

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Title: **Tuesday, June 6, 1989 2:30 p.m.**
 Date: 89/06/06

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

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PRAYERS

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

O Lord, grant us a daily awareness of the precious gift of life which You have given us.

As Members of this Legislative Assembly we dedicate our lives anew to the service of our province and our country.

Amen.

head: INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly a trade mission from Angola led by Angola's Minister of Justice and Member of Parliament, Dr. Fernando Van Dúnem. Dr. Van Dúnem and his colleagues from the ministries of commerce, agriculture, and energy are on an official visit to Canada to promote trade links between our countries. I have been advised that in addition to Quebec and Ontario this delegation specifically requested a visit to Alberta, and we are very pleased to have them in our province.

Mr. Speaker, as we are all aware, Angola and its neighbours in southern Africa have recently undertaken major steps towards peace in that region. Our guest has been a key participant in that process, and I'm sure that we will join in commending them for their efforts. We look forward to lasting peace in the region and closer ties with Canada.

Our guests come from a major oil-producing nation in Africa, and they will be attending our Inter-Can oil and gas trade exhibition today to pursue possible co-operation with our companies in this area. Will you please welcome our distinguished visitor, who is seated in your gallery today. I'd ask him to stand and be welcomed to Alberta.

head: TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the 1987-88 annual reports for Grande Prairie Regional College, Lakeland College, and Red Deer College. All members have already been provided with copies of these reports. As well, I'd like to file copies of the 1987-88 annual report for the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of tabling the annual report of Alberta Environment for the year ended March 31, 1987; '88 is soon to follow.

head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, I take pleasure today in introduc-

ing to you and through you to members of this Assembly some grades 5 and 6 students from Pineridge community school in my constituency. We had a picture, and they visited in my office. They are seated in the public gallery. They are accompanied by their teacher Mr. Winchester, other teachers Rob Dougherty, Ellen Sears, and Cheryl Murray, and one of the parents Marilyn Fodor. I would ask that they stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Environment Week is everyone's concern in this province. I am here to introduce a group of Friends of the North, who come to the Legislative Assembly today to indicate their concern over clean water in the province. I'd like Randy Lawrence, Betty Paschen, Dale Anderson, Doris Anne Barnes, and Kim Franklin to please rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

MR. CHERRY: It's my pleasure today, Mr. Speaker, to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 66 students from the Holy Rosary high school in Lloydminster, accompanied by their teacher Mr. Ray Politeski. They are seated in the public gallery, and I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

MR. MAIN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce, or perhaps reintroduce, to you and through you to the rest of the members of the House John Batiuk, the former MLA for Vegreville, who is now serving as the chairman of the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village advisory board, helping Albertans relive their cultural heritage and preserving this important part of our past. He is seated in your gallery. I would ask him to rise and receive the warm welcome of his former and current colleagues.

REV. ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to introduce to members of the Assembly 12 grade 6 students from the Oliver school in Edmonton-Centre. They are social studies students, who are here with their teachers Sharon Fitzsimmons and Normand Journault. I would ask that they please stand in the members' gallery and receive the traditional warm welcome.

head: ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**Impact of Federal Budget**

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. As indicated yesterday, we believe the federal budget is disastrous to Albertans for many different reasons. But specifically today I'd like to talk about the Premier being rather dishonest in the Stettler by-election when he talked about the established programs financing, that those cuts would only cost the Alberta Treasury some \$20 million. The Canadian Association of University Teachers has figured it out in a much different way. They have indicated through a lot of figuring that this would actually cost Albertans over \$300 million in the next five years. Now, my question to the Premier. Didn't the Premier know the truth about these figures, or was he deliberately trying to mislead the people of Alberta at the time?

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: After question period.

MR. GOGO: Can I quote *Beauchesne* 489?

MR. SPEAKER: It's still a point of order. At the end.
Mr. Premier.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition should know, if he doesn't know, that I was referring to the first year of the impact of the budget. People can make estimates into the future further than that, but I felt the first year was the one that could be predicted with most accuracy, and that was the one that was used.

MR. MARTIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, my point to the Premier. Is this not very misleading? Because the last time they had a cut, it was a 2 percent indexation that could start off with \$30 million, and now it's up to \$200 million. Why was the Premier not telling the full truth about this at the time, and more importantly why wasn't he standing up to the federal government, fighting this because it's going to hurt us in our budget in the future?

MR. GETTY: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition knows that there are various impacts on a province from a federal budget. In some cases the federal government is taking moves to hold down the debt on a national basis. That would have a positive impact. In other areas, if they are reducing their transfer payments, that can cause us problems. But, all in all, we believe that the federal government has to tackle their huge deficit problem, and we are not going to go into a particular battle with Ottawa when they try and make moves to do that.

MR. MARTIN: But, Mr. Speaker...

MR. SPEAKER: Question.

MR. MARTIN: This is a deficit that we're going to have; the Provincial Treasurer is going to be dealing with our deficit. Is the Premier saying, then, that it's okay for the federal government to reduce its deficit and cause increases in our deficit, that he's not prepared to fight for that? And is it the reality that what is going to happen is there's going to be more tax increases on average families and cutbacks in people services because of it? That's what's going to happen. Why doesn't he tell the truth?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I think there are three questions that the hon. Leader of the Opposition asked, and the answers are no, no, and no.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Second main question, Leader of the Opposition.

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

Environmental Impact of Pulp Mills

MR. McINNIS: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of the Environment. Earlier this afternoon I witnessed the spectacle of the minister berating a group of Friends of the North because they had the temerity to interrupt the minister's media event. Not only did he end up walking out of his own photo oppor-

tunity, but he ended up accusing them of everything from wrecking the spirit of co-operation to destruction of community pride. I think he can dish it out, but he doesn't seem to be able to take it. I want to know how the minister can speak of a spirit of co-operation when his government is about to give away the northern Alberta forests to allow construction of seven pulp mills and not allow Albertans a proper say in the matter? Where do you get off?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, first of all, Albertans will get their proper say in a very, very true and democratic fashion and in a very, very fair way and long before the next election, which is going to be a long lime from now, I would hope.

Mr. Speaker, relative to the situation this afternoon, there was a contest, and perhaps someone will allude to that later on. It was a very friendly event, and it wasn't a media event per se. During that particular contest I was presented with some glasses of effluent from the Procter & Gamble pulp mill at Grande Prairie. Some controversy and some discussion evolved with the people there, and I thought it was entirely unfair that they would use an entirely friendly event to make a point in a very, very brash and, I would say, shabby manner. After meeting with the Friends of the Wapiti just a little bit more than a week ago and discussing with those people how we can pursue the environmental impact assessment process in a reasonable fashion, in a friendly fashion, after getting their understanding that they would work with me and my department to make sure that what is done relative to that pulp mill is done right: after all that, to have this group disrupt a friendly event, a community event, I think was downright shabby.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Supplementary question; succinct supplementary.

MR. McINNIS: Well, the minister likes dialogue as long as the news media aren't there.

I want to know: if the minister thinks the process is so good, will he answer this? Why is there no study of the combined impact of seven pulp mills, no consideration of alternative development proposals, no opportunity for citizens outside the area to hold meetings, and no . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, thank you; you're now on to three supplementaries.

Mr. Minister.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, there will be ample opportunity for the citizens to participate in these projects. As I said in the House yesterday, the process has been extended to establish a citizens' advisory review board that can conduct its business in any way it sees fit. I think that is a fair process. In addition to that, we will be discussing with the federal government ways to enhance that program and perhaps involve their participation. I think that is a fair way to go. I think that reasonable discussion with those who have concerns over the pulp mills is the right way to go, and the reasonable review of the EIA process is the right way to go. If the opposition wants me to accept simply what they want or they think we ought to do, then I simply can't buy that, because I'm not so sure that they're right even half the time.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. minister. [interjection] Or-

der please.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, I received a copy of a letter written to the minister by Jody McElligott, who resigned her position as the chair of the . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. Order please. Just get the question out. This is a supplementary. [interjections] I know.

MR. McINNIS: It's like a slot machine. You put a nickel in; you get everything out.

I want to know . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. Now, the member's had enough time to get the question. Let's go.

MR. McINNIS: When is the minister going to quit with the insulting nonsense that it's just the opposition concerned about this, when he knows that the ever changing process is unsatisfying to everyone who lives in the north?

MR. KLEIN: It will be changed, Mr. Speaker, when we have completed a thorough, reasonable, honest review of the situation with good, honest consultation with the people involved, not those who happen to be politically motivated.

Assistance for Chinese Students in Alberta

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, all Canadians had to have been awestruck by the reports that we've heard and seen from China, particularly with respect to the courage shown by the students in China. Nothing could have been more overcoming than to see one individual holding back a whole string of tanks. There are many students in Canada who have also been courageous, students from China who have shown courage in condemning that which has happened in China. I believe, we believe, that that action has perhaps put them in some jeopardy. The federal governments in the United States and in our own country have taken action to extend visas. My question to the Premier, Mr. Speaker, is this. Would the Premier be prepared to contact all of the universities in Alberta to determine if there are any students who have had this extension of their visas and who are in financial difficulty in terms of student assistance? Is he prepared to contact them and to see if some arrangements can be made by our province giving them that kind of assistance?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, certainly a reasonable suggestion that the government would consider, although I must caution the hon. member that we will want to make sure we don't intrude into federal areas of responsibility.

MR. DECORE: So I take it that the Premier will do that, Mr. Speaker. I understand that's the answer that he gave.

My second question is this. I suspect that there will be a number of Chinese students in Alberta who may wish to receive political refugee status. There is some influence that the provincial government can give to the federal government in this regard. Would the Premier be prepared to give that kind of assistance to those students who wish to seek landed immigrant status in Alberta and in Canada?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the government of Alberta would want to treat all those who request refugee status in an even-handed way.

MR. DECORE: Well, I'm going to ask that the question be answered, Mr. Speaker. That's not an answer, and I respect . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, hon. member. Under *Beauchesne* that's an inappropriate request.

Next supplementary, please.

MR. DECORE: Well, I'm going to ask, Mr. Speaker, that the question be answered in the clearest, simplest way.

MR. SPEAKER: Again, the same thing holds, hon. member, so if the member has another question on the supplementary, the Chair will allow it. Under section 416 in *Beauchesne*.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, in the event that landed immigrant status is given to Chinese students, is the Premier prepared to give additional support, not in the form of student assistance but in terms of settlement, much in the same way as our government gave settlement assistance to people from Vietnam after that conflict?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, it's far too early to judge what assistance the government of Alberta will be able to provide on a longer term basis.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The appropriate section, as it relates to this recent discussion, is section 416 in *Beauchesne*, which reads in part, "insistence on an answer is out of order, with no debate being allowed."

Environmental Review of Procter & Gamble Plant

DR. ELLIOTT: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of the Environment. I'd like to make reference to his visit to Grande Prairie on May 27, at which time he visited our forests, the pulp mill, and the Wapiti River and also met with representatives of the South Peace Environmental Association. He made certain commitments on that date, and my question is with respect to his commitment on establishing a review process for the examination of the environment, specifically as it applies to the Grande Prairie forests. Has he made any progress on that review process?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the meeting with the Friends of the Wapiti I think was a very productive meeting. It lasted about an hour, and there was agreement that we would indeed involve that group in the environmental impact process review and we would receive from them their input relative to the review and the kinds of things they think should be incorporated into the review process. We also discussed the question of licensing, and that is the licensing of the mill that is now in operation and whether those procedures are being carried out properly. I have given them a commitment that indeed they will have the opportunity to become involved in the licensing process, to review that process, and to become involved with my department. I think that is the fair way to go, to work in a spirit of co-operation rather than confrontation, so unlike the situation that occurred, unfortunately, this afternoon.

DR. ELLIOTT: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the minister if he's established a time frame for either of these commitments.

MR. KLEIN: The time frame, Mr. Speaker, will certainly be before the EIA process begins. I've asked my department to get in touch with the Friends of the Wapiti to begin some meaningful discussion as to how they can become involved. So, in fact, the process has begun.

MR. SPEAKER: Final? Thank you.
Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Impact of Federal Budget on Health Care

REV. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the leader of the New Democrats has already pointed out, this government cannot be trusted to stand up for Albertans in the face of federal budget cuts, particularly the reduction in the rate of funding by the federal Conservatives to hospital and health services here in Alberta. With an already stretched provincial health budget, this Conservative Minister of Health here just sits back while the Wilson budget seeks to reduce \$192 million to be transferred for the future health of Albertans. Why has the minister remained so passively silent on this issue, proving that she, too, cannot be trusted to stand up to her friends Wilson and Mulroney when the future health of Albertans is at stake?

MRS. BETKOWSKI: I haven't, Mr. Speaker.

REV. ROBERTS: It's really nice to get these one-word answers. It's a real opportunity to explain how she's made representations to a number of people at federal levels.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary question.

REV. ROBERTS: We would like to hear those answers, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister make today a claim that she will point out to federal officials -- Michael Wilson, Brian Mulroney, even Perrin Beatty -- that it is just unfair to Albertans, that in the first year of budget cuts it would mean, for instance, saying good-bye to the air ambulance service here in the province, to the Lethbridge regional lab, that the \$3 million would mean a complete reduction of the province's funding . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, funding the needed health programs within this province is not dependent upon the federal government solely. We take very important steps, one of which will be our budget on Thursday night, but to jump to those conclusions is patently wrong.

