

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTATitle: **Thursday, March 26, 1987 2:30 p.m.**

Date: 87/03/26

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

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

PRAYERS

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Let us pray.

As we make laws that govern all Albertans, let us be mindful of the trust Albertans invest in us as lawmakers.

Amen.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. members, as Speaker Carter had related at the opening of the sitting, the hon. Member for Chinook, Mr. Kroeger, was being hospitalized in the University hospital. I'm pleased to report, having visited him, he is in good spirits, although he can only attend visitors upon permission. It would be perhaps helpful if members of the Assembly would care to drop him a note. He's in the University hospital in 5F4; and if you wish to visit him perhaps a phone call to the hospital first.

head: **PRESENTING REPORTS BY
STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

MR. SCHUMACHER: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 93, I've taken under consideration the petitions for private Bills which have been received by the Assembly. I wish to report that all the petitions received have complied with Standing Order 86, except the following: the petition of the Calgary Beautification Foundation for the Calgary Beautification Foundation Amendment Act, 1987; the petition of C.J. McGonigle, city clerk, for the Edmonton Economic Development Authority Amendment Act, 1987; the petition of C.J. McGonigle, city clerk, for the Edmonton Convention and Tourism Authority Amendment Act, 1987; the petition of Thomas Payne, president, Central Western Railway Corporation, for the Central Western Railway Corporation Amendment Act, 1987; the petition of David Lagore, George Lagore, Gregory Schroeder, Ron Goodhew, and Gordie Lagore for the Acts Leadership Training Centre Act; and the petition of the William Roper Hull Home for the William Roper Hull Home Amendment Act, 1987.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS****Bill 18****Land Surveyors Amendment Act, 1987**

MR. HERON: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce a Bill, being the Land Surveyors Amendment Act, 1987, a proposed amendment to change the procedure for appealing disciplinary decisions of the Alberta Land Surveyors' Association, a new procedure [consistent] with the standard appeal procedures currently existing in other professional legislation.

[Leave granted; Bill 18 read a first time]

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 18 be placed on the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

head: **TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS**

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker. I wish to file in the Legislature Library a summary of the small business term assistance program, a summary of the distribution of the loans and other financial analysis.

MR. WEISS: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table information relating to Motion for a Return 154, and we might need the assistance of one or two pages to take the documents.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS**

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly, 10 students from grade 8, Exshaw school in the heart of improvement district No. 8 of Big Horn. Exshaw has a long history of development. But a number of the students, not only from Exshaw, are here today from the Stoney Indian Reserve, who also attend this school. They are accompanied by Mr. Carl Dick, their teacher, and their helpers Mrs. Veronica Bristow and Mrs. Lori Kamenka. They are seated in the members' gallery. If they would rise, would the members give them the customary welcome.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of this Legislature -- the very first time I've had the opportunity -- Southwood elementary school from the Glenmore constituency, of course, in Calgary, grades 5 and 6. There are 83 students, five teachers, and two parents. The teachers are Mr. Yaremko, Mrs. Sykes, Mr. Orme, Mrs. Torfason, and Mrs. Hauk. The parents are Mr. Bell and Mrs. Roelofsen. I had the opportunity of meeting these students and discussing government and parliamentary procedure with them. They're very clever and they know everything you're doing in here, so I'd ask my colleagues to behave themselves today. Thank you very much, and I'd ask you to rise to be introduced.

MR. ALGER: Mr. Speaker, Jake and Verna Berger are Highwood constituents from Nanton and they are in our midst today but I'm not sure where, so I'd like them to stand and receive the warm welcome of the House. There they are; I thought so.

head: **ORAL QUESTION PERIOD****Health Care Costs**

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask my first question of the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care. I understand the minister has said that he plans now to cut the medicare program itself by some \$65 million this year. I wonder if the minister will explain how he arrived at this figure, or if he pulled it out of a hat or what.

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, I'd be pleased to respond to that, perhaps in more detail even during the course of the budget

estimates. As I indicated earlier in a question period, the amount of funds in the health care insurance plan in the budget, tabled by the Provincial Treasurer last Friday, for basic health services is \$694 million. That is equal to what we believe it will cost during the current fiscal year, that being the basic budget of \$673 million plus some additional \$21 million, part of which was funded by special warrant a few weeks ago.

At the current time the rate of increase in the utilization of the plan is running at about 7 percent. Added to that is an amount of about 2 percent for changes in population groupings, more people entering into an older age group taking more health care. Some other items, such as new procedures and so on, take up some additional cost, making the projected increase in the health care insurance plan expenditures about 9 percent, and 9 percent on top of \$694 million is equal to about \$65 million. And as I've explained numerous times over the course of last week, one of the things we now have to do is figure out how to reduce that plan by that amount. That's what I've been discussing in this legislature over the course of time since it opened and outside the House before that. So we're looking at various ways, Mr. Speaker, in which we hope we can reduce the plan down to fit the budget that was tabled last Friday.

MS BARRETT: Well, supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure the minister is aware that his predecessor in 1985 commissioned a report on utilization by a committee of doctors, and the key finding of that report was that health care in this province costs some 37 percent less than it does in the American program, which isn't a system at all. Given that, Mr. Speaker, if the system isn't broke, why fix it?

MR. M. MOORE: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member may not be aware that the system in Alberta has been going up in cost at the rate of 15 percent a year over the last five years. That is well above inflation, about 10 percent above inflation and population growth. We're currently spending, when you add the costs of the Department of Hospitals and Medical Care to Community and Occupational Health and the health component of Social Services, about \$3 billion a year, or 30 percent of our budget, on health care.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that we can probably continue to meet the challenge of providing those kinds of dollars, but we cannot meet the challenge of providing dollars at the rate of a 15 percent increase each year. And if members will look at the estimates that were tabled last Friday, they will see that we had a great deal of difficulty even holding the line in the Department of Hospitals and Medical Care with some \$45 million of additional premium collections, let alone actually reducing the budget any significant amount. So if the member equates 15 percent a year over the next 10 years and projects where the health care budget will go in this province, it's not hard to understand that it's impossible for us to finance that kind of escalation. Now, if the member wants to compare with some other system, perhaps something other than the United States could be found where much of the health care dollars are borne directly by individuals and not financed by the state.

MS BARRETT: Well, supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. The budget doesn't say 30 percent. The supplementary question to the minister: has he been meeting in fact with representatives from the professions of chiropractic, optometry, and physiotherapy, and will he confirm to the Assembly that he's giving them a choice -- either deinsure these programs alto-

gether or slash their fees by 25 to 50 percent?

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the budget doesn't say "30 percent for the Department of Hospitals and Medical Care"; that runs about 23 percent. Neither did I say that the Department of Hospitals and Medical Care spends 30 percent. What I did say is that the Department of Hospitals and Medical Care, when added to the health and medical care components of two other departments, Social Services and Community and Occupational Health, does then equate to about 30 percent, and they're experiencing equal increases in those departments for health care components. So we've got a real challenge to meet in order to contain the budget.

With respect to the other professional groups, Mr. Speaker, I have been meeting regularly, as members know, with the Alberta Medical Association, who comprise by far the largest professional group involved in the utilization of the Alberta health care insurance plan and are not, by way of federal legislation and our agreement of last July 22, able to extra-bill or bill directly to the patients. The other professional groups involved in the Alberta health care insurance plan are dentists for work outside the hospital system. If dentists are in fact working in the hospital system doing surgery, then they are covered by the Canada Health Act and aren't allowed to extra-bill either. But outside the hospital system dentists fall into a different category, as well as physiotherapists, chiropractors, podiatrists, and optometrists.

I've been meeting with all of those groups over the course of the last few days. In fact this week I met with two different groups, and what I've been discussing with them is the need for us to contain the escalation in the practice that they're involved in in terms of health care costs. For example, in physiotherapy the average increase in cost to the health care insurance plan over the last four years has been 39.5 percent a year, and I've simply told them that there's no way we can continue that. I suggested to them that we were looking at options all the way from deinsuring totally some of those services to cutting the fee schedule that's paid by the health care plan in half or cutting it by 25 percent and then allowing those professions -- which they're allowed to do under current legislation -- to bill the patient directly for the balance. I must say that in a number of instances, Mr. Speaker, there was a good degree of acceptance and at least some knowledge and understanding of the difficulty we had and some suggestions that the approach I was suggesting was a reasonable one.

MS BARRETT: Well, I question, Mr. Speaker, the veracity of some of the statements about the basis upon which health care costs have risen. But let me ask the minister in a supplementary question then: can he confirm that when these services like chiropractic and optometry are deinsured or when the minister cuts the fee schedule going to those practices, patients will then have two choices, either pay extra fees themselves or participate in a private medicare plan? Is that the case?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. The Chair is having some difficulty with the whole business of hypothetical questions. If the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care wants to answer, so be it.

MR. M. MOORE: Well, Mr. Speaker, the present situation is that those professional groups I referred to may bill the patient directly more than what is paid by the health care insurance

plan, and many of them do. Optometrists, for example, have billed -- or many of them have -- an amount over and above what the health care insurance plan has paid for some time. People then have the option of either purchasing insurance which you are able to buy now, in fact, under the health care insurance plan . . . The only thing is that we have to pass regulations by the Lieutenant Governor in Council in order to allow private-sector insurance companies to sell insurance. But that has been done. They can either do that or pay for the extra amount out of their own pocket, or in many cases recover it by group insurance plans such as Blue Cross or something like that.

MS BARRETT: Supplementary question . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Edmonton Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary. There is, I submit, yet another choice, a less pleasant one, Mr. Minister. I'd like to know what consideration, what weighting in these economic considerations has been given to the potential that persons who desperately need these kinds of services of chiropractic, podiatry, physiotherapy, and optometry to stay independent will not be able to afford them and will have to go into institutions, therefore costing the system far more.

MR. M. MOORE: Well, that's always a consideration, and indeed the physiotherapists in particular raised with me the possibility that if their services were not readily available we might be looking at a situation where more people are institutionalized. That is one of the reasons why they encouraged me to try to limit any reductions in the amount the health care plan pays to their profession as much as we could, because they felt strongly that they were a preventive group of professionals in some instances at least. So the hon. member raises a good question, and we have to balance whatever we do in the fee schedule in the health care insurance plan against that probability. The other difficult area is that we have to be sure we don't have people going to the hospital system to utilize hospital-paid physiotherapists or chiropractors or whatever. And those are matters that we certainly are taking into consideration in the deliberations that we're making.

But I say again, Mr. Speaker, it's not possible to meet the budgetary targets this government has laid down, which we think are responsible, unless we take health care into consideration and try to contain costs there.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplementary, Member for Clover Bar.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, in the area of physiotherapy, I believe, the hon. minister said that the cost has escalated 39 percent. Is the minister in a position to indicate, in light of the fact that these are relatively new additional services -- that number of 39 percent should not startle the minister, because when you go from zero to something it's going to increase 100 percent. So these services are relatively new.

MR. M. MOORE: Well, that's true. Certainly that's true. But they still have to be paid for. And I wasn't suggesting that there are too many physiotherapists or that the level of medical attention they're providing to our population should be reduced. What I am suggesting is that part of the costs of it are going to have to be paid directly and not out of the health care insurance

plan.

The hon. member and I have discussed another item involving dentists under the code that provides for temporal mandibular joint work on people. That's escalated again very, very rapidly. I'm not able to stand here and suggest that the amount of work that's being done in that area shouldn't be done, but I do know that we've got to do something to try to control the cost of it.

So it's not a suggestion that any of these professional groups are carrying out work that they shouldn't be; it's rather a suggestion that the escalation in the costs are not one the government can any longer bear at the rate they've been increasing.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Second question, Official Opposition.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, I designate my second question to the Member for Vegreville.

Agricultural Assistance

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, and it concerns the reduction in the Alberta farm fuel rebate program. In view of the fact the grain farmers are making plans for the coming crop year at this time based on cash flow projections -- that is, income versus expenses -- and in view of the fact that the income side of this formula has been dealt a serious blow by the projected decrease in the price of grain, can the minister indicate why he decided to deal the serious blow to the expense side of this formula by raising the price of fuel 23 cents a gallon on June 1 this year?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to review it with the House yesterday, and I am more than happy to review it again with the hon. member. I should indicate to the hon. Member for Vegreville, because I believe that both he and his leader indicated it was going to be an increased cost of somewhere from \$2,000 to \$3,000 per average farm . . . I would hope that he would recheck the record, because that is totally false in that it will result in an increased cost -- there is no denying that -- of somewhere in the vicinity of \$500 per average farm. I just point that out so that the public itself is aware, plus the Chamber is aware, that there is a great deal of misleading information as it relates to the farm fuel allowance.

