

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA**Title: Thursday, May 28, 1987 2:30 p.m.**

Date: 87/05/28

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

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PRAYERS

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

As Canadians and as Albertans we give thanks for the precious gifts of freedom and peace which we enjoy.

As Members of this Legislative Assembly we rededicate ourselves to the valued traditions of parliamentary democracy as a means of serving our province and our country.

Amen.

head: **TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS**

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I wish to file with the Assembly information released earlier today regarding health concerns in Strathcona county and Fort Saskatchewan. This information shows that there is nothing unusual about cancer rates in those two areas.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS**

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to introduce two groups of students, but I would start with the first group of grades 5 and sixers from the Manning elementary school. There are 38 students accompanied by two teachers and five parents. The teachers are: Mr. John Elliot and Mrs. Leslie Snyder. The parents are: Mrs. Terry Fedorchuk, Mrs. Linda Gurtler, Mrs. Alice Rondeau, Mrs. Erica Whilens, and Mrs. DeeDee Matheson. I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased again to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly, 41 grade 6 students from the Glenmary school. They're made up of two classes: class 6L, that's L for Mr. Laurin, the French immersion class; and 6D, D is for Mrs. DeAlmeida's class, the regular class. They're from the Glenmary school in Peace River. Three teachers are accompanying the group: Mrs. DeAlmeida, Mrs. Jennifer Smith, and Mr. Laurin; and seven parents: Mrs. Elliot, Mrs. Sharp, Mrs. Ethier, Mrs. Pauline Gunning, Mrs. Gour, Mr. Plamandon; and their bus driver, Mr. Don Morin. They're in the public gallery, and I would ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Rocky Mountain House and Caroline.

MR. CAMPBELL: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly, 29 bright and energetic students from the grade 6 class in Caroline. They are accompanied by two teachers: Mrs. Luchka, and Mr. Leavitt; and also six parents: Mrs. Blowers, Mrs. Harriott, Mrs. Kobbero, Mr. Fay, and Mr. McNutt; and their bus driver, Mr.

Appel. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask them to rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

MR. CLEGG: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly, a valuable member of the board of governors of Fairview College, situated in the wonderful constituency of Dunvegan, who is sitting in the public gallery today. Rob Little, would you please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure, sir, to introduce to you and to the Members of the Legislative Assembly, two groups today. Let me begin by introducing two individuals from the Sherwood Park constituency, Ed and Silvana Shewchuk, and the pleasure is that much greater in view of the fact that these are parents of one of our excellent pages that we do have in the Legislative Assembly. I would ask Ed and Silvana to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, it's also my pleasure to introduce to you and Members of the Legislative Assembly, four students from the Archbishop Jordan high school in Sherwood Park. They are grade 11 students presently participating in a social studies project on India. We had the opportunity to visit earlier, and I will ask them to also rise and receive the warm welcome of the House when I do introduce them. Let me begin by introducing Deanna Morgan, Kyla Kondrat, Linda Meyer, and Kim Hogervorst. Would you rise and receive the warm welcome of the House also.

MR. HERON: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly, nine grades 10, 11, and 12 students from the Spruce Grove composite high school. These students are the Canadian champions of the academic decathlon. They competed throughout Alberta and indeed throughout Canada and recently won this distinction in Burlington, Ontario. They are accompanied by their teacher Mrs. Patricia Penner, who is the assistant principal and coach. These guests are situated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, and I would ask that they stand as I call out their names: Karen Unland, Tom Sneddon, Laura Cheyney -- Laura won five gold medals -- Jennifer Kiss, Paul Roberts, Colleen Kavanagh, Fred Antoniwi, Keith Andony, and Scott Kiss. I ask that you extend them congratulations and the warmest welcome of this Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Recreation and Parks.

MR. WEISS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Maybe it's the best to the last. I'm not sure.

Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through to members of the Assembly, eight students of grades 6, 7, and 9. I had the pleasure of meeting with them earlier in my office, and they're from Chipewyan Lake school in the constituency of Fort McMurray; not to be confused, Mr. Speaker and members of the Assembly, with the community of Fort Chipewyan. Chipewyan Lake school is located between the 23rd and 24th baselines just northwest of Fort McMurray. I had the pleasure of opening the new school with some of the students earlier in the last year, and it was very encouraging to see them back today. I'd ask that they rise and receive the cordial welcome of the Assembly. They're accompanied by Mr. Horst Brunsch, their teacher, and Miss June St. Cyr, the school counselor, as well as their transportation supervisor, Mr. Gary

McFaden.

MR. SPEAKER: Might we have the consent of the House to return to Tabling Returns and Reports?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Hon. Premier.

head: **TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS**
(*reversion*)

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the House allowing me to table communiqués 1 to 7 coming from the Western Premiers' Conference, which was held in Humboldt, Saskatchewan, earlier this week.

head: **ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

Assistance for the Homeless

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct the first question to the Minister of Social Services. Nineteen eighty-seven is the UN International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. A report issued today by the Edmonton Coalition on Homelessness recommends, and I quote:

that the provincial government work in formal partnership with the community groups which work in the housing and social welfare fields toward the goal of eliminating involuntary homelessness within the next decade.

My question to the minister: has the minister decided to seek such a partnership in support of the goal of eliminating involuntary homelessness?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that's a laudable goal, particularly in some of our less developed countries of the world where in fact we're talking about not even having the ability to have a roof over one's head. But the Department of Social Services delivers a safety net for people, and based on that financial assistance, citizens are given the opportunity to choose their own housing if it's available at that cost.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, is the minister saying then, after this report and the work that's gone into it, that she sees no basis at all for this report, that there are not homeless people in Edmonton that need help? Is that what the minister is saying?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition is always quite adept at trying to put words in everybody's mouth, and I would categorically say that hopefully my answer wouldn't have given the hon. member that impression at all. What I am saying is that we do look at the basic needs of individuals who have no means of support. They, for whatever reason, are without a job and other means of support. That safety net is there. The financial assistance is given to individuals, and on that basis they access the accommodation that's available.

There certainly may be reason to look at the report in terms of accommodation across the province, and I have other hon. colleagues that may like to supplement the answer. If in fact we don't have housing available to citizens, then certainly there are other programs that could address that area, and I'm sure that

information will be very useful.

MR. MARTIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's precisely the problem that they're alluding to in this report. I don't know if the minister has had a chance to read it yet. For instance, the report notes that many of the homeless are women, often victims of family violence, who need emergency shelter space. My question very specifically: has the minister decided to address a concern in the report that there is a particular need for such facilities, and what is she going to do about it?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, at all times when individual people come forward and they are in need of emergency assistance, that assistance is supplied. It may be financial, so those individuals can avail themselves of accommodation that could be classified as emergency, because I'm sure that most people would not want to spend an extended period in a hotel or whatever. But once having moved off emergency assistance, obviously there is long-term assistance available to people. As I look at all the information that is available to us, coming from the various types of shelter, for instance, that are available in the city of Edmonton, more often than not they show vacancies.

MR. MARTIN: Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. This particular report is alluding to government policy that's creating many of the problems. Specifically they talk about the recent shelter allowance cutbacks which the government imposed, coming due on June 1, and they make it very clear that social assistance recipients cannot afford available rooming house accommodation at the new rates provided. So what I'm saying is that government policy is creating more of a problem in this area. In view of this, another report out to this minister, would the minister be prepared to at least reconsider the recommendation of the coalition, consider that these particular cutbacks be rescinded at least for the time being until they study it some more?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, on one hand, the hon. member seems to be saying that there isn't enough housing available, and this is a retrospective comment. On the other hand, the hon. member is saying that in the future we may have a problem because of the amount of the shelter allowance. I would say that if the single employables in particular access shared accommodation, in fact the shelter allowance will be sufficient.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a supplementary to the minister. Clearly the community has information that the minister doesn't seem to have. Has the minister, as I suggested, met with community groups and those who provide housing, including housing authorities, since announcing the shelter allowance reductions to determine if in fact there is housing available at that rate?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member, I think, is more or less leaving the impression that every individual is entitled to accommodation in terms of, so to speak, their own pad. This may not be the case, Mr. Speaker. What we are saying is that the shelter allowance that is available for an individual is half the amount that a couple with no children would receive. Those people are housed -- the couples that I'm speaking of -- and they are housed adequately. It does mean that in many

cases singles who don't want to be in a room-and-board situation will have to share accommodation with another person.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Grande Prairie.

DR. ELLIOTT: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask a supplementary on that respecting the adjustments to the social allowance coming due on Monday. There are several concerns in the constituency of Grande Prairie about whether or not people are going to be able to find places to live. In view of the minister's comments I'm wondering if there is a monitoring mechanism that will be in place that will adequately provide up-to-date information on how well these adjustments are taking place.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, yes, we do have a monitoring system, and in the course of the last month it has shown that there is what we would expect to be an average number of people who have changed their accommodation. This does mean, of course, that many, many people may be in accommodation that is more expensive than their shelter allowance will allow for. But there is one other interesting bit of information that I'm sure all hon. members will enjoy, and that is that there have been a significant number of cases where landlords have reduced the rent to the amount allowed under social allowance.

MR. SPEAKER: Second main question, Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MARTIN: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to designate my second question to the Member for Edmonton Belmont.

Employment Alternatives Program

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the program announced today by the Minister of Career Development and Employment discriminates against people who are on unemployment insurance and perhaps even against those who are already working for minimal wages. The program creates subsidies for people on welfare while leaving many others wishing perhaps that they might qualify for a program. Will the minister announce a program for others who are left off without a subsidy for their labour?

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. gentleman was here during my discussion on my labour market strategy, he would have seen that in fact we have \$90 million for employment programming in the department and \$84 million for training. So there are other programs within the department, Mr. Speaker, that are open for not only employees or individuals looking for training, retraining, or work experience, but also for employers who are looking for a different stream other than the one that targets employables on social assistance.

MR. SIGURDSON: Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Given that the employment alternatives program subsidizes wages for a period of six-months up to one year and that the goal is really to create long-term employment, will the minister file with the Assembly documents that indicate that -- and I would quote from the minister's own release this morning:

a significant percentage of employees whose positions are subsidized, remain employed after the subsidy period ends.

Would you file those documents, please.

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, we do an ongoing monitoring of our programs, not only during the programs but following the programs. As a matter of fact, in instances we will bring in outside consultants who will do the monitoring for us to determine the success of our programming. We have determined under the wage subsidy program that in fact in 1986 and this part of '87 we have had 17,000 working under the wage subsidy program. We have also determined by monitoring over the years, Mr. Speaker, that close to one out of two people who go on a subsidy program end up working after the program expires. We also find that another one-third on that program end up getting further training or getting upgrading at some of our postsecondary institutions.

In response to the hon. gentleman's request, I'll give some consideration to it, and if he is serious about it, he may consider the Order Paper, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well I don't know why I'd want to do that; it hasn't worked before. However, I may just do that.

Will the minister agree that this program that has been set up would really take jobs away from some people only to give them to others?