REV. ROBERTS: We just get such equivocation, Mr. Speaker. It seems to me that the health care of Albertans . . . [interjections] It's that slot machine again. Maybe they should move to Prince Edward Island and to Summerside and see how people stand up . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, hon. member. Perhaps now we can have the question.

REV. ROBERTS: Well, has the minister determined the impact on Albertans of the \$192 million reduction over five years, that that would in fact mean the closure of four auxiliary hospitals, three regional hospitals, deinsuring eye care, physiotherapy care, and chiropractic services? Those are the kinds of impacts . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
Madam Minister. Let's go.

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, the established programs financing was originally designed to be fully indexed to the gross national product, and that was the commitment that was originally given the province. In 1986 the federal government moved to have that indexing factor decreased by 2 percent and by their recent budget have deindexed that by another 1 percent, for a total of 3. Before the actions were taken by the federal government, the Canada health ministers, of which I was a part, met with the Finance minister to discuss the impact of that issue on provincial budgets and certainly registered our clear collective as well as our individual concern about the effect on health programs. However, in Alberta we have always taken the position that the funding of health programs is a very important priority of our government, and despite those reductions Alberta's support per capita for health in our province remains the highest in Canada, a record of which I am very proud.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by Calgary-Millican, Calgary-Forest Lawn.

Environmental Impact of Pulp Mills (continued)

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to return to the Minister of the Environment's public relations event today, called the Great Alberta Water Challenge. Earlier in question period he stated that this demonstration of concerned citizens from the north was uncalled for because he personally assured us that their concerns will be met. What are the minister's assurances worth when we hear him talk about high dioxin standards which Daishowa simply doesn't have to meet, when we hear him talk about the need for new environmental impact assessment legislation which he simply won't be introducing this session of the Legislature, and when he makes a commitment to delay Alberta-Pacific's public meetings and he simply can't deliver on that commitment? What are those assurances worth, Mr. Speaker?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, those assurances are worth the spirit of good thinking people entering into negotiations to refine the EIA process as it needs to be refined. As I explained to the hon. member in the House yesterday, no permits will be issued, no permits will be issued, and I'll say it one more time: no permits will be issued until all of the environmental concerns have been met. It's as clear as that.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, does the minister simply not understand that these people, these Friends of the North, would not be forced to demonstrate in the makeshift fashion that they had to demonstrate in today if they had assurances from this minister, specifically laid out in legislation, that there would be public hearings for them to participate in?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, I take exception to "the makeshift fashion." I think it was a well-orchestrated display, with members of the opposition gleefully standing behind the . . . [interjections] And, Mr. Speaker, what I'm trying to get across here is that the best way to resolve the issue and to ensure that the issue is fair and well thought out is to seek the co-operation, in a nonconfrontational manner, of those people who are concerned, and that's what I'm attempting to do. If changes are needed, changes indeed will come about.

MR. MITCHELL: Talk, talk, talk; media relations. Will the minister please tell us when he is going to replace his public relations style with substantive action like implementing proper environmental impact legislation in this Legislature, approved by the members of this Legislature?

MR. KLEIN: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I will never replace my public relations style, because I think public relations is very, very important.

And, for the third time, the process will be changed after we have had meaningful discussion with those people who really want to see things brought about in a reasonable fashion that will address not only sustained economic development but will address environmental concerns as well.

Closing of Park Wood House

MR. SHRAKE: Mr. Speaker, for the past few decades the Salvation Army has provided aid and comfort for the needy in the province, and in Calgary the Salvation Army has Park Wood House, which provides aid and comfort to unwed mothers, single mothers. They're taught birthing skills, how to care for their infants, and prenatal and postnatal service. Unfortunately, recently the Salvation Army announced plans to close down this wonderful facility due to a lack of funds. Could the hon. Minister of Family and Social Services please advise the Assembly if he or his department have contacted the Salvation Army to see if there is a way we can salvage this wonderful service in Calgary?

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is quite right in making reference to the good work that's being done by the Salvation Army down in Calgary and, indeed, throughout the province. I also want to make note of the appreciation I have for the work the Salvation Army is doing in Calgary. I've had the opportunity of attending a number of functions there with the Salvation Army already, and I want to say that as it relates to Park Wood House, I've certainly had presentations made by a number of my colleagues here in the Assembly on their behalf.

I would only want to say that the decision to close down Park Wood House at the end of this month was a decision made by the Salvation Army. I can only state that the funding commitment of this government as it relates to that facility has not changed at all in the last six months.

MR. SHRAKE: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. This closing will leave a gap, a service not provided. Could the minister please advise if he and his department will be taking on staff or making sure a similar service is available for the unwed mothers in Calgary?

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of programs that are being offered in the city of Calgary that are certainly in

part meeting the needs the member has referred to. But I want to say that I have initiated discussions myself with Major Jolly of the Salvation Army, and she has advised me that from their perspective the facility that was being utilized to offer this particular program was perhaps oversized. That is to say, it's a 35-bed facility, and as I understand it, it's now down to a utilization factor of about eight to 10 beds. So they've made the decision to turn it over to the Grace hospital, and we certainly support them in that decision.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, again I have had preliminary discussions with Major Jolly and indicated that certainly I would be prepared to work with her to see if we can't find a more adequately sized facility to meet the former service being provided by Park Wood House.

MR. SHRAKE: Final supplementary. Mr. Speaker, could the hon. minister please advise the Assembly, though, if he and his department are doing everything in their power to keep these volunteer agencies such as the Salvation Army and many others operating and not let it slide into the big bureaucracy, the faceless bureaucrats slowly taking on the jobs the volunteers used to do?

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, the member made a very good point when he made reference to the volunteers that play such an important role in the delivery of services here in the province of Alberta. I will certainly undertake to continue our commitment to work with groups like the Salvation Army. I'm very happy with the arrangements we've been able to make as it relates to Children's Village and the men's hostel in Calgary.

I can only say that this government as a whole recognizes the very important role volunteers play in this province. I know that quite recently the minister responsible for the Wild Rose Foundation helped to initiate a volunteer awareness week. I think that again speaks in part to the appreciation we have for the thousands and millions of hours of volunteers that go into making this province a better province to live in. So, yes, Mr. Speaker, we'll continue along in that spirit.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Forest Lawn.

Energy Industry Assistance

MR. PASHAK: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In spite of higher-than-anticipated oil prices, drilling activity has fallen off substantially, with fewer than a third as many rigs drilling this year as were drilling a year ago. Drilling and service companies are particularly hard hit, as well as the small towns and communities of Oil Field, Alberta. It's the policies of this government and their federal cousins in Ottawa that are responsible for this appalling situation. To the Minister of Energy. What consultations, if any, took place between the minister or his government and their federal counterparts prior to the cancellation of the Canadian exploration and development incentive program in the April 27 federal budget and the consequent loss of \$80 million in federal government funds?

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, since I've been the Minister of Energy, I've met with many of the organizations and representatives in the industry; I believe some 60 to 70 different individuals. I can say that the issue of the cancellation of CEDIP has come up, and it is of concern to me. I have as recently as

this week sent a communication to the Hon. Jake Epp. I expressed to him the concerns passed on to me by the industry for the termination of CEDIP. I find it regrettable that it was committed to till the end of the year and that the federal budget decided to have it terminated at an earlier date. I will be meeting with the minister, Jake Epp, along with the minister from Saskatchewan in Weyburn, and at that time I will again reiterate my concerns with regard to CEDIP.

MR. PASHAK: Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. Given that there will be a second reading vote on the Bill to cancel CEDIP tonight in the House of Commons and given that Ross Harvey is the only Alberta MP who has thus far stood up for Alberta on this matter, what efforts will the government make to get Alberta Conservative Members of Parliament to vote against this damaging Bill in second and subsequent readings?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Energy has just given the hon. member an answer regarding his input into the decision. As far as the Members of Parliament, this government is not responsible for them.

MR. PASHAK: Final supplementary. Back to the Minister of Energy. What other action is the minister contemplating to restore some health to the energy industry? Is he, for example, contemplating extending the Alberta royalty holiday?

MR. ORMAN: Well, I'll do more than bark in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. I have communicated with Jake Epp. Along with my concerns about CEDIP, I've expressed a concern to him about the high interest rate policy of the central Bank of Canada or the bank of central Canada; I'm not quite sure which it is these days. We have a real concern about that interest rate policy and how it affects investment in this province. I took the opportunity to visit New York looking for opportunities of equity investment in this industry, and it is a concern of investors that the high interest rate policy does adversely affect this industry.

I must say that the cash flows of these companies today, Mr. Speaker, are very good, particularly in the context of the last couple of years. The problem with the reinvestment has to do with interest rate policy. I'm glad to see that finally after an election campaign, the opposition is onside on the interest issue. If they have a concern, why don't they talk to their MPs, instead of bringing it up in this House, like we do?

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by Edmonton-Highlands, then Smoky River.

Suicide Prevention for Foster Children

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, we've just experienced another tragedy in our province. Along with the town of Grande Cache everybody in this House mourns the death of Wayne Moberly. He hanged himself in a boarding home last week. The fact of the matter is that this young man spent most of the last of his 16 years being shuffled from one foster home to another, eight of them in seven years. Certainly all the indicators were there, all the red flags, that this youngster desperately needed help of a different kind. The red flags were there for administrators, for care givers, for social workers. It's clear, Mr. Speaker, that our present system isn't geared to deal with

some of the very special needs of certain high-risk children. My question is to the Minister of Family and Social Services. Can the minister please inform the House whether Social Services staff involved in this case have specific training in identifying and intervening in potential suicide situations involving teenagers? Is there a special care team, Mr. Minister, and if not why not?

MR. SPEAKER: First question only. Thank you.

MRS. HEWES: I think he can handle more than one, Mr. Speaker.

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, as the member mentioned, it was a very tragic situation in Grande Cache. Any time a 17-year-old boy takes his own life, it's a tragic situation. Yes, this minister is concerned.

I want to correct a couple of points that the member opposite did make in reference to the movement of this young man. She made reference to eight facilities. In actuality this child was in three foster homes. He was also in a placement centre and a receiving home and spent some time with several family members. In this particular instance there were at least two exhaustive and very complete professional assessments done on this individual, and from my total review of the situation in Grande Cache, I'm satisfied that it was handled properly.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the young man hanged himself, regardless of how many homes he was in.

Last year, Mr. Speaker, we made much of the fact that 37 new child welfare workers were added to improve the service. Obviously it hasn't made any difference. Will the minister undertake a complete and independent investigation of this incident, the report of which should be made public, to see if we can reorganize the system to prevent such tragedies?

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, we began an internal review the moment the department was notified of this particular situation. Again, I am satisfied that in this instance every effort was made to handle this particular case properly. I don't think there would be any purpose in making it public at this time. So, no, I don't think that would be appropriate.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister's answer, but it certainly does nothing to give confidence to the public. The public does want to know what the results are. This case has certain grave similarities to the Richard Cardinal case of a few years ago, and nothing has happened since that one. Will the minister himself now undertake to this House that he will meet with child welfare experts, including native and Metis community leaders? Will the minister intervene personally in how we can make our system relevant to these needs of special, high-risk children?

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, again, in this particular instance I am satisfied that every humanly possible step and process was taken. This young man was placed into loving and caring foster homes. He received total support from our Grande Cache office. The native community was consulted on an ongoing basis. He was placed in native placements as it relates to his foster homes. He received ongoing counseling from a professional in Grande Cache. I am satisfied that we as a department, that we

as a government, that the foster parents involved, the care givers involved did everything humanly possible to help this young man make his way back into society in a meaningful way. We're sorry that it didn't turn out the way we would have liked it to. It is a tragic situation, but I am satisfied that we did everything that we could, and I don't think you can ask us to do anything more than that.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Highlands, followed by Smoky River, followed by Edmonton-Avonmore.

Endowment Fund for Postsecondary Institutions

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to return to a subject that we talked about a few days ago, which is the bait-and-switch throne speeches: throne speech A, February 17, that talks about an \$80 million endowment fund for postsecondary institutions, and the bait-and-switch one, B, that drops the reference.

AN HON. MEMBER: The sequel.

MS BARRETT: The sequel; thank you. I'd like to ask the Premier just how it is that he can justify his government somehow promising to the public in an official throne speech in February a big-ticket item like this major endowment program and then, strangely, taking it away in the switched throne speech just 10 weeks later.

MR. GETTY: Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess you'll indulge the hon. member and allow her to ask a question that's already been dealt with in the Legislature in this session. I'll draw again to her attention, as I did to the hon. Leader of the Opposition when he raised the same question, that

my government will reaffirm the legislative and budgetary policies for the priorities and programs outlined at the opening of the Fourth Session of the 21st Legislature on February 17, 1989, and so strongly endorsed by Albertans.