I should also point out, as I did yesterday, that farmers within the province of Alberta are going to retain the lowest fuel costs of any province within this country of ours. The changes do not take place until June 1, allowing for grain producers to get their crop in well in advance of this taking place. We are maintaining the 14-cent differential which is a cost to the Provincial Treasurer -- because as you are aware, Mr. Speaker, the program is administered under the Provincial Treasurer -- a cost of some \$97 million. In addition to that, with the foregone revenue as it relates to the 5 cent a gallon taxation that is going to take place on June 1, there will be somewhere in the vicinity of \$40 million of foregone revenue, which again will serve to be very beneficial to the agricultural sector.

MR. FOX: Mr. Speaker, if record correcting is being done here, what my leader and I have said is that grain producers are going to feel the effect of this the most, some \$1,000, \$2,000, and even \$3,000 per farm. Those are misleading statistics that the minister tries to lay on us.

Did the minister at least undertake any studies or consultations with farm groups, farmers, or lending institutions to determine the effect his decision to raise farm fuel prices will have on cash flow projections for farmers who are trying to borrow money right now to plant their crops this year?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I just indicated to the hon. member the figures and the studies that we have done, whereby it has shown that there is going to be an increase of somewhere in the vicinity of \$500 for the average farmer within the province of Alberta. The hon. member can use his figures any way he likes, but I would ask him if he does not agree with the figure I have quoted to him that is available in the estimates, whereby there is going to be an additional injection of some \$97 million to the agricultural community because of our retention of the 14 cent differential or the 63 to 64 cents differential in a gallon of gasoline, which we feel is going to be very beneficial to our agricultural sector, we acknowledge. I am delighted that this government has been so forthcoming in their support for the agricultural sector, where close to a half a billion dollars have been allocated to the agricultural sector, acknowledging that we are going through difficult economic times as it relates to our own budgetary expenditures within the government of Alberta right now.

MR. FOX: Regardless of the terms the minister tries to couch this action in, the fact remains that the price is going up 30 to 40 percent. And if he doesn't accept the figures given to me by farmers who say it is going to cost them \$2,000 or \$3,000 each, then he can take it up with them. But that is based on . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Question please.

MR. FOX: If the minister needs to credit it to back-bench pressure or whatever . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Question please. Will the hon. member put the question.

MR. FOX: Will the minister at least undertake to review this decision with an eye to delaying the implementation of it until after the season, until a full season has passed before bringing it in?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, we gave a great deal of forethought to our budget prior to bringing it into the House, and I must say in all fairness that we make these decisions on a very balanced approach, unlike the opposition who seem to make their decisions in a vacuum. We want to do it on a very balanced approach. I had the opportunity to meet with in excess of 200 farm groups prior to the reconvening of this Legislative Assembly. Nobody, Mr. Speaker, likes to see additional taxation. If there were a plebiscite or a petition circulated within the province of Alberta now, would you, the average taxpayer, agree to paying no taxes? Everybody would sign it. That's only natural, and it's only common sense that we are attempting to confront what we consider a very difficult issue as it relates to our budgetary deficit. We're asking the farming population to play a very small role in reducing that budgetary deficit.

In addition to that, we're maintaining our support in a very solid and concrete way for the agricultural sector, more so than any other province in this country. Again I stress: the farm fuel costs are lower than any other province within Canada.

MR. FOX: If the minister is implying that through his meetings with some 200 . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. FOX: This is the question. If he consulted with some 200 farm groups through the province of Alberta on his decision to raise the price of farm fuel, I challenge him to prove that, because that's not the impression they have.

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I indicated to the hon. member I had met with in excess of 200 farm groups, I never indicated to the hon. member that the farm groups endorsed this increase, and if the hon. member's attempting to relate that to the Chamber, he again is offering misleading evidence to the Chamber, as he consistently does. Because it's interesting to note when one looks to their own paper, the NDP proposals to curb government spending, which was released on November 27 -- and I'm going to get into that in more detail when we have an opportunity to debate our budgetary estimates -- they themselves offered a number of suggestions as to how to reduce the expenditures as it relates to the Department of Agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, we acknowledge the difficult period the agriculture sector's going through. That is why we have been so forthcoming in our support again in this budget, which amounts to close to half a billion dollars. We've maintained our programs of support such as the red meat stabilization program. We further extended the feed grain market adjustment program, a program which the New Democratic Party does not support. But we acknowledge the important role that agriculture does play.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Minister of Agriculture. On page 19 of the budget speech, the budget clearly indicates that farmers will continue to receive a 14 cent per litre advantage. In other statements from the budget the farmers are led to believe they would not pay the 5-cent tax. There is confusion out there in the province, and I would have to agree with our Legislative colleague from Vegreville. Would the minister be prepared to clarify this by a ministerial statement or a statement through to the media that would clarify once and for all that there is an increase of cost to the farmer and approximately what that cost would be?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I would refer the hon. member to page 85, I believe, of the budgetary document, whereby we go through in a very concise way as to exactly what is taking place. We indicate that on June 1 we are reducing the farm fuel allowance to 9 cents per litre because the farming population will not be paying the 5-cent tax that has been imposed. I went through it in a very open way with the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon yesterday, and I indicated just earlier to the hon. Member for Vegreville also that from our calculations, the average farmer is going to face increased costs of somewhere between \$500 and \$550. If the hon. members would like further elaboration, I'm in their hands as I always am and we will do our level best to be obliging to the House.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Agriculture, He's fond of making the statements that Alberta farmers will pay less for fuel than anywhere else. That's like saying that Newfoundlanders will pay less for their fish than anywhere else. We make the fuel here.

Now let's move on a bit here then. Would the minister . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Question please.

MR. TAYLOR: . . . consider at least altering this tax plan to the extent that if a farmer is able to come in and show you that he paid no taxable income last year, he will not have to pay this \$500 or \$1,000 or \$2,000, whatever the case may be, in tax up front this year? Will you let those farmers off the hook anyhow?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, we brought together what we consider a number of very worthwhile programs for the agricultural sector. We've come forward with our farm credit stability program, in which in excess of 14,000 people are participating. I would only ask the House to exercise one caution and that is to acknowledge the inflammatory statements the member made during the 1986 farm year in which he indicated that we were going to have such a disastrous impact, where in reality it was a record year.

We offer our projections, and our projections do acknowledge, as the hon. members have indicated, that grain prices are going to be lower for the year 1987. But until we see that in reality, it's rather difficult for us to offer concrete figures. But even acknowledging that, we are going to continue with our consistent support.

In direct response to the hon. member, as he is aware, taxation policy falls under the preview of the Provincial Treasurer, and I'm more than happy to offer that suggestion to him. But I want to put the strong caveat on it that this government is going to continue to support the agricultural sector, as we have done in the past, and I am sure the hon. member would acknowledge, if he wished to exercise some fair play, that we have been very forthcoming with our support, because our heart does go out to those individuals within the agricultural sector that are presently facing those difficulties.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. Order please. The Chair is somewhat uncomfortable. We are now two-thirds through the question period. There are nine hon. members which the Chair presumes have urgent and pressing questions to ask members of the Cabinet. Could the hon. members and ministers attempt to keep the questions and responses somewhat in direct proportion?

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I'll keep mine to two sentences. He's able to answer them all with a yes or a no. Okay . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question. Ask the question.

MR. TAYLOR: Well, you rattle the cage, and the whole works come after you today, don't you?

Mr. Speaker, looking at this budget here, there has been . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. To whom is the hon. member putting the question?

MR. TAYLOR: I'm sorry; it's to the Minister of Agriculture. I thought he had occupied centre seat here.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Question please.

MR. TAYLOR: He stated that the priority of this government is

in the budget, but when you look at last Friday's direct spending on agriculture, it is down over \$200 million or down 37 percent. However, the cut in travel is only down 17 percent. Could the minister tell us whether or not this is an indication of this government's emphasis on agriculture, when travel gets cut less than what farmers get cut?

MR. ELZINGA: Well, Mr. Speaker, surely the hon. member is not advocating that he is going to wish a drought on our farming population. Because one only has to examine our budgetary estimates and he will see that the result of our budgetary estimates -- the main reason for that is the doing away with a number of drought-related programs such as the Alberta livestock assistance program, the livestock drought assistance program, and the farm water assistance program that account for the large majority of that reduction, and because those programs are now redundant, it's only natural that they be decreased.

The overall budgetary decrease is in the vicinity of 6 percent within our budgetary estimates, when one does away with those programs and takes a number of factors into account. But if I could underscore again, and recognizing what you have just said I will not do that, but at a different time, when we have our opportunity to go through our budgetary estimates, I will outline in a specific way the excellent programs we are continuing with, the number of programs that we have renewed in support of the agricultural community.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplementary, Liberal leader?

MR. TAYLOR: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Back to the Minister of Agriculture. Could he tell us whether or not, since he's been responsible for administering the single largest cut in financial assistance to farmers in the history of this province, no matter what government -- the largest single cut -- he will at least now look at the possibility of establishing a debt review board with teeth, at least with powers equivalent to what the federal board has? Will he put in a moratorium on foreclosures, for instance?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to answer that question yesterday, so acknowledging your advice, sir, I'll just indicate that if you would like to review *Hansard* from yesterday and the day before when he asked the same question, it will save the time of the House.

MR. TAYLOR: Well, at least we're spared the thought of listening to the same answer over and over again. Now we can read the same answer over and over again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. TAYLOR: The natives are restless today, Mr. Speaker.

Could we have any evidence from the Minister of Agriculture that he would take into consultation with him the farm organizations to make the representations he talked about earlier to the Provincial Treasurer, to see whether or not they could review the budget and take that 23 cents a gallon off the backs of the farmers for this year?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I just answered that question also.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, his refusal to answer has to be his greatest confession. So I take it now that he will not approach

the Treasurer and also that he will not give succour or help to those farmers that paid no taxable income this year and, through no fault of their own . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. Would the hon. member put the question?

MR. TAYLOR: My final question, Mr. Speaker, is: would he just go this far? Now you haven't answered this one before. Will he admit that his performance around the cabinet table has been so disgraceful . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. Order please.

MR. TAYLOR: . . . that he's prepared to resign?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, if my behaviour were as bad as the hon. member's, I would, but since it's not I won't.

Trade with Middle East

DR. BUCK: The hon. Liberal leader has a decided advantage; he can turn his hearing aid off when he wants to. He doesn't have to listen to you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade. I'd like to know, in light of the fact that the minister has spent the taxpayers' dollars to go to the Middle East, if the minister can indicate if there's been any impact on the potential for Alberta to get involved in Mid East trade because of the arms scandal that the United States was involved in. Can the minister indicate if this has had any spin-off as to how we are making out in dealing with the Middle East?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, as a part of our ongoing priorities with respect to expanding trade opportunities, trade missions are conducted through many parts of the world. The most recent mission to the gulf states was a very productive mission, with a number of Alberta companies being involved in this mission. In the course of meeting with major potential customers of Canadian suppliers of oil and gas equipment, including national oil companies from three of the gulf states, there was an indication left with us, with the companies and with myself, that the timing of the mission was appropriate.

DR. BUCK: What direction has the minister given his department as to what areas we should be looking at initiatives to enhance our trade with the Middle East? What directives has the minister given his department?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, the first area was the one the hon. member referred to, and that's in the area of oil and gas equipment. Historically a number of the gulf states have sourced oil and gas equipment from other countries, particularly the United States. I wanted to raise the profile of the capability of Alberta manufacturers for those goods and services that are required in that market area, and that was one of the key focuses.

Another area was in the area of our capability of providing consulting services in areas such as telecommunications, communications, service areas, civil engineering. Those are important areas where we think improvements can be made in terms of access to opportunities in that part of the world as well as

other parts of the world.

Another key area in terms of focus of the mission, Mr. Speaker, was in the area of investment by way of joint ventures with Alberta companies, particularly in areas where there are suitable matches in terms of opportunities for additional trade worldwide.

DR. BUCK: Can the minister indicate if there have been any specific examples that we did accomplish something with this mission? Were there any specific projects that developed because of the trip over to the Middle East?

MR. SHABEN: As a result of the mission and at the time the mission took place, a number of the companies that were with the Alberta mission had direct, one-on-one meetings with the national oil companies and with other companies. One company in particular indicated to me that they expected to conclude between \$50 million and \$100 million worth of business as a result of this mission.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Chair would remind hon. members -- order please -- that urgent and pressing business is the whole point of question period and that ministers' estimates are now before the House.

Supplementary, Liberal Party.

