. Speaker, could the Premier update the Assembly as to the current status of proposed discussions between the western Premiers, the Premier of Ontario, and the Deputy Prime Minister regarding the increased use of western coal in Ontario?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, we did have an excellent opportunity to meet with members of the communities involved in coal mining in Alberta and members of the United Mine Workers and some elected officials regarding the problems that they face now that the sales of coal have been reduced, both into the Pacific Rim areas and into Ontario, other parts of Canada, and Germany. They made some excellent suggestions, and I found the meeting very positive.

I have been able to follow up by asking the Deputy Prime Minister to arrange a meeting between the committee which he and Premier Peterson proposed to form, and that committee will meet tomorrow afternoon in Ottawa. It will be a meeting of the three western Premiers -- Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia -- and the Deputy Prime Minister and the Premier of Ontario. We intend to look at all of the obstacles that may prevent western Canadian coal production reaching Ontario in an increasing amount so that our communities can be healthy and viable. I hope that with the commitment of the four Premiers and the Deputy Prime Minister we can make a breakthrough. I hope I will be able to report back to the House on my return from Ottawa.

MR. BRADLEY: Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. Has a time frame been set up with regard to the committee of Premiers/Deputy Prime Minister as to when they will come up with solutions with regard to this? There have been several studies to date. Now is the time for action.

MR. GETTY: I certainly agree with the hon. member, Mr. Speaker, because that is why we moved so quickly to establish the first meeting of this group. I hope that following this meeting we can set in place certain mechanisms that will see increased coal going to Ontario. There is the problem of course that Ontario has been moving from producing their electrical energy by coal to the use of nuclear power, and that is a problem in long-term planning. However, they also use metallurgical coal in Ontario, and perhaps we can make a breakthrough into those markets as well.

MR. BRADLEY: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, in the absence of the Minister of Energy. Could the minister update the House as to what actions have been taken to date by the Alberta government and what other measures are under consideration to reduce

coal transportation costs in order to make our coal more competitive domestically, in Ontario, and in international markets?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, presently Alberta coal moving to Ontario Hydro is about one million tonnes per year. It's been identified that one of the difficulties is transportation costs. The Minister of Energy and I, through our officials, are working at examining ways of reducing transportation costs by working with the railways in three areas: one, at the loading end in terms of improving the efficiency of loading; unloading; and we're also working with the railways to see if there is new technology that has been developed in terms of types of railcars that can improve and reduce the cost. So those are in the area of transportation initiatives.

There are other initiatives that have been undertaken to look at ways of improving by upgrading the coal prior to moving it to market to improve the Btu content. As all members are aware, Ontario Hydro is presently using high-sulphur coal from the U.S. Alberta coal is far better quality in terms of its sulphur content -- lower sulphur -- and so it has advantages. So the net benefit of using Alberta coal as opposed to imported U.S. coal to the national economy is a part of the process we're examining and looking for ways to make it more competitive in the total sense, not just in the sense of coal but in transportation, Btu content.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary, Member for Pincher Creek-Crowsnest.

MR. BRADLEY: Mr. Speaker, a final supplementary to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. A position was put forward by the concerned coalmining communities to reintroduce coal subventions which would be paid in part by the federal government and the producing and consuming provinces. Could the minister advise the House as to the position of the Alberta government with regard to this proposal?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, I referred to that in the latter part of my answer; that is, the net benefit to the Canadian economy of using Alberta or western Canadian coal as opposed to U.S. coal is a key part of this entire endeavour, and we are examining the total consequences of shipping Alberta coal into Ontario and not just limited to the cost of the coal.

MR. TAYLOR: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. It's on the same question, but it's to the Minister of the Environment, referring to the minister's and the Premier's comments that they want to reduce the cost of getting coal into eastern Canada. Will the Minister of the Environment give assurances to the House that part of the reducing cost will not be the relaxation of certain environmental laws and rules that now go with mining and restoration of the surface?

MR. KOWALSKI: Well, Mr. Speaker, that assurance goes without saying. That is a commitment of our government, not to reduce our protection in the environment, I should point out that there are very, very significant benefits to Canada should this proposal come about. The government of Ontario has recognized the acid rain problem to be a very major one, and in September of 1986 I had an excellent discussion with the Minister of the Environment from Ontario, who clearly understands and appreciates the need for low-sulphur western Canadian coal to resolve some of the major environmental problems of the

government of Ontario.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, to the minister of economic development. Could the minister confirm that the Deputy Prime Minister has refused to look at transportation costs, at least subsidies, and if that's the case, how can we make it cheaper to get to eastern Canada?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, the Premier alluded to a meeting that was to be held, and I would suspect that it would be better to wait for that meeting for the response to that question.

Unemployment

MR. PASHAK: Mr. Speaker, my questions are to the Premier. In response to the loss of 50,000 jobs in the petroleum industry in 1986, the government announced incentive programs and royalty holidays costing in excess of \$1.5 billion. Given that the resultant flurry of activity lasted for only one month and that the prorated cost to date is about a half billion dollars and scarce revenues, has the Premier any evidence that these programs created a single new permanent position in the oil patch?

MR. GETTY: I find it remarkable, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. member, when the House was sitting last, was complaining that the program wasn't working. Now he complains when the program works and complains about the activity that took place.

I would like to say that there were two parts to that program. One was announced early in 1986; the second was announced on October 29, 1986. The industry found that both of those programs helped them tremendously. When we announced the second of the two programs on October 29, we were hoping that we might have somewhere around 200 rigs active by the end of the year. In fact, the program worked so well that there were in excess of 400 rigs operating. Then, Mr. Speaker, after the end of the year there was a turndown in the number of rigs operating because one of the programs ran out. However, the rig count has picked up again recently. I noted that just looking at the new wells that are announced to the Energy Resources Conservation Board, they are averaging some 75 to 80 new locations a week, and just yesterday 24 new locations, and the rigs and drilling and moving are in excess of 200 now.

So I think the government's programs are working very well; they are creating jobs. I spoke recently to the Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors. They advised me that the programs had allowed them to maintain their crews and to keep their companies operating.

MR. PASHAK: Mr. Speaker, despite the Premier's confidence and mention of the Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors, that same association says that 19,000 Albertans were laid off within a week of the program's ending. Has the Premier any new strategy that will offer more than month-long booms when he spends hundreds of millions of dollars of Albertans' money?

MR. SPEAKER: Time for question period has expired. Might the Assembly agree to completing the complete set of questions on this issue?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

AN HON. MEMBER: No.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? The Chair heard a no. Question period is complete.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Minister of Agriculture had some difficulties with figures. I would point out that Agriculture Canada -- I was talking about it, a 29 percent decline in farm income. I would like to send this over to the minister from his own agricultural branch, where they talk about realized net income expected to decline 64 percent. So it's his own figures, and I'll send it over to him so he's not confused anymore.

MR. SPEAKER: To the purported -- purported -- point of order, Minister of Agriculture, speaking to whether or not it is a point of order.

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I just want to underscore what I indicated earlier, and I guess it's somewhat typical of the New Democratic Party to attempt to twist the facts. Yesterday I indicated that in his speech from the throne, his so-called speech from the throne, he indicated that net realized income was to drop 64 percent. It's totally inaccurate . . . [interjections] I can show you the information that I have available to me.

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order please. Order in all quarters of the House. [interjections] Order has been called three times.

There is no point of order. What we have here is a dispute about facts, and since the information is to be shared and that has been made manifest clear, let the information be shared without taking up the time of the Assembly.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move that all questions and motions for returns stand and maintain their places on the Order Paper.

MR. SPEAKER: Order in the gallery please.

[Motion carried]

head: MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

201. Moved by Mr. Chumir:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to take steps to increase the confidence of the public in government and enhance the openness of government and the accountability and responsibility of elected representatives by introducing legislation

- (1) to enact freedom of information legislation in order to enshrine the right of Albertans to information from and about government;
- (2) to provide a "sunshine" law requiring meetings of all provincial and municipal bodies performing government functions to be held in public and be open to the press, subject to limited exceptions where confidentiality is demonstrably required;
- (3) to provide a "shield" law to give protection for the media from the need to disclose confidential news sources; and
- (4) to provide clear and enhanced rules and procedures governing conflict of interest for cabinet ministers,

Members of the Legislative Assembly, civil servants, and those serving on government boards and other bodies performing government functions.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, . . .

MR. TAYLOR: She's better looking.

MRS. HEWES: This is not the Member for Calgary Buffalo. Mr. Speaker, I have the honour today to introduce and speak to Motion 201 as printed, the motion of my colleague from Calgary Buffalo.

This motion is multifaceted. As the preamble to the motion reads, we must

. . . take steps to increase the confidence of the public in government . . . and the accountability and responsibility of elected representatives by introducing legislation

in the four following areas: freedom of information, sunshine law, a shield law, and conflict-of-interest guidelines.

I'll speak first to the freedom of information section, Mr. Speaker. Public opinion polls have been for some time now telling us about the decline in public stature of political figures. It's vital that we move to enhance the quality of the legislative process and public confidence in our system. In order to do this, there is a need for open government, free flow of information, and unquestioned ethical behaviour by legislators, civil servants, and government appointees. These matters affect the quality of government, the quality of decision-making, and respect for our system. The democratic process is based on the consent and trust of our citizens. If this trust isn't justified, then respect for the system is eroded and the whole process undermined. There is a legal adage that for public confidence to be established, justice must not only be done but must be seen to be done.

