

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Title: **Monday, June 19, 1989 2:30 p.m.**
 Date: 89/06/19

[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: TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Speaker, under section 4(3) of the Election Act it is my pleasure to table four copies of the report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the Stettler by-election, held Tuesday, May 9, 1989.

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'm tabling four copies of the 1987-88 annual report of the Agricultural Development Corporation.

head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the Members of this Legislative Assembly a very longtime and dear friend of our Assembly. She's seated in your gallery. She served as a Conservative member of the Legislature from 1979 to 1986 for the riding of Calgary-North West. I'd ask that Mrs. Sheila Embury stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 21 students of the Calgary Christian school in Calgary-West, and who knows, sitting up there in the members' gallery, how many future MLAs we have with us today. With them is their teacher Mr. Kevin Francisco. I would ask everyone to give them the traditional warm welcome of the House, and would you please rise to receive it.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the pleasure of introducing two groups today. The first is a group from the Covenant Community Training Centre, some 20 students in the group. They are sitting in the public gallery, and they are accompanied by their teacher Mrs. Margaret Sloan and a parent Mrs. Bonnie Ashton. I would request that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Family and Social Services.

MR. OLDRING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to the Members of the Legislative Assembly 36 bright and enthusiastic students from the Mountview school in the constituency of Red Deer-South. They are accompanied by their teachers Mrs. Colette McDougall and Mr. Greg Atkinson and by three parents Dave Weir, Brenda Heemsrerk, and Sharida Sawyer. I would ask that they rise and receive the warm reception of this Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The second group is a group of students from St. Pius X school in my riding. There are 20 students in the group, and they are in the public gallery. They are accompanied by their teacher Mr. Ron Huber. I request that they rise also and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, seated in the members' gallery today, accompanied by a former member of the Edmonton city council, Olivia Butti, is a guest visiting from China. She is a student who has been here in Alberta who will be returning to Beijing next week. This young lady served as an interpreter for a delegation which visited China some time ago, and I'm sure we would wish to wish her well as she returns to her homeland. I would ask the members of the Assembly to welcome Olivia Butti and her guest, Bin Lin. Would you please rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. members, I know that direction has been given by the Chair with respect to the House leaders that we would try to refrain from introducing family guests, but I wonder if on this occasion you would be good enough to allow the Chair to deviate from its own ruling.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

First, I would like to introduce in the Speaker's gallery my sister from Selkirk, Manitoba, Anne Ward -- if she would stand, please -- a very good friend of mine from Port Colborne, Ontario, Jake Reeb; and a very interesting person who started out in Newfoundland, but thank goodness we found each other here: my wife, Jean.

head: ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**Department of Health Act**

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Health. We in the Official Opposition are still very concerned about the Department of Health Act, Bill 5. We remain concerned about this government eventually fundamentally trying to change our health care system by privatization. We don't believe this government can be trusted; we believe one of their goals clearly is privatization down the way. I can only refer again to what the Premier said last Tuesday: that further privatization of health care remains an option on this government's agenda. Now, not in the House but outside to the media, the minister said that basically this is just a housekeeping Bill and all she really intends to do is transfer three extended care facilities in Raymond, Camrose, and Claresholm. Mr. Speaker, if this is the case, then,

could the minister explain why the two Acts which now restrict transfers to hospital boards and nursing home operators are being replaced with a Bill which allows transfers to any person or any organization?

MRS. BETKOWSKI: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I have to correct some of the lead-in to the Leader of the Opposition's question. At no time have I ever referred to Bill 5 as a housekeeping Bill. In fact, it's a very important Bill, which pulls together both the institutional side, which was traditionally under the former Department of Hospitals and Medical Care, and the community side, the former Department of Community and Occupational Health. In that sense, it is anything but housekeeping; it is very much substance.

There is no effort by this province, as described by the Leader of the Opposition in his question, of a fundamental change by way of privatization of our health facilities. This particular section, section 11 in Bill 5, currently before the Legislature and which I will look forward to discussing in second reading and committee and however else it proceeds through the House, is in no way a fundamental change with respect to privatization. The facilities which are referred to in the section are meant to refer to four facilities, in fact, in the province, which are really primarily psychogeriatric facilities -- and leaves open, certainly, the potential of them moving from being operated and managed by the Department of Health to some other option, including board option. But to describe it as a move to privatization is, I think, a statement which frightens more people, which the Leader of Opposition should not be doing to the people of Alberta, because it's clearly not the province's intent.

MR. MARTIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, why put something in a Bill if that's not what you mean?

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to come back and ask again specifically why the wording changed to "any person or organization" from the previous wording, if it isn't an attempt at some point down the line to privatize. Why are you doing it then?

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, I'm very much aware that the opposition have never liked the fact that included in our delivery system in this province is the potential of and the existence of privately run nursing homes. I know that the members of the opposition do not support that option. We believe it's part of a continuum of health care in our province. What we are not referring to, however, are hospitals in this province that are run by board-governed institutions. But for me to agree with the concept that there should not be a move from being operated and managed by the Department of Health is something I will not agree to.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, what we're looking at is legislation that's going to be here with this minister and other ministers. My question, then, to come back to the minister with the ridiculous proposal for killing a mosquito with a sledge hammer. If she wants to deal with the four institutions, why did she have to bring in this Bill, which gives herself sweeping power which could lead to privatization down the way? Why is that necessary?

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, it does not give sweeping power. It certainly does refer to the government health care

facility. I am looking to ensure that the intent of the government, which I have attempted to express here today, and the legislative wording are in fact consistent. I have no reason to believe at this moment that they are not consistent. Nonetheless, I am reviewing it, and I will look forward to dealing with the matter further at the appropriate time, which would be second reading on Bill 5.

MR. MARTIN: We've had Bills before for medicare that we had to fight back, Mr. Speaker. We want to do it before it's too late.

To continue with this minister then. The minister says she just wants some legislation to change three institutions. We're suggesting there are ways to do that without having all-sweeping legislation that she proposed. Mr. Speaker, the three facilities meet the Hospitals Act's definition of auxiliary hospitals. If they require new hospital districts, the Hospitals Act says right now that the minister can make an order to create them. So even if Bill 5 was worded the same as the previous Acts, allowing transfer only to local boards, she could do the same thing, transfer these sites to existing boards or the new district boards that she creates. She could do that. My question, then. Is this not true, that if Bill 5 specified local boards, she could use that Bill and deal with these institutions adequately without the legislation that she's proposing now?

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Well, really, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is asking me to give a legal opinion, which I am unable to do. I would be happy to take the question under advisement and deal with the issue further at second reading and, presumably, committee.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, this government gets bullheaded when it gets to second reading. We want to help this minister out right now. Remember the labour Bills.

My question, then, going from the minister's answer to the previous question. Will the minister commit today to withdrawing the Bill and bringing back one that specifies local boards; in other words, to go back to the language previously used?

MRS. BETKOWSKI: No, I will not, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MARTIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, then we all have worries about this Bill.

Is it not true, then, that this minister wants this all-encompassing legislation so that in the future this government can bring any privatization they want, including hospitals down the way? That's why they want it.

MRS. BETKOWSKI: No, it is not, Mr. Speaker. And I think it is really important to tell the people of Alberta that when the issue of privatization is referred to by this government, we are referring to nonmedical privatization. There may well be some ways that we can effect some efficiencies in our health system through things like laundry services and disposal of medical wastes, but to say that this is a province that wants to give over to private interests the delivery of health services: that will not be accomplished by this Bill and is certainly not the intent of the province. As I indicated to the hon. members, I am ensuring that in fact section 11 is declaring what we have as our intent as a government, and I will review that to ensure that that is the case. But to allege that this moves to privatization is irrespon-

sible and, frankly, is frightening to the people of Alberta and is not the agenda of this government.

Federal Participation in Environmental Assessments

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, last week we had the incredible spectacle of one minister of the Crown going around threatening the federal government with lawsuits and another minister of the Crown acting as if nothing had happened; in fact, berating newspapers in Alberta for building a story where none existed and saying that no legal action was even contemplated against the federal government. One thing appears to be clear and one thing appears to be uncontradicted at this moment, and that is that this matter will be discussed at the upcoming First Ministers' Conference. My question to the Premier is this: does Alberta recognize the right, any right, of the federal government in protecting the environment?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I guess the hon. member hasn't been listening in the Legislature when we've dealt with this matter before. As I recall mentioning to the House, there are certain areas in the Constitution that the federal government has responsibilities for -- such things as navigable waters, fisheries -- and therefore has a role to play in environmental impact in those areas.

MR. DECORE: Well, I wonder if the hon. Premier would outline the official position of his government with respect to Alberta's position and the federal government's position vis-à-vis the pulp mills.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, as I've also said before in the House, the province has jurisdiction over development of natural resources and certainly the forestry matters, and we will continue to insist on that jurisdiction.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, my last question to the Premier is this: does he believe that there is anything that the federal government is doing in singling out Alberta, using Alberta as sort of the precedent with respect to coming into a province and involving itself in environment in a bigger way than was up till this time known or expected?

MR. GETTY: As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, there has been a discussion and explanation for the House already in this session provided by the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs, where they pointed out that we've had an agreement for years with the federal government. That agreement provides for co-operation in the areas of environmental matters because there are certain areas that are the responsibility of Ottawa and certain ones that are provincial responsibilities. Then there was the matter of the Rafferty dam decision, which has caused some legal problems for the federal government. I don't think there will be in the long run, unless the federal government changes its way of thinking, a problem of again having an agreement which covers this matter. It's worked very well in the past, and I think we can do it in the future. I think there is nothing inconsistent at all in what the two ministers are saying. We are going to work in a co-operative way to come to an agreement with the federal government, but at the same time we will not, we will not, allow our jurisdiction to be invaded.

MR. SPEAKER: Cypress-Redcliff, followed by Calgary-Mountain View, Calgary-North West, then Smoky River.

Dominion Glass Plant in Redcliff

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister of economic development. On Friday last the residents of Redcliff received a notice that very few communities are ever subject to, and that's the closing of a major plant in the community and the loss of 500 direct jobs in the area. I met with a group of union and town citizens on Saturday relating to what we could do at the plant. My question to the minister is . . . [interjection] You'll have your chance too.

Are there any more steps that he is considering taking towards achieving any more operation of that plant?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, let me say at the outset and indicate my appreciation to the hon. Member for Cypress-Redcliff and the hon. Member for Medicine Hat for their thoughtfulness as we did proceed through this very difficult stage of negotiations with Consumers Packaging, whereby we did offer them a substantial amount of support. The letter was released by way of a news release from two individuals from this Legislative Assembly that indicated that we would offer up to \$7.5 million by way of a capital grant to the restructuring. We also indicated that we stand ready to offer any type of support they deem advisable so that we could retain what we considered a very, very important industry to the Cypress-Redcliff constituency and to the Medicine Hat area.