MR. TAYLOR: Designate.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: You don't designate a supplementary. The hon. Member for Edmonton Meadowlark.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister, again. When we need to be developing new markets for Alberta products, how can the minister justify a 53 percent cut in financial assistance to exporters? Is he replacing that kind of program with his own personal travel abroad?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, one of the difficulties in dealing with that sort of a question in the question period is that . . .

MR. MITCHELL: It's a legitimate question.

MR. SHABEN: No. It needs to be dealt with in the discussion of the estimates. It's impossible to deal with that kind of a question in the question period, and the hon. member knows it.

Federal Aid for Oil Sector

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Energy. Yesterday the federal minister of energy made an announcement which has the potential of \$1 billion of energy-related and energy activities in this province. To the minister: what role did he have in the discussions leading up to this enormous announcement of potential activity? [interjections]

DR. WEBBER: I can understand why the hon. members in the opposition are upset; they don't like good news.

Mr. Speaker, hon. members know that we as a government have been for many, many months now pressing the federal government for initiatives to respond to the low oil prices and the problems that the industry were finding themselves in, and it was in the last 10 days in particular that we had particularly intense and fruitful discussions, as it turns out, with respect to spe-

cific assistance measures. We were working co-operatively with them, and we provided them with information and ideas that would help them formulate their package. It was not a jointly negotiated package; it was a decision of the federal government to make this announcement. It's not like negotiating Syncrude, as we did in the past, where everything was agreed to before an announcement was made.

Some of the information that we did provide them related to the importance of enhancing the cash flow, particularly of the small companies, and attracting investment from the outside, as earned depletion with flow-through shares did, and improving the economics of drilling. We discussed these alternatives with the federal government and also with representatives of the industry.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Speaker, to the minister. When did -- let me rephrase that. Did the minister know in advance the details of the announcement by the federal minister?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, after discussing the initial ideas and options between ourselves and the federal government, we had to await their cabinet's decision. In fact, we did not know if in fact they were going to announce a package or when it was going to be announced. We didn't know the substance of the announced package last week, as indicated by a report in the media. In fact, the federal government met Tuesday of this week, through their planning and priorities committee meeting, where they made the decision on Tuesday as to what they were going to announce. We did not know the substance of that particular package on Tuesday.

The Deputy Prime Minister and our Premier had a conversation late Tuesday afternoon, and it was at that time that we were made aware of what the details of the package were going to be from the federal government. Again I make reference to the fact that a media report indicated that I had confirmed that the Premier knew the full details last Thursday. That's entirely false. And also, Mr. Speaker, there was indication that the Premier knew last Thursday that there would be an offer of a substantial package; again, that's false.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Speaker, has the minister had the opportunity yet to discuss with industry representatives exactly when they will respond to this announcement?

DR. WEBBER: Well, Mr. Speaker, we are entering into the time of year when we have spring breakup in the oil and gas industry, and hon. members know that there is a significant drop in activity at that time. The announced package of the federal government was to begin April 1, 1987, and I expect it will be several months before we'll see a significant impact on jobs. However, I do expect that we will see through the course of the summer and the fall and next winter a significant increase in activity.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to point out -- and the point was raised by the hon. Member for Calgary Forest Lawn yesterday -- about the companies that would be responding. Of the top 50 to 60 companies in the industry about 27 to 37 of them are considered to be junior companies. In fact, there are only 23 that one could consider to be big companies or integrated and seniors, and they would be taking up about 22 percent of the estimated incentives, and they actually provide some 82 percent of the production. On the other hand, the juniors, who represent about 18 percent of the total production, will be receiving about 78 percent of the

total incentives. So it is a program designed to assist the small- and medium-sized companies.

MR. STEVENS: Final supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Can the minister outline the role played by Alberta MPs in this decision? [interjections]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, order. Order, please . . .

MR. STRONG: Those 21 phantoms.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: That includes you. Order please.

The Chair is having some difficulty with the urgent and pressing nature of some of these questions. Minister of Energy.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Speaker, I'll rephrase that supplementary. Would the minister confirm the results of the discussions that he had with the MPs on this matter? It is an urgent matter for Albertans.

AN HON. MEMBER: Before the next election.

AN HON. MEMBER: Most of them are going to lose anyway.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Calgary Forest Lawn, a supplementary.

DR. WEBBER: I was sitting down so that the hon. members across the way would quieten down so that I could respond to the question.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to note that Alberta MPs have been working for many months trying to get their federal government to respond. In fact, with the earned depletion allowance with flow-through shares, some 60-plus MPs from western Canada were supportive of that particular proposal, as was a significant portion of the industry and also the provincial government. I think our Alberta MPs played a very important role in having the federal government make this particular move with the announcement of yesterday, and in particular I think the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Mazankowski, played a specially important role.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplementary, Calgary Forest Lawn.

MR. PASHAK: Well, I'd just like to disagree with the minister.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. PASHAK: You'll get a question right now.

Half of that money that is being made available will not generate flow-through share funding, so how is the minister going to explain how this measure would generate \$1 billion in added investment capital?

DR. WEBBER: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member, all he has to do is read the announcement yesterday from the federal Minister of Energy as to what the program is designed to do: some \$350 million worth of federal incentives to generate approximately a billion dollars of additional investment each year during the life of the program. The hon. member was indicating yesterday that there's only going to be -- I don't know if he used the term "multinationals," but he probably did. In fact, what I'm

trying to point out today is the fact that the portion of the industry -- the small producers who represent some 18 percent of the total production in this province will get 78 percent of the benefits of this package.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, supplementary to the minister. I've had I think three phone calls in the last 12 hours, all from investors in Oklahoma and Texas that wanted to know if it was indeed true that they could come up here like a Klondike gold rush, set up a company, and only pay two-thirds of the cost of any well, dry or oil. In other words, is this budget going to apply to any newcomer coming in from anywhere in the world that wants to put money into drilling a well? Are we going to take taxpayer's dollars and give him a third back whether it's a dry hole or not?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. [interjection] Order, please. You're sure testing the Chair. The time for question period has expired. Would the members of the Assembly agree to the completion of this phase of the questions?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Minister of Energy.

DR. WEBBER: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. leader of the Liberal Party surely should know that the administration of the federally announced program is done by the federal government, and I think his question would be more appropriately applied to the federal government.

However, as a government of Alberta -- and I indicated this yesterday -- we welcome foreign investment in this province. Whether it be from the United States, the Texas gulf, or wherever it's from, we welcome foreign investment. I say that in the sense that we have a substantial segment of the industry -- we have Canadian independent companies, and we want to see that sector remain. But we also welcome foreign investment, as we have in the past -- not like his federal cousins of a few years ago who with this FIRA system discouraged investment in this country.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question period has expired. The Chair would observe that other than the statutory agreement as to questions today, only one member had the opportunity of putting a question.

AN HON. MEMBER: Point of order.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Red Deer North, point of order.

MR. DAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd refer you and the members to page 132 of *Beauchesne*, citation 359(8): "A question that has been previously answered ought not to be asked again." There's a growing difficulty in this area, as witnessed today; the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon with his questions on moratoria and the Member for Vegreville with his questions on the gas tax are just two of the more obvious examples. I don't want to belabour the House with a litany of other examples that have been ongoing over the last week or two. Citation 359(8) says: "A question that has been previously answered ought not

to be asked again." It doesn't say that the member asking it has to be deliriously happy with the response. It merely says that if it has been answered, it should not be asked again.

The reason I bring it up, Mr. Speaker, is because we can't deal with the points of order during question period; we have to wait. By that time the time has been absorbed, and in light of the ironic fact that the opposition complains about lack of time in question period when they already have 89.3 percent of the questions, I feel it's putting an unnecessary weight on us and refer it to the Chair for a decision.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Vegreville, on the point of order.

MR. FOX: Mr. Speaker, just simply because the Member for Red Deer North does not understand the issue doesn't mean he can imply the questions are the same. I challenge him on the point of order. I have not asked any two questions on the farm fuel distribution allowance that are the same. He can check the record, and that will be verified. Check the record.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, since I was referred to as asking the same question, the point, as he so correctly read out, is: if an answer has been given. Just because a minister stands up, mouths some words, and sits down -- that's not an answer. Now it may well be that we should go to deciding whether or not an answer has been given after it has been given. But also quite clear in this same section is the right for the minister to refuse to answer, not get up, or dodge the question. All those things are in there, and consequently the right to ask the question -- this is why *Beauchesne* says: if a question has been answered. Because it's not always answered. It can be refused, dodged, and run around. So all we're trying to do is get an answer, first of all.

Secondly, I know that some things like farm problems may not be that interesting to some of the back bench over there, but the fact is that quite often some of these questions have a subtle difference and there is a subtle change. They don't have the same hammering, right straight through to the point that the Member for Banff-Cochrane was able to make; I'll agree. But nevertheless they do have subtle changes in their questioning, and I think maybe he might of missed that.

MS BARRETT: On the [inaudible] point of order. Mr. Speaker, it occurs to me that if the member who raised the point of order is so concerned about expediting question period so that more questions can actually be asked and answered, the ministers ought to refer themselves to the *Standing Orders* and to the routine Orders of the Day, which allow them to make ministerial statements in a separate category other than question period.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, the point the hon. Opposition House Leader made is the point I want to bring to your attention. The Minister of Energy had the opportunity yesterday to make a ministerial announcement. We didn't have to have the Greg and Neil show this afternoon, when we are concerned about wasting the House's time. And some of the questions -- there was a prime example where the minister could have gotten up yesterday, and should have because this was a very, very important announcement he could have made in this House. Now, he had to wait for my colleague from Little Bow to ask him a question so that he could make a little speech, and today we had more of that charade going on. So I think that could have very well been

a ministerial statement.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, just to commend the hon. member who raised this point of order and to remind the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon that he may be the only person who finds anything subtle about anything he says, despite his look in the mirror. There has been a repetition of questions, just no way around it, and if the hon. member wants to verify that, he may only need go to *Hansard*. So I think the point is well taken, and obviously if questions are going to be repeated, then ministers are in the position of trying to bury the answers in order to communicate a different form of understanding to people who find the expressed word very difficult to absorb.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Well, the Chair... [interjections] Order please. The Chair is of the view that there is some foundation to the point of order raised by the Member for Red Deer North. Indeed, if one were to read *Beauchesne*, there is ample evidence about repetition of questions being asked. As to the matter of ministers responding to questions asked, as members are well aware, no member of this Assembly is compelled to answer any question that is put.

Now, with the view in mind that there is some foundation to the matter raised from the point of order by the Member for Red Deer North, I would request that all members consider the comments made speaking to the point of order, and let's see some sense of co-operation tomorrow.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, I move that questions 140, 142, 151, 153, and 160 stand, and that motions for returns 161, 166, 173, 175, and 178 stand.

[Motion carried]

head: WRITTEN QUESTIONS

154. Ms Barrett asked the government the following question:

What is the government's best estimate of when it will be able to table a response, in each case, to:

- (1) Order for a Return 139, made May 14, 1985, for detail of travel by Members of the Legislative Assembly, members of the Executive Council, and others, for the period March 1, 1984, to March 31, 1985;
- (2) Order for a Return 141, made May 28, 1985, for results of monthly ambient water quality monitoring undertaken at 11 river sites in Alberta;
- (3) Written Question 132, accepted June 26, 1986, seeking information about caseloads served by social workers in the Social Services department;
- (4) Written Question 138, accepted June 19, 1986, seeking information about foreclosure actions undertaken by the Alberta Home Mortgage Corporation and its successor corporation;
- (5) Order for a Return 140, made June 19, 1986, for information about employees of the government working in offices outside Alberta;
- (6) Order for a Return 141, made June 19, 1986, for information about the travel undertaken by employees of the government working in offices outside Alberta;
- (7) Order for a Return 142, made June 19, 1986, for details of travel by Members of the Legislative As-

sembly, members of the Executive Council, and others, for the period April 1, 1985, to March 31, 1986;

- (8) Written Question 152, accepted July 31, 1986, seeking information about grants of money, if any, by the government to Gainers Inc. since March 31, 1984;
- (9) Order for a Return 154, made August 14, 1986, for copies of documents, if any, formalizing obligations between the government and Ski Kananaskis Incorporated;
- (10) Order for a Return 158, made September 11, 1986, for information concerning the assumption of responsibility by the Department of the Environment through its agent the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation, in May 1985, of the abandoned chemical waste storage site at Nisku previously operated by the D & D Corporation; and
- (11) Order for a Return 165, made September 11, 1986, for information concerning the assumption of responsibility by the Department of the Environment, through its agent the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation, of the abandoned chemical waste storage site at Nisku previously operated by Kinetic Ecological Resources Group (1982) Ltd.?