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, one of the preconditions of the program, and it's a contractual obligation on behalf of employers, is that there can be no reductions in existing manpower to access any of our department programs. If employers enter into a contract with us, we monitor it. As a matter of fact, we go on the jobsite, go to the company and determine the level of manpower. If there's any evidence that there's abuse, they must return the funds that have been advanced, and they're also subject to legal proceedings, breach of contract. I might say that we have had very little abuse of our programming in this particular area, and it's the same condition for all our programming under training and job creation.

MR. SIGURDSON: I'm pleased, Mr. Speaker, that the minister says he's monitoring the program, but I'm curious to know how far back one looks at the employment records of the employer. I have been made aware of a case where a person has been laid off, and one might suspect that that person has been laid off so the employer can qualify for this program. How far back does the minister go in monitoring the program?

MR. ORMAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, nobody is going to lay anybody off to access the programs, because in fact they don't get approval until we have done our research on the level of employment. In my experience in this department I have found that there is a great deal of integrity both on behalf of the employer and the employee with regard to our programs. The abuse in this area is very small. We do our very best to monitor the programs. If in fact there are abuses, they are small in number, and it's certainly not sufficient for us not to proceed with programming just because there are the odd people that are going to abuse it.

In my particular view, Mr. Speaker, I believe this employment alternatives program, together with our other programs in the department, is well received, both by the individuals and by companies. We want to be sure that we maintain the integrity of those programs, and we will watch them very closely. But certainly a low level of abuse is not enough for us not to embark in programming in this area.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Social Services briefly.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to supplement my hon. colleague's answers and say that I am very encouraged by the response of my colleagues to the needs as have been identified with a particular social allowance group. I think that anybody looking closely at the profile of the social allowance group will note that they do need an extra boost up. But we're talking about a hand up and not a handout. I believe it's fair to say that the government believes that these people can be made self-supporting, and that is their desire. Their desire is not to be treated, as the opposition would, with a continual handout and be crippled in terms of looking for government services.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton Gold Bar, followed by Clover Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you. I have a supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Career Development and Employment. When we consider that this is approximately a \$9,600 per person per annum subsidy to the employer -- not the employee but the employer -- with no guarantee of a permanent job of any kind being created, will the minister consider incentives or penalties, perhaps in the last part of the program, to hopefully encourage employers to make that job permanent?

MR. ORMAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, the very last thing I'll do under this program or any programs in my department is guarantee anybody anything. The individuals have to prove themselves to the employer that they are making a meaningful contribution to the expansion of that business. The employer has to be satisfied of that. The employee has to be satisfied that he is making a meaningful contribution to the program. To suggest that we guarantee people's jobs is something that I believe to be absurd.

But I might add that we are providing an extra training bonus under the program that will encourage employers to provide additional training over and above the on-the-job work experience. That, I believe, is a very important aspect of the program. We have in our minds the interests of the individuals. The human resources of this province are our most important resource. We have to be sure that we provide every opportunity available to them to move into the work force if they have an inclination to be there. In my estimation, most of the people in this particular category would prefer to be working. We want to address that issue, restore self-esteem and self-confidence, and have them make a meaningful contribution to society.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, to the minister. This program we're discussing plus the other subsidized programs: is the minister going to have these in place before the end of the construction season, or is he saving them for next winter? Because the response we're getting from the employers is that none of that material is getting out. So could the minister tell us if he has a deadline, if he's going to get something going?

MR. ORMAN: Yes, Mr. Speaker, it starts Monday. I might say that our department has had in Edmonton, not including our regional offices, over 200 telephone calls from employers anxious to participate in the program and a like number of calls from individuals who are employables on social assistance anxious to participate in the program. So despite what the opposition would say, the people on social assistance do prefer to work, and they're not lazy. They want to get out and participate in the

labour force. So I would encourage the people of Alberta not to listen to the negative people and refuse to hear them when they say that these people are lazy and don't want to contribute to society. They do, and this program provides that opportunity.

Triple E Senate

MR. TAYLOR: Only a Tory would be surprised that people want to work.

My first question, Mr. Speaker, is to the Premier. I noticed yesterday that the Premier bragged that the support for the Triple E Senate, due to his great convincing powers, increased by 100 percent. But I also noticed that Mr. Vander Zalm, the Premier of B.C., said that he wouldn't help him sell the idea. In other words, he will dance with him until a prettier girl comes to the party, and then he will be left. Now, to the Premier: if you cannot convince four western Premiers, who have a vested interest in the Triple E Senate, how are you going to convince the rest of Canada?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I thought the hon. member would be helping me.

MR. TAYLOR: I'm glad to, Mr. Speaker. They talk about drowning men clutching at a straw, but this time he's clutching at a Liberal. I would be interested then, if I am going to come and join the Premier in selling his idea -- and I would love to. I would like to know whether he would share with us just what bargaining chip he has or what he would use to try to get the Triple E back on track in the constitutional talks.

MR. GETTY: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Triple E is on track, and the constitutional talks, as most Canadians recognize, have now got within our Constitution the need to discuss Senate reform. It's never been there before. For 120 years we've had the same Senate, and we now on an annual basis -- perhaps more than annually -- will be meeting and discussing as first ministers how to reform the Senate, how to make it more effective, more equal, and to make it an elected Senate. I think it has so much validity that while first ministers would naturally say, "I want to think of the other alternatives," the Triple E, that all members in this House are able to support unanimously, surely has attractiveness that others will also recognize. I'm counting on that.

MR. TAYLOR: Surely, Mr. Premier, you know you were taken in on the Meech Lake accord. Now that the Premier of Quebec is trying to upgrade what he is going to get out of the Constitution, now that the Premier of Quebec is trying to upgrade what he was supposed to get out of the Meech Lake accord, would the Premier consider upgrading the Triple E Senate likewise to one of the main issues, rather than talk, talk, talk, year after year after year on Senate reform?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, with some interest I notice the hon. leader of the Liberals talking about the Meech Lake accord. All you have to do is look at the Liberal Party on this issue. They are in total shambles. They don't know which side of it they're on. The hon. member here has tried to get on the bandwagon -- late, I must admit -- of the Triple E Senate. At the same time he's trying to tell us that you need the federal government to whip provinces into line, he's trying to tell us that he in fact supports a Triple E Senate which would give provinces strength, I mean, it's such an opposite point of view of his views. It shows

that he, too, is just like the federal Liberal Party and, I believe, the provincial Liberal Party. They have no position on this; they're in shambles on the whole issue.

MR. TAYLOR: I would remind the Premier, Mr. Speaker, that it was he that signed the Edmonton accord and after he had signed it, agreeing not to discuss the Senate, suddenly he had a change of heart, because I showed him the light.

Will the Premier now reconsider something else? Which is, to follow the example of Quebec and Ontario in calling an all-party committee of the Legislature to examine the Meech Lake accord, or is he still frightened of it?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, we're not frightened. The only reason the Liberals would like some kind of an additional committee or some additional time is so they could figure out where they stand. I mean, we've just had the former Liberal leader once again expressing his view of Canada, one that Albertans totally reject, which is of a strong Ottawa dictating to provinces as second-class citizens. That's the exact thing that we have removed in the Meech Lake accord, and we're not going to let it get away. We're going to make sure that that kind of thinking never has a place in Canada any more.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, if I may just talk generally about the Meech Lake accord, and I understand the 2nd is still the deadline. I'm asking the Premier, in view of commentary from Premier Bourassa and others, as he understands it, is the Meech Lake accord agreement still on track for June 2?

MR. GETTY: Yes, Mr. Speaker. The government has had officials in Ottawa working on the translation from principles to the constitutional text. While there are some comments from time to time in the media presenting problems, I don't really see those problems becoming large enough to slow down the process which has been put in place on April 30. We believe that the constitutional text will adequately present the principles which we agreed to on April 30 and that we'll be able to sign them. The meeting is on for June 2. We will get final documents, I believe, on Monday, and of course we have people working on them now, over the weekend, and on Monday and should be in a position to discuss them with the other Premiers.

I was pleased that at the meeting in Humboldt, Saskatchewan, the four western Premiers endorsed again, unanimously and strongly, the principles which we established at Meech Lake.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Little Bow, followed by Wainwright, followed by Athabasca-Lac La Biche.

Deficiency Payments for Grain Producers

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Premier a question with regards to the communiqué relative to agriculture. The communiqué indicates there that

The Premiers . . . called on the Government of Canada to make an early announcement in 1987 for an increased and substantial deficiency payment, due to the continuing decline in prices and incomes.

Could the Premier indicate, with regards to the Prime Minister's attitude on that matter, whether his rejection was on the basis of no deficiency payment or that there would not be an early announcement.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I felt it was extremely inaccurate, some of the reports covering the Prime Minister's reply in the House of Commons when first asked about the Premiers' communiqué in which we asked for another deficiency payment. Because upon reading *Hansard* and upon seeing his actual reply on television, it was clear that his response was that: we're working with the western Premiers, we're working with farmers' organizations, farmers directly all over Canada, and we're assessing the matter; we know that we're making progress in terms of convincing other countries to get out of the subsidy business because none of us want to be in it; but, nevertheless, we have helped in the past, conditions are worse, and perhaps will be worse in the future, and we're prepared to help again. So I think the Prime Minister was assisted by the communiqué which came from the western Premiers.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary. Could the Premier indicate the size of the deficiency payment being requested by the western Premiers and what time line was recommended to the Prime Minister in terms of a payment?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, it was difficult to come to any agreement on a particular number because it will depend on the crop year and how things proceed through 1987. Sufficient to say, though, that \$1 billion last year was determined to be what was necessary, and we have conditions worse than last year in the grain farming sector of agriculture. Therefore, we felt that it was obvious that it should be larger the next year.

There is debate whether it should be much, much larger, 20 percent larger -- those kinds of arguments are now floating about -- and also to learn whether there was any information that has been found in the payments this year, and how they're allocated, as to whether it might be improved. So we believe that the Prime Minister, the House of Commons, the Members of Parliament, working together with the provinces and our agriculture ministers, will be able to come to some joint understanding of what the right level would be. And we would hope that it would be announced before 1987 ends.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, a final supplementary to the Premier. It's with regards to the comment in the communiqué that Canada could direct some of their wheat to various countries in terms of aid. My question to the Premier is, with the object in mind, I'm sure, to bring relief to the farmers of Canada: could the Premier indicate who would be paying for that grain, in terms of -- are we looking at the federal government, are we looking at a partnership of the provinces and the federal government in compensating the farmers for the grain shipped in terms of aid?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, we were completely open in that regard. The province of Alberta now, in aid, often sends the aid in kind for nations that require help and people that require help. We would look at that again, and we offered, as the communiqué said:

The Western Premiers offered to work with the Government of Canada to develop programs in the aid area.

So it might require some purchasing of the produce by us jointly, perhaps the federal government only, perhaps we might pay some part of the shipping. We're prepared to work it out.

MR. FOX: Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Premier. Is he prepared to take the leadership on this issue and make a commitment right

now of new provincial money in terms of a deficiency payment to Alberta's grain producers, perhaps on a dollar-for-dollar basis with federal money?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member would know, the deficiency payment over the years has been deemed to be a rightful place for federal assistance in agriculture, and we feel that that is the correct case. In any request for deficiency payments you're always judging the ability of the country or a province to be able to assist. Alberta assists their agriculture sector more than any province in Canada, and we'll continue to do that.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, it's to the Premier. In view of the fact that the federal government has turned down the form of aid that's been used in the past, which is more or less tied to deficiency payments and to subsidies and quite often misses the people that really need it, would the provincial government work with the federal government in undergoing studies on a system of a negative income tax for the farmers that would be based on helping the farmers that need it, rather than a subsidy system?