Recognizing the importance of this, Mr. Speaker, after I have further consultations with the hon. Member for Medicine Hat and the hon. Member for Cypress-Redcliff, it is my hope later today to have further communication with the president of Consumers Packaging, Mr. Thomas Tinmouth, so that we can hopefully find out if the decision is final. If not, we wish to proceed with further negotiations. We've received the telex of the news release indicating that it would be closed down late Friday. We hope to have further communication with them with the extent of having them change their minds, because we recognize again the importance that this does play to that particular region of the province.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question to the minister is: will the minister, after he has contact with the chief executive officer of Consumers Glass, then consider meeting or having staff meet with the committee that was formed by myself and others on Saturday to discuss the future of the plant?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, we are more than happy to work with individuals in the community, recognizing the serious impact that this is going to have, to see if we can't spur additional economic development. But I also wish to leave the hon. member with the assurance that we're going to work with the group that is there to develop further economic development activity. We wish to have further communication with Consumers Packaging, plus we have had extensive discussions personally, by telephone, and through correspondence with Consumers Packaging. We wouldn't want anybody to think we didn't put every effort into making sure that the plant was maintained in the Redcliff area, and even acknowledging the release that was put out on Friday, we're going to continue with our work because we don't wish to leave any stone unturned.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Speaker, my final supplementary is to the minister of career development. I wonder if the minister can assure the Assembly if her department is prepared to take any action necessary and work with this local committee in the near future.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, there is a program in such unfortunate circumstances, and that is the province working with the federal government and the workers at any given worksite in this situation, as well as companies. So the four groups get together and form what we call an industrial adjustment committee. We will make every effort to provide whatever services to each and every individual employee, should they find themselves unemployed.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Mountain View, followed by Calgary-North West.

Funding of World Blitz Chess Championship

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On June 8 the Minister of Tourism claimed in this House in regards to funding for the World Blitz Chess Championship in Calgary, and I quote: "At no time was my brother involved with reference to the grant or grant application." Mr. Speaker, I have in my hand a copy of a letter dated July 22, 1988, addressed to J. Sparrow, Sparrow Group, Nisku, Alberta.

Dear Jim,

Following is a letter which meets Calgary's requirements . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. Order. If indeed you are about to file this with the Table so that all members of the House have a chance to look at it . . . The other thing is that if you are quoting from a letter, I trust that you've had the permission of the person who wrote the letter to release it, and the other part is that perhaps you'll be much more succinct about getting to the punch line. Thank you.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm quite happy to leave a copy with you. Attached is a draft letter for the minister's signature which outlines proposed procedures for paying the Tourism department grant. To the minister. How did Mr. Jim Sparrow appear to come to be involved in the process of drafting correspondence for the minister's signature, when according to the minister's own words, his brother was "at no time . . . involved with reference to the grant or grant application"?

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, I would like to see a copy of what he's talking about. I have no knowledge of what the issue is with reference to that letter, so I cannot comment on what other people outside this House do.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Speaker, given that the letter, which eventually came back from the Tourism department, resembles closely the draft which Mr. Hamilton sent to Mr. Jim Sparrow, will the minister then explain why it was that a key organizer of this chess tournament appeared to turn to the minister's brother for assistance and advice?

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, as I stated earlier, in May of

last year, well before what the Member for Calgary-Mountain View is talking about, we received a proposal that was being sent to the city of Calgary, made by Mr. Robert Hamilton from Global Chess Group Inc., which was involved in New Brunswick the previous year in putting on a similar event. My first involvement with that was a call from a Mr. Brian Foster, who called to notify me that this proposal was coming to us and being sent to Calgary, and I immediately looked at the proposal when it was dropped off at our office and, as we do in many other instances, called Mr. Al Richards, who works for the Calgary Tourist and Convention Bureau in Calgary, to inform him of the project and that we had received a copy of it. Proponents continually work with everybody they can, and in this instance it looks like they knew my brother. Definitely at no time, I can reiterate, did my brother be involved with us or the department with reference to the grant.

We met, as I stated earlier, with the proponents, Mr. Robert Hamilton of Global Chess, in August, with my deputy minister, my executive assistant, and another department member. The department then took that presentation and worked with the group along with the city of Calgary and later in October agreed to get into a contract with Global Chess, trying to put on an event similar to what was handled the year before in New Brunswick.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Speaker, will the minister now admit that there is at least the appearance of a conflict of interest and a contradiction with the minister's earlier statement with respect to his brother's involvement in this grant application?

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, I don't believe there is any conflict of interest whatsoever. What I see in front of me here is a letter that the member had, dated in July, which is well after the discussions that took place and the approval of city council in Calgary and the May date that we had received the proposal. We had officially received the proposal months before this.

MR. SPEAKER: There is also another difficulty with the material as filed. The second letter is without letterhead, and it's unsigned. It's written on a blank page, so that raises other questions.

The Chair recognizes Calgary-North West, followed by Smoky River.

Dominion Glass Plant in Redcliff

(continued)

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On June 12 in this Assembly the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, regarding the Dominion Glass plant mentioned earlier, stated that this government would "do everything within our power to ensure that those jobs are kept within the province of Alberta." He further stated that there is a plan developed to save the plant and save those jobs. On Friday of last week, as we've heard, the officials announced that the plant will be closing. My question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Why hasn't this minister made more effort to keep this plant, which is environmentally sound, when Daishowa, which is questionable in terms of its environmental impact, has been offered more than 10 times the amount of money that this plant has been offered?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his

concern as it relates to this, because it's a common concern that we all share. That's why I indicated to the hon. member that we were working so closely with Consumers Packaging. I'm sure the hon. member will have made available to him, if he hasn't already received it, a copy of the release that has been put out by the hon. Member for Cypress-Redcliff and the hon. Member for Medicine Hat indicating the steps that we had taken, the plan of attack that we had involved ourselves in with the hopes of maintaining the plant in the Redcliff area. I reinforce what I indicated to the hon. Member for Cypress-Redcliff, that we did offer a substantial grant to the tune of some \$7.5 million to the plant for refitting purposes because we did recognize the importance of it. I am going to have further discussions with the president, Mr. Thomas Tinmouth, with the hopes of them giving reconsideration to the statement that they did issue on Friday.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, \$7.5 million is chicken feed compared to Daishowa.

My second question is also to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. How can this minister say that this government has a commitment to economic diversification when this company, which is the largest secondary industry employer on the prairies, is closing up and moving to B.C.?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, it's amazing how the attitudes can change. In the event that the grant would have been given and would have been accepted, the \$7.5 million, I'm sure they wouldn't have indicated at that time that it was chicken feed. They would have been critical of us for offering that type of money in support of a company within Alberta, as they have done in the past. But we recognize that we do have to support some segments of the industry. We're going to continue to do so, because our first priority is job creation within this province so that we can continue with that strong economic climate that we presently enjoy.

MR. BRUSEKER: My third question, then, is directed to the Minister of the Environment. Since the government in volume 1 of its throne speech made a commitment to recycling, what does the Minister of the Environment propose to do with the 40,000 tons of glass that this plant had recycled in the past? Shall we have them delivered to your office, Mr. Minister?

MR. KLEIN: I would think not, Mr. Speaker. Hopefully not, anyway. But certainly if there is a problem there, I'd be glad to discuss this with the minister of economic development and other appropriate government officials, including those in my department, to see how the problem should be dealt with.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Smoky River, followed by Edmonton-Jasper Place.

Drainage of Potential Agricultural Land

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government has a good record of supporting the need for adequate water through the irrigation projects in southern Alberta, and this helps, of course, in the economic viability of agriculture. My question is directed to the Minister of the Environment. There are many parts of the province that have large tracts of very flat land that require drainage to assist the economic

viability of these regions. What steps is the minister prepared to take to enhance this needed program?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, there are two programs: the water management and erosion control program and the water services development plan. Both of these programs are ongoing, and the department is continually monitoring these programs and continually trying to enhance these programs. It's a program we hope to continue for some time.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: To the Minister of the Environment. Is there a long-range plan for the continued development of drainage programs to assist in allowing better productivity of this vast area of agricultural land? I'd just like to point out that I'm not referring specifically to the drainage of wetlands; it's just the agricultural land.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, this situation of drainage of agricultural lands and water management projects refers more specifically to the northern regions and the Peace River region in particular. There will be a program developed this summer. There will be public hearings -- and those public meetings are scheduled for July -- as to how the total program should be in effect without affecting specifically the wetlands.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: My final question. What sort of funding are we looking at, Mr. Minister?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the total program is somewhat in the area of \$5 million.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Jasper Place, followed by Edmonton-Whitemud.

Forestry Industry Employment Potential

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Foreign corporations have been allocated perpetual control over almost the entire green zone, 30 percent of Alberta's land mass. The foreign-owned companies propose a mechanical clear-cut logging operation in support of a mechanized pulp mill that's going to ship raw pulp out to Japan and the United States. I wonder if the Premier is concerned that these forest projects create jobs at only one-quarter of the rate of an average forest project in Canada.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, those projects are a very important part of the diversification of Alberta's economy. We have a tremendous forest resource, and in the past it's not played a great role in the development and broadening of our economy. We're determined that the forest resource does play a bigger part, that it provides opportunities: job opportunities for young people, opportunities for communities to grow and expand in a healthy way. But the projects will proceed on the basis of sound environmental controls and regulations.

The hon. member may want to go into further detail with the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife when he's in the House. But to make it clear: the government believes these projects are important to the future strength of our economy, will be handled in an environmentally sound way, and everything possible will be done to make sure the development works with the people's desires.

MR. McINNIS: Well, there aren't very many jobs; that's the point.

In view of the fact that the taxpayers have placed a billion dollars at risk in these projects, I'd like to know: why pay these foreign companies to rape our lands and pollute our rivers?

MR. GETTY: Of course we don't, Mr. Speaker, and that's a foolish allegation from the hon. member.

MR. McINNIS: Well, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of the Environment. I'm wondering if in view of the fact that the government ignores the environment in these matters, the minister has complained to the Premier that his department has been reduced to the status of a bystander in these forestry projects in that there's no environmental impact assessment federally or provincially on the forestry aspect of these projects.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge there is a very, very comprehensive, very, very extensive forest management agreement which addresses all the questions related to the forestry aspect of pulp mill development and other forestry development in northern Alberta. I would think that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place should know that by now.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Whitemud, followed by Edmonton-Kingsway, Calgary-Millican, West Yellowhead, Edmonton-Meadowlark, Calgary-Fish Creek, Edmonton-Highlands, Clover Bar, Edmonton-Gold Bar -- otherwise known as let's pick up the pace.