MS BARRETT: I can hardly wait till he tries to get out of the next one, Mr. Speaker. So how is it, then . . . [interjections] No, that's cute. How is it that the Premier can say, "We're going to live up to our commitments," when the April 1 deadline already got past? Mr. Premier, you missed the date. How are you going to do it?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Advanced Education announced that program well in advance.

MS BARRETT: A final supplementary question, then, to the Premier, who seems not to understand that the issue is that bait and switch doesn't work; the public is on to you. Is the Premier ready to disclose the rest of the empty promises that were contained in this one, that are now removed from this one, and the implications that will have for Albertans?

MR. GETTY: Well, Mr. Speaker, I understand the member of the opposition wanting to try and find fault with either of the throne speeches and, being unable to do so, then tries to continue to ask the same question. I'm sorry, but the throne speech is there. The February 17 throne speech stands, as does June 1. This government lives up to its commitments.

MR. SPEAKER: Smoky River.

Honey Industry

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is addressed to the hon. Minister of Agriculture. My question deals with a very significant industry to all of Alberta, and that is the honey industry. The honey capital of Canada is in Fahler in the Smoky River constituency. We've had a very high winterkill rate in our bee industry this past year, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to ask the minister, realizing that importation of bees is under federal jurisdiction, if indeed there have been any discussions involved or any work done at all to assist this very distressful situation for the beekeepers in Alberta?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, I might say that Alberta Agriculture is very aware of the problems in the Peace River region and that we have been working in support of the beekeepers of that area and in support of groups like the Northern Alberta Development Council to encourage the federal minister to open Hawaiian borders to clean, disease-free, inspected queen bees.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: A supplementary. With honey prices being depressed, has there been any effort made by the department to assist in the stabilization of honey prices in Alberta?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, we signed the national tripartite agreement about two or three weeks ago. Five provinces are now participating. It's retroactive to June of 1988, and most honey producers should be getting a payout.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: My final supplementary is to the minister as well. With the increased incidence of the tracheal mite throughout Alberta and all of Canada, has some thought been given to providing some funding through the Farming for the Future program to perhaps start a study on the tracheal mite and help alleviate the difficult situation that we have developing not only in Alberta but in all of Canada?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, we've been monitoring that problem rather closely, and I will take as representation the hon. member's suggestion that we maybe look at Farming for the Future research funds.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Avonmore.

Homemakers' Pensions

MS M. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the February 17 throne speech the government promised to address the issue of homemakers' pensions, but this commitment was absent from the June 1 throne speech. The minister confirmed that her department does not have time to implement a study. On June 2 in this Legislature the Premier committed his government to a study on homemakers' pensions. My question is to the Premier. Who are the women of Alberta to believe, the Premier or the minister responsible for women's affairs?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, we work as a team. As I advised the hon. member earlier in the House, the government had made that commitment and will carry it out.

MS M. LAING: Thank you.

In view of the fact that in the February throne speech the government linked homemakers' pensions with the review of pensions for women over the age of 55, can we take this as an indication that the government has finally recognized that its widows' pension plan is discriminatory and unfair to single and divorced women and must be changed?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, no.

MS M. LAING: Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. On what basis does he continue this ongoing discrimination on the basis of marital status alone?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, one of the interesting parts of the review with the people of Alberta will be to see their views on this very matter.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Rocky Mountain House, followed by Westlock-Sturgeon.

Mining of Cline River Glacier

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the past a group of entrepreneurs have been harvesting some 500-year-old ice from the Cline River glacier. This area, of course, is in the Eastern Slopes and is designated as prime protection area in the Nordegg/Red Deer River integrated resource management plan. My question is to the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife. Did this group have a permit from your department to operate in this area?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

MR. LUND: A supplementary, also to the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife. What are the terms of the permit, the time frame of it, and any restrictions that might be on the permit?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, that's correct; it is in a prime protection zone, and the zoning in a prime protection zone certainly allows this kind of activity. We made their activities there extremely restrictive. In fact, the restrictions and operating conditions made sure there was no environmental impact and no safety hazard whatsoever to the public. As well, we made sure that the way in and out of the site had to be by helicopter over a specifically designed route to make sure that no wildlife would be impacted in any way, shape, or form, and that all the activities would be done in a very safe manner.

MR. SPEAKER: The time for question period has expired. Might we have the unanimous consent to finish this series of questions and to allow the Minister of Health to respond to questions raised earlier by Calgary-McKnight?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried. Thank you.
Rocky Mountain House, final supplementary.

MR. LUND: Final supplementary. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of the Environment. Did this group have a permit from the Department of the Environment?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding that there was a permit of sorts issued to mine a small quantity of ice, and I understand that there has been a reapplication for a much larger operation, which certainly would come under the Water Resources Act. The application is now being held, and we're asking for public objections. After those objections are received, the department, in concert with myself, will decide what route will have to be taken, and perhaps it will involve an environmental impact assessment.

Health Services for Athabasca Region

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, last Friday the Acting Minister of Health took a question as notice from the hon. Member for Calgary-McKnight with respect to health services in Athabasca and the increased need for these services as a result of the Alberta-Pacific project. I can advise the hon. member that with respect to acute care facilities all members of the Assembly should realize that a new hospital was completed in Athabasca in 1984. It was constructed for 50 beds and currently has 42 beds open, so there is, in fact, capacity within the existing hospital to expand services.

Secondly, with respect to community health services, the Athabasca health unit is currently assessing their anticipated needs based on the new population projections, and I anticipate receiving this assessment by the end of this month.

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you, Madam Minister. My supplementary question is: will the minister commit to this Assembly that a process will be put in place to identify any possible negative health effects of these developments and to monitor public health in affected areas to ensure that any negative impacts are identified and dealt with?

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Well, certainly, Mr. Speaker, the linkage between our health and our environment is a very important linkage and one in which all members share the concern. I can advise the hon. member that through the public health process a lot of those linkages are in place, and we're looking at ways and means to strengthen those initiatives. I thank her for her representation.

MR. SPEAKER: Point of order, Minister of Advanced Education.

MR. GOGO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rose during a question being put by the Leader of the Official Opposition to the hon. Premier and raised the matter of *Beauchesne* 489, 490, and 492 with regard to unparliamentary language. I simply rose to draw it to your attention. In addition, I would make reference to our own Standing Orders, which take priority in this House: Standing Order 23(i). I would think it's appropriate if the hon. member would withdraw his comment to the hon. Premier regarding dishonesty.

MR. MARTIN: I thought I was being rather gentle in explaining what went on. I notice that there are differences. Sometimes it's ruled parliamentary, in 490; sometimes it isn't. But if it bothers the hon. member, I'll figure out a different word to use next time, Mr. Speaker. So if that's the case, I'd be glad to

withdraw it.

Question of Privilege

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I rise with respect to Standing Order 15 and, more particularly, subsection (5) of that order. It relates to a statement given out by the hon. minister responsible for occupational health and safety and workers' compensation to the press yesterday. It only came to my attention moments ago.

The statement indicates certain information that has been divulged by the hon. minister with respect to settlements and payments. This is the part that I think is particularly bothersome in looking at the definition of parliamentary privilege with respect to the effect it has on the House collectively. We heard from an hon. minister yesterday, Mr. Speaker, that members of this House are bound to maintain, to be mindful and vigilant of the laws of this province. Part of the laws of this province in the Workers' Compensation Act call for information which is known to the Workers' Compensation Board to remain confidential. The minister, under my interpretation, my reading of the Act, is an officer in the workers' compensation area. He has the same responsibility as the people working in t h a t . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, hon. member. The Chair notes that the member is raising a potential point of privilege under Standing Order 15. That has now taken place. The Chair would then direct the hon. member to look at Standing Order 15(2).

A member wishing to raise a question of privilege shall give a written notice containing a brief statement of the question to Mr. Speaker and, if practicable, to any person whose conduct may be called in question, at least two hours before the opening of the sitting.

I wonder if the hon. member, then, would be good enough that having given notice now, would then prepare the necessary formal notice tomorrow and have the copy also given to the appropriate minister so that we might deal with it at another occasion.

MR. DECORE: I wonder if you, sir, have looked at *Beauchesne* where it indicates that the Speaker can entertain . . .

MR. SPEAKER: I think that given the circumstances that it has come to the member's attention just in this short while, if we could follow through with this in terms of the next day, the Chair would be most appreciative.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MR. SPEAKER: Might we revert briefly to Introduction of Special Guests? All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS**
(*reversion*)

MR. SPEAKER: I wonder if we might go in this following order: the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, Calgary-*Buffalo*, Edmonton-Jasper Place, Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Minister.

MR. ELZINGA: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker and members of the Assembly, each summer since 1983 individuals

from around the world have come to the University of Alberta to participate in a two-month program of petroleum technology. The program is designed for personnel from countries currently developing or upgrading their petroleum industry. This year we have 65 participants from 25 countries. I'm very pleased, Mr. Speaker, to welcome these individuals to our province for the seventh annual program of the Alberta Summer Institute for Petroleum Industry Development. These individuals are seated in both galleries, and I would ask that they rise to receive the warm welcome of this Legislative Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-*Buffalo*.

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly nine students from King Edward school in beautiful Calgary-*Buffalo*. They are attended by teacher Les Gorog and several assistants, Chau Nquyen and Curtis Ganske. My apologies for any mispronunciation. I would ask them to rise in the public gallery and to receive the welcome of the Legislature.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce a group from the Youngstown school in Jasper Place constituency. It's a school I know well; my father taught there. There are 34 of them in the members' gallery, accompanied by their teachers Colleen Chapman and Donna Fauser. There are also parents Barb Mann and Colleen Hutchinson. I ask you to rise and receive the recognition of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Centre.

REV. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the public gallery are 28 social studies students from the Alberta Vocational Centre in Edmonton-Centre, my constituency, with their teachers Ann Nikolai and Michelle Tracy. I've not met them yet, but I know that students who go to AVC are hardworking in terms of upgrading their skills. I'm really glad they can be here today, and I hope to meet them shortly, after the session. May they please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **WRITTEN QUESTIONS**

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I move that written questions appearing on the Order Paper stand and retain their places.

[Motion carried]

head: **MOTIONS FOR RETURNS**

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I move that the motions for returns appearing on the Order Paper stand and retain their places.

[Motion carried]

head: **MOTIONS OTHER THAN
GOVERNMENT MOTIONS**

201. Moved by Ms Barrett:

Be it resolved that there be established an all-party committee of the Legislature, to be known as the select standing committee on special warrant reviews, to review be-

fore the release of funding the special warrants which are passed by cabinet when the Legislative Assembly is not sitting, the members to be recommended to the Assembly by the special committee established under Standing Order 49(1).

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, I think it's a very sad day when a member of the opposition has to propose to the Assembly the obvious democratic procedures that should have been adopted by the government years ago. Nonetheless, I'm pleased to do so on behalf of our caucus in light of the fact that since the Premier took over his party in 1985, near two elections, both the 1986 and 1989 provincial elections, that Premier has decided that it's smarter to spend about \$4 billion from behind closed doors rather than bring a proper budget and debate it through the Legislative Assembly, comprising all elected members of the Assembly. I think it's a very abusive environment, and it shows, I believe, contempt and nothing but disregard for the democratic process that is cherished by Canadians and envied by millions around the world.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I propose a motion that, if passed, would see the construction of an all-party committee that would review, prior to disbursement of the funds, all applications for special warrants going to cabinet. Now, the motion does not state the conditions under which this committee would meet. It doesn't state whether or not they would be bound to secrecy until the issue got to cabinet. It doesn't state that it would have a veto power. What it does state is that all parties represented in the Assembly would be represented on that committee and have a say in the review of those applications. I think that's a pretty important step, Mr. Speaker, to taking away or starting to remove the barricades that this government has built around itself and its decision-making process. That process has increasingly crept behind closed doors of cabinet, and in the instance of, for instance, the expenditure of lottery moneys, lottery revenues have now been designated to the responsibility, if you can call it that, of one member of the Assembly, one cabinet minister, not even cabinet itself. This is an appalling and frightening trend in 1989.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

I hear speaker after speaker get up and talk about what's going on in China. What's going on in China at this moment is deplorable, Mr. Speaker. For all I know, it could be civil war as we speak. But let's have a look at our own backyard, folks. Let's have look at the political methodology that leads to a type of Hitlerian attitude towards politics and democracy. I mean, it's those creeping little tendencies that result in the empire building that ultimately leads individuals who believe themselves to be leading to take power and make decisions increasingly by themselves without due regard for the process into which they were elected and, by the way, without even having the gall or chutzpah to come and change the rules. In other words, Mr. Speaker, we have an annual budget process and we have, for those exceptions in between budget processes, exceptions which are, by regulation, allowed to go to cabinet for decision. We do not have a stated policy that says, "By the way, Mr. Getty, whenever you want to call an election, just go ahead and spend half of your budget from behind closed doors." "Rubber-stamp that little piece of paper and run away with the store," you might as well be saying.

Now, I believe that it shows ultimate contempt and disregard for every other MLA in this Assembly, all 82 of us, when one Premier does this by abusing a rule that is silent. The issue is "silent," my friends. It is not spelled out that you cannot do it, but neither is it spelled out that you can do it. What is spelled out is that we have an annual budget review, that we must have a budget introduced once a year in this Assembly, and that ultimately it must be debated. Therefore, why not proceed to the obvious mechanism given to our democracy, which I believe the members of the Conservative caucus say they cherish? Why not support that process by following the rules as they are written and not exploiting those which are silent -- and I do mean silent; they're not even gray, Mr. Speaker -- on this matter?