MR. GETTY: Well, Mr. Speaker, the federal government hasn't turned down the request. So we shouldn't be designing something new when we in fact have one that was working this year and still the majority of it to be paid and we've requested for next year.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Wainwright, followed by Athabasca-Lac La Biche.

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This could be a supplementary question to the last one. However, as long as I'm in line, I think that it would be okay.

I would like to know if there was any discussion at the western Premiers' Conference on the arrival of the 1986 special grain program. As we're all well aware, the expenses pile up in the spring of the year, and we're in the last two months of the crop year, and the largest portion of the 1986-87 payment has not come out yet. Was there any discussion on that and are there any more delays in it?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, we talked about it but not in a definitive way, because the federal government doesn't participate in these meetings. Therefore, we were not dealing with a federal certainty. However, we believe that the cheques will be coming to Alberta farmers and farmers all over Canada before the end of June. Now, my colleague the hon. Minister of Agriculture is discussing that on a more current basis with Minister Wise in Ottawa and may wish to supplement that.

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, it was the intention and the hope of the federal government that the cheques would have been out prior to the end of this month. And, as the Premier has just indicated, because that was not possible, they have sent out letters indicating that the cheques will be forthcoming in the early part of June and at the latest by the end of June.

MR. FISCHER: A supplementary then on the new '87-88 agreement. Was it discussed that it would be separated in two portions again?

MR. GETTY: No, Mr. Speaker, we didn't make that request nor have we heard back that there's any idea that it would be split in two again.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche, followed by Edmonton Meadowlark, followed by Edmonton Centre.

Metis Land Grants

MR. PIQUETTE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier. At the failed First Ministers' Conference on aboriginal rights, the Premier prided himself in the fact that the province has committed itself to proposing a revised Metis Betterment Act and to grant surface rights to an existing 1.28 million acres of Metis settlements to the Metis and to confirm this grant of land in the Constitution of Canada. In view of the fact that these existing Metis settlements only provide land to 4,500 Metis people in Alberta, is the Premier prepared to consider negotiating an expanded land base for those Metis who have no land?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will recall that the government was following through on a resolution of this Legislature on the first matter which we discussed. In terms of additional lands granted or in some way provided to the Metis people of this province, the hon. Solicitor General is leading in that area in discussing the matter with them. It's not easy because of course they aren't in a particular area, so it's a more complicated situation. But he may wish to advise the House about his most current discussions with the Metis people.

MR. PIQUETTE: Yes, I will, Mr. Premier. I hope the Premier is aware that four Metis settlements granted to the Metis people in the 1930s were rescinded by the previous government: the Touchwood Siebert settlement the Wolf Lake settlement, the Cold Lake settlement and the Marlboro settlement all in the Lac La Biche area. Is the Premier prepared to renegotiate with the affected Metis the reacquisition of some of these rescinded Metis settlements?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I haven't had the people that the hon. member is referring to discuss with us that very alternative. I'm sure the hon. Solicitor General, when he's in the House, would be pleased to bring the member up to date on his current discussions with the Metis Association, because in Alberta they are going very well. I look forward to being able to come up with some long-term solutions in this area of a unique self-government of Metis people in Alberta.

MR. PIQUETTE: As the Metis local 2951 of the Owl River-Lac La Biche area representing 154 members is submitting to your government a land proposal that attempts to recover Metis land that was rescinded in 1940 and 1960, will the Premier and his government be prepared to sit down with this Metis local and negotiate in good faith this land proposal application?

MR. GETTY: Well, as I just said, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Solicitor General is handling that and would respond when he's available.

ANHON. MEMBER: How about a commitment from you?

MR. PIQUETTE: Yes, I think we'd like to see a commitment

because they'll be meeting with the government next week.

Regardless of the status of the suit relating to Metis settlement subsurface rights brought by the Metis against the provincial government, will the Premier now commit his government to negotiate to settle this long outstanding issue out of court?

MR. SPEAKER: Is this before the courts? Is the issue before the court, hon. member?

AN HON. MEMBER: No, it's not before the court.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, the question's out of order. Sorry. Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: A very quick supplementary to the Premier. Has the government done any more thinking on whether the mineral rights, that'll be accorded to the Metis in the final agreement will be of a pooled nature, or will it be specifically assigned rights in different lands of the province?

MR. SPEAKER: That same issue -- it's a matter before the courts. Edmonton Meadowlark, followed by Edmonton Centre, and if there is time, Calgary Forest Lawn.

Meech Lake Accord

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has been going to some lengths to avoid the issue of an all-party committee to discuss the Meech Lake accord. He's been hiding behind some sort of tired old rhetoric without giving us real answers. Albertans need to discuss this in full and open disclosure. They need to see expert testimony on many of the very difficult questions that are involved. Could the Premier please indicate to us why it is that he's opposed to an all-party committee of this Legislature to openly debate and discuss the Meech Lake accord?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, we're right now an all-party committee of the Legislature. The resolution would have to come before this Legislature, all the parties here. Nothing is being hidden. We're not being silent. The hon. member would get his right to express his views as much as anyone else. I don't see his problem.

MR. MITCHELL: Could the Premier please indicate his feelings on having open public hearings, so that we can have public input and public testimony, so that all Albertans can consider this important question?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, that's exactly the role of an MLA: to negotiate and discuss and listen to his constituents and then represent them here.

MR. MITCHELL: If that were the case, Mr. Speaker, then I guess we wouldn't have to have an open, public task force on ambulance policy, headed by a couple of Conservative MLAs. Is the Premier saying that ambulance policy and open, public hearings on that are more important than the Meech Lake accord and its implications for the future of this province and the future of this country?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, that's a foolish question. Perhaps if the hon. member's one-day wisdom grows to match his ego,

he'd understand that.

MR. MITCHELL: Perhaps if the seriousness with which you dealt with this matter grew to match the arrogance with which you're dealing with it, we'd be able to get proper public input into this very serious matter. If we sign this accord, we lose leverage on Senate reform. Is the Premier really saying that he doesn't want to face the public on this important matter because he knows he sold the chance for Senate reform down the river?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, again a foolish proposition. As most Canadians know and most Albertans know and support very strongly, we now have Senate reform guaranteed in our Constitution. We've never had that in 120 years. It has been the establishment of equality of provinces, and it has been the leadership of the province and government of Alberta that has established these matters.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton Centre, followed by Calgary Forest Lawn. Followed by Edmonton Belmont, if there's time.

West Edmonton Mall Accident

REV. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In reference to a very serious incident at the West Edmonton Mall this week. To the minister of community health. Can the minister give us an interim report on his investigation into the trapped diver accident at the West Edmonton Mall which occurred this past Monday? Has he yet determined if in fact the lifeguards, who were standing right by the submarine tank, were refused permission to help save this man until five minutes later, when top echelon brass from the chain of command finally got a different team of rescuers to go in?

MR. DINNING: No, Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't want to give an interim report simply because I'd like to have the full information from a complete investigation before I would report or take any action that's required.

REV. ROBERTS: Well, Mr. Speaker, in light of this horrible accident, is the minister now reviewing health and safety regulations to ensure that they are tight enough to prevent this type of poor decision-making from ever occurring again unchecked?

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't want to comment on the hon. member's question, simply because the investigations as to the conditions of the site at the time of the accident and the procedures that were followed would be part of the investigation, and I would want to have all of the facts on hand before I'd want to pass judgment.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, there is a certain difficulty involved under Standing Order 23(g), a member should be called to order if a question:

refers to any matter

(ii) that is before any quasi-judicial, administrative or investigative body constituted by the Assembly or by or under the authority of an Act of the Legislature

So if we would bear that in mind while the questions continue, and the minister will have to help us as to what stage this proceeding is at.

REV. ROBERTS: Thank you for that guidance, Mr. Speaker.

I hope this question is, then, in order. Could the minister please indicate what state the submarine tank at the mall is in now. Are those working on the subs properly licensed commercial divers, and will the minister insist that all future sub work be done by commercial not scuba or recreational divers?

MR. DINNING: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, I can't give a report to the Assembly on the current state of activities at the site at the West Edmonton Mall, but I would happily get that information and report back to the Assembly.

MR. TAYLOR: Entirely outside that investigation. Does the minister have at his fingertips whether or not we use the buddy system in regulations as far as diving practices or commercial diving as used in this province?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, that isn't in the regulations as we have them. That is just good common sense, and we would expect that good common sense would prevail.

Oil Pricing

MR. PASHAK: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Energy has written and met with Alberta refiners hoping that they'll amend practices that cost Alberta producers and the Provincial Treasury some \$400,000 a day. This is a backward step from the action he took a year ago when he at least enlisted the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission to amend this practice. To the Minister of Energy: what new steps will the minister take to achieve fair posted prices now that 11 months, a few letters, and a few meetings have obviously passed without satisfactory results?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, I outlined, I believe, the answer to that question in the House the other day when I indicated that we have been tracking very closely over the course of the last year, since world oil prices collapsed, as to whether or not the Canadian posted prices were tracking the U.S. spot prices. After meeting with the industry at that time, the tracking indicated that the posted prices and the spot prices were tracking extremely close together. We did recently take action when we noted that the spread was widening, as it did during the collapse. And we wanted to assure our producers in this province that they would not get less than fair market value for their oil and thus through the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission, again in discussions with them and the industry, we decided to write to the industry to get their response and follow up further if necessary.

MR. PASHAK: Well, Mr. Speaker, clearly the minister is just writing letters and not taking any effective action. But again, to the Minister of Energy. What became of the increased role in ensuring fair posted prices that was to be played by the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission according to statements you made last August?

DR. WEBBER: Well, Mr. Speaker, maybe if the hon. member has a good suggestion as to what we might do, I would be happy to hear from him.

MR. PASHAK: When we form the government I'm sure that you'll hear the answer to that question.

Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Energy then. How can the

minister say, as he did on Monday, that a fair market determines Alberta's gasoline prices when refiners are reaping a half a million dollars per day from producers and the Treasury because of his ineffectiveness? Is this the minister's idea of fairness?

DR. WEBBER: Once again, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Calgary Forest Lawn exaggerates the numbers that are involved. He is indicating up to a half a million dollars; I'd be interested to know where he gets those numbers. Certainly we believe in the marketplace determining what prices should be, and if the marketplace is working, we're satisfied not to take any particular action. And by monitoring and discussing with industry, things have worked out well in the past, and I expect they'll work out well in the future.

MR. SPEAKER: The time for question period has expired. Might we have unanimous consent of the House to finish this series of questions and to allow the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care to give supplementary information in response to a question?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Calgary Forest Lawn.

MR. PASHAK: In the same vein, Mr. Speaker, I find further inaction on the part of the minister. How can the minister claim to protect Alberta's interest when he accepts a 41 percent decrease in provincial take on gasoline, invites foreign takeovers in our producing sector, and cannot get a nickel out of refiners, who on average have doubled their revenues since 1985?