Similarly, the governmental process must be seen to be open and ethical, and the credibility of our system requires it. Life has in the past few decades become infinitely more complex. More than ever the maxim that information is power is true. There's a natural tendency for governments to try to monopolize this information and the power which flows from it.

The need to deal with this penchant for secrecy has become more pressing as the role of government has increased. Government has become much more involved in all aspects of society, particularly economic matters, in the past 20 or 30 years, and the rise of the computer society has increased the amount of information generated and ease of access to such information. The amount of information held by government and its collective and individual importance have increased in geometric proportions. As society becomes more complex, the need for clear information to make and assess political judgments has become indispensable.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

Many jurisdictions in North America and many elsewhere recognized long ago the public interest in having a greater flow of information. The prevailing philosophy in those enlightened jurisdictions has been that government information paid for by public funds should be available to the public as a matter of right unless there are clear reasons for confidentiality. It's about two decades ago now, in the 1960s, that the United States federal government and virtually every state government in America adopted freedom-of-information legislation, giving to

citizens a legal right of access to information held by government and providing a mechanism for enforcing such rights. Similar legislation has been enacted in Australia, New Zealand, and the Scandinavian countries. In '79 the federal government of Canada adopted guidelines affirming the spirit of open government and in '82 enacted freedom-of-information legislation. Most Canadian provinces now have or are in the process of developing similar legislation.

It should be clear, Mr. Speaker, from the wide acceptance of freedom-of-information legislation that it's neither new nor a sign of creeping bolshevism aimed at the heart of our government. It is simply an attempt to respond to the current needs of the democratic process.

None of the legislation which has been enacted provides for unlimited access to information held by government. It recognizes the need for a confidentiality in many areas and almost invariably tends to be very conservative in protecting important government interests. Thus exemptions are provided, for example, from disclosing information the release of which would harm national security or law enforcement, divulge certain personal information, reveal cabinet confidences, trade secrets, and other validly confidential information.

The experience of those jurisdictions having such legislation has been that the demands have been for expansion of the right to access rather than to narrow it. In other words, the concept has been accepted positively, but there is continuing battle to make the bureaucracy in government responsive in the face of the perpetual inclination to avoid public scrutiny of decisions. The reality is that even with freedom-of-information legislation, not enough is disclosed to the public. Thus the federal Act in Canada has been described as having more exemptions than Swiss cheese has holes.

Where does Alberta stand on the right of its citizens to be informed about government? Well, it appears that all of these other jurisdictions -- that it must be going in the wrong direction. Freedom of information is a fad, the provincial Attorney General told us in 1980. The rest of the world will soon come to its senses and see that the government is the best judge of what information should be disclosed. As a result, we in Alberta have the distinction of enjoying the most secretive and closed government in North America. Calls for freedom-of-information legislation by groups such as the Alberta branch of the Canadian Bar going back to 1978 have been laughed at. In 1984 the report of the federal Privacy Commissioner described Alberta's refusal to allow the release of any provincial information as "the promiscuous use of confidentiality." The consequence of this secrecy is that the people of Alberta may not be well-informed on many important public issues, and we as elected representatives are severely hampered in our duty of assessing and formulating public policy by a refusal of the government to provide more than token access to important government information.

My colleague for Calgary Buffalo stated in the hearings of the standing committee of the Legislature on the Heritage Savings Trust Fund that reports and information given to MLAs is woefully inadequate. The committee is forced to spend their time rummaging through footnotes of annual reports in order to piece together basic information which should be set out clearly in primary sources. The committee is forced to play the role of Sherlock Holmes and ferret out information instead of doing what they're elected to do and could do more effectively if adequate information were provided; that is, to deal with important policy issues. This attitude reflects contempt for the democratic process.

A number of examples of the government's refusal to release to the public key information relevant to assessing government decisions illustrate the hypocrisy of government allegations that it runs an open government. Let me give you some. The government recently leased public land at mount Nakiska to Financial Trustco of Calgary for the purpose of constructing a lodge. We learned from a prospectus of Financial Trustco that the provincial government had guaranteed an \$8 million loan to the company and was spending millions of public dollars on underground parking, utility connections, and promotional fees. The total public expenditure on mount Nakiska, the adjacent golf course and, under the lease agreement, to Financial Trustco totaled over \$50 million. We learned from the Financial Trustco prospectus that the return to the province under the agreement is to be a miserly \$4,500 per year. The adequacy of this whole transaction cries out for public review, yet the government declines to release the documents relating to this use of public funds so that we, the elected representatives, can properly assess the transactions. Indeed, the government majority on the Heritage Savings Trust Fund committee refused even to pass a formal recommendation asking for the documents, even though over \$200 million of trust fund money has now been spent on the Kananaskis Country project.

Another one. The government recently announced a \$200 million loan of public money to Syncrude to expand operations. The minister has declined to release the agreement for public scrutiny.

The government recently accepted a payment of \$54 million from Alberta Energy in settlement of rights it had to receive up to 50 percent of income from Suffield natural gas production. We've asked for details and agreements relating to this transition, but they have not been forthcoming.

The government regularly commissions public opinion polls at government expense. It has ignored our requests that copies of these studies, purchased with public funds, be made public.

The federal Access to Information Act provides for the release of information held by the federal government and provided by provincial governments only if the provincial government consents. In a letter to the federal Justice minister in June 1983, the Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs asked Ottawa to stamp "confidential" on all documents from the province and provincial institutions on federal/provincial matters. Alberta is the only province, Mr. Speaker, to have asked for such a blanket exemption to Ottawa's access to information. The *Calgary Herald* reported that the Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs, who described the approach as cautious and prudent, said that the blanket confidentiality applies only until the province completes its review of its own classification system for information. The review was to be completed in the spring of 1984.

In the first annual report of the Privacy Commissioner in mid-84, Alberta was singled out as making particularly broad claims of confidentiality. In July of the same year the *Herald* reported the minister saying the province would have a set of guidelines for the release of provincial information by the federal government in late summer or fall. Mr. Speaker, we're still waiting.

Grazing lands owned by the province have been sold to private lessees without public bid. The government declines to release any details of these sales, including price, so as to enable the citizens of Alberta to determine whether a fair price has been received. It's hard to see how private sales without competitive bidding can be at fair market value.

Many environmental reports are regularly kept confidential. The *Calgary Herald* noted in 1985 how a provincial government study of Bow River pollution remained in the Environment minister's office for more than a year after it was to be made public. Meanwhile, people concerned about their water quality were left with nothing to do but worry. Requests for a report and studies on which the government based its decision to proceed with plans for the \$8 billion Slave River hydroelectric dam and on the Lodgepole sour gas well blowout were declined.

In May '84 the government department announced it was considering charging the public \$30 an hour for time spent preparing data for public release. This was derailed by a public outcry.

The government has declined to release key studies about the impact of free trade in the province.

In '85 a discussion paper on private schooling was circulated to special interest groups by the Department of Education. It was the subject of a newspaper story indicating that pro-private-school interests in the United States were reviewing the document. But the citizens of Alberta were not allowed copies.

Why should information of this nature, Mr. Speaker, be kept hidden from Albertans who pay for its collection and preparation and should be able to make up their own minds about government policies and issues? It's clear -- it's clear -- that freedom of information legislation is long overdue in this province.

Let me go on to sunshine laws. One of the tenets of open government is that public business should be conducted in public. This is a general rule with obvious needs for some exceptions. Unfortunately, public boards, agencies, and other bodies do not always live up to this. All too often they meet behind closed doors and discuss public policy, make decisions, and sometimes meet with special interest groups. Such practices, in addition, erode confidence in the system, prevent adequate input from being made from the community and concerned groups, and sometimes lead to the suspicion that special interests are receiving preferred treatment. We're badly in need of a study to assess the degree to which public decisions are made behind closed doors. It appears that public bodies are conducting far too much business in the shadows of secrecy.

The newly formed women's advisory council. It started poorly by holding closed-door meetings. This won't serve it or women's issues well.

Mr. Speaker, there are examples in municipal government as well that illustrate that the practice is not unique to provincial government. Municipal councils in the absence of laws are prone to hold discussions in camera. In the States the problem has been directly and intelligently tackled both at the federal and most state levels by the enactment of sunshine laws, open meeting laws. The ideal is that of allowing the light of day to shine in on government business in the finest democratic tradition. Not all government entities fall under the jurisdiction of the legislation and, similarly, not all business need be transacted in public. The U.S. federal Act lists 10 exemptions, any one of which can justify a closed meeting. In the United States contraventions often result in prosecutions, penalties, and fines of considerable substance, even jail sentences. I'm far from having observed actions in Alberta meriting this draconian treatment, but I am convinced that we should enact a sunshine law in this province requiring meetings of all provincial and municipal bodies performing government functions to be held in public and to be open to the public, subject to limited exception where confidentiality is demonstrably required.

Moving on to the third aspect, the need for a shield law. As

politicians we have ambivalence towards the press. As individuals it seems we're either getting too little or too much publicity -- too much when we want shadows and anonymity, too little when we're brilliant and there's no one around to see us. However, the importance of the press goes far beyond our own individual concerns, careers, or lives. The press has a fundamental structural role to play in the democratic process, and its role has long been recognized by its designation as the fourth estate. Without the free flow of news and information arising from investigative reporting, the capacity of voters to assess government would grind to a halt. That's why freedom of the press is guaranteed as a fundamental freedom in our Charter of Rights.