What we have in Alberta is a trend of abuse of the system and a decreasing role for the duly elected members of this Assembly, whether they be Conservative members or opposition members, Mr. Speaker. What is the cabinet saying to its own backbenchers? "You don't count, folks. Doesn't matter if you get to review the budget, doesn't matter if budget day of estimates can be as little as 10 minutes for a department. It doesn't matter to the people that you represent that you got elected. You're supposed to have this job to do, but you don't count, so you're not going to get to do the job." I think that's implicitly what is being said, Mr. Speaker.

AN HON. MEMBER: We didn't say that. We just need more privacy.

MS BARRETT: That's true.

Now, I had a look back over the last few years' worth of special warrant approvals by cabinet from behind closed doors, and I couldn't help but notice, Mr. Speaker, something that didn't happen in the Lougheed years, something that didn't even happen in the Socred years, but something that has happened in the Getty years. And that is, when you see a great big special warrant like a multibillion dollar special warrant, if you hadn't been in the country and if you hadn't had any news -- you hadn't seen any newspapers, heard any reports -- you could be anywhere else in the world, and if somebody sent you this information and said, "Alberta cabinet under Don Getty approved \$4 billion worth of expenditures today," you would be able to know within a month of accuracy that either an election was about to be held or an election was held. Now, in either instance I say "phony."

Because in 1986 when this was done, Mr. Speaker, they tabled a budget and they called the election that night, and they said, "This is the budget that we're running on." Sure enough; on March 26, 1986, they had passed a special warrant to the tune of \$4,129,172,000. Well, I can tell you that that certainly tipped off the Official Opposition New Democrats that the election was about to come. That's okay; we'd been preparing for years anyway. But the point is that if they have this motion, they pass these special warrants, they come into the House, they give a budget, and they pull the plug without the proper debating of the budget. Now, it seems to me that that's sort of short-circuiting the democratic process to which they at that time, because I was not elected at that time, were elected. Since then, I did get elected, Mr. Speaker, and I reserve the right to debate a budget in full and to know what the cabinet thinks it's doing from behind closed doors.

Then we go to March 22, 1989. Now, they pulled the plug on February 20, right? We still don't know how much they spent on that fancy throne speech on February 17, but I'm sure

the government will cough up the information that I've requested on the Order Paper in this regard. But anyway, after we go through, you know, the bait and switch program from the throne speeches that I've talked about earlier today in question period, we get an election. This time the Conservatives didn't bother to introduce a phony budget, but they gave us this fancy throne speech which has subsequently been changed. And then, two days after the election, instead of having the guts or the respect for the democratic process to come into the Legislature and present us with a budget, they decided that the House wouldn't sit until three months later. "So what if it hasn't sat in 11 months?" might as well read their thought balloon collectively. They decide that it won't sit until June 1 and they're going to pass more than a third of the annual government budget from behind closed doors. On March 22 the Getty Conservative government approved special warrants to the total tune of \$4,370,112,000. Isn't that respectful? It makes you wonder where the regard for the democratic process is anymore in the Conservative benches. I can't guess anymore.

Now, I confess I've never voted Conservative or Liberal in my life and I'm not about to, so I can't pretend to guess at the mentality that governs those poor political parties. But I can speculate from being a member of the opposition that it represents, at very minimum, contempt for the democratic process. Therefore, some weeks ago, in meetings with the Official Opposition caucus, we decided that it would be very important to try to convince you -- without being too partisan and without telling you that you would lose your rights to make some decisions, particularly under emergency conditions, particularly when unforeseen events occur -- that you should have to participate in some democratic process before spending my money. I can tell you, gang, if you'd done that when you were trying to spend my tax dollars supporting the free trade agreement in the federal election, I would have piped up and said: "Oh, no, you don't. Not my money, not my friends' money, not the taxpayers' money."

Well, what I'm arguing for now is that a process be set up so that an all-party committee of the Assembly can review the necessity of those applications for expenditure prior to them being approved or released for expenditure by cabinet. Now, I can imagine all the arguments I'm going to hear from the back benches. I can see a couple of them smiling already. They're getting ready to tell us why it is that they have to be secret, Mr. Speaker, why it is that they have to be the empire builders, why it is that they have to turn democracy on its head and pretend that we're living in China or the Soviet Union, and I look forward to hearing those observations.

But me? You know, I dealt with this issue with 15 other people in caucus, my whole executive in the Highlands Constituency Association, and countless individuals who kept our phones ringing for days after March 22, when the news finally got out of the bag. And you know what? All those wonderful people I talked to couldn't understand. They couldn't come up with one real reason that cabinet has to have the right to spend up to half an annual budget in one fell swoop. You know what my constituents concluded? And I think the constituents are smart, Mr. Speaker; I think politicians should never underestimate the intelligence of ordinary working people. Because what they concluded is that this government doesn't like to come and sit in the House, that they don't like the democratic process, and that's why we've got fewer sittings per session than we've had in the history of the Alberta Legislature since the

horse and buggy days. And I think they're right, Mr. Speaker.

I think the Conservatives have dug themselves into a funny little trench and put up one of those little drawbridges and expect the rest of the world to live on the other side of the moat while the kings in the castles make all the decisions. I think my constituents are right, because what I see year after year is the government calling fewer sittings in a given session and doing everything it can to get out of those sittings in any given session as soon as it possibly can. To me, it's all part of the same mentality. I don't see much of a distinction between the attitude that they take about spending money from behind closed doors and the number of sitting days per year compared to Mr. Getty's predecessors including, although I'm reluctant to admit it, even the Socreds, for heaven's sake, who seemed to have a little greater respect for the democratic process than do the Getty Conservatives.

So I challenge this Assembly to approve this motion. I challenge you to strike a committee under the provisions of Standing Order 49(1). And that committee, remember, would operate under the rules established by this Assembly; the Assembly has to approve those rules. That committee would then be able to meet every week, every two weeks, and look at the applications for special warrants -- which are really called requests for decisions, but we won't get fancy about all this -- and have a look and see who really needs the money, have a look and see what's causing the decision to be made, have a look and see if the decision couldn't wait until the next budget, or have a look and see if the decision could be reasonably incorporated into the larger parameters of the budget most previously approved by members of this Assembly.

It seems to me an eminently reasonable proposal, particularly given the heartfelt statements I heard here yesterday and today on the floor of the Assembly by members of the Conservative caucus and the Liberal caucus about the sadness of what's going on in China, Mr. Speaker. Because I do feel really sad about what's going on in China. I don't like people being quashed, and I don't like democracy being eroded under any circumstances. I say what's good for the goose is good for the gander. If you like democracy, and if you really approve of the process established hundreds of years ago and refined over the years, then why not stand up and give it one more refinement and stop allowing a few empire builders who like to run away with the store at every opportunity from spending money without the prior approval of the members of this Assembly?

Of course, everybody recognizes that we're not going to sit year-round, and everybody recognizes that we don't deal with the budget on a year-round basis. So the problem is solved. You have a handful of Conservatives, a handful of opposition members, you get together and review those requests for decisions, and then you make your recommendations to cabinet. And if the situation is so urgent that cabinet wants to overturn, with its reasons in writing, the recommendation from the all-party committee, then maybe that's the best process to have happen. But I'll tell you, it might invoke a sense of accountability that seems to have escaped this government on every other issue, so far as I can see, and has proved itself to be incapable of being trusted ever since 1985, Mr. Speaker. I'll allow you to draw your own conclusions from that one.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak to Motion 201 and just speak briefly about some of the flaws that appear to me

to be part of this motion. The motion was put forth by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands, and perhaps it's based on an acceptable principle. This principle is that the government taxes money from some people and allocates it to other people, and so there should, in all fairness, be close scrutiny by the Legislature of all steps of that process.

This motion proposes to establish a committee which will scrutinize spending of public moneys through the mechanism of special warrants. Although I fully support the idea that effective scrutiny of public spending should be encouraged, this motion has several serious flaws which would make the proposed select standing committee ineffective. For that reason I must speak against it. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move through my points in very simple language in an attempt not to antagonize the opposition but just to explain to them the process so that they'll come to understand that we already have a process in place and that it's effective and that there are checks and balances there to take care of the types of things that they seem so concerned about.

I'd like to begin, Mr. Speaker, by pointing out that this motion does not differentiate between the two circumstances under which Executive Council approves special warrants. The first occurs at the end of a fiscal year where the budgetary allocations to specific government programs or projects have fallen short of the needed amount during the fiscal year and the House is not in session to provide interim supply. Simply, they're out of money. In these cases the minister will ask cabinet to approve extra money in the form of a special warrant. This procedure is a routine part of the so-called in-year budgetary process of the provincial government. A list of these special warrants may be found at the end of the subsequent year's estimates. In 1987-88 some \$320 million of these types of special warrants were passed. I'd like to refer to these special warrants as in-year special warrants for the purposes of this debate.

The second also occurs at the end of the year but under different circumstances. If the fiscal year draws to a close without the next budget being presented, the government could find itself with a serious cash flow problem. Regardless of whether a budget is in place, the Alberta public service needs money to operate, and cabinet approves the funds through special warrants. March 1989 was a case in point. Due to the provincial election the Legislature had not been asked to consider the government's 1989-90 budget. A special warrant was passed. This type of special warrant differs from the in-year warrant because it is a much larger lump sum, which is broken down by department in an attachment. It is listed under the Appropriation Act, and the expenditures are recorded in public accounts as part of the annual departmental budget. For want of a better term, I will refer to these as blanket special warrants for the purpose of this debate.

Because the wording of the motion does not indicate otherwise, I am assuming that the select committee would have mandate to examine both in-year and blanket warrants. Unfortunately, in neither of these cases will the select standing committee be effective, and I'd like to point out why.

Since blanket warrants are by far more significant in dollar terms and seem to be of particular interest to the member sponsoring the motion, I'll deal with this category first. The motion would establish:

an all-party committee of the Legislature, to be known as the select standing committee on special warrant reviews, to review before the release of funding the special warrants which are passed by cabinet when the Legislative Assembly is not

sitting, the members to be recommended to the Assembly by the special committee established under Standing Order 49(1).

I emphasize the words: this committee is to examine all special warrants when the Legislature is not sitting. The key point here is that sometimes the Legislature is not sitting because it is in recess, and sometimes it is not sitting because it has been dissolved.

The March 22, 1989, special warrant included \$4.1 billion for the General Revenue Fund and smaller amounts for the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund capital projects division and the capital fund. A blanket special warrant was last used in 1986, when a \$4 billion special warrant was passed. In both cases these blanket warrants were passed because the Legislature was not in session due to an election and the public service needed money to operate. Asking for a select standing committee fails to account for this timing and is the major flaw in this motion.

All select standing committees are automatically dissolved when the government resigns for an election and then reappointed as part of a new session. If such a select standing committee had existed in 1986 and in 1989, it would have been dissolved prior to the approval of these large blanket special warrants. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, how could they have been authorized to meet to consider the objects that are proposed in this motion? What function would this committee serve in reviewing blanket special warrants if it does not exist during the times when large blanket warrants are most likely to be passed; that is, when the Legislature is dissolved? Since blanket special warrants authorize far larger sums than in-year payments, using a select standing committee is a very poor way to achieve effective scrutiny, because the large sums are not subject to the committee. For this reason alone, the motion is ineffective and I can't support it, but I would still like to deal with the matter of in-year warrants.

The hon. opposition member might contend that the argument I have just presented would not apply in the case of in-year warrants, and for that reason the motion has merit from her perspective. Again I would respectfully disagree. The wording, "to review before the release of funding the special warrants which are passed by cabinet when the [House] is not sitting," is the basis of my objection. Primarily, I object to the ambiguity of the mandate review before release of funding. This objection has a philosophical basis with a very practical aspect. As I stated earlier, members of this Assembly have a duty to review and control all tax spending as accountable representatives of the taxpayers, and on a simplistic level, the motion is consistent with this principle.

However, the motion ignores a very basic principle of the British parliamentary system with respect to the role of the cabinet. In the parliamentary system a Crown minister is both a member of the Legislature and head of a department in the executive branch. Cabinet members are legislators who enact policy but are also given the authority to direct departments in their executive sense. Thus these two closely related but clearly distinct duties are exercised by one person. It is one of the basic features that distinguishes our system from the American system, where a definite separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches of government exists.

Some of the programs or projects seeking interim funding through in-year special warrants have been debated and approved by Members of the Legislative Assembly acting as a policy-making body for the province of Alberta. The special

warrant is used to provide interim financing so that an approved program which has depleted its budget can continue to operate until the next fiscal year starts. As such, my opinion is that it is an executive decision involving interim financing for an existing government program, not a policy decision on the merits of a new government program. I also feel that this interim decision is best left to the discretion of cabinet ministers utilizing their detailed knowledge of the advice of their department officials. Another review by a group of legislators at this stage in the form of a select standing committee would not be a useful step.