Industrial Waste Site in Edmonton-Whitemud

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, the provincial government has leased out an area of land at 109th Street and 9th Avenue in the Edmonton-Whitemud constituency. The tenant, Mayer Metals, has used the land as an industrial waste site and dump. I point out that this site is fenced in with barbed wire fence on top. There's a fellow in a brown uniform who inspects it every day. In any case, complaints and concerns have arisen that this site has been used to store hazardous industrial waste, possibly including PCBs. My question to the Minister of the Environment. Can the minister confirm what toxic or industrial waste material has been dumped on this Crown land, which is at 109th Street and 9th Avenue in the Edmonton-Whitemud constituency?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, no, I can't, not at this particular time, but certainly it's the kind of question I can take under notice. If there has been a pollution situation at that particular site, then I'm sure the pollution control division of my department was on the scene. If they weren't, then obviously they would have some answering to do. But it's certainly one of the things I can check down with the department and get an answer for the hon. member.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of the Environment. Is the minister not aware that staff from my office contacted his office three weeks ago, with no replies; that residents who contacted the previous elected representative in Edmonton-Whitemud were assured that action would be undertaken? Is the minister saying that he has not received any of that communication? Has the minister not taken any action on that communication?

MR. SPEAKER: Two questions in one. We'll settle for the first, thank you.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I get a lot of letters every day relative to specific issues, and I try to deal with those issues the best that I possibly can. It could very well be that if that issue was brought to my attention, it is now in the department. If it isn't, I have given an undertaking to the hon. member to find out for him and to act in a responsible manner. That's precisely what I will do.

Thank you.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Is the minister not aware that there were assurances given that this site would be clean by the end of May, that the city bylaw enforcement has issued orders? Is the minister's office, is the minister himself, not aware as to what is . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. We're now up to the third question in this supplementary.

Mr. Minister, please.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the answer is quite simple -- no -- and is quite honest. No, I am not aware, but I will check it down. I will check it down, and he will get some action almost immediately.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. WICKMAN: [Inaudible] you didn't answer my phone calls.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Kingsway, not Edmonton-Whitemud, thank you.

Dominion Glass Plant in Redcliff

(continued)

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. The announcement by Consumers Packaging of the closure of the Domglas plant in Redcliff is more proof that the Getty government cannot be trusted to look after the workers and the industries of Alberta. Contrary to what the Minister of Economic Development and Trade said last week, the chief executive officer of the parent company, Enfield Corporation, a Mr. Michael Blair, said that the closure was part of a rationalization of production to accommodate increased competition from the United States because of the free trade deal. Will the minister now admit that the free trade agreement that this government so strongly supported is the reason that Domglas is going under, striking a major blow to the Redcliff community?

MR. ELZINGA: No, Mr. Speaker.

MR. McEACHERN: Well, a loss of 500 jobs to a town of less than 4,000 is a major blow, Mr. Speaker.

Does the minister realize that even with a monopoly in glass manufacturing in Canada, Enfield Corporation will not be able to compete with the two U.S. giant companies that with a series of mergers and takeovers now control two-thirds of the U.S. industry?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to reinforce what I indicated to previous hon. members: the concern that we do have as it relates to the plant in Redcliff. We are going to work very closely with the individuals concerned -- as the hon. minister of career development indicated -- and our department so that in the event that they do proceed with their plans that were announced on Friday, we can involve our department and other departments in spurring economic development in that area so that we can create additional jobs.

MR. McEACHERN: Mr. Speaker, he just lost the bidding war with B.C. But in any case, the American companies will just cannibalize the industry, whichever one wins.

Mr. Speaker, recycled glass is piling up around here in Alberta, and the Environment minister was not even aware there was a problem. Will he promise to get on this problem promptly, and is he going to continue to let his colleagues push him aside again and again on matters of the environment?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, the recycling program in the province of Alberta was one of the first of its kind in this country, as a matter of fact. It's a reasonable program; it's working well. I don't see glass piling up all over the province. As far as I know, the return on deposits and all the other things associated with glass recycling are working very, very well indeed; as a matter of fact, have served as a model for other provinces and other jurisdictions in this country.

Entrepreneurial Immigration

MR. SHRAKE: Mr. Speaker, the provinces and the federal government had a program to encourage immigration of businesspeople to Canada a couple of years ago. It was called the entrepreneurial immigration program, and it was to encourage people to come to this country who had expertise, capital to create jobs here, create industry. Lately I've had some calls, and I'm very concerned. I understand that under this program Alberta often approves business applications and then we get rejected by the federal government, yet I read that most of the business immigrants coming into Canada are going to Ontario. I wonder if the minister could please advise the Assembly. Is Ontario getting itself preferential treatment over the province of Alberta?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately I'm not able to answer that question. We have not got the statistics from the federal government. As a matter of fact, there have been some people raise concerns because it was the province of Quebec that they understood were having quite a few of their particular applications approved and not Alberta.

MR. SHRAKE: Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Then there's another concern, and that's that even though many of the mid-sized immigrants have been rejected, as I understand it, some of the very, very wealthy immigrants have got approved by ministerial approval because they're extremely wealthy. Have any of these been approved in Alberta by this route?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, the only route for business immigration in Alberta would be an immigrant visa. As to how the federal government or the minister responsible, the Hon. Barbara McDougall, may use ministerial approval, I obviously

can't answer that question.

MR. SHRAKE: Final supplement, Mr. Speaker. As I understand, the federal government has put a moratorium on immigration out of Hong Kong due to the events in Beijing. It's a six-month moratorium, and at the end of that six months there will be, as I understand it, a deluge of applications, a lot of good people there that would like to come, probably, to Alberta. Could the minister please advise: are you getting your department geared so that if we do get a large number of applications, we can process these fairly expeditiously?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, first of all, to the hon. Member for Calgary-Millican, in terms of the processing in the province of Alberta I think most business immigrants would indicate that they've been handled very fairly and that the processing has gone quickly. The problem is that something like a year ago the federal government centralized their approval process to Hull. In that space of time there has been a giant backlog in the approvals that have gone forward from the province of Alberta already having received the province's approval, and they have met some kind of a blockage with respect to the federal government. The hon. minister, in her favour at least, has struck a committee to examine this situation. There is an Alberta individual on that committee, and I have discussed at length with him the particular problems vis-a-vis the province of Alberta. I hope that message will be drawn loud and clear. It's been communicated at every level of the department including the minister's office.

VIA Rail

MR. DOYLE: Mr. Speaker, town councils from Wainwright to Jasper, Medicine Hat to Banff have actively been lobbying everyone from VIA officials to MPs to the Prime Minister in an attempt to halt the massive cuts proposed on passenger rail service in our province. The federal Transport minister has asked for a special report on rail abandonment from the National Transportation Agency as a result of the pressures from the Conservatives of such eastern provinces as Quebec and Nova Scotia but none from Alberta. My question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Since the government is obviously lagging behind not only other provinces but other levels of government in our own province when it comes to opposing the VIA cuts, how can we now take the minister seriously when he tells us he has expressed his strongest concern to the federal government on this issue?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to indicate to the hon. member, as I have done in the past, that we have communicated both to the federal Transport minister plus to the individual Members of Parliament from the province of Alberta, plus we have made a submission to the National Transportation Agency.

MR. DOYLE: Mr. Speaker, it's one thing to say that you're concerned or that you're looking into an issue, but could the Minister of Tourism then tell us today that he has a real and specific strategy to pressure the federal government into committing itself to saving such obviously viable routes as Edmonton-Jasper and Calgary-Banff?

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, along with the minister of eco-

conomic development -- our staffs are working on strategy, and yes, we do and are concerned about the loss of that service and have expounded it many times in the public.

MR. DOYLE: Mr. Speaker, in 1986 the federal Transport minister stated quite frankly that transcontinental services would never be abandoned. Would this minister, even though he was a Conservative MP at that time, take the federal government to task on this specific broken promise? To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

MR. SPEAKER: Time for question period has expired. Might we have unanimous consent to complete this series of questions?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried. Thank you.
Minister.

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of the hon. member let me reinforce and underscore what we've indicated on a number of occasions in the Legislative Assembly. We are going to involve ourselves in a very forceful way to maintain what we consider an essential service. As the hon. member is aware, we do not know for a fact what segments of VIA Rail are going to be cut back, because they're still going through that management decision. But we have placed on record with the individuals I mentioned earlier in response to his initial question our forceful position, recognizing the importance that it does play to the province of Alberta.

Question of Privilege

MR. SPEAKER: Time for question period has expired. I wonder if perhaps we could have the attention of the House for the next few minutes as the Chair hands out the ruling with regard to the purported point of privilege as raised a number of days back by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

For future reference the Chair would like to give the House a few guidelines on presenting a prima facie case of privilege. Number one, the member should confine his statement to one of facts of the case and little more. Two, the member will have an opportunity to make his presentation to the House only once. Three, the member's presentation is limited to a maximum of 30 minutes. Four, if a member's allegations involve another member of the House, that member affected will be allowed to respond, again limited to a maximum of 30 minutes.

Finally, I hope the House will entertain the Chair's request to allow it some time, in some cases considerable time, to examine and rule on cases of privilege presented before it, as the Chair must consider and research many sources. Privilege is a very serious matter indeed. The Chair would like to thank all hon. members for their patience while dealing with matters in this regard.

The Chair has had under consideration a complaint based on a purported point of privilege brought forward in the House by the Member for Calgary-Mountain View. The facts of the case, as the House will recall, involve the alleged actions of a landlord against certain tenants taken in response to the tenants' contacting their Member of the Legislative Assembly. The member has claimed that this constituted an impediment to his function

as a member. The Chair has looked very carefully at this issue. After consulting numerous authorities and precedents from both the United Kingdom and Canadian Houses of Parliament, it is clear that for privilege to be claimed, a member must be impeded in a part of his duties that fall within the definition of a "proceeding of parliament."

This raises the question as to what is a proceeding of parliament. Joseph Maingot in his book *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* explains:

As a technical parliamentary term, "proceedings" are the events and the steps leading up to some formal action, including a decision, taken by the House in its collective capacity. All of these steps and events, the whole process by which the House reaches a decision (the principle part of which is called debate), are "proceedings".

He further states at page 74 that there may well be work carried out by members in an official capacity but which extends beyond parliamentary work and which receives no protection of privilege. In essence, the authorities clearly state that while a member may do any number of official things, not all are directly related to proceedings of parliament and therefore are not entitled to the protection of privilege.

Assistance in establishing whether or not the Member for Calgary-Mountain View was involved with his constituents in a proceeding of parliament has been given by Canadian House of Commons Speaker Jerome in November of 1978 when he stated:

[Privilege] has always been interpreted very strictly by this House, because there is no reason why a general privilege or right to some kind of special treatment should surround a member of the House of Commons or any other citizen before our boards or commissions or in the everyday work we perform as citizens in this country, except in so far as it relates to the basic or essential function of carrying out our obligations as elected members in assisting in or participating in the proceedings of the House of Commons itself. . . . As I indicated earlier, parliamentary privilege is that which surrounds us here and ensures that we are able to carry out the basic function of participating in the proceedings of this House.

Maingot goes on to say further:

The duties for which a Member of Parliament can claim the protection of privilege are his parliamentary duties, particularly in his primary duty or service to this House of Commons here. At times the line distinguishing these duties as a representative on one side and parliamentary duties on the other side is very fine.