DR. WEBBER: Well, what the hon. member really has done, Mr. Speaker, is outline their socialist policy, which we disagree with. All the points which he mentions we could have considerable debate on in the House. And if he wants to debate anything on the Order Paper, we would be happy to do so.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, to the minister if I may, on his point of asking for some positive suggestion. I've seen many areas in the world; I've signed contracts where there's not any competition for the refining product, similar as it is here in Alberta with so few buyers. And the method used is to track on either the Persian Gulf price or, in this particular area in North America, to track the west Texas crude price. So why does not the government just tell the refiners they have to track on the west Texas crude price whether they like it or not?

DR. WEBBER: Well, Mr. Speaker, I suppose that would be the Liberal heavy-handed government approach to handling matters, and the hon. member indicating that we have no competition is also untrue. We had the federal body investigate competition in the industry over the last several years, and their conclusions were not the conclusions of the hon. leader of the Liberal Party. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we believe a reasonable approach is to sit down with industry people and co-operate with them and work them to the benefit of all Canadians.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care in response to a question raised by Edmonton Strathcona.

Health Care Statement Fee

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the hon. member from Edmonton Strathcona asked about certain fees charged by the health care insurance plan for a statement of benefits. The information I have is that the public is provided, free of charge, with a copy of the most recent statement of benefits that's regularly issued by the plan. If, however, an individual wishes to have an up-to-date copy for some other period of time, and it's often the case that a lawyer would ask for this involving a case of some kind, then there is a charge of \$30. That charge was put in last September. It will increase shortly to \$35, and it's based on the actual amount of time required to do that work because it has to be pulled from the records of the plan by hand, and it does involve that much actual cost.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton Strathcona. [Mr. Taylor rose] No, hon. members, it's only Edmonton Strathcona who has the opportunity to respond.

MR. WRIGHT: I have no question, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. [interjection] Not quite yet. Rest assured, Calgary Forest Lawn; I shall not forget you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MR. SPEAKER: Might we have unanimous consent to revert briefly to the Introduction of Special Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS (reversion)

MR. SPEAKER: Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the House. It's my pleasure today to introduce four senior citizens from Heritage Place lodge in Morinville in my constituency. Mr. Speaker, it's very interesting: one of the members was born the same year that Alberta was created and another of the members remembers delivering coal around the Legislature when there was nothing much around here except grass. I'd like to introduce them: Mr. John Meyer, Mr. Mike Babiak, Mr. Andy Fedechko, Mr. Fred Dzioba, and they are accompanied by two leaders from that lodge, Ms Heather Lee and Mrs. Shari Bourgeois. They are in your public gallery, and if they would rise now, I'm sure that the members would love to join me in greeting them with the traditional greeting.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair has been advised of a request under Standing Order 40 for unanimous consent with regard to debate. Member for Calgary Forest Lawn, speaking to the urgency of debate.

MR. PASHAK: Mr. Speaker, I rise under Standing Order 40 to request the unanimous consent of the House to waive Standing Order 38 in order to present the following motion:

Be it resolved that this Assembly express its opposition to the ruling of the U.S. Federal Energy Regulatory

Commission imposing further transportation and marketing costs on Alberta producers selling natural gas into the United States.

I have sufficient copies for all members, and I will be prepared to explain the urgency of the matter.

MR. SPEAKER: The pages may distribute the motion, but first to the House leaders of all the parties. [interjection] The member is speaking to urgency of debate only, please.

MR. PASHAK: This matter, Mr. Speaker, is urgent because yesterday the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission of the United States government approved regulations that could ultimately mean some \$400 million worth of loss to Alberta producers. This action is clearly extraterritorial; it follows in the wake of abrogations of take-or-pay contracts of earlier in 1984. It also involves the loss of revenues to the Alberta Treasury, thus worsening the deficit and exacerbating the current economic difficulties of the province of Alberta.

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to address the urgent and pressing necessity of debate on this topic. First of all, the hon. member again overestimates the financial impact. But with respect to the urgent and pressing nature of it, when the original decision was made, we took considerable action to approach Washington and also the regulatory body in the United States. I visited Washington myself in January, where we approached the Canadian ambassador and through his assistance approached senators, the federal regulatory body, the energy regulatory agency. The federal government also worked co-operatively with us, so representation certainly was made in terms of dealing with the original decision.

As a result of the decision yesterday, the door still is not closed in that the United States administration has indicated that both the Department of Energy and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission will be reviewing rate-making this summer, and Canada would have an opportunity to make its views known then. In addition, Mr. Speaker, industry is assessing, as we are assessing, what follow-up measures we could take. I'd like to make a final point, and that is that the original decision of that regulatory body was made months ago. If it was of such an urgent and pressing nature, why haven't we heard from that hon. member in this House with a motion? We haven't had one question in the Legislature that relates to that decision, so I don't believe it's a pressing, urgent necessity.

MR. SPEAKER: Under Standing Order 40, the request for unanimous consent to debate the resolution, which has now been distributed. All those in favour of giving unanimous consent for the debate, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: It fails. Hon. Government House Leader.

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, I move that motions for returns 209, 210, and 211 stand.

[Motion carried]

head: **WRITTEN QUESTIONS**

207. Mr. Younie asked the government the following question:
- With regard to every purchase of a herbicide or pesticide made by the Departments of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife; Transportation and Utilities; Public Works, Supply and Services; Environment; and Recreation and Parks between September 1, 1986, and April 30, 1987, where that herbicide or pesticide has been applied or is intended for application either by the government or by a person under contract to the government, what was or is
- (1) the brand name and the chemical name of the herbicide or pesticide applied or intended for application,
 - (2) the purpose for which the herbicide or pesticide has been or will be applied, and
 - (3) the legal description and size in hectares of the lands to which the herbicide or pesticide has been or will be applied?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, Question 207 is much too detailed to be accepted by the government, and we would reject it.

head: **MOTIONS FOR RETURNS**

176. Ms Laing moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of the evaluation of community schools prepared for the Department of Education by Dr. Ann Harvey.

[Debate adjourned May 14: Ms Laing speaking]

MS LAING: Mr. Speaker, I rise to request that this report by Ann Harvey looking at the efficacy of community schools be tabled. The minister, in refusing to table this report, has referred to *Beauchesne*, section 390(2)(n), that allows that papers that are of a private and confidential nature are not of a public or official character. She has used this section of *Beauchesne* as a justification for refusing to table this report.

Mr. Speaker, I can wonder what is private about this report. It is a publicly funded study of a publicly funded program delivered to the publicly funded school system in this province, to the children of the public. There's nothing private about this. What is being studied is what was delivered to the public: efficacy in terms of the delivery in terms of the meeting of the goals and objectives and the cost effectiveness. It is not a study of something that went on behind closed doors. It is not a study of a policy that is hidden. It was a public program with policies and programs designed by the community: teachers, students, parents, community members, indeed members of the public. What rationalization is there, then, to call this private?

The second issue is the issue of confidentiality. Confidentiality is usually used to protect from harm, be that those protected from individuals, harm that would arise from publicity, whether that harm would arise to individuals or to groups or to the nation. Usually when we use the issue of confidentiality to keep something hidden, there is an implication of alleged wrongdoing or an implication of jeopardizing the national security.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

I know of no allegations of wrongdoing or danger to the nation's security in this report. This is the study of the impact of

this program on the children who attended these schools. It is merely the gathering and synthesizing of data and, out of that synthesizing, the making of recommendations about the future of these schools. There is no impact on the members of the public in the release of this report, unless of course it causes anger in the face of the cuts to these programs.

The Member for Banff-Cochrane has stated in *Hansard*, and I would quote from page 1209, May 14:

If that advice, those reports, are simply revealed or tabled, what will happen will be a disservice to Albertans, because officials and consultants and contractors will simply stop reporting on options and recommendations; they will simply not make that information available.

I do not understand how the member can come to such a conclusion. Surely experts or people working as consultants can give advice, and that advice can be considered and disregarded for a whole variety of very good reasons. Of course, the person making the decision whether to take or not to take that advice should be able to answer for that decision. Experts for the most part know that their recommendations stimulate dialogue, debate, compromise, and in fact experts often disagree. That is part of dialogue and the compromising that goes into finding the best possible solutions. I would suggest experts would only be unwilling to come forward if they are punished for not anticipating or adhering to the party line. It seems they would not come forward publicly with their advice only if they will be asked to sell out and give what is expected of them rather than giving the true expert advice that is asked of them.

The Member for Banff-Cochrane further states. *Hansard*, page 1209, May 14:

But when ministers are receiving advice, to say that that should be tabled before any minister has made actions or made decisions is not fair to the citizens of this province.

Mr. Speaker, this minister has had this report for a number of months, many months in fact, and in fact has made decisions in regard to these schools. I wonder, then, how the minister can continue to justify withholding this report.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the minister spoke of this report in estimates debate on May 7 in this Assembly and surely in so doing brought it into the public realm in order to influence debate. I would therefore ask the Speaker for a ruling on *Beauchesne*, section 390(2)(n), which is the reason given for withholding this report. I would suggest that it is not applicable.

In addition, I would ask for support from this Assembly for this motion. It is an important study that we need to be able to look at the impact of this program on students, teachers, community people, and the cost efficiency of it and the efficacy and if in fact it has achieved the goals it was set and what changes would need to be made in order for this program to be better delivered.

I would therefore ask, Mr. Speaker, for two things: a ruling on *Beauchesne* 390(2)(n) and a vote of support for this motion. Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, if recollection serves the Chair correctly, last week the Speaker ruled on the request for a ruling on *Beauchesne*. That in fact . . . Order please. That in fact was a matter that was dealt with in committee and had to be referred back to committee. Having closed debate on Motion for a Return 176, all those in favour . . .

MS LAING: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker. The ruling was on *Beauchesne* 327, not 390.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Chair will reserve the decision on the request by the hon. member. On Motion for a Return 176, all those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: All those opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The motion fails.

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

[Eight minutes having elapsed, the House divided]

For the motion:

Barrett	Laing	Sigurdson
Ewasiuk	McEachern	Taylor
Fox	Mjolsness	Wright
Gibeault	Piquette	Younie
Hawkesworth	Roberts	

Against the motion:

Adair	Drobot	Nelson
Ady	Elliott	Oldring
Alger	Elzinga	Orman
Anderson	Fischer	Payne
Betkowski	Fjordbotten	Pengelly
Bogle	Getty	Russell
Brassard	Heron	Schumacher
Campbell	Hyland	Shrake
Cassin	Johnston	Sparrow
Cherry	Jonson	Stewart
Clegg	Koper	Trynchy
Crawford	Kowalski	Webber
Cripps	Moore, R.	Weiss
Day	Musgreave	West
Downey	Musgrove	Zarusky

Totals:	Ayes - 14	Noes - 45
---------	-----------	-----------

[Motion lost]

178. Mr. Sigurdson moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing those eight studies referred to by the hon. Minister of Career Development and Employment during the course of the Oral Question Period of March 23, 1987. *Hansard* page 262. which he said "indicated that there is a net negative effect on the level of employment by increasing the level of minimum wage."