The heart of such reporting is the source. It's a canon of journalism that the identity of confidential sources of information will not be disclosed. Any other approach would have the effect of drying up important avenues of information, to our collective detriment. In the United States the importance of maintaining the flow of confidential source information has been recognized by the enactment of what are known as shield laws. These laws have been widely enacted, and they protect news gatherers from having to disclose their sources of information to judicial or quasi-judicial bodies. The degree of protection has not yet been precisely determined, and many questions still remain. However, the merits of providing protective legislation have been widely recognized. In Alberta the issue arose recently with respect to the decision of the Alberta Labour Relations Board to require a newspaper reporter to disclose the source of a story relating to a labour dispute. The case pointed out the degree to which the issue of source confidentiality has been neglected in Canada generally, including Alberta. Many difficult issues arise in providing such legislation, but it's time we openly recognized the importance of a free and robust press and enacted a shield law in Alberta.

The last matter, Mr. Speaker, is the conflict-of-interest section. That relates to the need for more broad and far-reaching legislation. Typically, we only consider conflict-of-interest rules when there's been some transgression; these serve to highlight inadequacies. I feel we must become proactive in the area. I think it's a given in society that in order to have effective government, the public must retain the belief that the people who act on our behalf -- whether they are cabinet ministers, MLAs, or public servants -- maintain the highest standards of integrity in their performance of duties and that they are competent. Integrity is, of course, intangible. The concept varies from circumstance to circumstance, year to year. Nonetheless, the public does hold certain norms and values which office holders must acknowledge and live by.

The other factor, competence, is straightforward. It's important that society encourages competent people to enter public office, and I think that over the years this has clearly been accomplished. I don't think we'd want to place hurdles in front of those who want to serve, but we must be careful in producing conflict-of-interest guidelines. My concern is that the general public's opinion of public office holders is not as high as it has been in the past. I could point to inadequacies of certain personalities over the course of the last few years, but that's really superficial, Mr. Speaker. The fact of the matter is that if some guidelines help to ensure ethical conduct -- and I think this is true -- then stronger guidelines which impose more limitations should do even more to assure the public of integrity in their servants.

Alberta's conflict-of-interest guidelines for MLAs emanate

from the Legislative Assembly Act and Premier Lougheed's 1973 guidelines and the Public Service Act. Despite these, there have been incidents that should concern all Albertans about the propriety of government activities. Specifically, last year we learned that three government members of the Legislative Assembly held directorships on boards of Crown corporations or councils. This indicates that the government may not understand or respect the existing conflict-of-interest guidelines. These three MLAs were apparently ignorant of the fact that they were in conflict.

Mr. Speaker, many governments have stronger guidelines than Alberta, and they enshrine these within a conflict-of-interest Act. I feel Alberta should move to introduce such an Act. The Act would consolidate the existing appropriate Acts and guidelines into one all-encompassing and high-profile piece of legislation. We should have within the Act guidelines for cabinet ministers, MLAs, and public servants, including those in Crown corporations and boards. It should cover both the period in which the person holds office and perhaps 12 months or more after the person leaves office in order to avoid the situation where someone may be in a position to gain from intimate knowledge of decisions or information. I feel it's important that everyone who is paid for by the taxpayers should be covered to some degree by a conflict-of-interest Act.

I do, however, recognize that this should only be done after careful consideration, since we don't want, as I noted earlier, to discourage people from entering either public life or the public service. I would suggest that this matter is one which should be considered by a special select committee of the Legislature, as has taken place in other provinces recently, including Ontario.

As to the other matters I touched on earlier -- freedom of information, sunshine laws, and shield laws -- I hope a consensus will emerge from our discussion today and that we can move forward in these areas.

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage all members of the Assembly to support this motion.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Edmonton Meadowlark.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to support this motion, and I do that for one overriding reason, one overriding principle; that is, that this motion and the substance that it contains will promote, once it is enacted, good government, responsible government, accountable government. And there is perhaps no more important time than right now at this particular time in this province, in this country, that we begin to address the issue of good, responsible, and accountable government.

I believe we are confronting in this country and in this province something that approaches a crisis in our political process. I believe there is a tremendous cynicism on the part of the public towards their elected politicians. They are extremely cynical; they have an extremely low impression of what politicians do on their behalf. And in fact, I believe that in many cases Canadians and Albertans have been driven to a point where they believe that politicians act in self-interest.

There are a number of ways we as politicians can reverse this impression, because this impression is not, I believe, true. This impression, quite the contrary, belies the fact that most politicians in this walk of life have committed themselves to public office because they have a tremendous commitment. They have a desire to do something for their society, for the people whom they represent. At the same time, it becomes extremely difficult

for politicians to govern, to lead, to set directions, to set focus for our society as political leaders if we don't have the political credit, the depth of understanding, a strong relationship with our electorate. How do we solve that problem? We solve it in one way: in our constituencies, by strengthening that relationship by talking to people, by listening to people, by knocking on doors, by grass-roots politics. And I know that most of the successful politicians in this Legislative Assembly subscribe to that particular theory and approach to the political process.

But there's another feature of establishing the strength of a relationship, a quality relationship that allows us as politicians to govern this province, and that is the belief in the goodness, the trust that our population, that the electorate can have in the institutions of their government. It is clear at this time that we have a government which I believe has become sensitive to criticism, which has become, therefore, sensitive to releasing adequate information, to dealing properly with the press, to allowing the press the kind of freedom that it deserves and requires to be the active participant and an important defence of our democratic process. And it's exactly this legislation that approaches a redress of the problems that we encounter now with our institutions.

We want by way of this motion to ensure that there is freedom of information for everybody in this province, for all politicians and all members of the public. We want to have government functions open to public review so that we can be held accountable, so that the process can be reviewed by all to ensure that it is properly done. We want the interests of the press protected, and we want to ensure that all members have clear conflict-of-interest guidelines to which they are held accountable so that they can demonstrate to the public that they are operating in the public interest.

I can't underline enough, Mr. Speaker, that these four types of legislation will lend tremendously to the trust that the Alberta population can have in its institutions in this Legislature; that these pieces of legislation, once enacted, will therefore contribute significantly to the kind of relationship that we as politicians can have with the electorate and with the population of this province; and that therefore we can govern more effectively, we can lead more effectively, and we can do, on behalf of the population of this province, what we were elected to do.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Speaker, their Motion 201 has about four parts, and in proposing to increase public confidence in government or enhancing the openness of government or enhancing the accountability or responsibility of the MLAs, the motion and the members of the Liberal Party who have spoken today propose to do so not by example but by legislation, not by deed but by word, not by leadership but by law. The four issues in Motion 201 are each very different, and I think the Member for Edmonton Gold Bar did an excellent job on behalf of her colleague, the Member for Calgary Buffalo, in whose name the motion stands, in describing those four issues: freedom-of-information legislation, a sunshine law requiring open meetings, a shield law for journalists' sources, and conflict-of-interest rules and procedures for elected officials.

Well, I've listened very carefully, Mr. Speaker -- all of us have today -- to the arguments presented by the two members. They've taken a leaf or two from the Representative Party, from the New Democratic Party, and from the Progressive Conservative Party. They propose resolutions to problems that truly concern all members but which in fact will lead to a system which

will indeed frustrate Albertans, their MLAs, the media -- none of whom happens to be present -- and the public service. She and her colleague who has just spoken propose a cure which is indeed worse than the disease. For example, if information a member receives is taken from a source called the media -- the *Calgary Herald* might be one example -- about the Bow River, and if that is her only source, then it is very inaccurate. All reports indeed have been released or tabled in this Assembly by the minister of the day.

Indeed, this Assembly in 1984-1985 passed legislation which provides that all environmental monitoring reports submitted to the government by industry are public. I don't want to take a lot of our time commenting on the detail of her presentation, but I will read it carefully when *Hansard* is available because there are a number of errors. For example, it is Mount Allan -- it is Nakiska at Mount Allan -- and it is a great legacy for our citizens and for our visitors as a recreation source.

The agreements between the operators of the hotel facilities, the service facilities, the golf course facility: all of those were indicated in advertised proposals so that all citizens who wished to obtain information, all citizens who wished to make a proposal would have access to the full information available in the proposal call. But as the minister has said on numerous occasions, once agreements are reached, those agreements cannot be released unless the operators choose to provide their approvals to the government, and the government would be then happy to table those agreements. Those agreements contain information as private between the parties as they would be between the member and some employer or some employee.

Let us remind ourselves, Mr. Speaker, of the true freedoms and responsibilities we all enjoy. Many of the freedoms and traditions we enjoy are the result of custom, the tradition that one's word is one's bond, that a handshake is a contract, that the truth will out, and that honesty does pay. Sadly, as our society grows in terms of population and complexity, these traditions and customs are challenged by some and broken by a few in the public service, even in the media, and in governments at all levels. But punishment, whether it be in terms of retribution or dismissal or a public apology or some other penalty, is no longer enough if it be limited to those who break tradition, who act dishonestly, or who try to achieve self-benefiting rewards. It is now being viewed by those behind the motion, including, in fact, I assume, the civil liberty espousing legislator from Calgary Buffalo, to be extended to everyone, the innocent as well as the guilty.