In July of 1980 Madam Speaker Sauvé addressed this very question, and I quote from her ruling:

While I am only too aware of the multiple responsibilities, duties, and also the work the member has to do relating to his constituency, as Speaker I am required to consider only those matters which affect the member's parliamentary work. That is to say, whatever duty a member has to his constituents, before a valid question of privilege arises in respect of any alleged interference, such interference must relate to the member's parliamentary duties. In other words, just as a member is protected from anything he does while taking part in a proceeding in Parliament, so too must an interference relate to the member's role in the context of parliamentary work.

There is no doubt that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View was acting in an official capacity. That he was acting in a parliamentary capacity is not so clear. *Beauchesne*, sixth edition, citation 92 clearly states:

A valid claim of privilege in respect to interference with a Member must relate to the Member's parliamentary duties and not to the work the Member does in relation to that Member's

constituency.

In the case as presented to the House by the hon. member, a dispute occurred between two or more strangers to this House, which indirectly involved a member in his constituency work. A similar case, involving an individual who attempted to prevent third parties from contacting their Member of Parliament, was brought forward in the House of Commons June 2, 1981. In respect to the alleged breach of privilege at that time, the case is comparable with the matter at hand. In the ruling of Madam Speaker Sauvé, the fine line between a member's constituency duties and his parliamentary duties was recognized. The Chair was reluctant, it seems, to rule that the member's actions were within the definition of a proceeding of parliament, and therefore no case of privilege could be claimed.

It is with the same reluctance that the Chair observes that the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View was undoubtedly acting in an official capacity and in a sensitive way. However, it cannot be established that his duties within the narrow confines of a proceeding of parliament were affected.

I compliment the member on his obvious concern and efforts on behalf of his constituents. However, remedies do not seem to be available from this House through the claim of privilege.

Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MR. SPEAKER: Might we revert briefly to Introduction of Special Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS (*reversion*)

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Stony Plain.

MR. WOLOSZYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce a group of 61 people to you and through you to the members of this Assembly. It is made up of students from two schools, Queen Street immersion school in Spruce Grove and St. Damien school in Bedford, Quebec. They are accompanied by seven parents and two teachers, Mrs. Carmen Mykula of Spruce Grove and Mme Gisell Fontaine from Bedford, Quebec. I would ask the people in the public gallery from these two schools to rise and receive the traditional welcome of this House.

[On motion, the Assembly resolved itself into Committee of the Whole]

head: GOVERNMENT BILLS AND ORDERS (Committee of the Whole)

[Mr. Schumacher in the Chair]

Bill 2 Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 1989

MR. CHAIRMAN: The committee has before it Bill 2, Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 1989. Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered in connection with this Bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Chairman, thank you for recognizing me this afternoon. I guess the remarks I'd like to make this afternoon may not be the ones that the hon. members are expecting. I believe it's the one opportunity that we have to debate the individual clauses of Bill 2, which is the interim supply Act.

Mr. Chairman, included in the interim supply Act is funding for the special warrant approved by the Alberta cabinet earlier this year to set aside \$13.3 million for the acquisition of land on Nose Hill. I don't want the opportunity to pass by without making comment about that particular decision in this House. As members who have previously been here with me as a member of the Legislature will recall, on numerous occasions I've spoken in favour of acquiring the remaining privately owned lands to help the city of Calgary establish a park on Nose Hill. It was just yesterday I had the pleasure, with a couple of my colleagues from the House and from Calgary city council, to enjoy Father's Day with a kite fly, the third annual event that's been sponsored by the Nose Hill park communities board. There was a real feeling of celebration there yesterday that after many, many years of hard work and lobbying by many citizens in Calgary and throughout southern Alberta, that park has finally become a reality.

I use this seat many times to criticize the government, but I think it's only fair that at times when they do things that I feel strongly about and that I approve of, I also use the opportunity to say thank you or to acknowledge the good work that's been done.

I don't know what all the decisions and discussions and negotiations were that went on behind closed doors that led to the provincial cabinet approving that money for the city of Calgary, but I would say that there are some people that worked on the task force leading up to the decision being taken. I'd like to pay tribute to those people this afternoon and just publicly acknowledge, Mr. Chairman, the fine work that they did. First of all, our colleagues in the Legislature: the hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill, the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications, as well as the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, who are two elected representatives that sat on the Nose Hill task force. I'd also like to acknowledge the work of two former colleagues of mine who are still members of Calgary city council: Alderman Teresa Baxter and Alderman Dale Hodges. As well, Mr. Chairman, I think they were quite ably supported in their work by two administrative people: one from the province, I believe, Mr. Tom Forgraves; and on behalf of the city of Calgary, the former chief commissioner, Mr. George Cornish.

This decision taken earlier this year by the provincial cabinet and confirmed by Calgary city council in essence caps or culminates the hard work of many thousands of volunteers and citizens in the city of Calgary on an issue that dates back close to 18 years. It's a realized dream for many people, and the sense of excitement and celebration yesterday was testimony to the fact that politics can often achieve and ought to always achieve the best things that people desire for themselves and for their community. I honestly believe that that is the highest calling of politics, and so when an occasion presents itself, when I can see that that has occurred, I just like to make note of it.

Mr. Chairman, many never believed that it would happen, and it may be that the decision was taken as a calculated political hard-nosed manoeuvre. For all I know, that may have been the argument that eventually persuaded the cabinet to support

this special warrant. But I also recognize in politics that the right things sometimes get done for the wrong reasons, and whatever the reasons might have been as to how the provincial cabinet reached this decision, nevertheless this decision was taken. As a result of that, the city of Calgary also joined in approving their contribution towards purchasing the remaining lands on Nose Hill.

So I'd just like to acknowledge and salute those people who worked very hard on the task force, those who brought unwilling partners to the negotiating table and concluded this acquisition. I appreciate their work. I know that on behalf of many of my constituents, and many in Calgary who are not my constituents, they're saying today, "That's a job well done," to everyone who was a part of that process.

So, Mr. Chairman, having been highly critical at one time or another of this government and having criticized strongly what I saw at one time to be inaction and wrong action, I now wish to also warmly congratulate the provincial cabinet for that decision.

Thank you very much.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Chairman, presumably in the future when I tell the member from across the way to go fly a kite, he won't take exception.

I will pass on the comments to my colleagues. There are from time to time opportunities for us to be, I think, forthright with some of the criticisms and also some of the accolades, and I appreciate the Member for Calgary-Mountain View making those statements. I'll make sure that my two colleagues who are away from the committee right now will be aware of it.

Mr. Chairman, I move that Bill 2, Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 1989, be reported.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think we have to have agreement on the title and preamble first. Are there any further comments?

[Title and preamble agreed to]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, the motion for reporting.

MR. JOHNSTON: I'll make the same motion, Mr. Chairman.

[Motion carried]

Bill 3

Appropriation (Alberta Capital Fund) Interim Supply Act, 1989

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions, comments, or amendments to this Bill?

[The sections of Bill 3 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Chairman, I move that Bill 3, Appropriation (Alberta Capital Fund) Interim Supply Act, 1989, be reported.

[Motion carried]

Bill 4

Appropriation (Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, Capital Projects Division) Interim Supply Act, 1989-90

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments as to this Bill?

MR. McEACHERN: Just a comment, Mr. Chairman, and that's to ask the Treasurer if he'd perhaps take this opportunity to explain why he decided not to count the heritage trust fund expenditures as part of his summary financial plan on page 23 of the budget speech.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Chairman, the question of whether or not we combine the expenditures reflected in the Heritage Savings Trust Fund of course can be fully debated when we deal with the Bill or when we deal with the heritage fund estimates. But I'm at your direction, Mr. Chairman, as to whether or not it would be appropriate when we talk about the interim supply to deal with the disclosure or the way in which we display the heritage fund and the General Revenue Fund. Nonetheless, it is up to each member. He can go back and calculate the way in which he wants to calculate the numbers. We have, from time to time, used different displays, going back to 1973-75. There's no need for us now to combine the General Revenue Fund and the Heritage Savings Trust Fund expenditures because, in fact, they are different forms of expenditures for our own consideration, in that the heritage fund is one fund, a fund which has its own capital projects division, as the member well knows, and we think those are properly disclosed in the heritage fund estimates as they come forward.

At the same time, Mr. Chairman, it is also true that when we form or provide the consolidated statements for the government as a whole, in fact those capital expenditures which take place in the capital projects division of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund are disclosed together. So it's a question of how you want to proceed, how you want to disclose the amount. We have varied the disclosure from year to year, including this year over last year but also including 1983-84 over the previous year, when in fact we stopped the transfer of money from the General Revenue Fund to the heritage fund on the basis of royally transfers.

MR. McEACHERN: Well, it's interesting, Mr. Chairman, that the Treasurer has conveniently chosen to change the format, considering -- we've been through the arguments before about whether the capital expenditures under the capital projects division of the heritage trust fund are expenditures or assets. That's one question, and that's not the one that we're raising at this time. But the fact is, he counted them in his financial plan, his summary financial plan, in previous years and has now suddenly switched. Of course, Mr. Chairman, the reason is because it makes the deficit look \$141 million better to not count them. It's funny that he counts the revenue from the heritage trust fund as part of his summary financial plan, but it's odd that the expenditures don't count as part of the summary financial plan. So the Treasurer is trying to have it both ways, Mr. Chairman, and I don't think he should be let off the hook on it without somebody pointing it out.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any other comments or questions with regard to this Bill?

[The sections of Bill 4 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Chairman, I move that Bill 4, Appropriation (Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, Capital Projects Division) Interim Supply Act, 1989-90, be reported.

[Motion carried]

Bill 7 Farm Credit Stability Fund Amendment Act, 1989

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments as to this Bill?

MR. FOX: Mr. Chairman, I know that the hon. Provincial Treasurer has some response for the questions raised by my colleague for Edmonton-Kingsway during second reading. He's probably got those all lined up and ready to roll. But I did want to ask him a couple of questions myself.

The Farm Credit Stability Fund Amendment Act, Bill 7, proposes one very straightforward, simple amendment which we certainly support, and that is extending the terms for issuance of these loans by two years, so the program will in fact terminate June 30, 1991, instead of June 30, 1989. I'm hoping that the Provincial Treasurer will indicate to the farmers of Alberta that he's prepared to make this an ongoing commitment, in fact a permanent entitlement to farmers, because that sort of stability I think is important. But I would like to ask the Provincial Treasurer a couple of specific questions about the existing Act, which may open up the possibility for further amendment.

Section 10 states:

The Provincial Treasurer may enter into agreements with lending institutions for the purpose of this Act.

Section 12 says:

Subject to the regulations, the Provincial Treasurer may, for the purpose of this Act, make guarantees to lending institutions in respect of loans made in accordance with this Act.