[Question accepted]

174. Ms Barrett asked the government the following question:

- (1) With regard to the temporary staff service program terminated by Personnel Administration at June 1, 1984, for each of the last six fiscal years in which the program was in operation
 - (a) what was the average number of people employed, full-time and part-time;
 - (b) what was the average rate of pay and the range of rates of pay of people employed;
 - (c) how many people were employed solely to administer the program; and
 - (d) what was the total annual cost of the program?
- (2) For the 1984-85 and 1985-86 fiscal years, in each year
 - (a) what was the total cost of meeting the government's temporary staffing needs through private-sector agencies;
 - (b) what were the names of all persons contracted to supply temporary staff to the government;
 - (c) of all people contracted as temporary staff through private-sector agencies, how many worked a total of more than 30 hours per week for more than three weeks;
 - (d) which five persons were paid the most in public funds for temporary staff services contracted by the government; and
 - (e) what was the average cost per temporary staff worker per hour paid by the government to private-sector agencies contracted to supply temporary staff?

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, on Question 174, unfortunately not all the information requested is available, and therefore the question has to be rejected, but I am willing to speak to the hon. Member for Edmonton Highlands and perhaps find out if there is some information that she would like that is available.

177. Ms Barrett asked the government the following question:

In respect of claims filed for flood damage compensation under the program announced July 24, 1986, by the minister responsible for Public Safety Services:

- (1) what dollar value of claims was received from and what dollar value of compensation was paid to
 - (a) persons in the provincial electoral division of Barrhead, and
 - (b) persons in the city of Edmonton;
- (2) what was the total dollar value of claims received from and compensation paid to all other persons?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, on March 12, 1987, the hon. member raised a similar question in the House. At that time I indicated that I would be asking the Assembly to not accept the question, but I did point out at that time that I wanted to make a suggestion to the hon. member, and I would just like to repeat the words that I used on March 12.

If the hon. member would have the similar type question returned and put as a motion for a return, perhaps requesting that they be identified according to municipal district rather than electoral district, we would be able to provide that information rather quickly.

head: MOTIONS FOR RETURNS

162. Mr. Mitchell moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of every expense account submitted by, and of every charge incurred or account paid on behalf of, every minister and executive assistant during the 1985-86 and 1986-87 fiscal years, which covers an expenditure in respect of travel, accommodation, meals, or entertainment.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, I'm rather surprised that the hon. Member for Edmonton Meadowlark has moved this motion. Clearly, there are several points which should be made with respect to it. First of all, it asks for photocopies or a copy of every expense account submitted by, and of every charge incurred. That would be a tremendous pile of paper. I don't know whether the hon. member appreciates the cost and the volume that would be involved in it.

Secondly, there has in fact been an order filed. It was filed on March 9, 1987, for the assistance of the hon. Member for Edmonton Meadowlark and of his staff, which I hope he doesn't rely upon if he is going to chase the leadership of that party. Sessional paper 142A/87 is the identification of it, and that particular sessional paper dealt with details of all travel, excluding the travel in Alberta, paid for by public funds for Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, members of the Executive Council and Executive Council staff, staff of the office of the Premier, and the personal staff of all ministers for the period April 1, 1985, to March 31, 1986.

Mr. Speaker, in short, at least half of the information, the data, has been filed already in the Assembly, although it is not filed by way of photocopy or copies but rather by way of this document. And you can just appreciate, since this is a listing showing that data, how voluminous the background documentation would be. I would further suggest for the edification of the hon. member -- he was in the Legislature at the time, on June 19, 1986, when this motion that has been responded to was accepted -- that he would find on page 117 of *Hansard* the debate which indicated clearly how to appropriately express an order

for a return on a matter such as this.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would point out that a portion of the period for which he is requesting information has not yet expired, and clearly this motion has so many defects in it that we ought not to give it any further consideration.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I am surprised in turn that we would not receive or be aware of a greater humility on the part of this government when we consider the level of travel expenditure that is indulged in by this government. It probably assails the imagination of most governments in this country.

I would like to point out one very, very critical comparison that every Albertan should be aware of. In the fiscal year 1984-85 the government of B.C., which governs more people, which is further from Ottawa, spent \$29 million on travel. Count them: \$29 million. In the same period of time this government, renowned now for excessive expenditure on services to itself, spent \$64 million. That isn't double, Mr. Speaker; that is over double. That is 110 percent of what British Columbia spends on travel, at a time when we spend 157 percent of the national average of expenditure per capita by provincial governments. And what do I get in return for that, Mr. Speaker? A smug answer to a legitimate question.

Yes, we are aware of the information that is available in that document. That information is irrelevant to the question because it is insufficiently detailed. And I am offended by comments about our researchers, who, given the level of expenditure that we are allowed to expend upon them by this government, are more than adequate to the task and are superior in their efforts. [interjections] I want to make this point, if I could do that with some quiet from the other side.

My point is that this is not a matter for frivolity; this is a very important matter. And if this government was able to produce that document, they must have had the detail available. We want to see the detail because we want to see the nature of the expenditure. We want to see how much you spend on a hotel room, how much you spend on expensive wine, how much you spend on meals to whom, and for whom we're buying those kinds of meals. We are over double what B.C. spends.

This is a question of urgency; it's a question requiring serious consideration by this government. It should not be stonewalling, as it is in revealing this kind of information.

The matter is all that much more severe when we consider the debate today in question period concerning the minister of economic development's trip to the Middle East. In light of the fact that he has cut support to private-sector -- private-sector -- exporters by 53 percent in that area that is perhaps one of the most critical areas for this province's economic development, which is determining international markets, and he has replaced that by increased travel by bureaucrats and politicians, this request for information is all that much more serious, and their negligence in not responding to this motion for a return is all that much more profoundly disturbing, Mr. Speaker.

I urge the members of this House to vote in favour of this motion because it's a very, very important matter affecting the excessive expenditure of this government.

[Motion lost]

164. Mrs. Hewes moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of the report on Westerra Institute of Technology prepared for the government of Alberta by Woods Gordon, management consultants, in the summer

of 1985.

MR. RUSSELL: Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry we're going to have to vote against supporting this motion, and without meaning to sound niggling, I must be accurate. There is no such report as described in the motion and therefore we can't table it. We've done a search, and I believe I know the report to which the hon. member is referring. There was a report prepared for Westerra Institute by Westerra Institute, commissioned by Woods Gordon. Nonetheless, the description being inaccurate, that aside, we would still turn the motion down because the report belongs to a self-governing autonomous board, and the inquiry should be directed to them. They own the report.

[Motion lost]

167. Mr. Taylor moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of every study prepared for or by the government on the impact of free trade on any sector or sectors of the Alberta economy.

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the Assembly decline accepting this motion. There are a number of reasons for that. A great deal of the information that has been gathered in order for Alberta to provide information to the negotiating team representing Canada has been sought and obtained on a confidential basis. The information has been provided to us on the basis that companies who have provided it to us throughout the length and breadth of this province have provided it to us on the basis that it would not be released.

Also, Mr. Speaker, there have been studies undertaken that, should they be made public at this time, could jeopardize the nature of the negotiations that are going on between Canada and the United States with respect to a free trade pact. We would not like to reduce the level of communication that is taking place between Alberta and the federal negotiator as a result of material being made available that might jeopardize those discussions.

I am however, Mr. Speaker, updating a comprehensive compilation of publicly available documents and studies that relate to free trade and its impact. That compilation should be completed sometime in April, and I'll make it available to the hon. member.

MR. McEACHERN: Mr. Speaker, I don't understand why the minister cannot make some of these studies available. Why should the people of this country be taken into a free trade arrangement in which they don't know the facts and the details that went into making the decision. There are studies available -- supposedly we hear the Premier refer to them once in a while; we hear you refer to them -- that say that free trade would be a good deal for Canada. I'd like to see some of those studies. There are also studies available that say it is not so good. I'd like to see some of those studies. The Premier and yourself take it upon yourselves to say, "Oh no, we'll keep all these studies secret until after the deal is made, because we wouldn't want to give away an secrets."

AN HON. MEMBER: There were lots of studies made.

MR. McEACHERN: Yes, but there are not very many public studies available that are really as detailed as implied by the Premier and by yourself and by the federal government -- the same

problem. They've released some documents with pages blank in them. The Conservative government of this country and the Conservative government of this province are expecting us to go into a deal that they are making in secret, behind closed doors, with no information available to the public, and expect us to accept it and assume that it will be a wonderful deal.

I don't believe it, Mr. Speaker, and I think that those documents should be made available for us.

MR. TAYLOR: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I find it hard, too, to understand why we cannot release those documents. It's not a case, as is normal in government, where the government of the day is in the process of negotiating a deal of some sort with some private contractor or not. What we've been told time and time again by the national government and also the provincial government is that this is something that all Canada, all Canadians, are embarking on. It's really not so much a deal of a government to government as it is a deal, or almost a happening, that is taking place where all of the people of Canada are supposed to be involved in it. As a matter of fact, there was even some discussion at one time of a referendum, Mr. Speaker, or something so all Canadians would be behind it.

The very argument that the provincial governments used that the federal government shouldn't do this on their own, that they, the provincial governments, should have a part of it and that these meetings should take place, then moves on a step farther down. If the provincial government should be in on it because it's such a national momentous decision to make, then the people of the provinces should be in on it too. So it goes, it follows, Mr. Speaker, that if it is such a national undertaking -- and it will probably be one of the most major undertakings we've had as far as the voters of Canada are concerned, and particularly of Alberta since 1905, when the province got under way -- it seems to me only natural that they would want to involve the public as much as possible and, in effect, have the public in on the decision-making, because free trade is for everyone.

It's not a government-to-government deal. It's not a corporation-to-corporation deal. It's almost person to person, and consequently, being denied this information, it can only leave us with a couple of opinions, a couple of ideas, a couple of conclusions, Mr. Speaker, that there must be something in those studies that doesn't measure up to the rather cheery type of attitude that they haven't put across before.

Is there some hidden agenda? Is there something in these reports suddenly that may indicate that the provincial and federal governments are embarked on almost a suicidal mission? Or is there some sort of message that came out early to our Premier, as it did apparently a while back on the oil and gas thing, saying: "The attitude now is to change direction a little bit?" What's going on here? Here is something that everybody was supposed to be informed of. The very economics of the idea were supposed to be so patently obvious that anyone would vote for it. Now suddenly, when that evidence is asked for: "Well, we can't give it to you. It might jeopardize things. It could jeopardize relationships." Obviously, Mr. Speaker, the very fact that they cannot release it indicates to me that there are some very, very negative studies, and there's some very, very negative information. There's no question about it, Mr. Speaker.

So I ask the members in the House to support this, because it's very important. This is not an NDP or a Liberal or Conservative idea; free trade is a Canadian decision, an Alberta decision. And whether you're the cabinet of the day or not, I don't

think you have the right to try to deny the necessary information for the people to make up their minds on it. So I would urge the House to vote for my motion.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, in supporting the motion calling for the information, I point out . . . [interjections]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, order.

MR. McEACHERN: Nobody said anything about closing debate.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are you ready for the question on Motion for a Return 167? All those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

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

[Eight minutes having elapsed, the House divided]

For the motion:

Barrett	Hewes	Sigurdson
Buck	McEachern	Speaker, R.
Chumir	Mitchell	Strong
Ewasiuk	Mjolsness	Taylor
Gibeault	Pashak	Wright
Hawkesworth	Roberts	

Against the motion:

Ady	Elzinga	Pengelly
Alger	Fischer	Reid
Anderson	Heron	Russell
Betkowski	Hyland	Schumacher
Bogle	Jonson	Shaben
Brassard	Koper	Shrake
Campbell	Kowalski	Sparrow
Cassin	McCoy	Stevens
Cherry	Moore, R.	Stewart
Clegg	Musgreave	Trynchy
Cripps	Musgrove	Webber
Day	Oldring	Weiss
Downey	Orman	West
Drobot	Osterman	Young
Elliott	Payne	Zarusky

Totals	Ayes - 17	Noes - 45
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[Motion lost]

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, it's sure a lot closer then it used to be.

168. Mr. Chumir moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing:

- (1) a copy of the agreement between the government of Alberta and Financial Trustco Ltd. relating to the development and construction of the lodge and hotel at Ribbon Creek, and
- (2) a copy of every other agreement between the government of Alberta and any other party relating to design, development, or construction of the lodge and hotel at Ribbon Creek.

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to propose an amendment to the motion by adding at the end of the motion:

Such material to be provided subject to the concurrence of the private-sector parties.