Well, I for one, Mr. Speaker -- and I hope the majority of the members of this Assembly agree -- resent this approach. I do not subscribe to the theory that one rotten apple spoils the barrel, that there but for the grace of God go I. I truly believe that actions speak louder than words, that there are no better judges of my conduct in this Assembly than those of my colleagues here and my constituents in Banff-Cochrane. There are no better judges of reporters than their readers or their viewers or their listeners. And there are no substitutes for an independent evaluation and independent assessments of our public service by the Ombudsman and the Auditor General.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Edmonton Meadowlark seemed to suggest there is some new sensitivity by this government to the press or to the public. Well, my goodness, this government has led the way in Canada, in provinces, with a *Hansard*; with Cabinet tours; with open, storefront government; endorsing the Miller report, which in fact provided us with the opportunity to have constituency offices.

The mover of the motion has rolled up all of these issues into one, I won't comment on the individual components, but I would like to remind us of the system we have in place in Alberta, which serves us very well. First, in this Assembly and in this Assembly's committees, members are encouraged and are able to obtain information from ministers via question period, for one example, whether it's oral or written, and through motions for returns. Ministers appear -- in fact they're invited to appear -- before committees of this Assembly, numerous committees including the Public Accounts Committee, which is chaired by a member of the Official Opposition.

Our Assembly has one of the longest periods of time devoted to question period in any democracy, 45 minutes devoted to question period. I think it would be more useful if all of the members just simply followed the rules that have been set down by the Speaker, by tradition, by this Assembly, by the House leaders working with the Speaker -- just followed the rules, both questioner and responder. My goodness, here we have a prime example of how simple rules for question period can't even be understood by some of the members, let alone followed.

But there are rules, and there are practices of this Assembly, and not all documents can be, nor should they be, produced, for reasons of patient or client or informant or source confidentiality. Our Legislature is open to the public; it is open to the media; but no one in those galleries or in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, can exhibit improper conduct or he or she would face expulsion. Similarly, in municipal council chambers anyone can attend public meetings, even the media. But again, improper conduct can be and should be cause for expulsion, and when there is public interest at stake, the majority of the members of a council in Alberta may by resolution hold an in camera meeting. But the important point to note is that no public business can be concluded at that in camera meeting. The sunshine, the true sunshine comes when the meeting is open again.

Now this motion before us proposes that the decision must be demonstratively proven. Proven to whom? How? What appeal mechanism would we need to write into this legislation? What harm would this present to an individual who might feel his or her case was not considered fairly? But now that it's publicly discussed, now that it's demonstratively approved, what harm would there be for that individual in court if a council had to publicly justify its position? -- not harm to the council, harm to the individual.

What impact would there be on communities as various courts and judges started to give us rulings on rights and limitations?

With respect, Mr. Speaker, to the proposed shield law, I hope we do not lessen in any way the grave responsibility we indeed give all reporters to be ethical and to be honest. Reporters have no special status. They should face libel and slander charges if they transgress individual or common rights. They have a moral duty to maintain their professional ethics. They don't even have to be fair. But what happens if we write laws to shield reporters, to give them some sort of status equivalent to priests or lawyers or doctors and their clients with respect to the reporter and his or her informant? Do we open the door then for unethical reporters to pretend they have information that they don't have? Do we throw away libel and slander laws? Do we have to require then fair reporting? It might seem nice to some of us who have been the victims of incompetent media, but frankly I found it's really just better to work harder, to communicate more, to be open, to be accessible, to be available, because the public has a better eye and a better ear than many believe.

Mr. Speaker, reference was made to three MLAs in this Assembly who were for a period of time receiving stipends for their work on various boards and commissions or other agencies as appointed by the Executive Council. I think it must be said, as it has been made public, that those three MLAs have repaid all moneys received and no decisions of those agencies are in any way affected by what took place over a period of time when someone misread the legislation. And I think that if we're all familiar with the Legislative Assembly Act, we know how convoluted it is. No matter how many of us sit down and how many lawyers work on it -- my goodness, to be an MLA you not only have to be able to read or to be able to listen, you have to have someone tell you that to be a MLA, you can be this but not that or if you're that, not this or if you're not this, not that. And as you know -- I mentioned the Legislative Assembly Act and the work of our committee and the work of the Assembly in establishing it -- it is a very difficult Act to understand.

Finally, and with respect to more rules for legislators, I remind all members that laws cannot be chiseled in stone. Conflicts, real or apparent, can arise. Many are impossible to define. Rules for one group of people, whether they're pharmacists or doctors or MLAs, or rules for one set of circumstances do not necessarily fit another set of circumstances or another group of people. How do you develop postemployment restrictions outside of the criminal law or the common law? How do you develop postemployment restrictions which will carry on somehow, as if by magic cocooning someone? Even pre-employment screenings, pre-employment oaths, can well be challenged under our Constitution today. And if we begin to broaden our rules, to write more rules, are we then saying that what is not written to do is okay to do? No amount of legislation will ever prevent an unscrupulous person intent on his own advantage or her own behaviour or misbehaviour.

To this MLA, Mr. Speaker, our Legislative Assembly Act, the Financial Administration Act, the code of ethics and conduct for our public service, the requirements of the Premier for disclosure, for blind trusts, accountability, et cetera, of his Cabinet, and the host of strictures that we have in public office, including living and working in the fishbowl of the public eye, and including the right of any MLA in this Assembly to challenge me or any other MLA if I or he or she forsake their duties, are ample tools in our arsenal of political ethics. Those are ample tools in our arsenal of political ethics. Perhaps they need updating. Perhaps they need amendment from time to time, but they should not be thrown away for the mishmash proposed by Motion 201.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. leader of the Liberal Party.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In speaking in support of this motion, Motion 201, first, I was very proud of the job and the presentation done by the Member for Edmonton Gold Bar and backed up by the Member for Edmonton Meadowlark. And I also want to congratulate the Member for Banff-Cochrane for doing a very good job of presenting the 19th century arguments for why the government should not make rules or laws. Often the Tories and we in government make the statement that if there is anything that distinguishes the modern democratic society, it is the rule of law. The rule of law is used time and time again to describe a society that one would want to live in, versus the organizations run by dictatorships or communist societies.

It then seems to me only a question of whether that law is to

be written or to be understood. The Member for Banff-Cochrane would seem to make a fairly good argument that it should be understood by some form of osmosis or maybe learning it at mother's knee or grandmother's knee or by the teacher's strap but, somehow or another, that when you reach adulthood, you know what law is and what your peers expect of you and what is the proper thing to do and what not to do. He then went on and admitted that it was a disease. He said that it's a disease, but we have the cure, I think he fell on his own sword, you might say, when he admitted that it was a disease. But very much like the addicted smoker -- although he was willing to admit that he had a disease and had an addiction -- he didn't want to face the inconvenience of a cure. And this is one of the things I think we have to face up to today in our society, that the cure is spelling out in a lot clearer form than we have in the past what our freedoms are and what is expected of our legislators.

Now certainly in an old monolithic society, in a society, if you want to call it, that was entirely Christian or entirely Arab or Moslem or entirely Buddhist -- and I have done business in many of these areas -- if you get into an area that is entirely of one ethic or one religion, the written laws don't have to be spelled out because the people think alike; they go to the same schools; they use the same patterns, the same habits. Consequently, there is a certain amount of credence to the hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane's argument -- and one that Winston Churchill used to use, as a matter of fact, many years ago, that there is a British heritage, there is a British understanding, there is a British this or a British that.

Well, that's fine, but Canada today is a makeup of all kinds of cultures, and we're the better for it. We have all the different religious outlooks; we have all the different, you might say, nonreligious outlooks. Of course, one of the things that came with that when Canada became a multicultural society -- and it has become that -- is that quite often we have to spell out things. Quite often what we may accept as being a sort of principle or way -- principles are really nothing more than ways, not absolute rights and wrongs. A way of doing business or a way of conducting a public office may not be considered by somebody of a different culture as being the right way either; consequently, the question comes up time and time again.

A very simple thing like the Member for Banff-Cochrane -- he forgot that we're a plural society. He went in and talked about the media -- well, I know governments are always hyper about media -- and said that they're worried about their competence, worried what they might be saying. The point here, when we're talking about a shielding law, is just the right for the media to conceal their sources, not to go and libel. We weren't asking that they be allowed to libel. We weren't asking that they be allowed to commit any criminal offence. In other words, they just had to be able to be allowed to conceal their sources, and we think that in a free society a person should be able to. When there is information on government to come out, it does probably prompt and make it easier for information to come forward if the person involved in bringing that information forward isn't likely to get named tomorrow in the paper.

Maybe on a more practical, short-term thing. Since I've been in this Legislature -- and it's only been a short time -- I've been surprised at the number of ways that the government can hide information or try to keep things out, even something as simple as today when the hon. Member for Calgary Forest Lawn had the government on the ropes with the energy questions. Before they could keep on with their questions -- it had to have unanimous approval of the House -- someone over in that sector

hollered no., or at least the Speaker thought they hollered no. Consequently, no more questions, minister, on energy. It just shows how simple and easy it is for a majority to frustrate the will of those that are trying to get information for the public to make their decisions.

Since I've been in the Legislature, we've had financial agreements with private firms like GSR, LSI Logic, the Kananaskis Royal Trust deal, Olympia and York's recent rental deal that's coming up, Bow Valley Industries, Special Waste Management, the Syncrude deal, the Suncor deal, Teknica Resource, SPURT Investment Fund, North West Trust. It's a litany of deals that you cannot get the full information on as to whether or not the government has made a good deal or, on the other hand, the interests of the taxpayers have been used.