[Adjourned debate May 21: Mr. Nelson]

MR. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I'm not going to speak at any great length, just conclude. I'm sure the opposition members who have an interest in the item they've brought forward have taken the opportunity to research the files at the library and other areas they have available to them. I'm

sure they will be taking under examination and study those files so they may examine that information, and maybe this motion is in fact redundant. So I would again suggest that they have a little deeper look with their research and all the dollars that are provided to them for that purpose, and possibly then some of these lengthy items that are put here to take up time of other business that is probably a little more important that could be done during this period to advance the opportunities of other members of the House who certainly have some very important business that can be discussed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

AN HON. MEMBER: Question.

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

MR. YOUNIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Never one to ignore advice, I listened to the hon. members talk about the importance of research. I listened to their assertions that the studies are in the library, and we can find them there if we just look and read. In an effort to prove the 50 or so trips I've made to the library haven't been wasted and I still know my way there, I did go down to the library and looked under minimum wages and under labour and had a bibliography made up. I would like to let members in on a little bit of what we would have to instruct our research department to go through if we wanted to find this information instead of the minister just tabling the eight documents.

Under books obtained prior to 1986, there were nine on minimum wages and 66 notations photocopied under labour in general. The librarian said there were several hundred not photocopied. Under books since January 1986, there were 11 items under minimum wages and 12 pages of notations under labour in general. Under government documents, I found 20 items under minimum wage and 19 pages of listings under labour in general. I would like to file copies of that bibliography, and I have one more here that I'll present in a few moments.

I would not want to calculate the number of days I would have to tie up our entire research department to go through those documents to try to find the only eight that would give any support for the contention that a raise in minimum wages would have an adverse effect on the level of employment. Because I'm sure that out of the thousands, it's only eight. If I were to tie up that research department at a cost to the taxpayers for that length of time when someone else in this government -- one of my colleagues or one of his researchers -- has already done that and found the eight studies, I would consider that irresponsible use of taxpayers' money. I would think I should be able to count on one of my colleagues to save the taxpayers that money by answering a simple request for eight documents that he claims he has looked at or his department has looked at and he knows are in the library.

He could bring those in here or bring copies of them or just the notation of what the titles are so we could get them without wasting the taxpayers' money in that way. I think it's very unfortunate that in fact we're told to waste hundreds, perhaps thousands, of hours of research time that could be better spent on the taxpayers' behalf doing other things. I do not believe that duplicating efforts, as this government so often does, is a sound use of the taxpayers' money. The effort has been made once by government. We've asked for the studies. I don't think it's an

unfair request. What I will do to make it easier for the minister is send a copy of that bibliography over by page with a request that he agree to take it back to his researcher and get the researcher to go through and tick off the eight titles and send it back to me. I will take those eight to our research department, and we will look them over.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche.

MR. PIQUETTE: Thank you very much. Those eight studies referred to by the hon. Minister of Career Development and Employment during the course of the Oral Question Period of March 23, '87, when he

indicated that there is a net negative effect on the level of employment by increasing the level of minimum wage, I think is one of the most regressive types of economics that we've heard for a long time, maybe like saying we can foster economic development by, first of all, not paying anybody any kind of salary and I guess we would have full employment. So I really don't see where the minister is coming from, because without purchasing power on behalf of workers, there's really no consumer demand and there's no production capable by industry or by manufacturing plants or construction sites. You need to generate wealth by the exchange of work for money, and without adequate spending by consumers and by small business, et cetera, we really don't create wealth in terms of keeping our economy rolling.

Now, for the minister to say that a higher minimum wage has an effect of increasing unemployment is totally ridiculous. If we can create more wealth in this province by increasing the thousands upon thousands of young people who are now subsisting at a minimum wage, I can guarantee that there will be a net increase of jobs, because there would be more retail jobs created and there'd be more money circulating in our economy. And it would be an upward spiral in terms of government revenues because there'd be taxes to pay, and we would have less problems in terms of people having to run to the food banks in order to supplement whatever food is required on a daily basis. On behalf of a lot of single mothers, we would have no need to be providing supplementary welfare payments, because the money they bring into the home at minimum wage is not adequate to provide the health care that these people need. There are a whole host of examples we can provide which really refute what this minister has tried to do.

I mean, if you want to look at any particular study and want to prove any point, anyone who has studied mathematics or statistics at university will realize it all depends from what point of view you're trying to address a problem. You can ask questions which refute any fact which is out there. If you want to ...

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

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

MR. DAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under Standing Order 23 it's very clear that a member is out of order if he is discussing matters other than the question under discussion. Motion 178 is clearly asking for a return for eight particular studies. The member opposite is rambling away as usual on his particular philosophy of minimum wage. He is not directing his discus-

sion to eight studies being referred to this Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Shame, shame.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. That's probably an excellent point under Standing Order 23. Perhaps the hon. Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche would periodically come back to Motion for a Return 178 dealing with the said studies.

MR. PIQUETTE: I haven't had my run today, so I thought a little bit of rambling would help.

Again calling for these eight studies, it's very important that we have the studies the minister is basing his opinion on, because in order to be able to fully debate this question, we need to know on what basis these studies were created, what criteria they were based upon, and whether they were ... Perhaps some rich capitalist, like Mr. Pocklington, may be trying to prove that paying workers nothing will stimulate our economy. It's not at all out of order to be talking about the whole question of minimum wage in this discussion because that's really the issue. The issue here is that the minister has "indicated that there is a net negative effect on the level of employment."

Now, those studies he's talking about should be tabled so we could have a proper discussion. We could probably do our research and refute by tabling another 150 studies which would prove opposite to what the Minister of Career Development and Employment is trying to elicit here in debate. So without those documents it's really a one-sided discussion. The government is making those statements to support some regressive economics, and we can't really touch him because of the fact he doesn't want to table those eight studies so that we could be more precise in refuting these statistics he is indicating he has.

One of the things that kind of amazes me is that minimum wage is not paid by small businesspeople. It is mostly paid by some of our largest corporate sector like the McDonald's chain, which hires young people at minimum wage and then when they are ready for a little raise because of time or commitment, they are let go and a whole new crew rotates through their franchise. They could settle the issue of minimum wage in some of these large corporations simply by raising the price of the hamburger by 5 cents and then giving a little bit more money to these young people so they could actually go out there and have a little bit more purchasing power so they can actually save some money for university and be independent in the way they want to pursue their career. But no, we have a lot of our banking institutions, we have a lot of our larger companies, who play on this minimum wage issue. I think it's time this government realizes that this is what's happening. So I'm calling on the minister ...

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

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. BRASSARD: Under Standing Order 23, Mr. Speaker, the member is off and running again. Would he stick to the subject please.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, the Member for Olds-Didsbury ... [interjections] Order please. The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury is quite correct. The hon. member is going to have to deal with the matter before the House, and that is the operative part of Motion 178; those eight studies.

Now, will the hon. member restrict his comments to the question of studies. Edmonton Glengarry.

MR. YOUNIE: On the point of order. It seems to me that part of the method of explaining why we need those studies is to explain the whole problem of interpretation and to look at the general idea of how one person may interpret something one way and another may interpret it another way. The important thing and the point the member was trying to make both times he was interrupted on a point of order was that we have to see those studies and any other studies the government wishes to quote to see if in fact their interpretation is slanted and biased or accurate.

We believe that it will be slanted and biased. Once we've read them, we may admit otherwise. But until we have, we have to assume that the minister may be inaccurate in his interpretations.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, the Chair is restricted to the Standing Order 23(b)(i). That is, he must stick to the matter under discussion. Now, if hon. members are going to debate all matters other than the motion before the House, how is it, in the view of the Chair, for members to understand reasons why government should answer a motion for a return? Now, the Chair has been, in the Chair's view, quite lenient. If the hon. Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche would periodically return to the motion for a return, the hon. member could probably make his case.

MR. PIQUETTE: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I again indicate what the Member for Edmonton Glengarry indicated: the eight studies that the minister referred to in Oral Question Period on March 23, 1987, we believe are slanted. Unless he can table them and prove otherwise and we can have a useful debate here and discuss the real meaning of economics rather than this regressive type of economics or slanted type of economics that can benefit a few people as opposed to the majority of our society, then it's very difficult to be staying on topic, because we really have nothing in front of us filed to provide that information.

I would then continue by saying: why isn't the minister here today to provide us with that information? We did provide him with information today by the Member for Edmonton Glengarry submitting a whole list of bibliographies and information from the library, and we're counting on him to save us the research time so we can identify the eight studies he's talking about.

I would like to conclude by saying this simple thing: the way the Alberta government is failing to create jobs, this government will have to address the issue of wages and the whole issue of creating new wealth in this province as opposed to slashing and eliminating jobs without looking at creating additional revenue for the government and creating additional jobs for the unemployed people of Alberta.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Vegreville.

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to speak on this Motion for a Return 178:

That an Order of the Assembly do issue for a Return showing:

Those eight studies referred to by the Hon. Minister of Career Development and Employment . . .

I urge the members opposite to see the importance of this motion for a return.

This party has been urging over a period of years that the government take a serious look at the punitively low level of minimum wage in this province. We have often made the case for the harmful effects this has on the economy and the harmful effects it has on small business because of the lack of purchasing power in the hands of people that spend all their money on goods and services. So we've made the case very clearly, Mr. Speaker, that the minimum wage ought to be raised.

The government, represented by the Minister of Career Development and Employment, has consistently refused to take a serious look at that need, irrespective of the fact that our minimum wage is the lowest in Canada and irrespective of the fact that our minimum wage hasn't been increased since 1981. They nonetheless continue to refuse to take a serious look at increasing the minimum wage.

No one is suggesting an extravagant increase in the minimum wage, Mr. Speaker, but at least taking a look at it and to back up this minister's contention and the contention of all his colleagues, who seem to think with one mind, that we ought not to look at raising the minimum wage, in fact that we shouldn't raise the minimum wage. Underlying all this is their assumption that it would have a negative effect on employment in the province, that if we raise the minimum wage even a little bit, it would put more Albertans out of work.

Now, as ridiculous as that contention is, the minister stood on his feet in this House on March 23 and claimed that there were eight studies that proved, in his mind, that "there is a net negative effect on the level of employment by increasing the level of minimum wage." Well, that's certainly debatable, and I think any reasoned person could show that contention to be ridiculous. The minister nonetheless tried to support this contention by indicating that there were indeed some studies that agreed with him. In order that we can do a more effective job of representing Albertans here as an Official Opposition, all we're asking is that the minister prove it. Show us these studies, because we too want to have the benefit of this kind of enlightened wisdom that the Tories seem to ascribe to. So we'd like to see those studies.

Now, they say, "Get your researchers to go down to the library and find them." Well, my colleague from Edmonton Glengarry just outlined in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, that there are literally hundreds of potential references to this, perhaps none of which say what the minister says here. But there are literally hundreds of them, and it would be a total waste of productive time to try and go down and sort through that and find the studies he refers to. So we urge the minister to come clean, to do something that wouldn't take him more than 30 seconds: to table those reports. If he's not prepared to do that, at least, as the Member for Edmonton Glengarry indicated, tick off the names of those ones to which he referred, and then we can read the stuff and we can see. Maybe there is a case. I doubt it, but maybe there is a case for this contention on the government's side.