MR. CHUMIR: Mr. Speaker, I would oppose the amendment. This is clearly the type of information that's in the public interest. It relates to and sets out the terms of a business transaction between the provincial government and a private company, not dealing with assets of the private company but rather dealing directly with property belonging to the people of the province of Alberta, namely a portion of the rights that are within the Kananaskis Country development.

I would submit, Mr. Speaker, that it is totally unacceptable to place a condition of that kind on a motion of this nature. This is the type of information that should be provided to the House without delay, not only in this instance but in other instances. It's the type of information that is readily available under progressive freedom of information legislation across North America. It points out the urgent need for such legislation, and I would urge the House to reject the amendment.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, I oppose the amendment as proposed by the minister as well. Let's face it; we're talking about public money here, and there's an increasing tendency of this government to act with a siege mentality when it comes to public questioning of how our tax dollars are being spent. There's no end of ministerial statements about how our tax dollars aren't going to be spent on needed public services, but when it comes to honest questions about how this government is spending money, then I say we have a right to know. Moreover, let's ask the really important political point here: what has Financial Trustco got to hide, and why does the government want to support that potential hiding? Let's defeat this amendment and go right to the question.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, if I may speak against the amendment for a moment. One of the things I think we have to look at here is the principle of open government that we hope to be moving towards. All governments at one time or another aspire -- particularly when the parties are in opposition, they're always great for open government. But I think that there is a tendency, the longer you're in government, to do as the hon. Member for Edmonton Highlands said: undergo a siege mentality.

But I think one of the things that we can get across to the public and to anybody doing business with the government is that if indeed their contracts and the letters will become public, they know it'll become public, I think we will make one of the greatest moves possible to doing away with cronyism, secret deals under the counter, whatever it is. And this is for the future; it doesn't matter who's in government. Once the private sector realizes that they are operating in a fishbowl, then I think the morality will follow, and I think we have to make that statement sometime. We have to start saying, "You're operating in a

fishbowl whether you like it or not, private enterprise, when you're talking to government." This is the main reason for going against the amendment, so that we can send that message out to the people that are going to do business with the government that no longer is cronyism, no longer are trips, no longer are sideline benefits in: everything's going to be done in a fishbowl.

Thank you.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say something against this amendment as well. As I read the main motion, it says very clearly that it's agreements between the government and parties. So we're talking about a document that is a public document. The government of Alberta has signed the document, either made certain policy commitments or financial commitments to these other parties, and that document at that point in time, at least one copy of it, is the property of the government of Alberta. I can see no reason at all why we should have to go to the private-sector parties and ask for their approval to table it in this Legislature. There is no reason.

I would agree with the minister in terms of the amendment if it were a document that was between that private-sector group and some other private-sector group or some other municipality or the federal government. It is at that point in time not our property in this Legislature. But in this request in the motion for a return, it's clear: "agreement between the government of Alberta and Financial Trustco Ltd." The second part talks again about an "agreement between the government of Alberta and any other party."

So, Mr. Speaker, I really can't accept this amendment, which allows an outsider to determine whether public information is presented in this Legislature. I would really ask the minister to reconsider the precedent that's being set at this point in time.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Deputy Government House Leader on the amendment.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, a couple of observations. First of all, this is a standard amendment, in the event that the motion doesn't contain it, that is normally attached by the government to the request for production of this kind of information. And that is in keeping with long-established procedures that are outlined in section 390 of *Beauchesne*.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate -- and my colleague, in closing debate, may make it even more affirmative than I will -- that the attachment of this amendment does not indicate that the government isn't necessarily going to table the documentation that's asked for. Please draw a distinction between, hon. members, the amendment being proposed and the consequences, as is being assumed or concluded because of the amendment. They're two different things. One, we're observing procedure because we always need to be concerned about the possibility of precedents, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take some considerable umbrage with the hon. leader of the Liberal Party, who began to talk about cronyism and under-the-table deals and all the rest of it. There is nothing of that kind involved here. We are simply, as I indicated, trying to observe traditions, procedures that have been built up by many parliaments over a long period of time and have culminated in what we've come to know as the rules as codified in *Beauchesne*.

I say again to hon. members, before everybody gets too excited, that the fact that we attach as an amendment the approval

and concurrence of the private-sector parties does not by any stretch suggest that you're not going to get most of the information. I should indicate that there are a variety of contracts asked for and some of them, contrary to the view which seems to be held by the hon. leader of the Liberal Party, do not involve financial transactions.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, to try and shed some light on what the minister has just said. In *Beauchesne*, page 139 says:

Papers relating to negotiations leading up to a contract until the contract has been executed or the negotiations have been concluded.

So I don't know if the minister is making that differentiation, because this talks about papers relating to negotiations leading up to the contract, but after the contract is signed, Mr. Speaker, as my colleague has said, it should be entirely in the public arena. You know, I guess that's really what we're arguing about.

So I'm not trying to be unfair to the minister. I'm just wondering if he did not notice that that part of *Beauchesne* talks about things leading up to the contract. But once the contract is signed, then it becomes public information is the way I perceive it.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak briefly against the amendment. It's unfathomable that this government would present this House with an excuse such as this. That is to say that we would as a Legislature allow a party outside the process of public accountability to make the decision as to what is acceptable public information or what isn't acceptable public information.

What is all that much more disturbing is the implications that this has for the government's foresight and its ability to manage its affairs properly. If for one moment it would consider that it had to ask private-sector approval in order to release information which is clearly public information, why would it ever have entered into that agreement? Why would it not make a condition of any agreement with the private sector, a standard condition, that that information will always be released? Why would we ever hand the authority or the discretion to release information to the public to some party that's outside the public process? It's unbelievable that that would be contemplated, let alone that this government would stand up and admit publicly that it has actually put itself in the position of allowing its authority to be handled by some party in the private sector or some party outside the public accountability process.

That is akin to standing up in this House and saying, "I'm sorry we can't give you any information on the Olympia and York deal or on the Sterling deal or on any other number of deals, because Mr. Mabbott has told us that he'd rather you didn't know what it was."

I rest my case, Mr. Speaker. We cannot support this amendment.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Calgary Buffalo.

MR. CHUMIR: Mr. Speaker, in closing debate on this motion, I would merely reiterate that a comprehensive and useful principle for determining disclosure of . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. May the hon. minister close the debate on the amendment? Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, there has been left, within the Assembly, the impression that the government does not provide information necessary for the House to function. I would like to clear up . . .

MR. McEACHERN: We didn't say that.

MR. SHABEN: Absolutely. The impression has been left in the Assembly that the government is not forthcoming with information that is necessary, and that is simply not accurate in terms of the record of this Assembly and the record of the government in terms of producing documents. I would suspect that 90 percent of the documents that are provided to the hon. members are not read.

I'd also like to clear up, Mr. Speaker -- there seems to be some misunderstanding as to whether or not the documents are going to be provided to the Assembly. Yes, they are going to be provided. That permission has been obtained and the documents will be provided. We have, however -- and the members who've been in the Assembly for a number of years know that it is a practice in the House, as a courtesy, to seek the approval of those parties to documents when they are placed in the Assembly. This is simply a continuation of that practice, of that proviso. I can assure the members of the Assembly that the permission has been sought and obtained and the documents will be provided.

[Motion on amendment carried]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are you ready for the question on Motion 168 . . . The hon. Member for Calgary Buffalo.

MR. McEACHERN: If he speaks, does that not close debate on the question?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for Edmonton Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: So you maybe got permission from this company, but that is ridiculous. Why should the power of this Assembly be handed over to some private-sector company as to whether or not those documents should be released? It's a government contract, and once it is signed, it should be public information. This Assembly should not be delegating its right to release information to somebody else outside of this Assembly. I object. It's a silly idea, and I cannot understand why any government would put themselves in that position. To put it on here is to set a precedent that is absolutely ridiculous.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: May the hon. member close the debate on the motion for a return?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Calgary Buffalo.

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. minister referred to the opposition giving the impression that the government is not forthcoming. Well, let me dispel any illusions that it's mere innuendo. We are stating openly and forthrightly that the government is not forthcoming. It is very secretive and is not providing information to which the people of this province are entitled.

I would like to suggest, as a governing principle in this area, that there should be disclosure when the public interest in disclosure of a document outweighs any argument for confidentiality. I find very little suggestion of argument here with respect to the need or benefits of confidentiality. I would ask the minister and indeed the whole government whether they do not agree that public business should be conducted in public. Are terms of lease or sale of public lands to be kept confidential? Obviously, the answer which this government has provided, not only in this instance but particularly in the instance of sale of provincial grazing leases, is yes.

Now, if one considers an example of why there is a strong public interest in the disclosure of this type of information, let us ask the question -- and this is not an allegation, but it's a question, and it's an example that has happened many times in the history of government. What happens if the government enters into a sweetheart deal with a relative of a member of the government based on inside information? What happens if a favourable lease on unreasonably favourable terms or a sale on unreasonably favourable terms takes place? Are we to accept that that is the type of information that is to remain confidential at the whim or subject to the consent of the particular relative? Well, certainly that can't be the case, but that is exactly what the minister is suggesting by stating that the request and the permission of the company at issue is required. He refers to it as a courtesy. It's not a courtesy; it's a condition that they are imposing in each and every instance.

The hon. Member for Clover Bar very correctly pointed out that that is not one of the exceptions to production which are supported by *Beauchesne*. In fact, I note in rule 390(2)(n) that there is in fact a provision for confidentiality for "papers that are private or confidential and not of a public or official character." And these are of a public or official character. In fact, what we see is the government applying the most restrictive interpretation to production of information of any government in this country. The minister speaks of precedent, and I state that precedent can be an excuse for carrying on bad practice, and that is exactly what's happening here. It's a bad precedent, and it should be changed.

[Motion as amended carried]

170. Mr. McEachern moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the audited annual report of Syncrude Canada Ltd., provided to the Crown in Right of Alberta in accordance with the Crown's role as an equity participant in the Syncrude project, for the company's 1986 fiscal year.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleague the Minister of Energy, I accept.

171. Mr. McEachern moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of:

- (1) the Abacus Cities Ltd. investigative report, commonly called the Baines report, delivered to the Alberta Securities Commission on July 14, 1983; and
- (2) the findings of the minister's task force, presented to the Alberta Securities Commission, the Attorney General, and the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs on May 7, 1984.

MISS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, I rise to urge the Assembly to

vote against this motion. In doing so, let me say firstly that it is my firm belief and that of this government that full and necessary factual information about the operations of government should be as a matter of routine tabled in the House to enable members of the House to carry out their parliamentary duties.

One of the items that is being asked for in this motion for a return is a report that is commonly called the Baines report. And I might point out, Mr. Speaker, that that report is an investigatory report which does not give any information about the operations of government. Furthermore, the report in fact, I am told, although I have not read it, mentions many, many people and refers in many instances to the competence or character of those people. Nearly all of the people to whom reference is made in the report have not been implicated in any judicial or quasi-judicial proceedings of a disciplinary nature.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, I draw the members' attention to section 34 of the Securities Act. That section states:

34 Anything acquired and all information or evidence obtained pursuant to an investigation under this Part is confidential and shall not be divulged except

(a) in the case of an investigation under section 28, with the consent of the Commission,

the reference in that case being to the Securities Commission.

This was an investigation pursuant to section 28 of that Act, and the commission has not given its consent to release of the information. I am told by the commission that its reason for not giving its consent is in fact that there are many references to many people which reflect on their character or competence, and those people have not been implicated in any judicial or quasi-judicial proceedings of a disciplinary nature.

Fourthly, Mr. Speaker, let me also state that the Abacus hearings have not concluded. The public hearing cross-examination process has been concluded, but the decision of the commission has not been rendered as yet. So, in fact, the hearings have not been concluded. But having said that, I do want to draw the members' attention to the fact that there have been weeks and weeks of public hearings into the conduct of four principals affiliated with Abacus. There is a transcript, a verbatim record, of everything stated for every day of each of those hearings, and there is much information to be gained on that public record, and I commend the members' attention to it.