And in closing, in order to give more time to others to state their impressions or their opinions on the Bill, something has come up in the last while that bothers me a great deal. Maybe it's because I've spent a great deal of my life doing foreign business, but this is the question of the business immigration activities. We now have a national government that has basically said -- whether you agree with it or not, whether you think it's moral or not -- that if you or your family have a quarter of a million dollars that you can invest in Canada, you will be able to move to the front of the line for immigration. Not only to the front of the line, you'll be able to go through the gate, providing all else is equal, providing that you weren't an acknowledged and convicted member of the Mafia or some other movement and, as a matter of fact, maybe even get by by belonging to a liberal party overseas. But the point is, if you've got a quarter of a million dollars now and you're not a Canadian and you want Canadian citizenship, you can buy it. It's the first time in history that Canadian citizenship has been for sale, and the federal Tories have put it on there. But nevertheless, it's there. And unless you get out and get your share of these people that are paying a quarter of a million dollars or more for their citizenship, some other province will grab it.

So we've set a two-key system up. The second key is that the province the person is going to immigrate to has to approve the investment that that immigrant family is making. Those investments are approved in the provincial cabinet of this province. So we have, to me, one of the worst recipes for disaster or conflict of interest or graft that I have ever seen. You have a politically appointed friend of this government running a foreign office, talking to a foreign capitalist or person with some money, that person then making the deal with the same political people that appointed him back here in Alberta to approve the investment, that investment is allowed to run, not be directed, can be run through another company, and that company could very well be by political appointment too. So you have four different stages of political appointment for selling something that is valued more -- and I kid you not, because I spent a great deal of my life in foreign business -- probably the highest article of faith that you could carry with you, that little blue book that is a Canadian passport.

And yet we have four political gates, with no place where the taxpayers can investigate it, that these people can go through to buy a membership to invest in Alberta through some indirect means, appointed by politicians in Alberta. Put that together if you haven't got a recipe for disaster. I know in opposition I should be pleased -- sort of like watching for a chandelier to drop on your worst enemy. All we have to do is wait and watch it as it swings back and forth, and it's likely to happen. But I suggest that the types of laws we have here would preclude that

and would let the public in as to what kind of business is going on.

No, Mr. Speaker, I don't think there's any question. The time has come. We have moved into the last part of the 20th century. We have to spell out through the Legislature and through the Legislature give confidence to the voters of Alberta that we indeed are not only like Caesar's wife, are not only above suspicion but appear to be above suspicion as well. Consequently this movement goes a long way towards doing that, and I would urge legislators for a minute to forget that it comes from either the right side of the floor or the left side of the floor. Just look at it as whether it is common sense or not.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, I do have some remarks that I want to make on this particular motion. It's really four motions that are tied into one: freedom of information, a sunshine law, a shield law, and conflict of interest. But in light of the hour, I beg leave to adjourn debate.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Moved by the hon. Member for Taber-Warner that we adjourn debate on Motion 201. All those in favour of the motion to adjourn debate, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: Carried.

202. Moved by Mr. Taylor:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly support an amendment to the Constitution of Canada to provide for an elected Senate, which would provide protection for the interests of the lesser populated regions through equal representation and through effective powers.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, that to me is very similar to moving the abolishment of sin and the approval of motherhood. But when I look over the government benches over there, I sometimes wonder just whether or not they are interested in abolishing sin or approving motherhood. They've always seemed to find way of wiggling out from underneath a movement or resolution that is transparently good. I use the example of the seat belt legislation as one.

This motion -- one which, by the way, the Tories and your government were dragged kicking and squealing into approval of just a scant three years ago -- originally started amongst many westerners, led by Izzy Asper, the Liberal leader in Manitoba, and Gordon Gibson, the Liberal leader in British Columbia, back in 1971. But it is an idea that since that time -- really who founded it or who started it is not important so much as the fact that westerners have come through the years to realize that something more is needed than electing a Tory government in Ottawa or an NDP government or a Liberal government or any other government. There is something in the basic structure of how we put together this country of Canada and the way we govern it that requires a check and balance of the sparsely populated areas against the densely populated areas.

Certainly there were no questions in years past that population didn't really maybe grab so much. You could always

dream, as California did when it came into the union, that someday they would have a big enough population to hold their own in a House of Representatives down there. But we could dream.

As a matter of fact, when I first got interested in politics, I remember I used to tease the Conservative leader of the time, or the Premier, that his vision was millions of people out here in Alberta with enough votes to outvote Ontario. I'd even tease my NDP confreres on the left as they thought of 2 million hard hats marching hand in hand across Alberta singing *Solidarity Forever*. Whatever it was, it was a case of population and population growth, and that's where the power lay.

But as modern thinking started to come about, it became more and more apparent that we in North America, or at least north of the Rio Grande in the west here, had moved almost to zero population growth. In other words, there are not going to be any great increases of population, at least in the foreseeable future. Then we had to settle down and say that if Canada is going to be ruled over the next hundred years with equity and justice, we have to develop a system that doesn't depend on population for the absolute vote, or the mass migration of population.

It was okay up until about 1950, but the thoughts started to change, that there's maybe nothing wrong with a sparsely populated area and it's just possible the west will always have less population than Ontario and Quebec. And once the inevitability of that appeared in the thinking of our political scientists and in our politicians, then the thinking started moving over to the fact that maybe we need a bicameral system that is truly bicameral, and that the representation-by-population House should have a check and balance on the representation-by-geography House.

So we started investigating it, and as I say, into the '60s and '70s various groups and various peoples started working on the theory. And surprise, surprise; it turned out that the Fathers of Confederation were not that far behind. In a way, they had been ahead of us for the hundred people that came along a hundred years after. They saw a national Senate with 24 people from Lower Canada, 24 people from Upper Canada, 24 people from maritime Canada, and 24 people from western Canada, and they started it out with appointments. And those appointments probably, if we had progressed the same way as the United States has, would have moved into elected offices by now. But somehow or another -- although in the U.S. they moved from appointed Senators to elected Senators in the 1800s; maybe the blood of their civil war caused them to really rethink their bicameral system. We didn't have that, and I don't think we should have to go through that to get to the type of thinking that they did, which was an elected second House. But the fact is that the modern-thinking political scientists and the people that now look at how government is structured think of a bicameral system, where there's a check and balance for the sparsely populated against the densely populated.

If you need more evidence at all, it's that after the last war, in 1945-46, when the best minds of the western world were put together with some of the survivors of those that had lost the war to try to devise a governmental system for Japan and Germany, they came up with a bicameral system, the two houses. One is elected on the basis of geography, the other one elected on the basis of population.

So, consequently, it's a system that is starting to embed itself in our minds, and I know there was the old populist and Fabian socialist idea: one person, one vote; the labour union idea. It's a sort of an elitism, and I'd be interested in what my NDP confreres are going to say, because they've for so many years been

against the Senate of any kind, abolishing it. But I'm interested to see whether they have come into the last half of the 20th century just as the Conservatives did a few years ago and are now realizing that it is a plus factor. It is a factor that can go towards governing this country with much more fairness and justice than has been used in the past.

Consequently, Mr. Speaker, when I ask -- and I would love to see the unanimous endorsement of this Legislature to that move, because this is not a political one. I've been lucky enough to get it first on the Order Paper. It could have been one of the Conservative benches; it could have been one of the NDP or the Representative benches. [interjection] I do win some things sometimes.

I think it is quite possible to have the unanimous approval of this House, because we have to get it across clearly to central Canada that there is no argument on this issue, that there is no equivocation on this issue, that there's no holding back or giving lip service and pulling away from it. So therefore, Mr. Speaker, I ask the members of this House to endorse the thing unanimously and show once again to central Canada we're out to construct a Canada for the next hundred years that will be fair and just and equitable for everyone.

Thanks.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will not take a great deal of time and allow the other members to get in. But I would remind the Liberal leader that this has already been passed by this Legislature, I believe, two or three years ago. At that time -- and I know the hon. colleague opposite knows that I have some difficulties with another elected government. I said at the time I would support it. It's much better than what we have, because the Senate is just a rest home for retired Liberals and Conservatives.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt that we have a problem with regional development in this country. There are enough examples, I think, in this House. I'll agree. One of the problems we've had, though, was a Liberal government that created the problems for us over the years, and that led to that alienation. So if the Liberals want to tell us now that they're great Canadians and that they weren't centralizers, I'll give them my answer very clearly about that. Our party was formed on western alienation. I'm sure the hon. member knows that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like, for the record, to say that the problem is, I think, first of all -- hopefully we all agree that we should abolish the Senate, this appointed Senate that wastes a lot of money and has no value at all other than to the Liberal and Conservative parties. So we start from that premise, and I know that we all agree with that. Now, as I said, if it comes down to a choice, and I would support it here or anywhere else, between what we have and an elected Senate -- and I made this clear, I believe it was about two years ago when we did debate this in the Legislature -- I would certainly support the Triple E Senate.

I asked people to look at another way to deal with the regional problems that we face in the country. We in the Alberta New Democrats passed a paper many years ago dealing with the council of the provinces. We brought it back to this committee, and I think there's still some merit in it. For example, I'm not sure that electing more people solves our particular problems. There could be some constitutional problems dealing with the

budget and all the rest of it. If we are going to have a triple, elected Senate, knowing politicians, they'll want more and more power. I worry about some of that power coming from provincial Legislatures, and I'm sure federal Members of Parliament would worry about it coming from there.