Many other programs are new and were established between sittings of the Legislature. In this case there is a more pressing concern: time. In these cases my objection is not on purely philosophical grounds but on the practical reason for making special warrant power an executive decision: the time constraint. There is often some urgency to these warrants, and cabinet needs to review the case and make a quick decision. However, the motion gives the select standing committee the mandate to review all special warrants before funds are released. What does a review mean? The committee could continue to debate while a needed government program fails to start up. I wonder if we would have been prepared to have a select standing committee debate for several days after the tornado in Edmonton, when perhaps a special warrant might have been needed to pay the bills, and have people stand without being able to access funds to give them assistance in a time of emergency.

Another point that could cause delay is that some of the decisions require specialized knowledge which the select committee would not have, as they are not as familiar with the department as the minister in charge. Of course, if opposition members were part of such a committee, they would immediately want a public inquiry on every special warrant, and we know that that takes a lot of time.

Scheduling is also a factor which could delay the process. Any member who has sat on a select standing committee, indeed any committee, knows how difficult it is to schedule those meetings on short notice.

Also significant is the lack of power of this review. This committee simply has the power to review and delay; there is no power to make changes or recommendations. What possible useful purpose would such a committee really serve? Therefore, a committee review would defeat the very purpose for which in-year special warrants exist. These warrants are emergencies to tide programs over a cash crunch or start-up, with an opportunity for review and debate at a later point. They permit cabinet, acting as an executive body, to authorize funds for new or established programs and services which need money quickly. If this committee must review all special warrants before the release of funding, the speed and efficiency which make special warrants effective will be totally lost.

Another objection is based on the previous argument that I do not think it is efficient use of a select standing committee to examine spending on this scale. Although the spending authorized by in-year special warrants is large in gross terms, we must remember that everything is relative. For example, in 1987-88 in-year warrants totaled almost \$320 million out of a total department's voted, authorized appropriation of \$10.2 billion. This works out to 3.14 percent of total department spending. I'm not implying that \$300 million of taxpayers' money is not significant enough to deserve review. However, I am questioning whether a select standing committee is the right way to do it.

The seven select standing committees authorized under Order 49(1) handle matters that are either procedural or policy, with a couple of exceptions. The two financially oriented committees are the Public Accounts, which reviews the budget expenditures, and the Heritage Savings Trust Fund committee, which reviews the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. A select standing committee to review spending of \$300 million may not be the most effective way to protect the interests of the public.

My final point is that the committee proposed in the motion is redundant. There is already a means in place to initiate a debate on in-year special warrants. Standing Order 56 designates the whole Assembly as a Committee of Supply. Standing Order 57(3) authorizes the Assembly to receive each department's estimates and refer them to the Committee of Supply and designated subcommittee to study any part of the estimates. Order 57(4) also allows any MLA, including the hon. member who brought forth this motion, to participate in this meeting. Since all in-year special warrants are recorded in the subsequent year's estimates, this may be a better way to initiate debate on the warrant, albeit some time after the fact.

Mr. Speaker, that mechanism I just outlined puts special warrants on the same basis as our annual budget that's brought down by this government, and if this Legislature found that our government had not acted with prudence, then it would in fact and in effect be a vote of nonconfidence, a very effective tool that's already in place to be a watchdog over special warrants just as it is over the proposed budget.

For these reasons I cannot support this motion as it relates to in-year special warrants. These are the final reasons to sum up why I cannot support this motion. The committee would be ineffective, since it would most likely be dissolved at the very time that a large blanket special warrant would be passed. And secondly, it would be inappropriate to establish a select standing committee to review warrants that constitute approximately 3 percent of the budget and are better handled by Executive Council.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for your time. I urge the Members of this Legislative Assembly to defeat this motion.

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

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and colleagues.

I am rising, Mr. Speaker, to support this motion in the strongest terms insofar as the principle is concerned. However, I do have some reservations, and particularly the very significant points raised by the Member for Cardston have pointed out some logistical problems as well as some realistic problems relating to the way in which our system operates. So my support is in principle, but I'm not going to be able to support the motion insofar as the wording is concerned.

The original idea of the warrants was that they were to be used in an emergency to cover unforeseen circumstances in the event of sudden need. Unhappily, during recent years we've seen increasing use of warrants which are served in a way which can enable the government to avoid dealing with issues before the Legislature. Warrants have, in fact, in recent years become a way of life, and we have been increasingly seeing in this province long periods of time between sessions and consequent delays in the need for the government to come before the Legislature to obtain supply, as is the traditional basis of budgeting in the parliamentary process. Of course, once the government has

used the warrant process, it immediately recognizes the basic convenience of being able to spend money at a stroke of the pen without prior approval. This is a wonderful luxury and, of course, leads to the tendency for greater use of the system, thereby reflecting the maxim of how power corrupts. Once they get the taste of it, Mr. Speaker, it's like Paris; they want more.

We have seen this progression in the government in recent years. From occasional use of warrants, the government has steadily progressed to the point where its latest exercise is to authorize a warrant in the amount of \$4.5 billion, which must be a record, certainly, for this province and probably in the history of all the Canadian provinces insofar as budgeting is concerned.

Now, this also reflects, Mr. Speaker, in my view, the same line of thinking that led this government to pass the Interprovincial Lottery Act, which is a piece of legislation which authorizes the spending of hundreds of millions of dollars by virtue of decisions made in the back rooms of the Tory caucus without the prior, or indeed in that case, the subsequent approval -- indeed, we do not even receive the subsequent approval -- of this House.

AN HON. MEMBER: That's not so.

MR. CHUMIR: We hear an hon. member saying it isn't so, and I challenge him to stand up after I conclude and give us some justification for that comment.

Now, I said during debate on the Interprovincial Lottery Act that the government, in passing that legislation, had failed in its primary duty in a democratic system, and that duty is to protect and preserve the democratic process which has been established only through such hard effort, indeed bloodshed, on the part of our forebears and which, as we have seen through examples in other parts of the world, is indeed a very fragile treasure. And we can again look to raise the events of China; we can look over there to see how precious the democratic process is. And here we have this government, far from protecting the democratic process, moving away, in the case of the Interprovincial Lottery Act and now in the case of the increasing use of these warrants, from the long-established traditions of the democratic process in parliament which requires prior approval from the people of this province before authorizing expenditures.

This increasing use of warrants in our system is another erosion of our democratic process. It's becoming a way of life, and we accordingly have to ask ourselves whether there is a way to re-establish some form of democratic control consistent with some of the difficulties which have been raised by the Member for Cardston. The obvious answer is that yes, there is a way to re-establish some form of democratic control; there is a better way to do this. And the answer of how is through the general principle which is inherent in the resolution which has been presented in this particular instance.

The concept there is that in circumstances when the Legislature is sitting and when there is not an emergency situation requiring the immediate expenditure of funds, an all-party committee of this Legislature be authorized to review those expenditures and to comment and make recommendations with respect to them. I suggest that a process of that kind should be considered not to be merely a frill and a luxury but should be very much of the essence of our system. Now, if the government acted responsibly and used warrants in a very limited degree, perhaps this would not be as essential, but this government has been acting very irresponsibly. It has an inadequate appreciation for the democratic process, and as a result, it is becoming

more imperative that this House move to establish some forms of mechanism so that we get back to the basic principles with respect to how money is expended in a democracy.

Now, as I mentioned, the Member for Cardston has raised several practical concerns, the first of which, of course, is that there is a hiatus in terms of committees when an election is called and the Legislature is dissolved. That is something that in respect of which I can see no resolution. It's a hiatus, but certainly it does not vitiate the merits of this resolution in circumstances when a Legislature is sitting and a government with the precedent of the \$4.5 billion before it may use that precedent as a temptation to spend \$4 billion or \$5 billion or \$6 billion -- five or six months' worth of expenditures -- simply by a stroke of the pen in the back rooms of the Tory caucus. So the objection is a valid one in detail, but certainly it does not vitiate the principle.

The second concern raised by the hon. Member for Cardston relates to the urgency. Sometimes money has to be spent; an urgency arises. Well, I think we can all understand those, and none of us would stand in the way of important public business being conducted -- expenditures, the needs of citizens of this community being satisfied -- simply because it takes time for a committee to be struck. But that being the case, it's certainly possible to phrase this resolution in such a way or to establish a system which works in such a way as to allow those emergency expenditures to be made and to have the committee sitting and either reviewing those things as the expenditures are about to go out or perhaps only shortly thereafter. It's not perfect -- we don't live in a perfect world -- but it's certainly much better than the system we have in place now, which is fraught with abuse, open to abuse, and which I believe, in support of the concept of this resolution, is being abused.

I would also, before I close, like to make a few short comments with respect to how I would like to see this committee operate, and these comments are also relevant with respect to how we debate and review budgetary expenditures in the Legislature, which itself is badly in need of reform and improvement. In particular, the heart of what I would suggest is that the committee needs the power to be able to call witnesses, particularly deputy ministers, and to engage in a meaningful, not just a charade but a meaningful question and answer session with these witnesses and even with the minister. Anybody who has gone through not just three scenarios of going through Committee of Supply but if you've even gone through one Committee of Supply, you will immediately recognize that the system is so diffuse and unfocused and unhelpful that it is almost useless to accomplish what it was intended to accomplish.

So this, and very badly, the absence of a process which allows for meaningful questioning and transmission of information needs to be remedied in supply, and it should also be part of the committee system which should be established to review expenditures which are authorized by way of warrant.

So, in closing, I congratulate the member for bringing forward this motion. I think it's a sensible motion in principle. It reflects and recognizes the needs of our time, the very bad needs of our time, with respect to the heart of our democratic process of dealing with budgetary expenditures. Because of its failure to deal with these few items which have been so well raised by the Member for Cardston, I am regrettably unable to support it in detail, but I give it my strongest endorsement as a matter of principle.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to make a few comments this afternoon. First of all, I think we should review why it is that special warrants are needed and what role they are supposed to play.

Special warrants, Mr. Speaker, are supposed to meet the emergency needs of a government. They are supposed to meet those urgent cases that can't otherwise be dealt with through the ongoing responsible management of the province's financial situation. It's intended to be used only on very rare occasions and only for relatively minor items or unforeseen items as they arise. But the reason the hon. member has had to introduce this kind of motion in the Legislature during this session is because this government has so badly abused the proper process for the approval of expenditures of the province of Alberta. It's because of the abuse the government itself has incurred that she's been forced to bring forward this kind of proposal.

I think it's worth reviewing the circumstances that gave rise to the special warrant that was passed late in March of 1989. This government called the Legislature into session on February 17, introduced a Speech from the Throne, and then immediately dissolved and sent us off on an election. What the government could have done at that time, Mr. Speaker, quite clearly, after having been out of session since July of 1988, was to have introduced a budget. They could have brought forward their interim supply Bills and gotten those approved. Then, if they wanted to go to the electorate for an election, they could have done so at that time and would not have had to go to special warrants in any way, shape, or form. That was an option the government at the time could have chosen. If they wanted to go to an election on February 20, they could simply have called us back into session a week or 10 days earlier than they did. They could have solved their problem. But no, they chose to simply have a Speech from the Throne and proceed into an election based on the Speech from the Throne.

The Provincial Treasurer and the Premier didn't want to introduce a budget. I wonder why that was the case, Mr. Speaker. Why didn't they want to introduce a budget at that time? It would have meant, in introducing a budget, that the Provincial Treasurer would have had to give us a realistic update of the financial circumstances of the province. But he didn't want to do that, because they were going into an election. He didn't want to be forced to level with the people of Alberta about the financial circumstances of the province before going to an election. He wanted to maintain some fiction about the condition of the finances of the province throughout that election campaign, and being forced to enter into this Assembly, table a budget and interim supply and, as well, give an update of the fiscal year we were in at the time, would not have allowed him to do that.

They didn't want, Mr. Speaker, to be accountable for the fiscal management of the province. So instead of doing the proper and responsible thing in introducing a budget and bringing forward interim supply Bills through the Legislature, they simply went straight into an election, forcing, therefore, some decision having to be made before the new fiscal year started. So they were forced to adopt the second option, an option in which something like 40 percent, or close to a third of the budget, was approved by a cabinet -- now get this -- a third of whose members hadn't even been elected in the election we had just held.

Now, it may be that the hon. government member who inter-

vened a few moments earlier had some objections, and valid objections, as to the workings, some of the difficulties that such a committee might present. But surely even he has to admit, Mr. Speaker, that the proposal made by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands is at least as effective and is at least as accountable to the approval of the budget of this Assembly as to having a lame-duck cabinet, in which a third of the members aren't even elected, making the same approvals.

The problem, Mr. Speaker, was this. The cabinet was faced with a crisis. It was faced with a crisis not of the making of the opposition but a crisis created by the management style of this government and the decisions that it made in calling an election. They were forced to abuse the approval process to respond to a crisis of their own making. So members may argue with our proposal all they like, but there's no avoiding the basic fact that the special warrant approved by the cabinet for this fiscal year was unprecedented because of the way this government went about its approval process.