There's another concern here too. Mr. Speaker, and that is that this minister has consistently on a number of occasions made statements that he's unable to support. Indeed, in question period today he suggested that we file a motion for a return to get some information from him. Well, what an exercise in futility, because he so often refers to things that he can't back up. He refers to studies on minimum wage. He refers to proof positive of the creation of certain numbers of permanent, full-time jobs in the economy and then is never prepared to back it up with proof.

Mr. Speaker, we're simply trying to say that this is an important question, that addressing the issue of Alberta having a shamefully low minimum wage -- the lowest minimum wage in Canada -- is an important thing for this Assembly to be doing, an Assembly that is charged with the responsibility of building the economy in the province, and we want the minister to come clean. We hope that we can change his mind; he may hope that he can change ours. But let's get the facts on the table, folks, and have a little debate here. In other words, to put it in simple form which people may relate to a little more easily: where's the beef?

MR. GIBEAULT: Mr. Speaker, the motion before us is in reference to those eight studies that the minister of career development referred to in the House alleging -- and all we can call it is an allegation. What we're simply asking is for the minister to put these eight studies on the table so we can look at them. But he alleged that he had eight studies which indicated that "there is a net negative effect on the level of employment by increasing the level of the minimum wage." Now, we're simply saying, "Mr. Minister, put it on the table so we can look at it."

Is this a study that was done by the Fraser Institute, Mr. Speaker, that well-known right-wing think tank -- or excuse for a think tank -- in B.C.? Is that what it was? I'd even like to see it if it was. You know, I'm not afraid of the Fraser Institute's reports. I'd like to see it. Perhaps it's a report done by the Member for Calgary McCall. I'd like to see it, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps he is the author of one of these studies, and if so, I would like to see it. I always look forward to comments and reports and thoughts by the members of the Assembly, in particular some of the ones on the opposite side.

Is one of these eight studies that is referred to here one that was perhaps done by the Chamber of Commerce? If so, I'd like to see it. That's all we're asking. What's the big problem here? The minister alleges that he's got eight studies. Why can't he put them on the table for us to look at? Maybe one of them was done by the National Citizens' Coalition, another well-known right-wing group. Well, I wouldn't mind looking at that. I just want to see it; that's all we're asking.

We're having difficulty understanding why the government and particularly this minister, the minister for career development, insist on making totally unsubstantiated allegations in this House and refuse to put anything on the table to back up his allegations. Perhaps one of these eight studies, or maybe even all eight of them, came from various organs of the Progressive Conservative Party itself. Maybe they have a policy committee that looks at these things and they've come up with this assessment, this conclusion. Well, let's put it on the table. I don't mind looking at that. We just simply want to see where these allegations come from.

Mr. Speaker, we've done the research in the library and we have found, as my colleagues have already said, stacks of references to the minimum wage and the impact it has on unemployment. Most of those studies we found -- and we haven't found any of these eight that say there's a negative impact on unemployment -- suggest that there has to be income in people's hands to get the economy moving. The lower the wages and the more the people have to spend simply on basic subsistence, the less money they have to buy the products of the businesses of our province and of our country and get the economy moving.

Mr. Speaker, by making this allegation in the House, the minister for career development, by saying he had these studies and by refusing to table them for the House, has smeared all of

those constituents in my constituency of Edmonton Mill Woods and all the constituencies of this province who are working at the minimum wage or just above it. He is basically saying to those people that they don't deserve a raise after they haven't had anything in six years. It hasn't gone up since 1981 -- \$3.80 an hour unless you're under 18 if you're a student. As my colleagues have said, the most disgracefully low minimum wage in this province. The minister has stood in this House publicly and said he's got eight studies that prove that the reason we can't give these people a raise, even though we can give MLAs a raise and cabinet ministers a raise -- there never seems to be any concern about that. But we can't give people on the minimum wage an increase because he's got eight studies that say, "Sorry, the evidence here is that it will cost people their jobs."

Mr. Speaker, we just want to see that evidence. Why is it that in going through the records of this House, every time there's been an increase in the compensation package for the members of this Assembly, it seems to expand the number of people in the Assembly? When has there been a decrease in the number of MLAs in this Assembly, despite the fact that the compensation has gone up on regular and periodic bases? I would table that as my own study to show that increases in wages do not result in a decrease in employment.

My constituents, the young people in Edmonton Mill Woods -- and my constituency in particular has many young people -- see these kinds of allegations by the minister responsible, and they wonder where these things are. How come it is that those people who make these laws and who are doing very well themselves and who have never -- or so long ago that they've forgotten; they just can't remember the conditions it causes people to live under -- worked at the minimum wage come out with these statements saying, "Oh, we can't have any increase in the minimum wage." We've had members across the way give us these sad, sad stories about how we can't increase the minimum wage, and as I've said before, all they have to do is look at the increasing incidence of food banks and people living in the street, the homelessness report that we talked about today. Those are because people do not have enough income to live on. There's no way you can live on the minimum wage in this province.

The minister has alleged -- let me underline that -- he has alleged that he has these eight studies that say the reason we cannot increase the minimum wage is because he has this great fear, this evidence he says, that the level of employment will be negatively affected if they do so.

Mr. Speaker, as my colleagues have said, let us see the evidence. Where is the beef?

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

MR. EWASIUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, want to be recorded as objecting to the minister who makes comments that he can provide information or has information that suggest that by increasing the minimum wage, somehow it's going to have an impact on employment.

I want to refer him to a Bill that I introduced earlier in this session regarding the minimum wage, where I in fact presented statistics that suggest quite the contrary. Indeed, the two neighbouring provinces, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, both have a minimum wage of \$4.50 per hour. Of course, Alberta's is \$3.80. The unemployment rates in those two provinces are substantially less than the province of Alberta. Those are figures

that are available now from the last report from Statistics Canada. So it suggests to me that while the minister certainly may have some information, his information is totally outdated and irrelevant.

The other concern that I think one has to have when you are speaking of minimum wages is what has happened since 1981, the last time the minimum wage was increased in this province. I'm particularly speaking of the consumer price index, which has increased by some 30.1 percent. What it really has done is made the \$3.80 minimum wage worth only some \$2.92 per hour. In fact, as I did indicate earlier when I was speaking to my Bill, what it really has done is put thousands of people under the poverty line, and consequently what this minimum wage is doing is subjecting people to living in poverty. I think it's improper; I think it doesn't speak well for this government and for all of us in this Legislature. If the minister indeed has information that can really prove and justify his position, I think it's incumbent upon him to table it in this Legislature to convince me that in fact what he says is true.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Speaker, when a minister or a member asserts in this House, as this minister of employment and career opportunities did, "that any studies that I ever viewed -- eight, to be specific -- have indicated" something, then we are entitled, as fellow members, to take that as a statement of fact. And if there's any doubt about it, surely we are entitled to test the member's veracity by asking him to produce the evidence.

As a lawyer, it's analogous to assertions made by lawyers in court, assertions of fact as distinct from submissions. The minister was not making an argumentative submission; he was making an assertion of fact. I'm familiar with the rule in court that if a lawyer makes an assertion of fact, the court is entitled to rely on that assertion. If there's doubt about it, the lawyer is compelled to make it good under penalty of discipline. The reason is not something peculiar to courts; it's a reason founded on good sense that if you can't trust the people with whom you're dealing to state the truth, then it complicates matters immensely and lengthens business. If the minister had said that the studies he had read, as far as he could remember, or his impression of them was that that was the conclusion, then we could not be so dogmatic about it. But here he says that any studies he has ever seen say this, and we are entitled then to ask for the evidence.

Now, if the matter were one, Mr. Speaker, of relative unimportance, then perhaps it would be a waste of time or over-elaboration for us on this side of the House, or on any side of the House for that matter, to be spinning out the debate. But it isn't a matter of unimportance; it's a matter of extreme importance, the minimum wage in this province. It is astonishing in one of the most prosperous provinces in Canada, even in the circumstances of the last year when our resource income has declined so sharply, that we nonetheless have the lowest minimum wage. There must be some reason for it.

The reason we suspect is that there is an uncaring government in this respect. But if in fact there is a factual basis, an economic basis of plain business sense for it, then surely we are entitled to see the evidence. When the minister goes so far as to say there are eight studies, to be specific, that show that, surely it is not asking too much for the government to make good on what seems to be the basis for the continuation of what, on the face of it, is a very unfair, unjust, uncaring, and unfeeling rule.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think we must put this rule that you must make good on what you state to be fact in practice and recog-

nize that this request for a return is based on confidence and the wish to be assured of the sound basis, if it exists, of a very important piece of public policy. I want to rebut the idea that we are simply talking about this to embarrass the government or take up time or to spin our wheels or waste members' time. It is not that; it is the fact that there is an extremely important issue here. It is alleged to be supported by a basis of fact. We are in all reason entitled to see the evidence. It is specifically referred to. We are entitled to test that evidence by examining it. In my respectful submission, Mr. Speaker, the motion for a return is something that any fair-minded person would vote for.

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

MS MJOLSNES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, rise to speak on Motion 178. I'm not only concerned with this fact that the minister is not forthcoming with the eight studies to base this accusation that increasing the minimum wage will have a negative effect on the level of employment, but I'm also concerned with the fact that we do have in this province many people living in poverty. I think if the minister believes in what this statement says, we have cause for serious concern. There are many people, as I've said, that are living in poverty in this province, and things are not getting better; they're getting worse.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. The Chair hesitates to interrupt the hon. member, but under Standing Order 8 the time for this item of business has expired. The record will show the hon. Member for Edmonton Calder has adjourned debate.

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

Bill 218
An Act to Amend
the Local Authorities Election Act

MR. ZARUSKY: Mr. Speaker, I was prompted to sponsor this Bill amending the Local Authorities Election Act through both the concerns of my constituents and also my own personal concerns with practices associated with local elections. The concept of one man/one vote and each citizen's right to vote are essential to the democratic process. This Bill sets out to protect those very principles.

I feel this Bill has become necessary because of the abuses of the honour system that is the basis of the current Act. Mr. Speaker, that honour system quite simply is that those people who present themselves to vote in local elections are eligible to do so and affirm that eligibility by a legally binding declaration. The problem is that process isn't given the respect it should be given.

[Mr. Musgreave in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker, voters have been puzzled by the lack of checks on who they say they are when they have voted in the last two local elections. After all, there are checks at both provincial and federal elections. As you know, Mr. Speaker, when you come to vote in the provincial or federal election, there is a list which

you're checked off on, but at the local level you're not.

I'm sure that my colleagues are aware that in 1983 this Assembly passed a Local Authorities Election Act, which consolidated all the rules, regulations, and procedures related to local elections. I firmly believe this consolidation was a very wise move and has streamlined local election practices and procedures. You know, Mr. Speaker, that we don't want local governments to spend more money than they have to on elections, so that's why the enumeration list was taken out, but it does have faults.

I'm glad that we can trust the overwhelming majority of people who come to vote in local elections, but we have seen, unfortunately, that even a handful of ineligible voters have the potential to decide who the winner or loser of an election will be. I don't think that fault necessarily lies with the persons who voted when they were ineligible to do so. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that at least part of the blame rests in the current legislation.