However, as I say, it's better than the alternative that we have at this particular time. But we thought to deal with western alienation, and I can say to the hon. members that when I talk to people in the maritimes, they feel some of the same pressures. Mind you, people even in northern Ontario feel some of those same pressures of alienation that we feel in the west, that perhaps we didn't need to elect more politicians to do it. I believe they are vastly overgoverned now in terms of the numbers of people that we have.

So, Mr. Speaker, we looked at a council of the provinces. If I may go through it quickly to deal with the effective, and the area of trying to deal with regional alienation, I think you would agree that it also does this. So I throw this out as a proposal. The council of the provinces would bring representatives of all provinces together in a national context as a national body. Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this: the council would represent the interests of the province at the federal level. That's the problem that we have in the country right now, that provincial governments, especially in western Canada, do not feel that they have any power in the federal system, even if we have a federal government with all members from that particular party.

And I might say, just from my own analysis, that one of the things that I would be prepared -- although it's not our party policy at this point -- is I think we have to begin to look also at proportional representation in this country to cover some of the problems that we face, and it would be much better to have all parties represented at the federal level to deal with philosophical things and necessarily fight over regional things. [interjection] Don't worry about it, hon. member, we'll let you speak after. We know what central Canadians the Liberals are. I know it from the past, Mr. Speaker.

But the point that I would make about the council of the provinces, the jurisdiction -- what we're suggesting is that matters requiring Council consideration would be those affecting areas of concurrent powers, because that's where we run into the problems, I believe. There are areas that are clearly federal in responsibility and areas that are clearly provincial in responsibility, but where we run into the problems, I believe, is in those gray areas. That goes into both areas. So we are suggesting that

matters requiring Council consideration would be those affecting areas of concurrent powers, the definition of issues justifying use of federal emergency powers. [for example] the exercise of federal emergency powers, treaties relative to provincial jurisdiction,

and the free trade area would certainly fall into this, shared-cost programs, and ratification or rejection of federal appointments to the Supreme Court as examples.

Mr. Speaker, to deal with the regional end of it, seats in the Council would be divided equally among the provinces. Seats would be allocated in the name of the province, and not to individual delegates.

Now, for all those people that wanted to have a cushy job then, they would disband after. We're saying that P.E.I., would have their vote, Alberta would have their vote, and Ontario would have their vote. It would be equal as part of the Triple E

in terms of an elected Senate.

Provincial representatives would not be permanent, but would be appointed by their respective governments according to their appropriateness to the matters at hand.

In other words, the provincial government could send who they thought would be appropriate to that particular time.

This flexibility would permit provincial Cabinet ministers and provincial Assembly [ministers] to act as provincial representatives on the Council. Similarly, it would allow nonelected officials to so act as representatives.

But they would be directed there by the government of Alberta, if it was in the Alberta situation.

The Council's deliberations would be governed by parliamentary procedure designed to facilitate decision-making. Decisions of the Council would be made by a majority of the provincial delegations.

A simple majority, again, to deal with the equal part of it, Mr. Speaker.

The Council would be called into session by order of the Governor-General, at the initiative of the federal government, or by request by a majority of the provinces.

So the House of the council of provinces could be brought in by either method, Mr. Speaker.

The Council's powers would not be such as to undermine the principle of the federal government being responsible to the elected House of Commons. Nor would the actions of the Council prevent the federal government from carrying out its constitutional responsibilities. In particular, the Council would have no powers over the federal budget or estimates.

Because if we're going to start to get into that in a constitutional matter with an elected Senate, I don't know where you're going to come off in that. I know the more politicians you elect, the more they want to spend money.

But I would say again in conclusion, Mr. Speaker -- and I would like to file for the Assembly these proposals -- that we think this is a better way rather than creating another bureaucracy, another level of government, that would confuse people. But if it comes down to a choice between what we have -- as I said, old rest homes and patronage for Liberals and Conservatives -- or a Triple E, then I will certainly support the Triple E, if those are the two choices.

Thank you very much.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary McCall.

MR. NELSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know, or at least I'm sure there are a number of members that wish to participate in the debate that is before us today, so I'm going to be very brief in the comments that I have.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you.

MR. NELSON: That's all right. I'm not even going to take a shot at any of my commie friends on the right. So it will be all right.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to note that during the last session, of course, we did debate the issue of the Senate. There was a select committee drawn from the Legislature to deal with

the issue of the Senate, and it performed very well and developed a report called Strengthening Canada. The concern, of course, in western Canada is that, as the Leader of the Opposition has alluded to, is alienation to central Canada, and in the past we've had many comments relevant to that, including separation movements and other things that have happened to the detriment of the overall well-being of our country.

We do have regional disparities, and it doesn't seem to matter in many cases which government may be in Ottawa, whether it be Liberals who raped the west for many years through the national energy program and other such things more recently. I guess you could even consider the situation with regards to the aircraft. I'm sure that if the situation occurred that there was another party in government in Ottawa, they wouldn't be much different either, because everybody seems to want to do their own political thing as far as patronage is concerned and create that old people's home that has people that are paid extremely well for doing very little in. At least that's what it appears at the outset to myself.

Central government supports central Canada because that's where the votes are, and now we've come to this issue of dealing with an elected Senate, and I, too, agree that the Senate should be elected by the people, with each province having equal representation. That is the only way we are going to have effective government.

Mr. Speaker, when Confederation was developed in the 1800s, our Fathers of Confederation spent many hours and many days designing the upper House, the Senate, with the view that it would have equal representation so that the regions of Canada would be represented equally throughout this country, and of course over the years this has in fact not happened. In fact, it has deteriorated to the extent now where we have to have these discussions in the parliaments of this country. Even in our local municipal governments they are discussing this issue, and rightly so.

So for my part, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support the idea of a Triple E Senate, and as such, I would like to offer an amendment to the motion at this time which would read:

and further that this Assembly confirm the recommendations in the Strengthening Canada report endorsed unanimously by the Legislature on May 27, 1985.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Perhaps in view of the fact that Calgary McCall has moved an amendment, the House might just wait a moment until hon. members have a copy of that amendment.

The hon. Member for Edmonton Meadowlark.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to support the amendment to our motion because it strengthens the substance and the intent of my party's motion under consideration at this time. I support this amendment; I support this motion. All Albertans support this motion and, of course, its amendment, and all those Canadians, I believe, with a selfless interest in this country support this motion as well.

There are many important challenges facing the government of this province over the next 15 to 20 years, Mr. Speaker. One of them, of course, is economic stabilization. Another one is finding new ways to do government differently than it was done in the past, because it is not 1978; it is 1987 and we have to find new solutions to different manifestations of different problems.

The third and perhaps one of the most overridingly important challenges facing this government in this province is to establish

an effective and consistent role for the province of Alberta in this Confederation. We had, I believe, an effective place in the political mainstream of Canada in the '70s and into the early '80s. I think that this province had some strength, it had some influence, and it conducted itself extremely well at that level. I would like to caution that there were times when I think that we were too aggressive and we put our case too much in terms of us versus them and that we may have lost some of the positive impact and, therefore, some of the ultimate gains that we could have achieved at that time.

If you look at the experience of Saskatchewan, which I think conducted its place in Confederation with greater decorum in some senses and with less aggression in a more positive context, I think it achieved a better and more positive relationship with the rest of the country. However, that's not to say that we were ineffective in the 1970s and in the 1980s. We were not, as a province, ineffective. We were effective. We participated equally and effectively at the national level in this Confederation. We have, I believe -- and I believe that Albertans recognize this -- lost that place in Confederation.

We are consistently and continuously taken advantage of by a central Canadian government. Last year the federal government brought out a budget that put a billion dollars into the Atlantic enterprise program to support the Atlantic energy industry, and gave nothing to Alberta. They reneged on the \$1 billion Husky Oil upgrader agreement and did nothing to replace that \$1 billion in Alberta. They could not even find a way to support the loan to Syncrude of \$200 million despite the fact that that was little more than a hypothetical liability because it would only be invoked if oil prices dropped below \$15 a barrel.

We can see time and time and time again that central Canadian government emphasizes the interests of central Canada over the interests of the region. We have lost what we had in the '70s. We have lost what we had in the early '80s, and nothing that this government is undertaking at this time, that we can see, is designed to redress that in any significant way.

There are, of course, solutions. I believe that many people in this House across the way thought that the problem was an ideological problem, a problem of ideology, that in some senses a Liberal government had as a philosophy or as an ideology emphasizing central Canadian interests over Alberta interests. Clearly that wasn't the case. How do we know that? Because the current Conservative government in Ottawa is doing exactly the same thing to Alberta. What that underlines -- and I can see the disappointment in the sense of what this government is doing, because it doesn't have policies, procedures, and negotiating strategies to confront the vacuum that it now finds itself with, because its answer was always focused on this idea that it was an ideological problem and it would be solved once the Conservatives were elected. The Conservatives were elected federally, and what did they prove? They proved that it was not ideology, that it was not philosophy, that it was a question of central Canadian government emphasizing central Canadian interests over the interests of regions like Alberta. And so we have to set aside the possibility that an ideological change, a party change, would solve the problem. Clearly, it won't. We all know that. We're in the same boat, as it were, and we have to confront the reality of that situation.