I think it's important just to take a look at a deeper level at the attitude towards public money being expressed by this government in making these approvals in this way. I believe we have never seen in this province such an unprecedented and cavalier attitude. I would say, Mr. Speaker, that the decision of the cabinet to approve more than \$4 billion through special warrants following the March 20 election is more than anything a signal and a symbol of how far off base this government has drifted in that basic fundamental principle of public accountability.

This proposal by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands would provide greater public scrutiny into the process to ensure that abuses like this would not occur in the future. Yes, the government may vote against it, and they may argue against it, but if they have lost a sense of why that is important, that the public have scrutiny over the operations of this government, if they've lost that, then I don't know if there's anything, including unprecedented motions from the opposition, that would put this government back on track.

This motion before us today, Mr. Speaker, may never be approved. That's fine. If the government wants to vote it down, they have the majority in this Legislature to do it. But I hope they would recognize this: that the Official Opposition is giving the government every opportunity, from the very beginning of this session of this Legislature -- every opportunity -- to re-examine its approach, to re-examine its attitude, and to re-examine its management style. If this government takes the hint, then I believe the people of this province will be well served. But if they don't recognize what lies behind this motion, then the people of this province will not be well served, and we are headed for some very serious problems in the years to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise to support this motion, and I'd like to read it one more time to the House. I think a lot of people have gone to sleep in the last hour, and perhaps they should just take another look at exactly what the motion is. Ms Barrett proposed the following motion to the Assembly:

Be it resolved that there be established an all-party committee

of the Legislature, to be known as the select standing committee on special warrant reviews, to review before the release of funding the special warrants which are passed by cabinet when the Legislative Assembly is not sitting, the members to be recommended to the Assembly by the special committee established under Standing Order 49(1).

Mr. Speaker, I support this motion for two fundamental reasons. One is related to the idea of the fact that the government has so misused government warrants that this motion is necessary, and the other part is that the idea of all-party committees is an idea whose time has come. I want to speak on those two themes.

Clearly, the Alberta government has decided that it does not need to be accountable to the people of Alberta. If you think of the size and the frequency of the dollar figures put out under these special warrants in the last few years -- and I'll give some numbers later on -- you'll realize that the government has become more and more arrogant about the use of taxpayers' dollars. If you realize that more and more of those dollars are committed or expended without proper public disclosure or debate, you'll realize they're becoming less and less accountable for the dollars they spend. They're becoming more and more secret about how they're going to spend the dollars. We only catch up to where and how those dollars were spent in the public accounts a year or a year and a half, sometimes two years, later. It's also clear, particularly from the lottery Bill debate of last year, that this government has total contempt for the power of the purse, which is supposed to reside in this Assembly. This government takes tax dollars and spends them as if they were Tory Party dollars, and I'll back that one up as well.

Now, Mr. Speaker, on the other matter -- and I'll just elaborate slightly on it at this stage and then come back to it later -- about the idea of all-party committees. It's an idea whose time has come, as shown in the functioning of the Parliament of Canada. In the last few years they've gone a long way to making the ordinary members of the Assembly feel like they have some say or some authority, because they have all-party committees that have some meaning and actually do some work. I admit that before 1986 it was not a very feasible idea in this province. So it is not surprising that for a lot of years this government went along without using all-party committees very much before that time because there were not very many members in the opposition. But since 1986 there's been no excuse. There were 16 of us here last time. There were four Liberals last time; there are eight Liberals this time. There is no reason in the world that there aren't enough members in the opposition to man all-party committees in an effective and efficient manner.

Mr. Speaker, actually while I'm on that, it does seem most extraordinary to me that the government put out a document the other day listing all the Tory Party committees they have set up, using taxpayers' dollars, to facilitate the work of the various departments in propagandizing the Tory Party agenda to the population of Alberta. Now, all those committees that were released on that sheet the other day that you sent around to all members should have some opposition members on them. Yet you have set up committee after committee -- go back a few years when they had set up the education committee with six Conservative members. That seemed scandalous enough, because there were a few people around in the opposition that could have been on that committee. But they're still doing it for all committees, and that is quite ridiculous. I'm not talking

about the standing committees; those are all-party committees.

AN HON. MEMBER: On our caucus committees?

MR. McEACHERN: If you're going to have a caucus committee, then that caucus committee should be paid out of Tory funds because that's the Tory agenda. That is exactly the point I'm making.

Mr. Speaker, all the members of this caucus have great respect for the traditions of democracy, the parliamentary system, the traditions of Westminster, the traditions of the Canadian Parliament, so we don't make this suggestion to depart from the traditions of parliamentary democracy lightly. We're doing it because we see a need and a problem here in this Assembly in Alberta. This government's attitude, their secrecy, their delayed accountability, their contempt for this Assembly, have become a way of life with the Tories.

I can go back to 1975 if you'd like to find a simple example. It's a story I did tell once or twice in previous sessions, but there are some new members in here. You might remember that during the 1975 pre-election period a former member of this Assembly was given the task of running around the province to dispense some \$500,000. He gave a \$2,000 donation to a group called the society for the preservation of the Gaelic language in Alberta. It was a total farce, Mr. Speaker. The society supposedly was formed by a newsman who made up a list of 16 names as members of the society, headed by Pierre Trudeau and Margaret Thatcher, and asked for \$200 to help them preserve the Gaelic language in the province of Alberta. So keen was the Conservative minister to hand out money to anybody he might be able to buy votes from that he sent him \$2,000 without even looking at the list, because one cursory glance would have shown that it was nonsense. Now, that was in 1975. In 1982 Peter Lougheed bought a lot of votes with his mortgage deductibility plan, again using taxpayers' dollars in the middle of an election as if they were his own.

But it was really the sheer size of the special warrants in 1986, over \$4 billion, and over \$4 billion again -- \$4.3 billion -- this time around in 1989 that was really the thing that prompted us to at least suggest some attempt to have some democratic process or democratic review of the expenditures of this province, because this government does not pay attention to the niceties of democracy and power of the purse residing in this Assembly.

Now, you might remember that in 1985 when Mr. Lougheed announced his retirement in June, he then immediately proceeded to announce government warrants to the tune of \$400 million in the next few months. Here's a lame-duck Premier announcing \$400 million of programs. The new Premier, the present Premier, when he got the leadership, announced another \$400 million in government warrants before he got around to calling the Assembly to bring in a budget, and when he did bring in a budget he immediately called an election and we had to wait another several months before we had a budget. That was again why they needed \$4 billion to run the business of the government, when in fact he could either have called the election or passed the budget earlier. There was no need to put himself into that situation.

In fact, the following year the government warrants went from the \$800 million right down to about \$300 million, stayed there for a couple of years, and now we're faced again with a situation where not only have we got around \$300 million in

government warrants over this year -- although we haven't seen the accounting for that yet -- we now have a \$4.2 billion allotment so that we can run the business of this province while we're getting around to calling the Legislature. Eleven months since the last Legislature sat and finally we get around to calling an Assembly. July 6 was the last day of the last session.

AN HON. MEMBER: February 17.

MR. McEACHERN: No, that doesn't count, and you know it.

As well as these incredible expenditures I've just enumerated on special warrants, this government shows its contempt for the handling of the money of this province by all the loan guarantees it gives out: in 1986-87, \$637 million; in 1987-88, over a billion. We don't know what it will be in 1988-89, but with all these forestry announcements we know it's going to be large.

One of the things that really amazes me is that while this Assembly is sitting, we still have the ministers running out and doing press releases and announcing government warrants. Why don't they bring them into the Assembly? Why don't they accumulate them? Why don't they bring them here for debate so the people of the province of Alberta can see what the pros and cons are of some of their policies? Instead, a press release out there, and usually a convoluted one that doesn't really tell you a lot of the details. In fact, this government has the belief it has a perfect right to give away the money and, if there's a private company involved, then say, "Well, that's private business; it's nobody else's business." Now, Mr. Speaker, if a businessman goes to a bank and borrows money, I agree that's his private business. But if he comes to the government of Alberta and asks for money under any program, then that should be public business, because that's public dollars we're talking about. We've been around that debate before.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

In fact, Mr. Speaker, not only is it possible for this government to make these kinds of announcements of orders in council to the public, as they do, but it also is possible under the present arrangement of things for a minister to spend money with only the okay of the Treasury Board. They do not even have to make an announcement. They do not have to register that anywhere that anybody in the public can ever see. It will show up only in public accounts a year, a year and a half, two years later. It is perfectly possible and it probably happens fairly regularly, if I know this cabinet from watching them for three years. It is totally scandalous that a minister of the Crown can spend money without having to announce that he's doing it to the public, and yet we have a situation like that. And don't tell me it doesn't happen. I've talked to the accountants in the accounting department and the auditing department and the register and know that that happens.

Mr. Speaker, this government is arrogant beyond belief when it comes to handling the dollars of the province. There is not only the problem of the loan guarantees, not only the lottery problem we talked about last year. It's not only the overuse of special warrants. The ministers of the Crown actually spend money sometimes as if it were their own. I'm thinking of the Premier here in the case of the mortgage plan. It's the most arrogant example of use of public funds by an unelected official. In the middle of an election nobody is elected. I mean, I realize

the cabinet still carries on to run the affairs of government, but for a leader of a party to announce a mortgage plan in the middle of an election and announce that the payments will start before the end of the election is incredible arrogance.

The Premier of this province said that he would start the mortgage payments by March 1. Now, it turned out that he didn't know what he was talking about and it took so long to straighten out the kerfuffle that they've had to delay the start. In fact, I understand very few dollars have been given out. Although quite a few people have applied, not very much money has yet been committed. In any case, the problem with the Premier seemed to be that he didn't know the difference between a down payment and a mortgage. He thought somehow the \$4,000 part of the down payment could be tagged on to the mortgage. Well, the terms are mutually exclusive. Either money is part of a down payment or else it's part of a mortgage. Finally, when they got that kerfuffle sort of half straightened out -- and the Premier, of course, refused to back down -- then the Treasurer bullied the credit unions and the Treasury Branches and North West Trust, which they have under administration at this point, to go along with the idea, so first-time home buyers are going to get their \$4,000 interest free. Whether it's called part of the mortgage or not part of the mortgage, I guess if it is to be paid back over installments, it's part of the mortgage and not part of the down payment. Really, it means that those institutions have had to accept a lower down payment...

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, hon. member. Is the example really more closely related to special warrant reviews under the motion?

MR. McEACHERN: Well, if the Premier announces that program during the middle of a campaign as the Premier of the province, I guess you'd have to call it a special warrant. I assume he had his cabinet behind him on it, so I don't quite understand what's the problem.

AN HON. MEMBER: Well, maybe not. We're not sure.

MR. McEACHERN: I guess we're not quite sure how he decided to handle it. All we know is that he made a mess of it. What he did was force three financial institutions -- or at least he and the Treasurer together forced three financial institutions -- to go along with the . . . I'm not quite sure what to call it. It certainly is possible that it puts in jeopardy the finances of those three institutions, because there is a reason why you ask people, when they take out a mortgage, to make a certain-sized down payment in relation to the overall values of property they are buying. To insist that those three institutions knock \$4,000 off that and tag it on to the mortgage is really not fair to those institutions. Most of us have some stake in those institutions, if not directly in the credit union or one of the other two institutions, at least indirectly in that they are backed by the government.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's a very important point, and it shows exactly what I said: that the Premier, for partisan reasons to get himself re-elected, used tax dollars as if they were his own personal dollars. It is totally incredible that any government would do that sort of thing. Now, if he had announced the program and said "Our party, if re-elected, will do this program" and then brought in the Bill later, fine. We all make our promises during an election; that's okay. But to say that it will start on March 1,

as if he's got a right to start handing out dollars to buy votes before the election ever comes: that is what annoyed me, Mr. Speaker.

Actually, the break on the gasoline for farmers was the same thing. "It starts at midnight tonight," he says in the middle of an election. That's tax dollars. That's foregoing tax dollars, that is unacceptable. In fact, the taxed expenditures in this province is another area where the government does not look after the dollars as it should, but I'll forego getting into that, as it's not directly related to this issue.

Mr. Speaker, it is time we started to run our democracy on a more co-operative basis. The people of this province are not particularly enthralled with partisan politics. They've looked at what happened with the federal election; they've looked at the promises made by this government to buy votes. Yet we continue to run this government as if it's two solitudes or three solitudes, whichever you wish to call it. It's time that the government started to set up policies, set up committees, of which this one could be very important, to bring some co-operation to the governing of this province. The idea of an all-party committee is an idea whose time has come, and I think the government should consider it very seriously.

MR. BRADLEY: Mr. Speaker, as I considered this motion, it became apparent that the hon. member's proposal for a select standing committee on special warrant review is in need of some specific definition and rethinking. This motion should not be supported by the members of this House for several important reasons.

The first and perhaps most obvious reason concerns the actual wording of the motion itself. The hon. member asked for the establishment of a select standing committee to review the allocation of special warrants. Mr. Speaker, this motion lacks an understanding of the variety of roles, responsibilities, and guidelines related to the activity of select committees. Absent from the motion are references to the specific function of this proposed committee and the role it would play in facilitating special warrants. Without these crucial details, I'm in no way prepared to support the motion. The hon. member would have better served the Assembly by providing a more thorough outline of the proposed committee's ability to recommend and initiate change regarding a special warrant under review.