The second part of Motion for a Return 171 refers to the findings of the minister's task force presented on May 7, 1984. In fact, Mr. Speaker, there was no minister's task force. What there was -- and it was presented to the commission, the Attorney General, and the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs on May 7, 1984 -- was an analysis and recommendations prepared by five lawyers, one of whom is on staff, or was at the time at least, with the Securities Commission, and four of whom were at that time employed by the Attorney General's department. The recommendations that those five lawyers presented to the two ministers and the chairman of the commission, of course, were legal opinions or advice provided for the use of the government. Furthermore, that report was in the nature of a memorandum internal to the government, and on that ground as well I would urge the Assembly to reject this motion in its entirety.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member for Edmonton Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to speak in favour of the motion being accepted. It seems to me that

Abacus Cities, when it finally went down like a house of cards, took a lot of investors' money with it. I'm not convinced that the public hearings conducted by the Securities Commission have unveiled all of the information which in fact would be contained in the investigative report known as the Baines report. Otherwise, they would be identical, and the minister wouldn't be reluctant to release it.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that when we've got an Alberta Securities Commission that is supposed to be looking after the regulations that go with public investments and institutions which receive public investments, it's their responsibility to make sure that those people who lost a lot of money through what appeared to be a serious series of bunglings on behalf of the management of Abacus Cities -- they have a right to know what processes took place and what discoveries were made in those processes. It took long enough, I recall, to pressure the government into committing the Securities Commission into conducting the report in the first place.

Secondly, the analysis and recommendations that went to the minister's department, the Attorney General, and the Securities Commission on May 7, 1984, were not easy to get accomplished. It took a lot of public hue and cry to have that accomplished. We have since seen collapses of other mortgage and financial institutions, almost of all of whose operations come under the regulations of the Securities Commission. Now, either we have an effective Securities Commission or we don't. If we have an effective Securities Commission, let's find out what they found out. If we don't, then let's get an effective Securities Commission.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: May the hon. Member for Edmonton Kingsway close the debate?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. McEACHERN: Just a couple of points to add to what my colleague from Edmonton Highlands said, I went through great piles of stuff on the whole Abacus situation, I won't claim that I've covered them all, but the distinct impression I get is that this government dragged its feet for so long that eventually they let the statute of limitations run out on the time for doing anything about that Abacus situation. I think it's one of the really disgraceful periods of this government not supervising institutions that they should have been supervising. So I'm sorry if the Securities Commission doesn't want to release that, but I think the minister should order them to release that document. That's the number 1 document, the one on the Baines report. I don't see any reason why this minister should be stalled by her Securities Commission any more than what we were talking about a few minutes ago, about the minister being stalled by some private company from releasing information that should be in the public domain.

As to the other report, this analysis prepared by five lawyers, five lawyers can make up a task force, and it doesn't seem to me that anything I've said in number 2 is anything contrary to what the minister said about that. So, again, I just think that the government is covering up something. If you didn't have something to cover up, you wouldn't be keeping them secret. That Abacus deal stinks right from start to end, and this government should be making that public.

[Motion lost]

172. Ms Mjolsness moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of the studies or reports, preliminary or final, on the basis of which the hon. Minister of Social Services stated on July 16, 1986. *Alberta Hansard*, page 582, that, with regard to the effectiveness of the job-finding centres program, "We have information here which says that 50 to 70 percent of the individuals completing the program with these job-finding centres have found placements."

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, citation 390 of *Beauchesne*, which references internal departmental memoranda, applies in this particular motion, so I would ask hon. members to turn it down. However, it is certainly my intention in speaking both in the estimates and with respect to another question to provide the information that I have on this particular area to all hon. members.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Edmonton Calder to close debate.

MS MJOLSNESS: I'm sorry. What was the last part of your statement, Madam Minister?

MRS. OSTERMAN: May I respond, Mr. Speaker?

ANHON. MEMBER: She just asked a question.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I'm aware that the hon. member just asked a question. The Minister of Social Services.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I said for the information of the House that both with reference to a question that has been accepted and in my estimates I will provide the information that I have with respect to this particular area in the job-finding centres.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Those in favour of motion for a . . . The hon. Member for Edmonton Highlands. The Chair has a problem here. The Chair needs clarification of whether or not Edmonton Calder has closed debate.

MR. McEACHERN: She just asked a question.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Edmonton Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I worried that I was getting shorter by the day and was now invisible. Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that what the minister has said . . .

ANHON. MEMBER: What a wishful thought.

MS BARRETT: How unkind. Do you realize that some back-benchers have said, "What a wishful thought"? Geez, the integrity of some people around here.

Mr. Speaker, what the minister has said sounds good. It sounds good on a matter of good faith, but it occurs to me that the quote from *Hansard* indicates that

we have information here [says government] which says that 50 to 70 percent of the individuals completing the program with these job-finding centres have found placements.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we also note that it's incumbent upon ministers, when making information like that available orally in the House, to make that information available in its written form. If the minister is saying, as she is, that she's prepared to deal with this information during her estimates, then I don't understand why it is that the minister isn't prepared to table the document basically, which is what the motion for a return is calling for. I realize that that's another question, and I'm not going to force the minister to answer. We've got another point of order ongoing on a similar matter, Mr. Speaker. If she's got the information she's referred to in the House, she should table the information. If she's prepared to discuss it in estimates, then why isn't she prepared to table the information now under the motion for a return?

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, speaking to the motion and to the comments just made, again with respect to *Beauchesne*, there is a clear distinction drawn between information that is generated for the minister of an advisory nature. In other words, that is a basis on which decisions are going to be made. The position we're taking with . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. Order please. *Standing Orders* provide that at the hour of 4:30 the order of business will be private members' public Bills. We will then proceed to that stage.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, a point of order. Can you not ask the unanimous consent to finish what business we're on? That should take only no more than a minute is my suggestion.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for Clover Bar has a very valid point. If hon. members are of that view, would the members of the House agree to unanimous support to carry on with Motion for a Return 172?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Any opposed, please say nay. It is so ordered.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, if I could just complete my observation, it was really this: we are trying to adhere to procedure as laid out in *Beauchesne*. On the other hand, we are also trying to accommodate members and can provide information during estimates and in other forums -- Committee of the Whole, for instance -- that would go further than is provided for in the technical reading of *Beauchesne*. But we really want to stay with the rules that have been built up over a period of time respecting Motions for Returns, and that's the point that's being made here. The hon. minister has indicated she will be more forthcoming with information than is actually required under the rules of *Beauchesne*.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, I'm dismayed at the decline that has been made here to place this information before us. We're daily being asked in public and in this House to look at programs of work and employment, and we're being told that we're developing work and employment programs of a variety of kinds. We're being asked by the public: "What does this mean? What are they?" And a minister of the House stands up and says, "We have this information." Now, if we've got information that's good and positive, then we should have it in our

hands to be able to speak to it. In fact, the fact of the matter is that a report coming to the minister's own department tells us that after six months on social assistance the majority of so-called employable clients hadn't even received any referral for job training or counseling -- they hadn't received a referral at all -- and that 70 percent of employable clients who ought to have a telephone haven't gotten one.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in the light of those kinds of statements, those pieces of information from a report from her own department, it seems to me that every hon. member of the House should certainly have in their hands any documentation that would help us to show the public that some of these programs work. Now, the only thought I can take from refusal to table the information is that they're not working, and what else am I supposed to take back? Believe me, Mr. Speaker, we are being confronted with these questions every day. It's not good enough to make a statement and say, "We have information here." If there is information, then I suggest it should be shared with every member of the House.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Speaker, with the greatest respect to the hon. Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications, the rule he quotes is not a rule that forbids the production. It is simply a rule that entitles the government to resist the claim for production if they wish. I gather in this case they are quite willing to give the information but don't want to breach the rule, and I just assure the hon. minister that he is not breaching any rule by producing a document which he is not obliged to produce.

MR. CHUMIR: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say that I perceive a spectacular inherent contradiction of logic in the government's statement that it will refuse to produce the particular information here in this forum but will produce it another time.

The lapse in logic is that when there is a refusal to produce documents, presumably there should be some basis of principle behind it. And when you deal with the exemption for internal departmental memoranda, the principle behind it is that members of the civil service should be able to communicate freely amongst themselves so that their communications and internal advice not be inhibited. But here we're talking not with respect to internal advice, we're talking about background information -- factual information -- the data, the base data, the studies of the degree of success of these job-finding programs.

I would think that the government would be well advised to think through the basis, in principle, of the exemptions that they are claiming and determine whether or not they are not going farther than is necessary in preventing the members of this House from getting information that it should clearly be entitled to, which the government and the minister indicate they are going to provide in any event.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Edmonton Calder.

MS MJOLSNESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the information that we're requesting in this motion is information that will be very beneficial to all the members in this House in regards to the job-finding clubs. There hasn't been much information forthcoming from the minister on the job-finding clubs to

date.

The minister has made a statement that these [clubs] have a 50 to 70 percent success rate in placement. And I'm quite disappointed that today she's not prepared to give that information, the information that she's basing this statement on, to the members of this Assembly. I think that if she's got the studies and the reports -- you know, I don't see why we have to wait until we get into estimates. I don't know why we just can't have that information today.

Having said that and realizing that we will have to wait for the information, I will be anxiously awaiting the information during estimates.

[Motion lost]

head: **PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS
OTHER THAN
GOVERNMENT BILLS AND ORDERS
(Second Reading)**

**Bill 204
Alberta Health Council Act**

MRS. HEWES: [some applause] Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TAYLOR: Quit while you're ahead.

MRS. HEWES: Yes; I needed a little prompting.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to request support from the House of Bill 204, the Alberta Health Council Act. If there's anything that's important to Albertans and Canadians, it's the integrity of our health care and of our health care system. It's something that we in this country are very proud of and that we will protect. We believe in the system. We believe in open access, and it has become a landmark and a trademark of our nation.

Mr. Speaker, every day in this House we're treated to another little bit of chipping away at the integrity of that system. Yesterday it was the statement on Aids to Daily Living -- chipping away at the system. Today we're still having discussions about whether or not chiropractic, podiatry, optometry, and physiotherapy are going to be in or out. I suggest that it's time we put an end to these kinds of conjecture and let the people of Alberta know what's really going on, and in order to do that, we have to put into place a different kind of a system.

Now, why are these things happening in the province at this point in time? It's perfectly understandable. They're happening because of the cost of the system. We see it in our budget documents; it's well over \$2.5 billion projected for this year. We've watched a system grow in this province unilaterally. Some parts of it, Mr. Speaker, are great; they are, admittedly, great. Some parts are good, some parts are mediocre or fair, and some parts of our health care system are not so great. The point is that the health services to Albertans are not consistent, and the quality of those services is not consistent.

The minister points quite frequently in the House to the cost going up because of overutilization by consumers. I don't happen to believe that everybody in Alberta is a raging hypochondriac. I don't think that's the reason, and I don't think that reasoning washes with Albertans. The fact of the matter is it has become a very, very expensive system. The cost has now provoked the government of Alberta to do a number of things. In the first place, they cut back budgets to hospitals by 3 percent

unilaterally, straight across the board -- no priorities, no selectivity, just straight across the board.

Another thing they did immediately was try to consider other means of saving or dampening utilization. Deinsurance: well, we saw what happened to that little caper, Mr. Speaker. The Premier had to quickly bail that one out and help Albertans to understand that, really, what was said wasn't what was meant after all, and we could all be reassured that it really wasn't going to happen to us. The fact of the matter is that Bill 14 is still there, and we may still have certain kinds of those things. The minister every day in the House gets up and says he doesn't know yet what's going to be deinsured. He doesn't know yet what's going to be left in or what's going to be taken out.

Another move: means tests for supports to disabled people at home. These kinds of things are suggested to us each day. Another move: in our throne speech we have an announcement; in the throne speech the minister tells us that he is going to conduct a review of the hospital system and that he's going to look at the ambulance system.

And that's all very well, but we in our party have an alternate proposal, and we believe it's a much better one, a more practical one. It's a proposal for an Alberta health council, a continuous, independent council that would allow for consumer input. The remedies that the minister has suggested to us are quick-fix band-aids; they're band-aids for the balance sheet, I suggest. They're not going to save money over time. They will further, however, reduce the quality of our health care system.

Let's look for a few minutes at the present situation. What do the cutbacks do? Well, the cutbacks move the burden of those decisions to local hospital boards. Already hard-pressed, already working close to the bone, they must assume responsibility in their municipalities for cutbacks, for lay-offs, for reduced services. We're not just talking about nurses; we're talking about all kinds of people who are working with the hospital system to keep it operative and who are dependent on it.

The deinsurance business. Yes, the Premier bailed it out, but we had there, and we still have in that Bill before us, the potential for a two-tiered system. There's still a real mystery as to what's in and what's out.

I don't believe that Albertans will tolerate that kind of deterioration to our health care. Today we're being besieged with calls in our office -- and I'm sure other MLAs are, right across the board -- from people who are totally dependent on chiropractic, podiatry, optometry, and physiotherapy to stay independent, to stay mobile, to stay out of institutions, what we've been trying to promote and preach for years in this province. Today we're talking about taking those out of the plant.