There's a second way to solve the possible solution to this imbalance in Confederation, and that relates to an effective negotiating strategy. We can't, for example, tell the rest of this country that we have \$15 billion in the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. We don't have \$15 billion in the Heritage Savings Trust

Fund, and if we did, we would be remiss to tell the rest of the country that, because they will say, "If you have \$15 billion, you're rich and we don't have to help you." And yet clearly we need the assistance of the rest of this country to redress some of the imbalances that we find in our economy at this time. Rather than standing up and bragging about \$15 billion, we should be taking out full-page ads in the *Globe and Mail* in central Canada saying: "We don't have \$15 billion; we have a \$3.5 billion dollar deficit. That's 35 percent of the expenditures that this government will make this year. There are tens of thousands of people in this province on welfare, and in fact the first food banks in this country were in cities in this province." That's got to be part of our strategy.

We should seize opportunities like the CF-18 issue, when Manitoba was treated unfairly by Ottawa and not accorded a contract that they clearly deserved to receive on the basis of economic fairness. Our Premier should have got together the four western provinces in a statesmanlike fashion and said: "We will defend your interests, Manitoba. We will work together to defend your interests on this issue. You work with us to defend our interests on other issues. We'll work together with Saskatchewan and British Columbia, and we'll bring together four western provinces, provinces which in total control, if you will, or include as many if not more Members of Parliament seats as those contained or included in the boundaries of Ontario and Quebec." We would create a western coalition that would assist us in promoting western interests and redress the imbalance that we find in this country.

But, again, negotiations are not enough. Negotiations go on from day to day, and sometimes you're successful; sometimes you're not successful or you're less successful. They assist in redressing the imbalance, but they are not a final solution.

That brings me, Mr. Speaker, to the need for structural reform. I think it is safe to say that when this country was structured, the eastern and western regions were structured as a hinterland to central Canada. If you analyze the structures of this country, the parliamentary structure, the way in which the powers were allocated between the federal and the provincial levels, it was clear that western Canada, including Alberta, was designed to be a hinterland. I would like to mention as an aside, Mr. Speaker, that it was a Conservative government that presided over the implementation of that structure.

We can't negotiate our way out of that hinterland relationship entirely. We have to restructure the institutions that function to allocate scarce resources amongst the regions of this country. That brings us as a party, and I'm very pleased to see, hopefully, a Legislative Assembly, in unanimous support of the idea of a Triple E, elected Senate. The features of that Senate, the manner in which it would function, are known to all. They're clear. They've been presented as long as 20 years ago by two western Canadian Liberal leaders. It is a structure that I believe does not need defence. It is a structure that is clear in its intent and clear in its potential effectiveness in redressing regional imbalance in this country.

I might mention briefly that it's not enough simply to structure or restructure the Senate in this country. We also have to look at the way the courts are structured. The fact of the matter is that we now have a Charter of Rights. The interpretation of the Charter of Rights will have a profound impact on the way our society will evolve. That Charter of Rights will be interpreted by a central Canadian Supreme Court of Canada that is appointed by a central Canadian government without recommendation or input from provincial governments, and therefore

we may begin to see that the interpretation of the Charter of Rights will have an impact, once again, on exacerbating regional imbalance and in seeing a society that is structured to the favour of central Canada.

We need to have an effective negotiating strategy. I think we've come finally to the recognition -- at least those members across the way -- that it was not an ideological concern but that, in fact, it was a question of central Canadian government emphasizing central Canadian interests because, as somebody said earlier, that's where they get their votes. We have to have an effective negotiating strategy as a partial solution to redressing that political imbalance.

That effective strategy has to include the messages that we send to the rest of this country. We have to stop telling them that we're something that we're not, that we're not rich when in fact we're not rich and we need their assistance. We have to begin to build a western coalition by working with the four western Canadian provinces to establish a consensus in western Canada that can emphasize our strength in this Confederation, and we have to consider, we have to pass in this country, structural reform of the Senate and structural reform of the appointment of justices to the Supreme Court of Canada.

I urge every member of this Legislature, therefore, to support our motion and that this government take that motion to the rest of this country and have it implemented as a constitutional amendment in the Constitution of Canada so that as soon as possible we can have a Triple E Senate in this country.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I would remind hon. members that we're discussing the amendment as proposed to Motion [202] and not [202]. The hon. Member for Red Deer South.

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, had the question been called for?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are you ready for the question on the amendment to Motion 202?

[Motion on amendment carried]

MR. OLDRING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to participate in the debate on Motion 202.

I want to congratulate the leader of the Liberal Party for once again giving us this glaring example of how the Liberals are blazing new frontiers, fresh new innovative ideas, alternative proposals. I'd be most anxious to see if there's going to be more than the shallow one-liners coming from the Liberal leader, some real substance. But the best that you can come up with on this, your first opportunity to introduce a motion to this House in this sitting, is to follow the leadership offered by this government and reintroduce a matter that we initiated and unanimously passed in this Legislature in 1985. Once again it can be shown that the Liberals are light-years behind this government.

Perhaps, though, in fairness to the leader, this is just one more way the Liberal leader can show just how much he really does appreciate and approve of this government and our policies and our directions. Whatever the reasons, Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity of debating this issue, and I'm going to support Motion 202 brought forward by the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon to reaffirm our government's leadership on

this matter.

[Mr. Musgreave in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by commending my predecessors in this government for the extremely good work that they have carried on in this direction, the work of the now Minister of Culture and his Select Special Committee on Upper House Reform. This document, *Strengthening Canada: Reform of Canada's Senate*, Mr. Speaker, has once again shown Alberta to be a leading province for new directions in Canada today. This report has established the very foundation for meaningful progress to be made towards a Triple E Senate.

Mr. Speaker, historically speaking, it was very clear that the intent of the Fathers of Confederation was to provide equal regional representation in the parliamentary process through the upper House. Equal regional representation is what we are striving for here today. I think we all recognize that the current federal system is not working, that it is not fair and is not just, and that it's frustrating many Albertans and Canadians today, myself included. I think political satirist Larry Zolf put it very well when he once called the Canadian Senate the only museum in the world where all the artifacts, specimens, relics and fossils are alive, if barely breathing. On the reward side, or as Senator Bud Olson once remarked: being appointed to the Senate is like winning the Kentucky Derby and the Irish Sweepstakes all in the same day. A just reward to pension off loyal party workers and defeated or tired government MPs. And former Prime Minister Trudeau exemplified this in filling the Senate with more of his cronies as he stepped down. To Alberta what it meant, down in Lethbridge, was that Albertans would be represented by a Trudeau bureaucrat who had lived in Ottawa for the past 15-plus years. Is that fairness to Alberta? [interjection] It's she, not he. Is that fairness to Alberta and Canada? Is that democracy or justice?

The bottom line, Mr. Speaker: we have an ineffective Senate controlled by central Canada and lacking the moral authority to do the job. Too quickly they become part of that centralized bureaucracy of authority in central Canada. The numbers and the mathematics are stacked against us.

Mr. Speaker, as Albertans we are very proud to be Albertans; but overall we are still Canadians first -- proud Canadians, as committed to this great country today as the Fathers of Confederation were in establishing the Dominion of Canada. We recognize our responsibilities not only to this province but to our nation. In that light, we have initiated a proposal that impasses the very principles that our founding Fathers of Confederation strived for in establishing this country. An upper House to provide, yes, for that sober second thought but, more importantly, an upper House that provides equal regional representation to protect the interests of the provinces and of the citizens of this country. Fairness and justice: that is what Albertans are wanting for Canada today. Fairness and justice.

A Liberal government would never have rammed through the national energy program had we a Triple E Senate. Not only would it have failed to pass through a Triple E Senate; it wouldn't have even been dreamed of in the first place. Mr. Speaker, we need a Triple E Senate in Canada today to put to bed the inequities that exist, to put to bed any thoughts of separatism.

The task of selling this to Canada is an awesome task, an incredible challenge to this government, to Albertans, and to Canadians today. But this government is not afraid of challenge. Albertans are not afraid of challenge. If it's fair, if it's

just, if it is right, if it will strengthen Canada, then we will meet that challenge. Albertans and this government will continue to lead the way in Canada. Mr. Speaker, we made that very clear in the throne speech that we will continue to lead the way for Senate reform, that we are committed to Senate reform, and that it will strengthen Canada.

Thank you.

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in debate on Motion 202 and would congratulate the hon. leader of the Liberal Party for introducing it, quite sincerely I think, although it has been done two years ago in the Legislature and endorsed by all parties. The composition of the Legislature is new, and it doesn't at all hurt to have on record the support of hon. members. I believe that if we subtract the political rhetoric, which all of us are prone to use sometimes in the Legislature, the speeches so far this afternoon have indicated well the support of the Assembly for this motion and for this concept with the possible exception of the Official Opposition, which hedges its bets on this issue and which I would like to see a little more firm in this direction, though I suppose we are pleased to get what we can from that other party opposite.

The report which the committee comprised of a number of members of the Legislature presented two years ago and that I had the honour of chairing, Mr. Speaker, includes more than the Triple E concept and it does so for a number of reasons. The committee when starting its study worked from the basic premise that we in this country had a birthright yet unfulfilled, that we had a promise yet unkept.