Despite lacking the details to properly examine and analyze this motion on its own merits, I've given some thought to the general idea of a select standing committee to review special warrants. In so doing, Mr. Speaker, I'm strongly opposed to supporting this motion for a number of compelling reasons. A select standing committee to review special warrants would either present potential obstacles threatening the basic purpose of special warrants or exist as a relatively ineffective committee, duplicating a process that has already been established and proven satisfactory. If a special warrant required the approval of the select standing committee for authorization and allocation, this would certainly lead to unnecessary delays. As most of the members of this Legislature are aware, in order for a standing committee to make a motion of approval or of rejection, a one-third quorum must be present. While the Legislature is not sitting, other commitments may result in many members of the committee being unable to meet on short notice to review special warrants. Without a quorum in attendance, the special warrant would be held up. Even with a one-third quorum present, committee debate may invariably result in the delay of

many warrants.

Mr. Speaker, the very purpose of a special warrant is to provide funds for the public good of the province, and I quote from the Financial Administration Act:

When at any time the Legislative Assembly is not in session the Provincial Treasurer

(a) reports that the Minister having charge of any matter has certified that, in the public interest, an expenditure of public money is urgently required . . .

the Lieutenant Governor . . . may order a special warrant.

Mr. Speaker, the critical phrase here is "urgently required." Special warrant expenditures cannot be subject to rejection or delay tactics having more to do with the political manoeuvring of opposition members than a sense of responsibility to the people of Alberta. For example, we have requirements for drought emergency response, for fire fighting, for social assistance -- where in times of need the social assistance rolls have increased, there's need for a special warrant immediately -- disaster assistance in terms of tornadoes, and also funding to implement collective agreements which occur when the Legislature is not in session -- for example, in terms of recent collective agreements with nurses in the province. These are necessary reasons that special warrants must proceed without delay. I'm sure none of the hon. members opposite would want to see delay in terms of funding for these very important emergency situations.

If the committee which the hon. member proposes is not granted approval authority, serving only as a review body, is it not duplicating the procedure that is already available to each member of the Legislative Assembly through the Public Accounts Committee and through the Committee of Supply? I'm of the strong opinion that people of Alberta do not want a select committee that will be the cause of unnecessary delays at a time when immediacy is of the essence, and the people of Alberta certainly do not want a select committee to be formed that will further burden the taxpayers of this province without providing a necessary or effective role in our legislative process.

Mr. Speaker, this motion is also inconsistent with the intent and tradition of the British parliamentary system. The election of a majority government, the appointment of an Executive Council, and the subsequent course of government operation necessarily leads to executive decisions involving the interim financing of existing government programs. This is a basic tenet of parliamentary government. Such are the circumstances surrounding the use of in-year special warrants, which my colleague from Cardston has alluded to. This is a process involving government initiatives which will be incorporated into the new budget and public accounts which will receive the scrutiny of the members of the Assembly. An additional review process, with no other role than to rubber-stamp approval for government spending that has already received support in principle of the House, is not a useful or responsible measure. This argument is supported when we examine the degree to which in-year special warrants have been used through the past five years by this government. Over the past five years 3.6 percent of departmental spending has been allocated through in-year special warrants.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to review those particular years with you: the most current fiscal year, '88-89, 4.4 percent; '87-88, 3.14 percent of the total; '86-87, 2.48 percent of the total; '85-86, 4.91 percent of the total; '84-85, 2.92 percent use of special warrants. When you average this out in terms of in-year special warrants, that comes to about 3.6 percent of government expenditure. The members opposite today have alluded to there

being increased use of special warrants by this government over a period of time. Well, I refer them to look back even further. In fact, this current administration has used special warrants less in terms of the in-year special warrants I have alluded to than some of the previous administrations. I look back to the years 1982-83 in which the expenditure was 8.96 percent; 1981-82, 8.54 percent; 1980-81, 9.95 percent. So the trend line, Mr. Speaker, actually has been to reduce the use of special warrants. This government has in fact used them only in terms of emergency situations, and I'm speaking specifically to the in-year special warrants.

Government spending does in fact receive additional review through the estimates put forward by the Provincial Treasurer. These are reviewed and voted on by the Committee of Supply. So these special warrants do receive this legislative approval. Every decision involving government spending is subject to the full and complete extent of the legislative process which has been approved by this Assembly. The proposed select standing committee, Mr. Speaker, is redundant because there are processes in place. I'm sure the hon. members opposite may be quick to point out that the 3.6 percent I quoted in reference to the in-year warrants does not apply to the lump-sum warrants requested at the beginning of a fiscal year to finance all government departments until a budget can be passed. The \$4.2 billion warrant passed on March 22 of this year falls into that category. This lump-sum special warrant to cover interim supply needs of the General Revenue Fund and for the 1989-90 fiscal year has been referred to by members on the other side of the House as unprecedented and irresponsible, and on that perceived basis they have proceeded with this very motion.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to point out to hon. members that the use of such warrants constitutes standard practice and is an unavoidable alternative in both election and nonelection years. This is clearly evident by the following examples. In British Columbia, during 1983 a May election prevented a spring session and a \$3 billion special warrant was passed to keep the public service operating until a budget was passed. In Saskatchewan, during the 1987-88 fiscal year no appropriations were passed until October due to the House not sitting. The Saskatchewan cabinet relied on special warrants to provide interim funding from the beginning of April until October when the House reconvened. In Manitoba two special warrants, each worth \$1 billion, were required for the commencement of the fiscal year in April 1989 since the House was not in session. I could continue with further examples from other provinces and our federal government, but I think the point is well made. The use of these special warrants is a matter of the legislative process provided by the Financial Administration Act which was passed by this Legislative Assembly. The use of these special warrants, as I indicated, is a fiscal administrative reality as experienced by those who form the governments of this nation and provided by Parliaments and Legislatures throughout the world.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like to stress to the members of this House that the motion we find before us is not a responsible extension of the legislative process. Depending on the hon. member's intentions as to the specific role this committee would play, details of which are noticeably absent from the wording of this motion, a select standing committee on special warrants would become the cause of lengthy delays or remain an

ineffective committee duplicating a process that already exists. Now, with regard to the particular special warrant which has caused concern to members of the opposition -- referring to the \$4.2 billion special warrant -- as I understand the rules of the Assembly, with the dissolution of the Assembly on February 20 any select standing committee would cease to exist, so the process the hon. member proposes would not be able to take effect in terms of a very emergency situation related to ongoing interim supply. So even the suggestion of the motion is lacking in terms of substance. In fact, it could not operate under the circumstances the hon. members opposite in the opposition have spoken about today.

So, Mr. Speaker, for these reasons it's very obvious that the House cannot support this motion.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are tiptoeing around the point of all this. The point of all of it is that they don't give a dam. They don't mind what the rules say, they don't mind deceit, they don't mind certifying to what isn't true. All these things are involved in certifying to the alleged necessity for a special warrant amounting to about 40 percent of the annual budget. How can that be a matter of emergency? It's simply a matter of bad planning or, worse than that, intentional disobeying of the rules. And the latter is what it is. To bring out technical objections that standing committees as at present constituted can't deal with the matter because they cease on the dissolution of the House, which is perfectly correct, is silly, because we can change the rules. After all, cabinet ministers stay in their job, doing their job as necessarily they must, until replaced by the next incoming ones after the House has been dissolved. So for a committee like this that is specifically there to deal with special warrants, the biggest ones of which can only occur when the House is not sitting -- and, of course, sometimes the House is not sitting because it's been dissolved -- you'd have to have changed the rules. So that's implicit in the motion. To resort to technicalities like that is simply to ignore the purpose.

The Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services yesterday sanctimoniously referred us to the oath of office members take to uphold the law. That is the very thing that is lacking here and which this measure seeks to cure. The source of special warrants is section 30 of the Financial Administration Act, and this means that to get one the Provincial Treasurer must report

that the Minister having charge of any matter has certified that, in the public interest, an expenditure of public money is urgently required with respect to that matter.

So \$4.2 billion or some 40 percent of the annual budget being certified as "urgently required" is patently false. We have a group of ministers, aided and abetted by the Provincial Treasurer, certifying to what is patently false. That wouldn't happen if the ministers were anxious to uphold the ordinary rules. If they were anxious to uphold the ordinary rules, then the necessity for this motion would not exist. But because they pay so little attention to their oath of office, Mr. Speaker, which the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services was so keen about yesterday, this motion is completely necessary.

We understand the motivation of one of the Liberals that has spoken to agree with us on this. But typically for Liberals, while agreeing with the purpose of the motion, they said they wouldn't vote for it because . . . Then we didn't understand exactly why they wouldn't, but I suppose it's because it might

mean making some actual decisions.

I agree that the wording has to be fixed up a bit so the committee can function when the House has been dissolved, but the purpose is not to alter anything at all but to return what is supposed to be there to the form that is specified in section 30 of the Financial Administration Act. The necessity for this committee or something equivalent thereto exists because the present system isn't working, and the present system isn't working because it's simply disregarded. It's disregarded because there's no sanction there; it's just a rule that has to be obeyed. And if you can get away with it, well, why not get away with it? If the committee exists, perhaps it will at least shame the ministers into obeying the law.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

MR. GOGO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've listened today with great interest to the motion from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands. I don't question for one moment her intent to make government more accountable and the Assembly more accountable; however, it seemed to me, putting forward the arguments of her motion, it was as though some great dastardly act was occurring now in the province of Alberta with the way the province is governed. Now, I'm impressed with any hon. member who wants to stand up and speak up to make for better government, but I want members to note we've just been through a general election in this province. We've had a motion put forward by a House leader representing the hon. New Democratic Party, which ran third in terms of results behind the Liberal Party, which party won't even support the hon. member's motion. I think we should take a moment and not call the Liberals misinformed for not supporting the Member for Edmonton-Highlands' motion. I think we should listen with a great deal of thought to the arguments advocated and put forward by the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Mr. Speaker, I learned a long time ago that when you cannot gain office legitimately, you'll go to any route at all to obtain it. And here we have today with this motion, I think, a deliberate attempt to short-circuit the system called democracy. The Member for Edmonton-Kingsway stood up and talked about democracy. Well, he can't have it both ways. On the one hand he's prepared to say that voters are important, elections are important, and democracy is important. Let's just take a moment, then, to review the democratic system, which for some reason is not good enough in this House. We've had this system for a long time. It has served us well. Alberta, in my opinion -- and I'm sure the hon. member's -- is a respected province of Canada, a true partner in Confederation, mainly because, I believe, for all these years we've had good government.

Now, are we being told that all of a sudden we've got bad government? Is that the inference contained in Motion 201 and supported by the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway? Is that what he's saying? It seems to me, then, that we could probably do away with elections. We certainly couldn't use the yardstick that I'm hearing, and that is the popular support, because they ran behind the Liberals and presumably campaigned on what they thought would be good ideas for good government. Well, the public spoke on March 20. They told them what they thought by putting them somewhere behind the Liberal Party. Surely when we look at our traditions and our history, we recognize that under our parliamentary system when political parties

run for office -- this is pretty elementary stuff, and I really shouldn't be having to say it, but I want to say it -- the party gaining the greatest number of elected members forms the government. Now, do we object to that principle, first of all? The leader of that party becomes Premier. Do we object to that principle? [interjections] Well, hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, I just ask you to listen. Now, I sat and listened to you, hon. member. I don't ask for much. Frankly, I don't get much, but I don't ask for much.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. Perhaps the hon. minister could address the Chair and not engage in debate with other hon. members.

MR. GOGO: I very much appreciate your ruling, hon. Speaker, and I beg, sir, your forgiveness if I strayed somewhat from addressing you.

But we've accepted that principle for a long time, and yet for some reason it's not appropriate now. I don't know how a government can function . . . Unless the intent of the hon. member has an ulterior motive, such as this House would then sit 12 months a year, because the only alternative I know, and it's been explained by the Member for Pincher Creek-Crowsnest, the Member for Cardston, the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, that special warrants are only used when the Legislative Assembly is not sitting -- now, if hon. members want the House to sit 12 months a year, then say so, but I didn't get that from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands in her motion.

I'm puzzled, because we have in Standing Order 49 ample authority to authorize whatever committees of the House we wish. Now, the hon. member has not put forward to my knowledge an amendment to Standing Orders. I don't even think it's been discussed with House leaders to amend the Standing Orders to create another special committee. I would have trouble supporting it, but I have trouble supporting some other things as well.

To give the inference that special warrants are passed without any due consideration, without any serious thought, without the civil service of the province of Alberta, which I submit is a dedicated civil service, being involved in the process, and recommending through a minister to cabinet the authorization of those funds -- I mean, just the inference of that alone I think is wrong.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly don't know how members from Edmonton would have dealt when the hon. minister who at that time dealt with disaster services wanted to help out with floods in the city of Edmonton. I guess we just wait until we call the House to look after disaster services, because without the special warrant, I don't know how else we could deal with it. Now, if the hon. member who's proposing this motion is proposing to have this special committee -- and I think the Member for Pincher Creek-Crowsnest pointed out that MLAs are not full-time jobs -- drop everything to run to Edmonton to sit in judgment of Her Majesty's cabinet and rule above Her Majesty's cabinet, I don't understand how that could work. Members know that no member of this House, unless they're a member of Executive Council, has authority to spend a dime. Yet suddenly some members of this House are wanting to put themselves above that in terms of both parliamentary history and parliamentary tradition. I don't understand that, Mr. Speaker, but there again, maybe I'm a slow learner.