Because of that, I felt compelled to offer a solution through this amendment to the Local Authorities Election Act. The change I propose is one that might slow down the time it takes to vote at a local election, but I think this small inconvenience has to be weighed against all the other potential problems that this small inconvenience might prevent. I also realized, Mr. Speaker, that since the local authorities Act was passed, there have only been two court challenges of election results citing voting irregularities linked to the eligibility of voters. To my mind, that is two too many. In particular I think there is a very tragic example in the municipal district of Rocky View, and I have taken the time to check on some of these irregularities in articles that came out of this. One article out of the *Rocky View Times*, I believe, says, "Judge rules Rocky View election invalid." Another one here: "Ratepayers pay the price for justice," and another one, which I will read here, "M.D. is to blame." Basically, this is what's been happening in two areas so far, and it could happen in more.

The judge's decision to invalidate the municipal election division 4 places the blame squarely on the MD's shoulders, where it belongs. The judgment was based on a failure on the election officials' part to require voters to make an oral declaration that they were eligible to vote. In his reasons for judgment, Judge Hutchinson left no doubt that the fault is with the election officials, and here such fault lies with the lack of adequate training. The training of election officials is the job of returning officers or an officer who is hired by the municipality and council. Surely there are ways of ensuring that the returning officer must know his or her job, and surely time should be expended by the municipality in selecting exactly the right person to carry out these important duties.

We can safely assume that division 4 was not the only area in the MD where polling clerks received erroneous instruction on how to conduct an election and what to do at the polls, but it was the only area where the outcome was challenged. Jean Isley should never have been brought into the dispute at all. The court backs this by absolving her of any wrongdoing during the election. She's been subjected to tremendous stress, economic pressures, and bad feelings, when in fact the deficiency lies squarely with the MD. The voters have been cheated too. Not only has their representative been forced to essentially waste time in a lengthy court case, but voters will almost certainly have to go back to the polls in early summer to try again. The whole MD electorate will also have to pay at least some of the court costs attached to this mess, between the new by-election and high lawyer's fees. Judge Hutchinson specifically found the

MD responsible for all costs associated with the court case. Now, let's hope Rocky View learns from this fiasco. We don't need any more bungled elections. Now, in this case the judge placed it in the hands of the MD, but it was maybe our government that was a bit to blame by bringing such lax rulings into municipal elections.

So my amendment to the Act would maybe close some of these loopholes. And according to this ruling, the MD of Rocky View will be having a by-election on June 22. I think presentation of identification would make electors much more aware of the declaration they have to make.

Some might debate, Mr. Speaker, that only losers challenge results, that only losers of elections make a fuss about what might or might not have been done wrong. You know, if you're a winner in the election, well, you wouldn't complain any more.

But I think it has been clearly demonstrated, even outside the particular challenges of election results, that this legislation needs to be looked at closely to see if it has any fundamental fault. I also firmly believe, Mr. Speaker, that no matter how few the transgressors may be, they are still transgressors and their actions have a negative effect on society as a whole. So the loopholes that I believe exist in this legislation need to be closed for the good of our society and our democratic system. I believe that presentation of identification would close some of the loopholes that exist in the current Act.

Mr. Speaker, let me run through some of the scenarios which could and have been alleged to happen during recent municipal elections and how they might slip through the current safeguards. The first is the case of the nonresident voter. The Act clearly states a residence requirement in Alberta of six months and also what those rules of residency are in relation to a permanent residence. Potential voters are asked for their address and it is recorded on the voters' register, but there is no check of the address against anything else. In provincial and federal elections there is a check against a voters' list compiled through enumeration. Why shouldn't a local election also have a residency check? I'm not saying that we must go back to having a voting list in local elections, but I am advocating a simple check of address against some piece of identification, like a drivers' license, senior citizens' card, medical card, or whatever else.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I suppose this part of the spirit of my Bill is that I think voters need more information at the polls and that they shouldn't be afraid to ask what might be a stupid question in relation to their eligibility to vote. I am aware of the "Please note before you vote" posters that are at every polling station, but these posters only ask if you are a resident, without stating what that residency means. I don't think the posters say enough.

Let me give you some examples. A person who has just moved their home into the area the day before the election and has lived in Alberta for six months is eligible to vote in that local election. A construction worker who has been camped at a site in that jurisdiction for two months but whose permanent home is elsewhere is eligible to vote in the jurisdiction that his permanent home is in. And I've seen some, in my own constituency, examples of this, where we had some areas in certain divisions with a lot of construction, and these construction workers allegedly did vote at the polling station at that division, and their permanent residence wasn't even near there. Nobody challenged it, but that's what is happening out there.

Then, Mr. Speaker, there's the issue of multiple voting, either under the elector's own name or under a false name. I recognize that there's probably not a great deal of this sort of

thing happening in local elections, but there is a significant potential for both those actions as the current legislation now stands. Like I've said before, I'm sure there's not that many people that would abuse the system that way, but in some areas, if a person wants to get elected very badly or desperately, he will try some sort of way of getting in. I think the very simple requirement of providing identification as part of the act of declaration would close these loopholes.

I don't think, Mr. Speaker, that as responsible legislators we should ignore the problems in this existing legislation or say that just because there is an occasional abuse of that, there is no need for changes. The great problem, as I see it, is that perhaps we don't really know the extent of the problem, because we don't have the occasion to go through voting registers. It is quite possible that ineligible voters that have turned up when candidates challenged election results went through the registers and are merely tips of the many icebergs. And like I mentioned before, I've heard from other areas where people do think there were some irregularities but never did challenge them.

I think the other thing we must not lose sight of is the impact ineligible voters, especially multiple voters, could and have had on the elections. Because of the low voter turnout -- local elections in the province average between 35 percent and 40 percent often -- the results can be very close. Sometimes 10 votes or less separate a winning or losing candidate, and a single multiple voter could skew the results one way or another. Again, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure some of this is happening in some areas but hasn't been caught.

I think what we must ask ourselves as we consider this Bill is: "How important do we consider the process of voting? Do we give local elections the respect that they should have?" Even elections on the local level must uphold the democratic process. We owe respect to democracy as voters, as members of a democratic society, and as duly elected members of government.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are some other examples that could be used. First-time voters or young people that do come to vote -- I know of an example myself when I did come to vote at the last municipal election. A young fellow did walk in, and I presume he was 18 years old, but the poll clerk didn't ask him for any identification or anything. He just let him sign his name, didn't explain to him what he was signing, and this young chap went on and voted. I'm sure he wasn't cheating or he was of age. I think that's the way some young people can see it, and maybe try it once or twice and get away with it. Also, the candidates can fix elections that way. So, Mr. Speaker, there's another aspect of us teaching our young people in the process of voting.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I'd encourage all my colleagues to give support to this amendment to the authorities election Act. Let's change it to see that we don't have any more abnormalities and any more cases like the MD of Rocky View did, because after the next municipal election, we might have many challenges.

So once again, Mr. Speaker, I ask for the support of my colleagues on this Bill. Thank you.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton Beverly.

MR. EWASIUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 218, and on behalf of our caucus, the Official Opposition, speak in support of this particular Bill.

The hon. member has, I think, outlined substantial evidence

that there indeed should be some tightening up in the Local Authorities Election Act. I think he cited several cases, and I thought perhaps there might have been more, but at least I accept those two. I know, of course, of a recent by-election in the city of Edmonton where in fact there were accusations and allegations that there was tampering with the election process. While it was never proven to be the case, I think any suggestion that there is abuse or some kind of falsification in the election process, an effort should be made to tighten those loopholes that have been referred to.

I certainly don't see any problem with people having to produce some type of identification. All of us carry identification of one sort or another at all times, and I'm sure it's not going to cause too much of a problem in the election booths to produce those.

I think it's important that we do not cast any doubt on the outcome of our elections in this province. Of course, from time to time are exposed in the news media situations in other countries where there are suggestions that indicate -- some television videos have suggested that indeed there is tampering with the election process. I don't think we should allow that to happen here. I don't think it's happening to such an extent that it receives a great deal of publicity, but nevertheless I think this Bill goes a long way to ensuring that when we have a local election, when the results are in, we know that the votes are all legitimate and the results are indeed an indication of the electorate. And I think for that purpose we support the Bill, and it should not impose too much difficulty for the election process in local elections.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Dunvegan.

MR. CLEGG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly a pleasure today to speak on Bill 218, and I want to commend the Member for Redwater-Andrew on bringing this Bill in front of this Legislative Assembly, but I can't support it.

I want to talk as a former rural councillor for 19 years, and have taken part in many rural elections in the province of Alberta. We in rural Alberta believe in work. I'm not suggesting for one minute that urban people don't believe in work either. I've seen many elections when we're either out combining our crops, working our summer fallow, or we're doing our fall work. Many, many times rural people go in to stop at the poll and cast their ballots -- and I've been around there personally, so I know -- and many, many times they come off the combines and tractors. Certainly they don't want to be running home and yelling at their wife to look for their driver's licence or health care. I'm sure you all know that we in the rural don't pack our wallets with it, for obvious reasons: we haven't got any money in it. And if we did, we wouldn't have anywhere to spend it out in the fields.

May I suggest that if you want to make the rural people angry or furious, then I would suggest that you ask them for identification. You've got rural people out there that have lived in MDs and counties for many, many years, and if you get a polling clerk ask them for identification after living there that many years, all you're going to do is make them very angry.

This Bill is supposed to prevent irregularities during the local elections. Well, I believe the voters in this province are basically honest in voting procedures, and I don't believe that a local election has ever been won or lost by unfair tactics. I also would like to suggest that if that has happened, there are other

procedures, that it can be corrected. I'm personally against bringing in more amendments to Bills. I'm sure the people of this province . . . We now have more legislation than anybody in this province can understand, and probably for people right around this Assembly to understand, let alone -- and the general public don't want us to keep bringing in amendments to Bills. I personally haven't seen any problem with the local election Act, and I haven't had a big influx of people come to me over the last 10 years to want some amendments to the Act.

I can remember when the first criterion to be eligible to vote was "property owner." Well, you know, it seemed real logical to be able to vote if you owned property in a municipality. Well, we got rid of that probably eight, 10 years ago. And why we did, there was a real abuse in that system too, because what people were doing is they were going to municipalities. They had property in three or four or five municipalities. My neighbour was joking when he said: "Well, I can go into town and vote. I've got to go down to Berwyn and vote. I've got to go to the MD of Peace to vote. I've got to go the MD of Fairview to vote." He really made a mockery out of it. The only place that he would vote for somebody that he thought would be of benefit to the community or be progressive in the community is in his own -- where he actually lived, although he had a say in what other people did in the municipality. I don't really think that was necessary, and I was certainly glad that it was taken out of the election Act.

I haven't got any more concerns at the present time, but I'm really strong in my opinion that we don't need any more amendments to the election Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Bow Valley.

MR. MUSGROVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to make a few comments on Bill 218, An Act to Amend the Local Authorities Election Act.