Now, I'm wondering if the Provincial Treasurer will tell the House if there is any place I could go or any place that he'd be prepared to send me to look at copies of the agreements that he's entered into with lending institutions for the purpose of this Act and if I and other members of the House can see the guarantees that he's made to lending institutions with respect to loans made in accordance with this Act.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Chairman, the member of course is raising an issue which is far beyond the scope of this particular amendment. I'd be glad to deal with this, either through the estimates of my department -- but I seek the direction of the House, because in fact we could raise many things and many issues. But, unfortunately, as I look at this piece of legislation, section 10 in particular has not been touched upon. Should the House decide that it wants me to carry on, I'd be glad to, Mr. Chairman.

MR. FOX: With respect, Mr. Chairman, the Member for Lethbridge-East has been around long enough to know that

when you introduce an Act to amend an existing Act, that opens up the possibility of further amendment. The Act is before the committee now, open for amendment. We're discussing the particulars of his amendment, agreed, but I'm just giving him the opportunity to spare me the effort of asking a motion for a return on a particular item in respect of the Act.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, hon. Member for Vegreville, I would think that if you had an amendment as to section 10, then we might be able to discuss it. But if there's no amendment regarding section 10, I don't think we can ask the hon. Treasurer to discuss section 10.

MR. FOX: I'm just seeking information from the hon. Provincial Treasurer. Being one who has an eye for efficiency, wanting to streamline the operations of this House, I don't want to trouble hon. members with amendments that may not be necessary if the appropriate information is available.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any further comments with regard to this Bill?

MR. McEACHERN: Mr. Chairman, I asked a number of questions on second reading, and the minister did indicate to me that he would have some answers for me at this time. I haven't heard them yet to date. I wonder if the Treasurer would care to elaborate on some of the information that he indicated he would bring to this Assembly at this time.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Chairman, the request for information during second reading is an unusual request, as the Chairman I'm sure is aware. The member has an opportunity to raise questions that weren't dealt with when I summed up in second reading. I'd be glad to deal with them.

MR. McEACHERN: I specifically asked some of those questions at second reading so that at Committee of the Whole, when we are supposed to be dealing with a certain amount of details, it would be appropriate for him and he would be on notice and have time to get those answers. He in fact at that time indicated that he might answer them right then, except that it would be best to wait until Committee of the Whole. Now, here we are at Committee of the Whole and . . .

MR. JOHNSTON: Now you've got your chance.

MR. McEACHERN: Well, you just were on your feet. You could have answered the questions then. You're just playing games.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any further comments with regard to Bill 7?

MR. FOX: I'd like to ask the Provincial Treasurer if he has made the appropriate changes to Alberta Regulation 339/86, the regulations that put the meat on the legislation that's before the House with respect to loan limits. I understand that part of their commitment was to increase the limits of loans by \$50,000, from \$200,000 to \$250,000, I guess much in line with comments made by the hon. Member for Vegreville in the course of debate in 1986. I'm wondering if he's had a chance to make the appropriate changes to the regulations which increase the aggregate

amount of money to be lent out under the program from \$2 billion to \$2.5 billion.

MR. JOHNSTON: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

MR. McEACHERN: Mr. Chairman, I would remind the Treasurer, then, of a couple of the questions I asked. I pointed out that the 1987-88 public accounts documents show that the Alberta government borrowed something in the neighbourhood of \$1.4 billion for funds for this program. It was my understanding when they first intended to set it up -- and we asked a lot of questions and there was a lot of give and take in the House about it, although the government didn't always give us the straight answers that we might have liked sometimes. Nonetheless, it was clear from the discussion at the time the Bill was introduced that the banks were expected to put up a fair amount of the money.

Now, the other day the Treasurer told us that \$1.9 billion has been loaned out to farmers. I'm saying to him that \$1.4 billion of that, at least, has been borrowed by the Alberta government and put into the scheme. I asked him to update whether or not the remaining \$0.5 billion that has now been put in -- is that money that he has also raised, since the public accounts only show up to March 31, 1988. Has the government actually put in the rest of that money too, or have the banks put in some of that money?

I asked him also to think about and explain, perhaps, how the guarantee process worked. If I remember right, it was something like the first year, 20 percent of a loan to a farmer would be guaranteed by the Alberta government, the second year 40 percent, the next year 60 percent, and the next year 80 percent. I'm wondering what sense that makes if we have put up the money in the first place and not the bank. Are those kinds of loan guarantees still in place for a bank that's using not its own money but the government-raised money, so that the banks are in fact being guaranteed for money that isn't their own that they are lending to farmers? I thought he might explain a little bit about that.

MR. JOHNSTON: Well, Mr. Chairman, the process by which the Farm Credit Stability Fund operates was in fact explained to the members during the 1986 debate on this Bill. I'd be more than glad to sketch the mechanics for it one more time. That is a very reasonable question, I think, and everybody probably needs to have their memory refreshed.

First of all, this was a program whereby, as we said in the 1986 election, there would be all government money involved in this program; that is to say, we would use our own funds. We would pass on to the farming community the borrowing power of the province, and the government would put up all the money for these loans. Accordingly, Mr. Chairman, we have had to borrow money in the capital markets, and we have advanced money to the banks, to the fund at least, based on the need for the demand for money as a function of the number of loans that are processed. Accordingly, as well, the banks charge a fee for that, and we have also pushed out some of the traditional loaning programs a little further. By pushing it out I mean we have changed the fundamental character of the terms of credit, and that's essentially what this program was to do. We did say that if there was no cash flow in the farming entity, they would not be satisfied. The numbers that I quoted yesterday show that a very small number of farming entities did not qualify; I think

only 29 of the total were rejected totally. So, Mr. Chairman, we can say that this has been a very effective program, using government money entirely, and we have borrowed offshore, in particular, to put this money into the fund.

Now, from time to time, to reconcile the money that's in the fund with the amount of borrowings that the government has advanced to the fund, you also have to look to the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, because for some accommodation we used some money from the Heritage Savings Trust Fund on certain term loans. Certainly three- to five-year money, I think, was advanced from the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, and the heritage fund received a reasonable rate of return for those investments. So that reconciles the money.

But the reason we had to provide an additional guarantee, Mr. Chairman, is that in some cases the banks are on line for the money as well. We used a sliding scale both with this fund and with the small business credit fund so that we would not be taking the bank's total loss record into our own for our own account. As the loans are obviously on a short-term basis, you can tell whether or not they're more critical or more risky. So over a period of time we agreed that we'd backstop some of these loans based on the term. I don't think there have been a whole lot of calls on that guarantee. In fact, I think because the money has been put out at 9 percent, it has allowed, I would say, essentially 99 percent of the farms to become viable, meet the cash flow returns, the cash flow calls upon them to pay the loan down. And I think that as a fund, an amortization fund, it's working very effectively.

MR. McEACHERN: There was one other question on that. I was asking about the other \$500 million, the difference between the \$1.4 billion -- the \$1.4 billion I quoted I believe also included the heritage trust fund borrowings. So I'm wondering where the other \$0.5 billion has come from to make it up to \$1.9 billion.

In terms of the guarantees, the Treasurer related that to the idea that they didn't want to end up -- that is, the government didn't want to end up -- sort of taking over the bad loans of the banks, so to speak. In fact, Mr. Chairman, in the first year or so of the operation, they did; 90 percent of the loans under this program were in fact rewrites of loans that farmers had with banks. The same was true of the Small Business Term Assistance Fund Act. So I don't know; the banks sure must have thought the guarantee was a good one or that this was a good move for them. We didn't get a lot of new farm loans under this program. Most of it was a rewrite.

MR. JOHNSTON: Well, Mr. Chairman, I don't think I can agree with the member. There has been a significant amount of new farm loans; there's been consolidation of farm loans.

The intention of the program, Mr. Chairman, as all members well understand, is to ensure that farmer entities become viable, and I think the proof of that pudding is, in fact, in the statistics that I have presented to the House. Already, Mr. Chairman, I think 25,000 total number of requests, 21,823 active loans, a total of \$1.94 billion. I don't know where the \$1.4 billion comes from that the member talks about. I mean, the plan has been successful.

But what we have done is moved in and taken the banks' position. The banks have to go through the normal process should the loan be in default: the call against the property. And in many cases, because we are taking a little more risk -- that is,

we're extending the credit decision out a bit -- in fact the banks said to us, "Well, if you want us to do that, then you have to share some of the risk with us; that is, you have to go on the paper as a guarantor." And that's a reasonable request, Mr. Chairman, if you're changing the way in which the private sector, the marketplace, responds with respect to its credit decision. And we did that. We pushed the credit decision considerably. We pushed it because it becomes more viable at 9 percent. Therefore, the banks have to get their rate of return, so they charge us for the difference. They're the ones who have to take action should something go wrong on default, and then they say: "Look, we've done the following number of foreclosures," -- if there are any -- "and these are the losses. Here's your portion of that loss share."

Now, over time we will take more of the loss relative to what the bank is taking because we're going to start with zero. Right now in the first year of the plan, as we indicated in '86, our exposure would be roughly zero on most of the loans. So the banks couldn't put a bad loan into this deal, get our money up front for it, and then turn around and say: "Well, we had to foreclose the next day. Guess what? You owe us 50 percent or 60 percent of the loss." It didn't work that way, Mr. Chairman. We took the safeguards, the necessary precautions, to ensure our position. And we pay a fee for that, of course; I think I said the fee was somewhere around two and something last time, and that's a fee. We pay for it.

So, Mr. Chairman, I can't reconcile the dollar amounts. That's how the process works. It is unique; it took some time to negotiate, as you well know. But we are in the process of extending that again. We'll use essentially the same process. We want to deliver it to the banking system wherever possible, and I think we can, and we will find the \$500 million if and when needed. On a short-term basis, should there be a demand or a call upon us for money for the fund, we'll transfer on a normal, formal relationship from the Heritage Savings Trust Fund to the fund the amount of money required, and then when the interest rates or the capital markets are responding appropriately -- as a matter of fact, they are right now, today -- then we would simply replace that with long-term borrowings. Now, we have made some very good moves on the funding of that fund. As a matter of fact, those are generating profits within the fund, by the way, because of the foreign currency changes in our favour.

So, Mr. Chairman, I can't tell you more. I can't guess what the member is meaning. I can only explain what in fact is taking place and what will take place over the next two years ahead.

MR. McEACHERN: Mr. Chairman, the \$500 million I was talking about was not the new money you're putting in. I realize that will happen in due course. I was talking about the difference between the \$1.4 billion as of March 31, 1988, and the present time, which you indicated was a \$1.9 billion investment. So if you could still please answer that question.

But I want to go back . . .

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Chairman, it would be from the heritage fund.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you.

I want to go back to the other aspect of what we were just talking about too, though, the guarantee. It is true that the banks get a 2.375 percent administration fee on any loans they handle.