And that conclusion came from the debates beginning this country of ours where, if any member wants to take the time to look and read, show quite clearly that the Fathers of Confederation spent more time on a Senate and a discussion of it than all of the other topics put together. And the reason for that was clear and clearly articulated by John A. Macdonald and by George Brown and the other Fathers of Confederation when they stated time after time in speeches that there could not be a nation without a body equal to the House of Commons in power that represented the regions of the country. That was foremost in the minds of those people who brought together our nation, and yet because of the way we went about the appointment process and that unique coincidence of circumstances near the beginning of our nation, we did not evolve that safeguard for our nation. And we remain in the world the only federal state without an upper House that effectively balances the problem of population control from one part of the country.

Mr. Speaker, that has given our nation a lot of problems, and those have been fairly well articulated this afternoon. The nation itself, no matter how altruistic the people in all of its parts, still has the problem of being the second largest land mass in the world and yet not having the position of its provinces, of its regions, articulated firmly in the national context.

Mr. Speaker, when I said at the beginning of my remarks that there's more in the report than just the Triple E concept, I say that because I think it is important to look at what we are trying to accomplish: not only equal representation in Ottawa -- absolutely essential, but not only -- not only an elected Senate that the people can choose, that the people can have confidence in and faith in, not only one that's effective in that respect but one that is also oriented to the provincial perspective, to the regional perspective. We were concerned when we looked at some of the models around the world, particularly the Australian system, which has a Triple E Senate but which there is at least some evi-

dence to suggest that the parties nationally controlled the members of that Senate so much that they often did not represent their regions but rather voted with their national political parties en bloc. So the committee that our Legislative Assembly had struck came up with a series of recommendations to deal with that.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

The foremost among them in my opinion is that the election of those Senators should take place during provincial elections so that the citizens of a province can talk to those representatives about issues that relate to that province. I personally believe that that dimension of the report is pretty close to being as important as each of the equal, effective, and elected portions of the report and of the recommendations.

We made a number of suggestions which also, on the surface of it, may seem like a facade but, I think, also would tend to have our Senators in Ottawa elected by the people of this province orient themselves to representing the people here. And that would be to, rather than have an Official Opposition and the government, have them organized so that they sit in provincial delegations, recognizing where they come from, and elect a chairman from among that group who would sit in a Senate executive council so that there was that input directly recognized on a regional basis in the Senate.

There's a whole series of other recommendations in the report which deal in addition with other bodies that would strengthen our nation by strengthening the federation that's there with respect to the Supreme Court and the First Ministers' Conference, but I think those are the main ones. I don't want to hold the time up this afternoon, because I know there are other members, at least two who served on the select special committee and went with me to every province and territory in the nation and studied the issue and talked to our colleagues in other provinces, who would like to relay some of those experiences.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that the motion is here. I'm pleased that once again we have an opportunity in this Legislature to unite behind what is that need for recognition of our birthright, to unite behind the need to demand, in fact, that the promise made at the beginning of Confederation be kept, and that we do that to unite our country and to strengthen it in the manner in which the Fathers of Confederation had determined should be the case.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Highwood.

MR. ALGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To have the opportunity to speak to the Assembly on Motion 202 is a pleasure that I've really been looking forward to. You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that three years ago a committee was struck within this Legislature to discern if possible how the people of Canada really felt about the Senate of Canada as it presently exists. I happen to have the good educational fortune to have been asked to serve on this committee, and I want you to know that we weren't even out of town before the hue and cry of "change the Senate, reform the Senate, abolish the Senate" were ringing in our ears.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we didn't make one call where we weren't well received, presumably, I guess, because almost every citizen in the nation has a smattering of knowledge of the present formation of the Senate and knows how it borders on almost being useless -- albeit a very expensive part of our sys-

tem but, for whatever reason, a very ineffective voice in the procedures of our parliamentary system.

Years and years ago, there would have been no question in my mind that an upper House of parliamentarians was not only a pleasantry but was also a necessity, and I think at the birth time of this grand nation of Canada the Senate was probably very effective. Through the years, however, a deterioration of the composition of this important body has become to us citizens more and more apparent. I don't know, Mr. Speaker, what the terms of reference were when the Senate was originally established, but I know that now is the time for a complete overhaul of this august body if Canada is going to survive with any semblance of fairness to all 10 provinces.

And when I refer to survival, Mr. Speaker, I'm really thinking back just a few short years when there was a strategic movement afoot to divide this nation and indeed separate the four western provinces from central and eastern Canada. This idea seemed to me to be so absolutely ridiculous and so absolutely unnecessary. There was no need, I felt, for a division in this nation as long as the citizenry of this nation were able to communicate with one another.

The crux of the trouble at the time was a rambunctious Liberal government that indeed was driving everybody in the west almost out of their minds. With a little research of the problem I discovered, much to my dismay, that 50 percent of the general problem was due to a very ineffective Senate. The Senate of the day was and still is Triple E: extraordinary, elaborate, and expensive. And it didn't take our committee long to realize that most of the provinces in Canada wanted a Triple E Senate all right, but it must be equal, elected, and effective.

The House of Commons, Mr. Speaker, has a burr under its saddle in that they feel an exceptionally effective Senate might render them, the House of Commons, to be less effective themselves. Nay, Mr. Speaker; not so. I feel that the House of Commons would become far more sensitive to the issues of the day and would be continuously more conscientious of the disparities that now prevail in both western and eastern Canada. A reformed Senate will not and should not become all-powerful. Its prime concern should be to address the inconsistencies, imbalances, and help to avoid voter-oriented decisions.

If we fail to reform our Senate while we have a half-decent chance, I'm a little afraid that the next movement to separation will truly be a force to be reckoned with. When a federal government is toppled, it seems very shameful to me that an appointed Senate can remain to cause consternation to the new governing body. The leader of the Liberal Party suggests that maybe he was lucky to get this motion on the Order Paper. Well, I say that maybe we'll be lucky if we get a unanimous endorsement on this motion this time around. I for one and millions of Canadians would be thrilled to pieces to discover that finally the nation was going to wake up, not break up, and indeed implement an effective, equal, and elected Senate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: May the hon. sponsor close the debate?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Also, thank you very much for the support I've heard expressed around the House. I know everyone is trying to take parentage of this movement. As far as I'm concerned, I'm quite willing to

move to a back seat as long as we get it through. It's often said that success has a thousand fathers and failure is an orphan. So the Member for Red Deer South can consider himself one of the thousand fathers that have possibly taken place.

I was a little disappointed in the NDP. I think that the leader there maybe -- I don't like to use the word "weasled," but when you're talking about a council of the provinces as elected by the provinces, that is not an elected Senate. That is indirect election, and it's just a setup being appointed by the provincial government rather than being elected by the people directly.

I know it has also been brought out that the Conservatives had put this on the paper in 1985. Certainly I recognized that; I thought I mentioned it in debate. But this is a different House. It's maybe the very nature of things that once you're elected, you go on and on forever and the lines blur between elections, but I can assure you that I wasn't here in 1985. It was a different House, a good many members here -- it's a different House, so people would like to know what this House thinks. Even though it might have been passed in 1985, it is something that the people want to see.

The other reason that I'd like to see it go through and bring it up again is that the first ministers are having a very important conference again. The First Ministers' Conference is taking place, and I'd like to see our Premier armed with the unanimous endorsement of this House added to the unanimous endorsement of the last House, if you want to put it that way, added to the support of the provincial leaders from back in the 1970s -- added to whatever you want but brought right up to date so that when he walks in down there, he has the negotiating and has the power of the people of Alberta and this House behind him, because there's going to be some hard negotiating.

I think I had a glimpse of that in the Liberal Party, and I think it just may be a glimpse that you'll see in other parties. I was surprised to be able to negotiate at the national Liberal convention the okay of the Quebec delegation to a Triple E Senate. It is possible. In other words, Quebec could go for that provided there were some sort of linguistic and other guarantees -- guarantees, by the way, which the Triple E people themselves in Alberta feel are quite reasonable with Quebec in turn as long as we get our elected Senate.

So I'd like to see our Premier go down there with the chance to be able to make that negotiation or be able to put that on the table, I'm a little worried that we'll agree to Quebec's interests before they have agreed to our interests. I hope they go on the table at the same time. But one of the surest ways of making sure that our Premier has the chance to negotiate is to give him the unanimous approval of this motion in the Legislature, and I therefore would ask all members to get behind this. It's some-

thing that there's not an NDP side, a Liberal side, a REP side, or a Conservative side to it. There's only a western side to it, and I urge this Legislature to support it.

Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: All those in favour of Motion 202 as amended, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye,

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say no. Carried.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung]

[Eight minutes having elapsed, the House divided]

For the motion:

Adair	Getty	Musgrove
Ady	Gibeault	Nelson
Alger	Hawkesworth	Oldring
Anderson	Heron	Osterman
Barrett	Hewes	Pashak
Betkowski	Horsman	Pengelly
Bogle	Hyland	Piquette
Bradley	Isley	Reid
Brassard	Johnston	Roberts
Cassin	Jonson	Rostad
Cherry	Koper	Russell
Chumir	Kowalski	Shaben
Clegg	Laing	Shrake
Cripps	Martin	Stevens
Day	McCoy	Stewart
Dinning	McEachern	Strong
Downey	Mirosh	Taylor
Elliott	Mitchell	Weiss
Elzinga	Mjolsness	West
Ewasiuk	Moore, M.	Wright
Fischer	Moore, R.	Zarusky
Fjordbotten	Musgreave	
Totals:	Ayes - 65	Noes - 0

[Motion as amended carried]

[At 5:34 p.m. the House adjourned to Wednesday at 2:30 p.m.]