Before 1983, when the Local Authorities Election Act was passed, municipalities were required to prepare voters' lists with enumerations before each general municipal election. That's not exactly the way it was prior to 1983. As a matter of fact, there was a recommendation from a committee made up of the Department of Municipal Affairs, various elected municipal people, and administration people from around the province, and they had permission, providing the Department of Municipal Affairs agreed, to have what they called a declaration at municipal elections in lieu of a voters' list. There were some problems with that, however, because the declaration was written at the top of a page and voters were required to sign their name, and consequently they were signing the declaration. A lot of the voters didn't recognize what they were signing or the importance of it. And it was quite similar to what we now have today as the voting registry at municipal elections.

Mr. Speaker, there's certainly good reason for the absence of a need of a voters' list. In a lot of rural municipal elections at least half the people are elected by acclamation, and to have a voters' list and enumerator at those elections would be a waste of taxpayers' money and the enumerator's time. To have a voters' list made up for only those parts of the municipality where there is an election could create quite a hardship, because municipal elections are scheduled, and your nomination date is set every three years on a certain day and your election is set on a certain day. So in the interim it could be quite a problem to

get an enumerator and a voters' list made up.

In 1983, after the Local Authorities Election Act was established, the procedure was for the voters to sign the election register, and this has worked very well in most cases. However, there have been some problems. One of the problems has to do with the residency requirement under section 47 of the Local Authorities Election Act. It sets out the residency rules of voters, and section 47 states that he or she must have resided in Alberta for six consecutive months prior to the election and must be a resident as of the day of the election. Now, this last line is a bit confusing. I do know of a couple of candidates in an election that lost the election because of the last line. Resident on the day of the election means what? If I live here today, some people feel I'm not living somewhere else, and if I don't vote somewhere else, then I'm voting legally.

However, if someone brings in a group of friends or relatives to live there for that day, they may defeat someone in an election. I have known of some cases like that to happen. As the Member for Redwater-Andrew said, construction workers who live temporarily in an area have been known to vote in municipal elections, and I'm aware of a couple of cases where an election was lost under those circumstances. Now, those construction workers live there temporarily. They have no interest in the long-term actions of the municipality, and yet they have established who will represent that area for the next three years. It seems unfair that they are allowed to do that, but our residency requirements for elections are quite gray on that. In most cases that this has happened, those elections have not been challenged, because the interpretation of what it means for residency on this day is subject to what some courts might rule as a requirement under the Act. It's quite gray on that issue, and so that's probably one of the things we need to be more specific on in the local authorities Act.

Mr. Speaker, I've had some discussions with the municipal administrators in my area just recently, and they have agreed that the requirement that you sign the voters' registry, although it is a legal document and should be considered so, does not mean much to the people that sign it. To them, it's something like signing a petition. I've asked them what they would think if we were to have a private declaration for each person voting in an election -- one document for each person -- that they would sign and have witnessed that they were eligible to vote in that election in that area. And I think they should also be made aware of the seriousness of the document they're signing and that there are penalties for making a false declaration that they're eligible to vote.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

The administrators tell me that this would be an awful lot less trouble and a lot less expense than having to make a voters list. It would only be in those divisions, particularly in municipal elections, where there actually was going to be an election take place. So the ones that were elected by acclamation, there'd be no expense there. Mr. Speaker, I was elected in six municipal elections by acclamation, and to have gone to the expense of making a voters list would have been a waste of taxpayers' money and a waste of the enumerator's time. Of course, there are towns and cities that would have problems that are a lot different. So maybe in cities and towns of over 10,000 population a voters list is still the best way to solve the problem, particularly if they have problems controlling the voters' eligibility.

However, I would like to recommend that in rural municipal

elections and perhaps in some urban elections also each voter sign a declaration that they are an eligible voter in that area and that they are aware of the penalties for making a false declaration. I question the need in a lot of areas that a person should have to show identification, although if there's a place, particularly in cities where there's a lot of voters, why identification could and maybe should be possible.

To avoid further confusion in municipal elections, Mr. Speaker, I would recommend that we support this Bill.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Speaker, as my friend the Member for Edmonton Beverly has said, we support the principle of this Bill over here. I do hate to see the monolith of the back bench across there broken somewhat by a difference of opinion, and I've heard a difference of opinion between the Member for Redwater-Andrew and the Member for Dunvegan.

But I think the Member for Dunvegan did have a point; in the country, where the electors are mostly known to the people in the polls, it's a waste of time producing identification. So might I suggest that if, as I hope, this Bill gets to the next stage, the member might consider an amendment to subsection (b) of (1) where it says, "produce to the deputy or other person presiding" et cetera, the addition of the words "if demanded" -- produce if demanded to the deputy or other person presiding -- so that where it's a waste of time because the person is known, he or she will not have to produce the identification and all the rest of it. Because as the hon. Member for Dunvegan rightly said, that is annoying.

Yet we believe that the principle of the Bill is sound, so perhaps the hon. Member for Redwater-Andrew, who moved the Bill, will consider that little amendment, which might get him on side with his hon. friends so that, particularly if he made that declaration now, he might get the Bill through.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Red Deer South.

MR. OLDRING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me, too, to rise this afternoon and address Bill 218. The purpose of this Bill is to require presentation of identification by voters at local elections as well as making a declaration of eligibility. At first glance it doesn't seem to be an unreasonable request, and all he's really asking us to do is to show some identification and fill out our declaration and vote. Surely that shouldn't be too much to ask.

But as I thought about it and looked at it, I asked myself: on the other hand, is it really necessary? How did we get to this state that we're in? And do we really need to complicate our elections any more than they already are? Certainly voter turnout at municipal elections is of grave concern to a lot of citizens in this province today. I know that as a previous municipal councillor I was always disappointed when I saw a low voter attendance, so I wouldn't want to do anything that might discourage voters any further unless it was absolutely necessary.

So I did some reviewing and through my research discovered how we reached the point we're at today; that is to say, the passing of the Local Authorities Election Act in 1983. Prior to that, municipalities were required to prepare voters lists from enumerations before each municipal election. But in the early 1980s an interdepartmental committee was struck to undertake an administrative consolidation of the Municipal Election Act, the School Election Act, and regulations respecting hospital and nursing home board elections as well. The consolidation would provide for a single procedure to elect all local authority

officials.

Mr. Speaker, on that committee there were representatives from Municipal Affairs, from Education, Hospitals and Medical Care, and user representatives which included the city clerks and the election officers' association, the Alberta Rural Municipal Administrators Association, the local government administrators association, and the Association of School Business Officials of Alberta. In the course of their deliberations the committee unanimously decided that a voters list required by the municipal Act was no longer necessary in local elections. Such lists were expensive to prepare and were used more as a campaign tool than for the actual voting procedure. However, there are provisions in the current legislation for municipalities to put together a voters list if they feel that it's appropriate and that there's a need for it in their own elections. But also at that time they did receive tremendous opportunity for public scrutiny and public input. As I say, the people that made the recommendations have certainly had a great deal of experience in working with local elections in this province over the years.

I personally don't believe there have been any real flagrant abuses. I think the system has worked very well thus far, although we've heard of two situations that did cause concern. Both of them have been mentioned here this afternoon. The one situation in the city of Edmonton back in 1984 -- it was in the ward 6 by-election. It was regrettable. It was a very close election, 15 votes separating the two candidates. And I think that alone -- regardless of the system that we have in place, anyone that loses an election by 15 votes is going to certainly look for reasons for appeal or recounts or another process that might turn the tide in their favour. It was regrettable in that particular situation that the challenge was lost in the courts on a technicality; that is to say, the appellant didn't proceed quickly enough to find out how the courts might have felt about it.

It was also of interest to note in that particular situation that the city of Edmonton had recently gone to a computerized system, and as I understand it, there were 121 blank ballots discovered in that particular by-election. They were blank as a result of the holes that you were supposed to punch into these ballots for the new computer system weren't punched out properly. So I think that although that was a unique situation to Edmonton, perhaps they need to look at that a little closer to make sure that it doesn't reoccur. Certainly 121 blank ballots in a by-election with such a low turnout is a very unusual number, and I'm sure there were extenuating circumstances related to the computerization.

The other situation that was brought forward was the 1986 municipal district of Rocky View election, and again it was a very closely contested election. But it was interesting to note that in the decision that was handed down in February of 1987, a Court of Queen's Bench justice ruled that the division 4 election was invalid because voters didn't make declarations entitling them to vote. So the problem there wasn't the system; the problem was that the system in place wasn't being adhered to. It's interesting to note that since that time the local council has opted to have a by-election, and one of the things they're stressing is that the by-election workers will be given more training time, and there will also be more written procedures for poll clerks. So really what they're saying there is that we've learned our lesson, that we need to pay attention to the Act that is in place, and had they obliged by the current legislation, there wouldn't be a need for a re-election at this time.

Mr. Speaker, in my own constituency I did take the opportunity of discussing it with our city clerk and chief returning of-

ficer, and he feels the process is working very well in Red Deer. There certainly haven't been any substantiated instances of abuse. It's a very cost-effective means of electing local government, and I think it would be a mistake at this time to change the rules. But if it's going to happen, a couple of words of caution: I don't think it's good enough to leave the Bill wordage the way it is right now. That is to say, in getting back to the identification required, it seems they wanted to leave this up to the discretion of the local poll workers. I think that would put an undue burden and pressure on them. I think it would have to clearly define the type of identification that we are prepared to accept. I think it would have to be listed and clearly spelled out for the poll workers.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I think we need to work a little harder with the legislation that we have; although again, in talking with our own returning officer, he indicated how pleased they were with the co-operation and assistance they've received from Municipal Affairs, that the instructions and the guidelines were made very clear to them and their workers, and that they really didn't feel, as long as the guidelines were adhered to, that there should be any problems.

Obviously, there is going to have to be more of an emphasis put on the declaration itself. I don't think people fully appreciate the declaration they are signing when they go into the polling stations. And I know that the signs that are placed outlining who is eligible to vote should be highlighted even more. As part of the declaration there could perhaps be a short statement saying that they have read the signs. I know that when you go into the blood donor clinic these days, they hand you a card and they go through it item by item and ask you a list of questions, and they know very clearly then that you have read it and that you do meet all the requirements. So I think perhaps that would help.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think I have anything else to add at this time. Again, I would encourage members to vote against this particular recommendation. Let's give the 1983 Act a little

longer in its workings; as I say, it has worked very effectively to date. There's only been two situations where there's been any problems at all: one that was left up in the air because it wasn't proceeded on through the courts; the second one was decided by the courts, but the only flaw was that the existing Act hadn't been adhered to.

In light of the hour, Mr. Speaker, I would move that we adjourn debate.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Moved by the hon. Member for Red Deer South that debate be adjourned on Bill 218. All in favour please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

AN HON. MEMBER: No.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Carried.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, in view of the hour and the fact that the House will be coming back in Committee of Supply at 8 o'clock, I would move -- and I'm not sure of the order in which the motion should be made, but . . .

MR. FOX: We're with you.

MR. YOUNG: You're with me? Thank you . . . that we call it 5:30 p.m., and that when the House reassembles, it reassemble in Committee of Supply until the Committee of Supply rises and reports later this evening.

[The House recessed at 5:18 p.m.]