It is true that in the first year or so of this program, 90 percent of the loans were rewrites of moneys that farmers had borrowed from banks, of those kinds of loans. So while the Treasurer is saying that the guarantee was only a gradual one of zero percent in the first year, 20 percent in the next and so on, nonetheless we have put ourselves in the position of taking over the risk, because we've borrowed the money outside of the country and outside of the banking system and brought it into the bank and said, "Here it is for the new loans," and in fact to take over the loans the banks had with farmers. Now many of those banks are in a position where they have insisted that the farmer that took the loan rewrite all his loans to that bank, and if the farmer gets himself in a cash flow problem, that bank has the right to take over that farm. We in fact have put up the money to, in effect, help them do that.

Now, I'm not saying that's going to help them a lot, but any time it happens, it seems to me the bank has had it both ways, and the farmer, in some cases, certainly has not been the winner. If the Treasurer is skeptical, I would outline a specific case that I know of.

A farmer who wanted to borrow a couple of hundred thousand dollars to buy two new quarters decided not to do so because he had a few other outstanding loans and the bank was insisting that if he was going to get into this program through their bank, he would have to put all his loans into that bank. I think his total loans were something in the neighbourhood of \$250,000 or \$280,000. His property, with the two new quarters added and his machinery and spread, was worth over half a million dollars, and yet he was expected to put that all at risk to the bank for a price that he might not have been able to meet if he would have gotten two or three crop failures in a row. The government's program would have, in fact, been putting up the money, not the bank itself, and yet they were forcing on this gentleman the kind of terms which could have forced him into bankruptcy and they could have taken over his farm, which was worth certainly at least twice as much as what the total loan was going to be. They would give him the loan on no other terms. He could not just finance the amount he actually still owed by guaranteeing with property equal to that amount. He was not allowed to do that; he had to put up the whole farm. So he finally decided not to risk the rest of his farm and buy those two quarters and, in fact, backed away from the whole process.

So I would suggest that the Treasurer should look closely at how that program works and exactly what we are doing for the banks: what a good deal the banks got and how maybe the farmers in some cases didn't get all that good a deal.

MR. JOHNSTON: Well, Mr. Chairman, I would hope the farmer in question would change banks. I mean, we can't dictate what he does and doesn't do. It's a free market economy. He can move to another bank.

The only other comment, Mr. Chairman, deals with what happens to the money you put at the banking system. I'm hopeful that the member isn't suggesting that the chartered banks in particular are some sort of risk. If he is, he has a different view of them than I do, certainly. Our view is that the banks are in very good shape. Our money is secure; it's sitting there. I don't know quite what the problem is. Of course, we put the money up because it's our money, as we've indicated. We want the program to run with government funded credit rates, and that's essentially what's happening.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm a little remiss with my homework. I would have had the amendments in a written form that the Treasurer could look at and the House could vote on, but I thought maybe I could just bring up two suggestions that I think would improve the farm stability loan plan immeasurably. I suspect he knows the line I'm taking, because the two improvements I've talked about sometime in the past.

One has been added some more credibility lately in that the former minister of agriculture of the British Columbia government, now director of the Farm Credit Corporation, also came out, I noticed, and suggested a general assignment of all farm income -- he was suggesting 12 percent, but I would think something like 12 or 15 percent of gross income -- very much as the oil companies. I don't know if the minister is familiar with the old section 82 under the Bank Act where, in fact, when you sold a barrel of oil they didn't give you the dollar; they sent it to the banker directly. This would be the same type of thing with the farmers, that they would have a choice. This would be optional. It's a bit of a gambling choice, but farmers love to gamble, and the government would not lose money, I don't believe.

They should have the option, say, within the first five years, or right at the beginning if they wished, to convert their 20-year loan to a loan that would be a general charge -- the payments would be a general charge -- on all farm income. That's everything from eggs through to cattle to wheat, in the 12 or 15 percent gross. Naturally, in good years that would go way up, and in bad years it would go down. But I think it would average out, and it would go a long ways towards easing the question we always have of farmers getting behind in bad years and governments catching hell from the opposition and everybody else, and they say, "Oh, well, wait till a good year comes."

It's a floating charge against the land like a caveat or like a section 82 under oil and gas, and it would be, I believe, conducive to certainly a lot more peace on the part of the farmer when he knows that the income would be tied to his gross production receipts. Over a 20-year span surely the government will come out all right, because of the high years with the low.

The second aspect -- it's bothered me for some time and I'm sure I've brought it up to the minister three times or so in the last few years. He has sidestepped me each time, but that doesn't frustrate me from trying to grab the watermelon seed once again in suggesting and pointing out that the reason for this is the fact that the interest charged on a loan to somebody that's got nontaxable income is a pretty heavy interest charge, as I think the minister, who's familiar with business, will know, whereas the interest charged to someone who's rolling along in high gear and maybe in the 50 percent tax bracket literally is half, because all interest is deduction from taxable income.

So we get the rather peculiar basis here of a loan that costs the farmer that's in financial trouble twice as much in interest as the farmer that's really doing well. Consequently, it seems to me that the government could balance that out. Now, this is a fairly major change, I'll admit, but if the farmer had no taxable income that year, his interest rate could be in the area of 6 percent. If he had taxable income that would put him in the 50 percent rate, then his rate should go all the way up to 12 percent. So we'd get the 9 percent rate for all those farmers that are in the zero to 25 percent tax range, but it would go up to 12 percent

after he got past 25 percent, which is doing fairly well, and it would drop to 6 percent when you get down to a zero taxable income or less.

I think those are two financially fairly well-thought-out amendments or thoughts the minister should look at, backed up by experience in various areas around the globe, and various corporations and countries operate the same way. So that is all I wanted to throw in for the time being.

MR. JOHNSTON: Well, Mr. Chairman, there's no doubt there are several ways in which you can pattern repayments, but I doubt very much a traditional market response would be very acceptable of the first recommendation the member gives to us. Obviously, he put his finger on the problem with the idea of tying the amortization of repayment to the income stream, because of course the farmer could opt for doing nothing for five years -- or in fact could do nothing for five years and have a catastrophe, no crop at all, setting aside provision for insurance, I agree -- and therefore the repayment would obviously not be made and there would be some other sort of cascading of the interest, presumably, if it wasn't paid.

So I think in my review of repayment ideas based on a structure which is a debt structure, the one base we have provided probably is as good as any. Not perfect -- I know there are always good ideas -- but what we have done here is reduce the cost to the farmer to 9 percent, and therefore we think it's quite bearable in terms of what the cash flow of the average farm is and given the prospect that we see ahead. So while there are a series of options and a series of financing mechanisms that are available, I would have to disagree with the member that tying it, as he suggests in the first point, to the question of income flow would probably not satisfy certainly us, and I think you'd probably have a larger number of failures as a result of that step.

With respect to the taxable income problem, yes, of course, Mr. Chairman, that is a fairly accurate assessment. But let's hope that these farmers do have profit in the future. Whether or not the marginal tax rate will be 50 percent for all farmers is not sure, but I can say that in 1988, for example, total farm income was up. I think when the numbers come in, you may well be surprised at the number of farming entities that are going to be reporting taxable income, and therefore there will be some relief from the 9 percent interest costs for various farming entities as they deduct it from their taxable income. It won't be the 50 percent that the member talked about, but it may well be 50 percent in some cases and something less in oilier cases.

Nonetheless, the point is that the 9 percent in the marketplace compared to what traditional borrowing costs would be at 15 percent, say, is a massive advantage to any farmer, particularly since it's 20-year money and it can be repaid at any point he wants. I think it has maximized the flexibility. It has certainly transferred a major benefit to the farming community. It's working satisfactorily, in our view, and I think the sheer demand upon the program, both for loans as we've indicated and for more dollars as we've promised, must be the final measurement of its success. The farmers like it. We've changed it, as the Member for Vegreville indicated, to change the limits, to do a few other nominal things, but I think, in essence, this program is now well accepted. It is, I think, understood by the farming community. The numbers are there. I won't go so far as to say, Mr. Chairman, that it'll be a perpetual program, but obviously it'll be under review from time to time. Now we've made a commitment to extend it for two years, and I

think that's the second major step in this program.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Vegreville.

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm glad the hon. Provincial Treasurer introduced the notion of interest rate for the program. It's not my intention to indulge the House with an extensive debate on the matter of interest, because my Motion 205 will likely be before members of the House sometime later this week or early next week, wherein we propose in a very specific way the program outlined by our leader during the recent provincial election, that we move towards a 3, 6, 9 interest rate program which I think, and I'm sure hon. members opposite will agree, is a much more thoughtful and dramatic program in terms of having a positive impact on the farm community, and we'll discuss it at that time.

But I do hope the hon. Provincial Treasurer pays a little closer attention during that debate than he did the other day in second reading on this Bill, because I did talk about our desire to see the interest rate on the first \$100,000 lent out under this program lowered to 6 percent -- that's the first \$100,000. Now, the Provincial Treasurer interprets that, and I quote:

Now, [I know] the Member for Vegreville would rather have this operate as a full grant. . . . I know the Member for Vegreville rails and rails and rails about giving the money away to the poor farmers at zero cost, but I don't think the farmers want it.

I want to make it very clear that we're talking about a program that farmers borrow money from and pay interest for. I want to make that very clear, because it's this Provincial Treasurer and his buddy from Stettler that like to beat their collective chests and rail about how this is a \$2.5 billion commitment to the agricultural community, a benefit to the farmers of Alberta. In fact, it's money they're willing to lend at 9 percent, and farmers pay it back.

If they want to describe the true cost of the program in terms of its impact on the agricultural community, they should be referring, in fact, to the figures in the hon. Provincial Treasurer's budget which, depending on the year, are anywhere between \$17 million and, I think, \$40 million actual out-of-pocket cost to the Provincial Treasury for this program. And that's certainly money that's welcome and needed. The point I've tried to make over and over again is that it's not a significant benefit to the farm community. If we wanted to really do it right, we could have offered lower interest rates, and we'll have time to have that debate hopefully on Thursday next; if not, the following Tuesday, Mr. Chairman.

The other thing the hon. Provincial Treasurer seems to not understand as a result of second reading of this Bill -- I expressed the concern that there are a number of farmers province-wide, in every constituency represented by rural MLAs, who have been denied access to this program. That's a fact, hon. Provincial Treasurer. I didn't say they were rejected. I didn't say that the applications had come forward, in fact, for a program number from his department. He refers to 29 rejections. But there are a number of people who never make it that far. Their applications are rejected out of hand by the banks.

AN HON. MEMBER: Give us a break.

MR. FOX: Oh, well? [interjections] No, no, no. I could bring 29 people here tomorrow who were denied the benefits of this

program by the banks. You can laugh if you like, but the intention of the program was to provide a benefit for farmers, and I'm telling you, there's a number of farmers in rural Alberta who need the help, who could establish viable farm operations with this help and would make very good use of it, and they've been rejected out of hand by the bank -- not by the Treasurer but by the bank.