The hon. member mentioned a few minutes ago about the

former minister of this government who in his anxiety to help citizens of Alberta took as gospel an application for \$2,000 and dispensed those funds, whereupon that same person who -- I guess it's no secret as to who it was; he's still employed by the CBC -- made a big issue out of it and embarrassed the government. Well, I think we should be proud that the Premier of the day recognized that, frankly, it was a mistake of the head and not of the heart and kept the minister on. For this member now to raise it today I think does a disservice to former members of Executive Council when they say that without the special warrant it couldn't happen. I think that's a pretty cheap shot, Mr. Speaker.

As well, anybody in this House who has the audacity and temerity and ignorance to call Peter Lougheed a lame-duck Premier, I don't care when he decided to retire, obviously doesn't have a true appreciation, I think, for some of the former leaders we've had in this House.

Let me conclude, Mr. Speaker, on this note. I'm well aware that those who failed to gain office in terms of the power structure and form the government would go to great lengths -- and I'm not arguing with the Member for Edmonton-Highlands; I respect the hon. member -- to find an alternative to the present system of government. In other words, if I can't govern the province, maybe I can control through the golden rule the method of controlling it, and that is to veto any method the government tries, or attempts to try, to run the province through a special warrant process when the Legislature's not sitting. I think it's, frankly, a very weak argument. I've certainly not heard arguments today that would persuade me to put a committee of this House -- not in terms of accountability, because we have Public Accounts for that, but in terms of preference, to determine whether Executive Council, representing her Majesty the Queen, could spend funds in this province when the Legislature is not sitting to see that the needs of the province are met. For that reason I cannot, and certainly would urge other members not to, support Motion 201.

MR. FOX: Mr. Speaker, I must say I enjoyed having the basic lesson in democracy delivered to us by the Member for Lethbridge-West, but as a teacher he is somewhat lacking in his ability to explain the whole truth and the whole situation. There was indeed an election held on March 20 when a government was elected, along with opposition parties. The member made constant reference to percentages, and I would remind him that the government was elected with 44 percent of the popular vote, the opposition receiving a combined total of 56 percent. That means, in essence, that 56 percent of Albertans recognize this government's agenda wasn't worth supporting and voted for an alternative. So I would like to say . . . [interjections] You missed his comments, Government House Leader.

I would like to say that the government was formed because they elected a majority of members to the Legislative Assembly, and that is a time-honoured democratic tradition that we in this House support wholeheartedly. But that does not, Mr. Speaker, give that government, once elected, the right to run roughshod over the rights of the citizens of the province of Alberta, to ignore entirely the basic democratic principles that have been developed over time in the British parliamentary system and that have made this country great. It's our job as opposition members to stand up and make sure that this government is taken to task each and every time they try and abuse those rights. That's exactly what the Member for Edmonton-Highlands is doing

when she proposes this motion.

This government has in the some 18 years it's been in power demonstrated an increasingly regrettable disrespect for democratic tradition. When they were first elected in 1971, even I would concede that there were some positive initiatives. They were a breath of fresh air in the province of Alberta relative to the decaying regime that had been in for 35 years. But in the last several years this government has become increasingly isolated, arrogant, aloof and shows a regrettable disrespect for the rights of a significant number of Albertans who don't support them and who express concerns about the way they do things.

One of the things we identified as a priority in this legislative session was to introduce a number of things that we felt would bring democratic reform to the functioning of the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker, because it's been sadly lacking over the last several years. There was a time, admittedly, when there weren't very many opposition members here and it wasn't feasible or practical to involve all members in the committee process. But I think we have to recognize that there's a significant opposition representation here and that it's time for the Alberta Legislative Assembly to grow up, to follow the example set out for us not only by the Canadian Parliament but by a number of Legislatures in this country and develop a more complete and workable standing committee process that doesn't pit members against one another in every situation, doesn't put people on sides but rather takes advantage of the talents and aspirations and ideas of all hon. members elected to this Assembly. Because after all, Mr. Speaker, even though there may be Conservative members or Liberal members or New Democrat members, we're all Members of the Legislative Assembly sent here by Albertans to represent their interests and make sure those interests are being respected.

I firmly believe that by broadening the use of the all-party standing committee we can reform the democratic process here and as elected members do a better job on behalf of Albertans. Because we won't have to see a government that constantly rejects every idea the opposition has even though they plan on implementing it a year or two hence, we would have more of a congenial atmosphere where members sincerely try and work together. I might remind the Member for Lethbridge-West of our common committee experience, the Legislative Offices Committee, where the members have worked well together -- the Member for Cardston might need to be reminded of that as well -- where the atmosphere has been a positive one, where members really sit down, put their noses to the grindstone, and work to the best of their abilities on behalf of Albertans.

So the Member for Edmonton-Highlands has Motion 201. The Member for Vegreville has Motion 267, which we'll get a chance to debate if we're here till sometime late in December. That will further propose an expanded use of the all-party committee. The important thing about this particular motion, however, is not just that it proposes the establishment of an all-party committee to make some decisions but that it requires that there be an all-party review of the spending decisions made behind closed doors by this government. According to the Member for Pincher Creek-Crowsnest it is necessary on occasion for the government to have the latitude to approve special warrants; I grant that. We don't want to sit all 12 months of the year; that would be unproductive. We've got lots of important work to do out in our constituencies on behalf of Albertans. The special warrant process is one that's there to be used when necessary, but it's not there to be abused. It's not there to suit whatever

agenda the government may find convenient at the time. It's there for special emergency occasions.

To describe a \$4.2 billion allocation as a special emergency occasion requires a little bit of scrutiny, I think. Had things happened the way they were supposed to have happened, this Legislative Assembly, convened on February 17, would have presented and begun debate on a budget prior to the end of March. We would have complied with our own laws, and we wouldn't have had to engage in this distasteful process. But the agenda was interrupted, Mr. Speaker. The throne speech that was ostensibly presented to outline the government's legislative agenda was nothing more than an excuse to launch an ill-timed election only two years and 9 months after the last election. I applaud the hon. Minister of the Environment for making a commitment on behalf of this government to wait a reasonable length of time prior to the next election, because I think that's very important. But the public agenda, the matters of urgent, pressing, public concern, were put on hold because this government thought it convenient to go out and get themselves re-elected before people really found out what they had in store for them. So the election was called. The Legislature had been convened, the throne speech printed. That all became irrelevant. Out they go trying to make promises they had no intention of keeping, to win an election.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

On March 20 we had a government elected. There was still time to signal the government's intention to run this province the way it should be run. But lo and behold, the public agenda, matters of urgent, pressing concern, placed on hold again so that the former Member for Edmonton-Whitemud could get his job back. We had to wait until June 1 before we even reconvened as a Legislature. Why? Well, because we had to go through the by-election and then the period of appeal and then the time required before the new Member for Stettler was sworn in, and then finally the Legislature can get back to business and do what the public required us to do. What that meant is that we've waited 13 months between budgets in the province of Alberta. That's not a happy precedent to establish, Mr. Speaker, and it's one that's got to be challenged: \$4.2 billion of expenditures being approved, I submit with very little consideration, behind closed doors, away from the scrutiny of democratically elected public representatives, is an unacceptable process and one that we certainly will not cave in to. Even though the Member for Calgary-Buffalo seems willing to acquiesce, we're not willing to acquiesce.

We think that the quorum concerns mentioned by the Member for Pincher Creek -- worried about if we establish such a committee, what if members didn't show up; then there'd be a lack of quorum. You know, I want to assure the member that the New Democrat members of this Legislature take their committee responsibilities seriously. If we are assigned to a committee that is there to review requests for a decision to allocate money when it's necessary for important needs for Albertans, to carry a department over the hump if there was some legitimate reason for us not being able to present and consider a budget prior to the end of March, well then we'd be there; we'd be making those decisions and helping facilitate the process.

I think any of the objections put forward by the members opposite to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highland's motion are very shallow and don't withstand scrutiny, Mr. Speaker. I

want to make this case very clearly: that we need to reform the democratic process in this province so that the legitimate wishes and aspirations of Albertans are indeed respected in this Chamber.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services.

MR. KOWALSKI: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Periodically men and women of goodwill and integrity must rise in this Assembly and participate in motions that are before the Assembly. Today is one such occasion. I've been sitting and listening and observing with a great deal of interest for what appears to have been a lifetime but really is perhaps an hour and a half a debate with respect to Motion 201. It has to do with special warrants and the review thereof. I think it's appropriate as well from time to time just to remind ourselves what exactly a special warrant is and what the basis is of it and for it and everything else. I would like to just quote very, very briefly pertinent words from the Financial Administration Act with respect to a special warrant, Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence.

30(1) When at any time the Legislative Assembly is not in session the Provincial Treasurer

(a) reports that the Minister having charge of any matter has certified that, in the public interest, an expenditure of public money is urgently required . . .

the Lieutenant Governor . . . may order a special warrant.

Mr. Speaker, the important thing here is "urgently required." Let's just take the example of 1989 and put it in the perspective in which it is. We have a general election, a very important general election, on the 20th day of March, an election that showed that the people of Alberta would return to this Assembly 59 members of the Progressive Conservative Party. Now, when I analyze and look at that, I'm kind of impressed, when you consider that and these times and everything else, that we have a government here in our province that has 59 members of this Legislative Assembly representing the government party.

I know it sometimes is difficult for members of the opposition to understand that the fiscal year of government is a bit different from the calendar year, but the fiscal year of government begins on April 1 and flows through March 31 of the following year. So in a matter of 10 days a certain series of decisions had to be made. Mr. Speaker, it was urgent. It could be nothing else but urgent. The Assembly was not in session. The hon. members of the Assembly hadn't even gone through the review process to make sure that the Chief Electoral Officer could endorse the election of the hon. members of this Assembly, yet the business of the people of Alberta had to go on. From those days beyond April 1, 1989, if a special warrant process had not been put in place, had not been put in practice, then think of the havoc that would have been counted upon by the 2.4 million people in the province of Alberta.

The 425,000 children in our schools from grades 1 to 12 would not have been in school, Mr. Speaker, in a matter of days, because the opposition party would have thwarted an opportunity for this government, duly elected on March 20, to provide funds in the normal fashion to the hundreds of school boards throughout this province to provide for the salaries of our excellent teachers; to provide for the dollars to operate the schools; to provide the dollars for our bus drivers to pick up those children in the morning and deliver them safely in the evening back home; to provide for the purchase of textbooks, papers, rulers,

erasers, and everything else; and to help as well those children in need who have to have meal programs in the schools and the like. If that had not happened, those schools would have been closed. That would have been a terrible condemnation of the electoral process and the democratic process in this province.

Think what would have happened to those citizens of ours in the province of Alberta in hospitals, hon. members of the opposition, who are awaiting important surgery, awaiting important medical services. Because of the intransigence, because of the conflict with the democratic process put forward by the opposition parties, those hospitals would have had to close, Mr. Speaker. I said when I rose that most men and women of this Assembly come here on the basis of goodwill and integrity and a commitment and empathy for the people of Alberta. I simply cannot believe that there is any member in this Assembly who wanted to created hardship and havoc for our people in hospitals, our senior citizens in nursing homes and lodges, our children in the schools, all of those things. Mr. Speaker, look at a budget. . .

MR. FOX: Point of order. Mr. Speaker, do you suppose you could help me find a section in *Beauchesne* that would protect us from this drive?

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, the Chair has checked with Standing Orders. The minister is indeed speaking to the motion before the House.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. It's really unfortunate that in the democracy of Alberta an hon. member, duly elected, who has an opportunity to participate in the debate, cannot participate in the debate in this Chamber, in this province, without an interruption from another member. What the hon. Member for Vegreville has just done is shown to all of us in this Assembly today his disdain for the democratic process. It is indeed shameful in light of the events that are occurring thousands of miles away in Beijing, as an example, where students and young people are fighting for the democratic principle, that here in this Assembly the democratic right that I

have earned through the democratic process would be mischievously interrupted by a colleague, in this case from Vegreville.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. minister, I trust that you perhaps are referring to Standing Order 13(4)(b). Nevertheless, back to the motion, please.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate very much your ruling, and I'll be cautioned by that in the future, and I appreciate you undertaking your responsibility in the Chair and doing all that as well.

Mr. Speaker, it's really unfortunate that we're not going to have enough time for me to give all the important words and views that I want to on this extremely important motion this afternoon. It is not really unconstitutional to ask for an extension and unanimous approval of the House for me to continue my important remarks, but recognizing that there are important commitments hon. members have, recognizing as well that there will surely be an opportunity for me to come back and continue my remarks on this very important Motion 201, I must humbly say that in view of the time I beg leave to adjourn the debate.

MR. SPEAKER: Those in favour of the motion to adjourn the debate, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: Motion carries.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, the business of the House tonight will be consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's speech.

[The House recessed at 5:30 p.m.]