[Mr. Musgreave in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker, I've talked at length in this House about extended care. Now, there's one that really bears a lot of examination. It's not integrated in our province in either intake or in its operational aspects. A few examples where local boards have been very interested in trying to put something together that's a bit more innovative, but it's not integrated from the control standpoint, it's not integrated internally within itself, and it's not integrated with acute care hospitals.

We have many examples, Mr. Speaker, many long, sad, tragic stories of people who have to stay in acute care even though they are assessed at extended care level for treatment but who have to stay in acute care because there's no place for them to go. Similarly, on the other end of the scale we've met exam-

ples of people who could stay independent if they could simply get treatment in a day hospital. But we don't have an integrated service and, for whatever reason, we don't seem to be moving smoothly or swiftly to do it, although there are many economies available to us.

We don't have integrated care between acute, convalescent, and extended. We don't have integrated intake in extended care. We don't have a well-functioning day hospital system. We don't have day care, except for a few experimental programs. We don't have adequate home care. We don't have adequate respite beds for people to take advantage of so that families could have some opportunity to relax from the care of a loved one at home. All of those things are available in bits and pieces, Mr. Speaker, but they are not integrated, and it works a real hardship and a real expense on our communities and on our health care system to let it continue in this slapdash fashion.

In acute care I've already spoken about the need for integration between it and convalescent hospitals and extended care. There is still a serious need for collaboration, not confrontation or competition, between acute treatment hospitals, particularly in urban centres. We really need to guarantee that the economies so derived will be available.

Hospital closures. Well, we're seeing beds closing in urban centres because of the 3 percent cutback but not in rural centres. Rural centres are half empty; urban centres, the hospitals can't begin to keep up with the need. And so beds are being closed in all the wrong places.

Services to the elderly, particularly dependent elderly, are difficult to achieve at best. There's no one-stop shopping for elderly clients. There's no way that they can get the kind of support that they really need for home care. And so having waited overly long for a day hospital or a day care, they find themselves faced with having to be institutionalized. Not the best answer either for the individual or for the taxpayer.

Mental health services. The minister has introduced a new Act. It is deficient in my view, and I'll speak to that when it comes before the House, Mr. Speaker. It does not take into consideration some of the requests that have been made of the minister to name certain hospitals in regions across the province as places where involuntary patients can be received and cared for near their own community and, therefore, hope for a quicker recovery and back to their home and family and work. It does not support many of the recommendations that were made in the Drewry report regarding advocacy for patients.

It does not support many of the requests from community organizations and individuals for a much better working arrangement between hospital and community. We have heard many unfortunate stories of persons who've been discharged from hospital who need support in the community where it is not forthcoming. They suffer long times in the community, are eventually readmitted to hospital, in some cases over and over and over again, simply because the community support services are not available.

Palliative care. We've had an excellent program operating in the province in palliative care, never fully supported. I'm pleased to see that a government member has produced a private member's Bill, and I'll look forward to the presentation of that one -- certainly a need long overdue in the province and one that could be of tremendous benefit to citizens and their families.

Mr. Speaker, the question of rural health care I touched briefly on regarding rural hospitals, which we developed in great numbers and have not consistently been able to find staff for. I think persons living in rural Alberta are at a serious disad-

vantage, particularly in the more remote areas, regarding their health care and that it is a problem of long standing that needs our immediate attention. The review of the ambulance system may in fact give us some clues about some of the things that we can do to improve their access to facilities, but I believe that that system is not the only one. We should address ourselves to what is happening in those rural communities that have hospitals with unused beds and yet have need for other services for the disabled and elderly within their catchment area.

Mr. Speaker, this government has consistently declined to take any position on the federal proposed legislation regarding prescription drugs, patent drugs. I think that is a fault of the government. I believe we should be taking a strong position on that in order to protect the interests of the government, because there are many costs to our institutions in Alberta of drugs and there are costs, of course, to individuals as well. I see no reason that the government shouldn't be putting its position in the strongest possible terms to their federal counterparts.

Mr. Speaker, the whole field of health promotion. We talk about health care; what we're talking about for the most part is illness care, and it has become very expensive. We seem to have a great deal of difficulty in addressing ourselves to the whole field of practice of illness prevention, health in the workplace, health promotion. I'm proud to commend the work of AADAC. I think they've done some substantive work, have made some giant strides in this regard, and I just wish that community health could develop some of the same kinds of attitudes in their programs for health promotion.

There is a constant concern expressed to me, and I'm sure to other members of the House, regarding overutilization of the system by consumers and physicians alike. We have never really put our minds to that one. I have not seen as yet any data on that subject as to whether or not it can be brought down to a reasonable number. The minister talks about utilization at 7 percent; it's difficult to know if he's talking about consumers only or if that also includes physicians.

Health factors in unemployment: a whole field of practice, Mr. Speaker, that we really have not addressed in this province whatsoever, and yet unemployment is raging at over 11 percent now and expected to stay high throughout the year. We have not, to my knowledge, put our minds to the relationship between social assistance recipients and health care utilization and costs and what we should do about it, although the evidence is paramount in that regard as well.

Well, what should we do about it? The litany is there, Mr. Speaker. It's there for all of us to see; it meets us every day. We have these constant procedures or suggestions put to us in the House for a little chipping away just to make the balance sheet look better. What should we do? The minister himself has recognized the need for a review, and that's contained in the throne speech. Who then will do it, and will it be of any use whatsoever?

A review as proposed, I assume, will be a snapshot of where we are now with some kind of fix-it recommendations for the present critical situation. I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that this will be a costly exercise that won't work. I think an internal review, no matter how well intentioned, will be self-serving and protective. This is not a criticism of our present civil servants, the hardworking persons in health care; it's simply, I believe, an inappropriate task to set before them.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party puts to the Legislature the Bill regarding a health council. With the increase in expenditures for medical care, the aging population, the growing pressure on

government revenues, on the health care system, and on other parts of our system, we must indeed become far more adaptable, and we must become more fine-tuned.

It can't be allowed to continue: the health care system; its ad hoc, evolutionary process; and its drift with the primary focus on short-term, expedient solutions rather than on sound judgment. In order to make good policy decisions, the province has to have access to all relevant information. Policy developed using incomplete information will inevitably prove to be faulty and require modification in the future.

Information must be unbiased and objective. Policymakers and the public simply can't sift through all sides of an issue to determine what information isn't biased. Policy based on biased or partisan information tends to favour one interest group over others and distorts the fairness of the health care system. Changing statutes or health policy on paper is not a difficult process; however, the impact of making these kinds of policy changes has a resounding effect on the people of Alberta. People, not words, fall through the loopholes in programs, and often with very traumatic results.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that we need an independent body which would research and analyze health systems and provide recommendations and solutions quite independently of any particular interest group and independent of the ministry. In broad terms, the purpose of the council that we are proposing is to initiate and carry out research, evaluate programs, publish findings on important issues. In conducting its research and preparing reports, the council's goals would be to provide objective information, conclusions, and options on health care. Results of the studies would, of course, be published. Recommendations for change would be submitted as completed to the ministry and made available to the public on an ongoing basis.

The council would not -- and I stress "would not" -- be a body designed to advocate government policy or priorities. It would operate at arm's length, separate from government and from any particular interest group, by setting its own agenda and coming to its own conclusions. There's no intention here to walk around the ministry but to supply objective analyses and strategies to the ministry and the Legislature for decisions.

The council would rely on conferences, hearings, reports, and submissions from interested parties and would carry out research as well and have a small secretariat to conduct its own business. Every attempt, I believe, should be made to produce reports in a timely manner so that it can play a significant role up front in policy determination. It would be chartered to have 15 members chosen on the basis of individual interest, experience, or achievement in the health field or in health-related fields.

Mr. Speaker, it's been suggested to me that it would be very difficult to get an independent council or one that could act independently in this field of practice. I don't agree with that. I believe Albertans have a strong desire to see some profound changes in their health care system, and I believe there are many Albertans who would be willing to serve on such a council and serve from a standpoint of knowledge -- knowledge of what's happening in our communities, knowledge and concern about the spiraling costs, and a desire to make some changes in the system as we now know it.

Meetings of the council, of course, would be in public, and it would have the power to establish its own bylaws for various

operations. Funding would come through the Legislature to cover the council's costs, the process similar to the Ombudsman's, and that would maintain the council's arm's-length relationship to the government. Ideally, the Alberta health council would operate similar to what I'd hoped the Advisory Council on Women's Issues would operate. Unfortunately, the women's council wasn't given the clout, wasn't given the separation from government, that would allow it to act as an advisory council to the Legislature and the people of Alberta. I would hope that it would be a strong council and would be sufficiently funded to allow timely and meaningful options to come into the Legislature.

I'm asking for a new focus here, Mr. Speaker. The council could be extraordinarily helpful in generating ideas or reacting to government initiatives before they are in fact enshrined and, as one minister said, carved in stone.

A few of the areas that need to be addressed of a new focus: the current fiscal arrangement of the Department of Hospitals and Medical Care should be reassessed. Currently, medical facilities and hospitals are allocated funds based on the amount of beds in the facility, and I don't believe that is an efficient system. Another one: since established program funding contributions to health care are declining relative to the rate of growth in transfers over the last few years and ahead of us, the Alberta government will need to raise additional revenue for health care or reduce the costs, or both. Now, how we do that is a question that needs to be addressed immediately -- not by these ad hoc mechanisms that are being suggested to us daily.

Many problems arise when health care services overlap. Somehow it has to be an integrated service. Regionalization of health care may lead to a reduction in the overlapping of services. I submit also, Mr. Speaker, that in Alberta we are not such a complicated or complex province at this period of our growth that we can't make those changes, and I believe Albertans are willing to do it.

Costs will continue to escalate as the needs of the elderly increase, and the province needs to address the question of how it plans to finance programs for the elderly, not just institutional parts of it but all of the components that will help these people to stay independent. If the costs are to remain manageable, we have to replace institutional care with home care wherever possible. It means an immense infusion of funds into home care, but this would certainly save moneys in a very short order.

Rural health care, I've already mentioned, particularly relating to isolated or outlying areas, is overdue for study and for analysis as to how it can be improved. Multilevel management, where two or more facilities operate under a single board and combine services, needs to be introduced on a wide scale, including community and outreach activities. Coterminous boundaries between departments and health care units should be determined.

The Alberta government needs to take a much less rigid approach, I believe, to health care. A degree of flexibility is needed when planning for the current and future health of Albertans. More flexible planning would allow for changes to be injected into the system with minimal disruption. In order to do it, an independent council would fill so many of these needs and would be able to redirect so much of what we are doing in a positive fashion.

Unilateral development of our health care system, no matter how well intentioned, has gotten us into this problem of high expenditures and inconsistent service. Unilateral slashing will exacerbate the problem, will not reduce it but exacerbate it.

Unilateral regrouping and reductions will only delay paying attention to it. There is an urgent need for a continuous, independent review that will be rational, objective, will move us to profound changes in access to and delivery of services. Removed from the vested interests, it will get us, hopefully, Mr. Speaker, into the 20th century in our health care. It will involve consumers and the private sector in decision-making about what kind of care we want, what kind of care we are prepared to pay for.

We have an enormous need at this point in time to protect the immense investment that we have made in health care facilities and in the health of Albertans. I believe that Albertans today and will continue to want quality care. I believe they understand the costs and the need to curtail them. I believe that Albertans support changes in the system, and I believe that the system can be improved and can cost considerably less or at least can help to reduce the skyrocketing increases that we've experienced in the last few years with careful, rational planning, but only by an independent council working for all of us.

The timing of this initiative is important. Over the next 20 years our health care system is going to face many challenges as demographics will change in our province. It's critical that in Alberta we plan now for the future demands which will be placed on this system. Mr. Speaker, given the arm's-length and independent status of this council, I ask members of both sides of the Legislature to support the Bill.

DR. CASSIN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Member for Edmonton Gold Bar for bringing this topic and this Bill before the House at this time. And while I agree with the objective of the Bill and I can identify some of the symptoms and some of the frustrations that have been outlined this afternoon, I do have some difficulty with both the diagnosis and the treatment of the problem.

The Bill is suggesting that we set up a select committee, an Alberta health council, to carry out three functions. Number one, to initiate and carry out research on health care to evaluate the current programs and to look at alternative programs. At this point in time we have some 19 different select committees that are carrying out various aspects of this objective. Many of them overlap; many of them are redundant; many of them are perhaps not being used to their full potential. I appreciate those frustrations, and I think that perhaps there are other solutions that need to be looked at at this time. And certainly the problems have been well identified.