I think if he was as concerned as I about making this program available for farmers in Alberta, he would take a serious look at some of those denials from the banks and see what kinds of changes we might be able to make to the lending guidelines that would facilitate the lending of a little bit more of this money to farmers who could really make use of it, because there are indeed farmers who are carrying extensive loan portfolios with the banks at 13, 14, 15 percent. The banks seem to be willing to carry them at 13, 14, and 15 percent yet continue to deny them access to the program at 9 percent. I know his advice is well taken: walk across the street and go to another bank, because competition makes the world go around. And that's advice I've given to farmers on occasion as well. But the fact is, the banks collude with each another a lot more than they compete with each other, and oftentimes that isn't an option. I think that if this is a government program, then the government could take a little bit more care to make sure that the guidelines are in place. We do have provincial lending institutions, the Treasury Branch for one, that could have facilitated this sort of arrangement.

So I just wanted to bring these misinterpretations to the minister's attention in the hopes that he may pay closer attention when we debate interest rates in more detail in the context of Motion 205. But in terms of Bill 7, we support it.

[The sections of Bill 7 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

MR. JOHNSTON: You're lucky, Mr. Vegreville, that I didn't get back in.

My apologies, Mr. Chairman. Bill 7: I move that the Bill be reported.

[Motion carried]

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Chairman, I move the committee rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration and reports Bills 2, 3, 4, and 7.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Having heard the report by the hon. Member for Lacombe, is the House prepared to agree to same? All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

head: **GOVERNMENT BILLS AND ORDERS**
(Second Reading)

Bill 1
Family Day Act

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move second reading of Bill 1, the Alberta Family Day Act. I urge hon. members to support this legislation. I believe they are familiar with it. It's pretty straightforward. If the legislation is successful, I think it will provide an opportunity for all hon. members to see the family play a bigger and bigger part in the future of Alberta. I know that the values that our pioneers built this province on were the values of home and family, and as we get into the speed of modern society, I think sometimes we forget about those foundations that helped us to build such a magnificent province. I'm looking forward to seeing communities all across Alberta make Family Day an important part of the tradition in the future.

I urge members to support this legislation.

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

MS M. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we welcome this proposal for a midwinter holiday. Indeed, we had such a Bill on the Order Paper in 1988. It was debated, and in fact many of the government members spoke and argued against it. But I believe we do need a holiday in the winter to break up the long, dreary days of work and darkness, so a holiday in the middle of the winter would give people a chance to regroup. Certainly in the winter we see a drop in productivity as people face a long, unbroken stretch of working days and they become exhausted and often depressed. Such a holiday would allow for winter carnivals and festivals and for those interested to plan and participate in such activities. For others it's a time to get caught up on their reading, their resting, to see a movie, or clean their house.

We also applaud the recognition of the importance of the family and the need to find ways to promote and facilitate healthy family life, for it is a concern for all of us.

Certainly a holiday that recognizes and promotes family life is welcome, but this Bill does not do that. It does not acknowledge the great variety and diversity of family constellations in this province or the variety of needs of Alberta families. This family holiday Bill, as it is presented, may be an advantage to the middle-class, financially secure families, but it does little for the one in six Alberta families living in poverty. These families certainly do not have the funds or the wherewithal to be involved in recreational activities.

Moreover, this Bill does not legislate the closing of retail outlets, and therefore it ignores the position of those families where the person who is the source of family income is employed in the retail sector. Unless this Bill is amended, these families cannot have a family holiday, because one or both of the parents will be working. This phenomenon has particular significance for women. We know that 75 percent of women with school-age children and 58 percent of women with preschool-age children are in the paid labour force. Of these, 60 percent work in clerical, sales, and service-sector occupations which, of course, include the retail outlets which are not protected or would not be closed under this legislation.

Forty-two percent of workers in sales jobs are women. Many of these are in part-time positions, and again we know that 72 percent of part-time workers are women. These women are the ones most likely to be working and thus not at home with their children on holidays and on this holiday. Coupled with their low economic status -- and we know that one in six women, or 60 percent of families headed by women, lives in poverty -- a significant number of Alberta women will not benefit from this Bill. Indeed, many may face difficulties in finding child care for their children on a holiday, never mind dealing with the cost of such child care, which might well mean that the mother of the children will receive only marginal economic gain from a day's work on a holiday.

Mr. Speaker, we must applaud the government in accepting our commitment to creating a winter holiday. However, calling it a family holiday without the constraints that will make it a holiday in which all families can participate reflects this government's inability to recognize that not all families are middle-income, two-parent families who will benefit from this holiday. For families other than middle-income families, it demonstrates the emptiness of the government's rhetoric about families and demonstrates that although the government pays lip service to the diversity of families and the difference of circumstances, it really does not understand that diversity or those different circumstances and what is really needed by those families and what will really benefit those families.

In addition, we need more of a commitment to families than having a family holiday. We need to address the issues and the realities that impact on families, that weaken family life. Such considerations include labour legislation that is responsive to the needs of families. We need consideration as to how to eradicate poverty, particularly the poverty experienced by women and children in this province. We need to determine how to eradicate unemployment and how to provide services to families that will facilitate healthy family functioning, including marriage preparation courses, communication and problem-solving skill development, parenting courses, and counseling and support for families experiencing difficulties.

When talking about strengthening families, let's turn our attention to all families, and in creating a family holiday, a winter holiday, let's include insofar as possible all families.

Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Associate Minister of Family and Social Services.

MR. WEISS: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I didn't intend to get involved or speak towards the Bill, but I felt I must in view of some of the remarks I've just heard from the Member for Edmonton-Avonmore.

Mr. Speaker, I find it very interesting that the member would support the Bill but would bring out some glaring examples of what I would call nonconstructive and certainly nonpositive attitudes towards the Bill or what the Bill reflects in itself. But I am pleased that she would support the Bill. In particular, though, I would like to point out that it would not be just a day to have winter carnivals and to have the day off, that we're concerned about care for the children and who'd be working and who wouldn't be. I hope it would become a special day, a special day for the families, of rededication for the families to start with, not to encourage winter carnivals or recreational events that would be taking people away from the family but hopefully

would be involving the family in total. [interjection] If you don't mind, Member for Edmonton-Avonmore, you had your opportunity; I'd like to have mine now as well.

AN HON. MEMBER: It was Edmonton-Calder.

MR. WEISS: My apologies.

I'd like to also indicate that the member referred to the cost. Well, I think that's the intent of what the Premier is doing with regard to the introduction of the Bill: to ensure that all families from all areas, whether it be any level of income or any age, would be able to participate and be involved. That's the full intent of it.

I know there was reference made to the retail sector, and I know some people in the retail sector don't honour such special days as Remembrance Day or Christmas Day, but we do find there's some other spin-off in economic benefits that others look at. I hope we'd see such things as family cards for family days, as we see for Valentine Day and Father's Day and Mother's Day and instances like that. So there will be some ancillary benefits that I'm sure one doesn't even look at or think of at this time.

I'm very pleased the hon. member would refer to the involvement of the women, because of course they play a very, very important part of it, and I think this Bill is sensitive to the needs and is certainly going to be involved. I say "involved" because I would like to make mention and reference to the Lieutenant Governor's conference that will be held on the family, a very significant one that will be bringing people together from North America and perhaps abroad as well. That conference is projected to be held on February 21 and 22 in 1990. So I would hope there'd be some constructive comments and suggestions made toward that conference, that we would all be on the right track as it comes to dealing with the family and family issues.

If nothing else, Mr. Speaker, the Bill has made people more aware, involved, and caring. And this government does care, and that's the purpose of the Bill.

The poverty aspect that was referred to by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore I think is a weak one. She talks about child care. I think that's where we should all readdress our priorities, and if at all possible and wherever possible, we would be involved with our families. That might be just one day of many during that week that we'd be able to dedicate our family needs to be sharing and caring and to whatever it may be. I certainly suggest it's not emptiness, as the member has indicated, but positiveness and the commitment to family.

I do believe it was a typical ploy, though, to throw in such references to labour, to unemployment. These aren't the issues we're talking about in the Bill. We're talking about the importance to the family and getting back to the meaning and the caring and the responsibilities that we all know and share. Nobody on any side of this House or no member in this Assembly can say they don't care. We all care. Nobody, certainly, has any other priorities in that degree. I'd like to talk about the positives and not the negatives, to build upon the family by strengthening it. I believe that is what the intent of the Bill is, and it certainly can do that. I would urge all hon. members to support the Bill without looking at the other aspects of it but the positive things the Bill brings out. Because I certainly intend to be there, involved in family week, and I'm sure all hon. members will do so.

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

Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly I do believe in emphasizing the positive, in response to the minister, but I think there are some things in this Bill that are wanting.

Mr. Speaker, I have no question about the thoughts expressed here about the need to strengthen family life. Nobody in this House takes exception to that. I think the idea that families through this Bill would have an opportunity to share a day together is a lovely one. However, the reality of the circumstances of families in Alberta and elsewhere in this country is often quite different from what has been expressed here.

Mr. Speaker, there's merit to a winter holiday. What we are talking about here is a statutory holiday in February. I expect service clubs in our various communities will get going to try to promote events that will include families, and that'll be grand. All of that's okay, Mr. Speaker. That's fine. But will families spend the day together, and will they get together? Probably not, unless the Premier is prepared to introduce legislation to maintain total closures and make sure families do have an opportunity to spend one day together in a given year. As it currently stands, any employee can be required to work on this day, thus robbing the holiday of any real meaning for many individuals. If the Premier is truly serious about giving increased consideration to families, he should ensure that all Alberta employees are allowed to take Family Day off from work with no threat of penalty from their employer. I'd like to ask the Premier and the Minister of Labour if they are going to take immediate steps to amend the Employment Standards Code to ensure that Albertans are guaranteed that legal right to spend Family Day at home. Otherwise, the objective becomes somewhat shallow.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to know if the Premier or others in the cabinet have had any discussions about this particular piece of legislation with business organizations, large and small, and what their response to it will be.

What will really happen? Well, people who have a real desire to spend a day with their families and need the time off may, in fact, not be able to do so. They'll be compensated with money but not with time. If that's the objective of the piece of legislation, Mr. Premier, it's not working. It's an okay idea, but it doesn't fulfill it.

Mr. Speaker, I have some thoughts about what really needs to happen to strengthen family life in Alberta that I would hope the government might put their minds to. I'm afraid that their understanding of a family is perhaps different from mine and the reality of today, although I'm pleased to note that in the government's own document *Caring & Responsibility* there is a comment that acknowledges that family life has changed in Alberta, that a family isn't necessarily the usual two parents, two children kind of configuration but it could reach out to being a different kind of mix of people: foster families, people who live in group homes; a mother, father, his, hers, and theirs; different arrangements of family life. In fact, my consideration is that it's two or more people living together in a supportive, nurturing relationship. I hope the government thinks about Family Day within that context.

But if Family Day is intended to strengthen family life, Mr. Speaker, we have to look at what those elements are about our society, our environment, that weaken family life that we can put our minds to, along with things like a day off. What would Family Day do to alleviate some of these kinds of stress, for in-

stance poverty. One of the major causes of problems in families, of family breakup, of divorce, of stress and strain in families, of children running away, and so on, is poverty. One in six families in Alberta are in poverty, 96,000 children, many of them operating at the minimum wage or only slightly above it, maintaining themselves, attempting to be good parents and good children but experiencing immense difficulties.