But I think we have to look at what's happened in the field of medicine and the field of health care. We've moved from the stage of the horse and buggy and an individual who provided a lot of services in a community. We've moved to the other extreme, to the hospital and to the institution. And I remember that certainly my grandfather said, "I don't want to go to the hospital; that's where people go to die." Now today people have trouble leaving the hospital. They have trouble leaving the institutions that we have put in place, and it is indeed time that this whole situation is reviewed. But I'm not certain that it's going to be helped by putting in another committee, another layer of bureaucracy, more red tape that is going to frustrate those people who depend on and need that service at this point in time.

I would suggest that perhaps another alternative would be to look at a district council, the people in the communities who are more easily able to identify their needs, because these are unique needs. The people in Peace River have much different needs than the people in Calgary and Edmonton, and I think that

these have to be addressed. I think that we have examples in this country where it has been addressed, and it's working very well in the way of a district health council.

You might ask: what is the purpose of a district health council, and how does it work? It's really a group of concerned citizens who volunteer their time and their expertise to work with the ministry of health in planning the health care system for their community. It's made up of the people who live and work in that community, and they're in a very good position to determine what their health needs are, and again we have to deal with the uniqueness of each community.

I think that there's a reason for this quite apart from the reasons that have been identified by the hon. Member for Edmonton Gold Bar from the standpoint of the cost and utilization. There's a growing awareness in the public and an interest in health care and health care services. After all, they're paying for it through their tax dollars. There's a strong desire to participate in directing how the health care dollars are going to be spent.

The second concern is that the health ministry is concerned about the expansion and the size of its department and how it's going to deal with the problems effectively. A district health council has approximately four different areas that it should concentrate on or should look at. It has to identify the health care needs in their area and examine ways of meeting those needs. It has to examine both the short-term and the long-term health care priorities. It has to co-operate with all of the health planning activities within the district and work them into an effective and efficient system. It has to work towards co-operation and the social development of activities of the district.

Some of the benefits that have been obtained -- I use the example of the province of Ontario, which had been set up back in 1973 and reviewed in '81 by the government of the day -- is that it developed long-term care plans and programs, health service surveys and inventories, planning and developing of mental health programs, reviewed and approved hospital equipment acquisition, the rationalization of beds and services in institutions, public information programs, developed placement co-ordination services, developed alcohol and drug assessment and referral services. It also developed emergency and disaster plans.

We have at this point in time, both in Calgary and Edmonton, a regional health planning council. It has been there for some years. It's unfortunate that perhaps it hasn't been utilized to its full potential. I have to look back on the recent months when we had to deal with a problem; we had to deal with a problem of utilization of beds. At that point in time that structure worked. Those people who had been identified to represent the various areas were able to come together and to put together some alternatives for the ministry to make some very important and serious decisions. I think that that activity has to be applauded.

I have some concerns with going from a service that was delivered in rural Alberta to the growth and development of urban Alberta and the institutions and the power and the decision-making that takes place within the mortar and the bricks of our large institutions and not enough attention to the community programs and the system as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to perhaps at this time identify some of the other areas that need to be looked at by such a committee or council. Usually, rather than having a number of overlapping councils and programs that apply throughout the province, each region or area identifies various categories and

works with those. They're broken down into four areas: acute care, which again deals with the hospital; the institutional type of care, which we have presently and is working well; it then breaks it down into the emergency care, and quite often when we talk about emergency care, we're talking about, again, hospital care, but there's a lot of emergency care that takes place in the community, and certainly that involves the development of ambulance services and outpatient services that have to tie in and work with the infrastructure that we presently have in place.

It's very difficult for a minister to make decisions that are going to affect one community or one area more favourably than its neighbouring community. And I would think that those decisions would be handled much better by people who are within a district who can rationalize and deal with their problems more effectively than a centralist type of council.

The other area that's important -- and I would like to think that this government is going to address that problem through the development of the Department of Community and Occupational Health -- is the whole area of health protection and promotion. For too long we have dealt with illness, dealt with disease. We have to deal with the prevention of disease and the promotion of health in the community and in the workplace. I think that this is a problem that has to be addressed by all governments.

The other area is long-term care, and again the hon. Member for Edmonton Gold Bar alluded to the problem. It's going to be an increasing problem as we deal with an aging population, and that has to be addressed. And it has to be addressed, again, in a regional area, because the requirements of someone living in a large urban centre where they have a good number of support systems might be quite different than the individual who wants to remain close to their family, perhaps in rural or northern Alberta, and those requirements are somewhat different and have to be addressed.

The other area that we separate out is that of mental health care, and again we're dealing with a very specific area. And I would think that the people within a community, within a district, should be the individuals who can deal with input and help to resolve some of the problems and needs in that area.

The primary function of a district health council is leadership and health planning at the community level. The terms of reference for a district health council, as established by the ministry -- again, in Ontario, and I would think that that is a model that perhaps we could look at -- are to identify the district health needs and consider alternative methods of meeting those needs that are consistent with provincial guidelines. It's to develop a comprehensive health care plan which includes long-term objectives and a clear indication of priorities; to co-ordinate all health activities; to ensure a balanced, effective, and economic service which best meets the needs of the people in the district; and to work towards co-operation in the social development activities of that district.

The health care system in a province is really the sum of all the services and the people that help prevent, treat, and cure illness. Health care is not static, Mr. Speaker; it changes. And we're constantly trying to keep up with the new technology and the new treatments, and we have to maintain our position in that area. This province has led the way. It has some excellent individuals and facilities, and it's important that we maintain that lead for the benefit of all our people.

It is suggested also that some of the responsibility of the facilities and the services within those districts should rest directly with those people who are suggesting that there is a demand. In

the province of Ontario they have dealt with that by asking the municipality and the people to fund one-third of the cost of those services. There's an exception for the universities and for those areas who are dealing with new technology and very expensive equipment.

In this province we have the need of additional technology that's not available to us right now because of the price tag. I would like to think that the means to remedy that problem is within the system. It's a matter of getting the various interest groups together and putting their priorities in the right place.

Mr. Speaker, I think that this is a timely topic in view of the problems that we face, not just in this province but in this country, in dealing with the demand and the cost for health services. We have to look within, and we have to look at what we can do as individuals to get the best bang for our dollar and to provide and continue to provide the type of services that we've learned to expect in this province.

Therefore, in closing, I would like to compliment the member for bringing this topic to the Assembly, but I do not want to see us bring in another council, the 20th such council, to deal with the problem on a centralist basis. I think that we have to deal with the problem in the district and with the people who live and work within the system.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Edmonton Centre.

REV. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the remaining time may I, too, commend the Member for Edmonton Gold Bar for bringing forth this Bill 204 and its intent to establish a health council. I certainly appreciate the comments from the previous speaker about the need for a council that might well be better served by being a co-ordinating regional council that is going to help co-ordinate and link various regional boards in the delivery of services that are more appropriate for certain regions. That might be a better use of such a council as this than just another one that's going to be somewhat bureaucratic in addition to the minister's own resources in terms of his advisers.

But, Mr. Speaker, I feel not only that the council would be somewhat more bureaucratic and could be better directed in an above policy sense, as the previous speaker has mentioned, but I was a bit disappointed that in the Member for Edmonton Gold Bar's introduction and in the Bill itself as I've looked at it, it leaves out a great part of what I think is missing in health care; that is, the input and experience of the consumers. Now, although she has said that it might have something to do with the consumers of health care, there's nothing in the council or its mandate which suggests that consumers' experiences or complaints would at all be raised or be a matter of concern. It seems to me that if you want to get something changed in a hurry in a system that's as large and complex as the health care system, you don't need another council, another level of bureaucracy. But if you get one horror story from a patient, then doctors learn pretty quickly or a hospital responds pretty quickly.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that there are more and more of these horror stories that are emerging and not a real way and degree in which individual patients or average Albertans can have their stories raised and heard as consumers. Certainly we have the royal college, which gets complaints from certain patients and certainly reprimands and disciplines doctors accordingly. But as a college that is comprised primarily of doctors and is concerned about their interests, it seems to me that they're not as much of a consumer association that could be

used in the province. We, as has been said, don't have an Ombudsman in the hospital system, and so complaints in hospitals often go unchecked and unguarded.

What we really need, Mr. Speaker, is a consumers' association of health care in the province that's going to look at the number of abuses that exist, the patients who are getting ripped off in terms of their pockets and of their time and of the public purse that is having to spend a lot of money on waste and inefficiency in the health care system. Iatrogenesis is the word that needs to be riveted home into the minds of Albertans. Iatrogenesis is the term to refer to doctor-induced illnesses. It is a very great concern of many in the health care system and yet isn't often looked at.

Or pharmacy: the rip-off that goes on in this province by pharmacy. Just yesterday I had a constituent call me who said that her husband, being quite depressed of late, was prescribed by his psychiatrist to have a certain kind of medication and went to the pharmacist. It cost about a hundred dollars for this medication. But the [pharmacist], when they complained, said: "Well, there is this other product. It's the generic brand; it's not the brand name. It costs \$19." The patient, quite astounded, said, "Well, how can such a difference be?" "Well", they said, "this is the difference between a brand name and the generic." And when going back to the doctor, he said: "Oh, I wasn't even aware there was a generic substitute. Sure, go ahead and use it. There's no problem there at all." And by just one bit of complaining, this patient was able to save himself fully \$81. What other kinds of rip-offs are going on in the system, if that is allowed to go on?

Or the Member for Highwood no doubt is aware of the young boy in his own constituency, in Okotoks, who was discharged early from the children's hospital after a tonsillectomy. Certainly, in this day of bed closures and constriction on the global budgets of hospitals, one of the ways of dealing with it is by early discharge and getting people through the beds faster. Well, in so doing, this little boy ended up hemorrhaging on the way home in the car, was sent from one hospital to another on his way to get better care, and finally was admitted back to the children's hospital at great expense and anxiety to his parents and, it was said, almost at his loss of life because of his early discharge. Well, where does such a story as that get put in such a council as the member is talking about?

Or women's health: who is looking at how the predominantly male occupation of medicine is dealing with women in this province and looking at the various rates for Caesarian section or for mastectomies that are performed throughout the province? It's much higher, you know, in the town of Wetaskiwin than it is in the city of Lethbridge. And one has to wonder why there are these various rates of surgical utilization on women throughout the province. Is it that women demand more mastectomies in Wetaskiwin than they do in Lethbridge? Or is it because there is a particular surgeon in that neighbourhood who needs the business? These questions are often never asked, but they are concerns of consumers, particularly of women.

Or in nursing homes: we might need to look at a certain meal or have a meal brought in before we can really see what's going on in terms of the food and nutrition value that often nursing homes do or do not have. Or as Ontario has recently done, bring in a Bill to make it mandatory for anyone who observes any elder abuse in a nursing home, that that must be reported. I get rather upset when the daughters and sons of elderly people in nursing homes call me and say: "Well, we don't want to give

our names, but my mother in a nursing home fell last week and wasn't sent to a hospital until two days later and sat in pain and agony for two days. Well, we don't want you to know our names because we don't want our mother to face any reprisals in the nursing home." Well, I said: "Please give me your name. Something has to be done in this situation so this doesn't go on any further." Well, they declined. They didn't want to have any further problems.

So, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that when we have a system that is so large and complex as the health care system and the hospital system, and that is so controlled and dominated by the powerful interest groups that are at play within it, what we desperately need is not another bureaucratic council but one, if it is a council, that's going to be very cognizant and very open to the input from consumers, from patients, from families of those in the health care hospital system or with doctors where there's been abuse, where there's been neglect. Because certainly the doctors don't want and the college doesn't want to have even greater numbers of malpractice suits, and hospitals don't want to have to buy more and more liability insurance. So certainly there must be a middle way in which legitimate complaints, concerns by patients who have been abused or feel neglected or have had some problem in the system, can be raised and can be settled so that the betterment of the institution, of the profession, short of malpractice suits and short of someone unnecessarily dying -- certainly their voices can be raised and the whole system improved because of much better consumer input.

With these remarks, Mr. Speaker, I'd like permission to adjourn debate.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. members agree with the motion to adjourn debate? All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed, if any? So ordered.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, the business of the House this evening will be as reported last afternoon, which is that following return at 8 o'clock, we will be dealing with committee study of certain Bills and then, if there is time, estimates dealing with the Department of Agriculture.

I move that we now adjourn until this evening at 8.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Moved by the Deputy Government House Leader that the Assembly adjourn until the Committee of the Whole rises and reports?

MR. YOUNG: Excuse me, Mr. Speaker; my motion was that we now adjourn until 8 o'clock. I believe that the Committee of the Whole cannot commence until we assemble as a total body here.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Having [heard] that motion by the hon. Deputy Government House Leader, all those in favour please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed if any? So ordered.

[The House recessed at 5:29 p.m.]