Mr. Speaker, some of us pleaded with the government when the Employment Standards Code and the labour Act were developed to deal with the problems of part-time workers who achieve no benefits. So the circle of poverty goes on and, in fact, deepens. We've had some encouraging statistics recently about employment in the province but very little detail on what kind of employment that is or at what level of wage those jobs exist. Most of us know that many people who are heads of households are underemployed, are existing at only minimum wage, unable to achieve any additional training, many of them suffering from different forms of illiteracy, indeed many of them young people that we have begged to complete their education and who now cannot find work that in any way uses their skills and talents.

Mr. Speaker, we have included in our province the wonderful idea that we are a high divorce rate province -- highest in the country, I guess, still -- and we have, of course, many single parents. I'm pleased to see that in order to reduce family stress for many of those single parents, mostly women, we've increased our maintenance enforcement. We haven't yet been able to do too much about providing access for the noncustodial parent. I look forward to that legislation coming forward later in this session.

Mr. Speaker, back to poverty. The social assistance rates haven't changed. In fact, since 1982 they've decreased for many people in this province who still consider themselves family, and we're faced with increasing numbers of food banks in our province, a shocking situation. Hungry children in schools are common in the inner cities, and our communities are rallying as best they can to deal with that situation and eliminate it if at all possible.

The government has consistently declined to consider the possibilities of pay equity, which would relieve some of the situations for single mothers who, on average, are paid only 65 per cent of what a man in a comparable job would achieve. These are women in family situations, Mr. Speaker, supporting one, two, three children at home, but we do not see any need to pay them equitably.

Mr. Speaker, troubled teens are another source of immense stress. The Premier has indicated his intent to move regarding treatment centres for alcohol and drug addiction among young people, and I commend that. Sorry to see that the budget doesn't quite fulfill what we had all anticipated from throne speech one and son of throne speech two, but in any event we do have a gesture in the budget of \$250,000, and it appears we're going to look at it. We don't in any promises yet see any evidence of improved circumstances for those families who have troubled teens with mental illness. This could be approaching a scandal in our province, but we don't seem to have addressed ourselves to the needs of teenagers who are suffering serious disabilities with mental illness. We still are beset with runaways, with dropouts, with an increase in teenage pregnancy. Yet it doesn't seem to me our Family Day will in any way help those problems that are a consistent source of stress in family life in Alberta and an increasing source of stress.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier and the members of the Legislature what Family Day will do to alleviate the need for respite for young families who've been encouraged to keep mentally or physically handicapped children at home. In fact, we often have calls in our constituency offices about the closure of the various respite facilities in our communities that make it possible for those people to have any family life at all. They constantly live in fear that they will never be able to have any time, any holiday, any break from the care of that loved one who is mentally or physically disabled, or both, in their family. This also applies to the older-age family caring for an elderly parent at home or an adult mentally handicapped person. Respite care we talk about from time to time, but it doesn't exist in any kind of comprehensive form in this province. Family Day, I suggest to you, will do absolutely nothing to ease that situation.

Mr. Speaker, I have talked often in this House about child care, an absolutely essential service to many of our families in Alberta. The government appears to be moving now to improve standards -- years overdue -- and subsidies, and I'm grateful for that. However, the qualification limit for subsidies has not increased, and no steps have yet been taken to ensure safety in personnel in our child care centres.

Mr. Speaker, the government has at its hand a piece of legislation and a service system available to support and strengthen family life, and that's family and community support services. One wonders, when you see the budget this year, what on earth the government can be thinking of. This is a very important methodology to support our communities and our families, yet the increase has been almost nil. I'd like to know from the Premier, when he has an opportunity to answer some questions on this Bill, if in fact those people who are operating family and community support services, those hundreds of volunteers across our province who do thousands of hours of work to strengthen families, have been consulted about this kind of activity and what it could mean in their communities, and how they might have preferred to see such a day as this developed so that it truly would serve to strengthen family life.

Mr. Speaker, we've made no mention yet of immigrant families and their special needs to be integrated into our communities, the special needs for English as a Second Language and for support in particular to the women in those families who have a great deal of difficulty making their way in our style of life.

Let me get on to a few more of them that I see Family Day in no sense easing whatsoever. Family violence: yes, we have some increase to shelters, and I'm pleased to see that. As yet, no programs for the abusers. In fact, they've been withdrawn. Mr. Speaker, how on earth do we have any way of supporting family life if we allow this circle of abusers to continue? We make no major effort in this province whatsoever to intervene in that circuitous kind of activity the abuser can avail himself of, or herself -- rarer but I understand it does happen. I think the province has at its hand all the information necessary if it will but act, if it will have the political will do some intervention with the abusers.

The foster family situation I've spoken of before. Children have been taken away from foster homes unnecessarily. Children have been allowed to stay in foster homes without the significant support to the foster parents that they desperately need. I asked last week about the Thomlison report and the need for a special team for high-risk children, to identify them and to help foster families to deal with them. It's not there in our province,

yet we believe we can take the time to create legislation to have family days and leave those people bereft of the kind of backup they need. Group homes in our province need a lot of assistance and support to exist. They, too, are family life.

I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that there are expectations raised in this legislation that will not be fulfilled, with regret. I think a February holiday is a great idea. It's a long, dark month, and we're weary and need some fun at that point. I hope our communities will respond by creating some fun. I think it's fine to call it Family Day, but let's not fool ourselves. Hundreds of families in this province will never be able to take advantage of this unless the Premier and the Minister of Labour will act to change their legislation and unless all members of the government will act to change some of their methods that are at hand, that are known and understood to support families. This government's commitment to strengthen family life has yet to materialize. With regret, Mr. Speaker, this particular family Act doesn't accomplish it in any way.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Vegreville.

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to discuss briefly the principles of the Bill as proposed by the hon. Premier, the Family Day Act. It's not an idea new to this Assembly, it's fair to say. Indeed, much of the guts, shall we say, of this piece of legislation was embodied in a previous Bill, the Mid-winter Holiday Act, introduced by the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, Mr. Martin. I think, in fairness, the Bill was drafted by a former researcher in our Official Opposition shop who is now the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands.

The Mid-Winter Holiday Act was introduced by me last year and debated in this Assembly on June 16, 1988. For members who are new to the Assembly, you might find it instructive to go back to the details of that debate, where we in the Official Opposition proposed that a midwinter holiday be created in the third week of February. We thought it important that the efforts of Albertans be recognized, the fact that they go for three and a half and sometimes four months between recognized public holidays, the first one of the calendar year being New Year's Day and the next one being Good Friday, which occurs sometime in March or April, depending on the year. We felt that was a long time to go between holidays and that there would be some important benefits to our society and our economy overall if we brought in a midwinter holiday that not only gave the people in the workplace, the women and men who work for a living, something to look forward to in terms of a holiday that would beat the midwinter blues or dissipate the doldrums of a long midwinter but would also enhance the productivity of the work force. Because as members opposite recognize, a happy work force, a well-rested work force is indeed a productive work force. So we thought there were a lot of reasons for bringing forward this Bill.

I was interested to follow the debate on the Bill from members opposite and pleased to see my good friend the Member for Lacombe here, because he's one of the most incisive debaters on the government side and had some interesting comments to make that day on the holiday Act. I'll quote, Mr. Speaker, if I may, page 1788 from *Hansard*. In reference to the establishment of a midwinter holiday, a holiday in the third week of February, the Member for Lacombe said, and I quote, "I don't know whether we can afford it." Another quote: "No way. I'm not in favour of it anyway." Another quote: "Why would we

legislate another holiday? I just can't understand it." And here's the best one of all, Mr. Speaker, the best quote, the most incisive judgment of the member opposite: "Everybody likes a holiday. It's great. It's just like motherhood, till you think about it." Well, Mr. Speaker, I've thought a lot about motherhood, and I think motherhood is just swell.

I hope the hon. Member for Lacombe has had a chance to think a little bit more about the comments he made on the Mid-winter Holiday Act. I don't know whether the Premier has had a chance to make some compelling arguments in caucus that will bring that member on side, because it would certainly be an embarrassment, hon. Member for Lacombe, to see the Premier's flagship Bill of this session have a dissenting voice in his own caucus. So I do hope you've had a chance to think about it. Beyond just speaking against the Bill, he sort of tries to denigrate the whole purpose of it too, and it's unfortunate.

I talked about how it would be an important opportunity for communities to structure some of their activities. There are communities like Tofield, for example, in the Vegreville constituency that have an annual winter carnival, a winter festival. They do a lot of work to try and bring people together to generate some additional community spirit, provide an opportunity for families to get together and have some fun. They have some dogsled races and bring in dogsleds from the far north, have some competitions out at a lake south of town; a chili cookoff, a contest where people bring forward their favourite recipe and make all sorts of different kinds of chili. I had the pleasure of sampling 17 different types of chili this winter. I'm still recovering from that experience, but it was a fun time in the community. I think, you know, for the province to establish a midwinter holiday would be a signal to all communities that, hey, here's a day you can structure some valuable midwinter activity around that would generate some healthy community spirit.

The Member for Lacombe said:

... it's great for tourism. I think that's kind of stretching the fact. I don't know, in the middle of winter, whether the Member for Vegreville will go touring around Alberta on one day off in a snowstorm, but I guess it's great for tourism. You've got to stretch your imagination.

I think winter's a great time for tourism in Alberta, hon. member. I can refer to the wonderful time we all had in February, a winter not too long ago. We called it the Olympics. There were visitors who came to our province from all around the world to help us celebrate the many things Alberta has to offer in the winter. So I think the hon. member will have the opportunity to reflect on his comments. Because I think it would be good for tourism, the kind of tourism we try and put a special emphasis on in this province, the Take an Alberta Break promotion that encourages Albertans to maybe look at their province first when considering holidays and planning for activities away from home. There are a number of very special and wonderful things in this province that people should take the opportunity to learn about and visit. Certainly another statutory holiday, the mid-winter holiday, would provide that opportunity for people to get to know Alberta better and spend some money in Alberta.

The number of other concerns the Member for Lacombe raised about holidays not being without a cost and about how businesses just can't afford it: well, there is a certain cost associated with the holiday. I don't think it's the \$102 million referred to in the same debate by the Member for Calgary-Millican. He determined that it would cost \$102 million, and

therefore we couldn't afford it. He says that that figure doesn't include the cost of having to pay the time and a half or double time for those who do have that kind of a union contract.

I don't think that's a fair reflection of the actual cost. There would be a cost admittedly, but I think the cost would be more than compensated for by the increased generation of economic activity on a day in which people travel around the province and enjoy the many wondrous activities Alberta has to offer. Certainly businesses involved in the service sector -- confectionaries, roadside gas stations, et cetera -- enjoy their best days when there are long weekends, and that's what this Bill proposes.

I want to emphasize again that this is like so many: an idea brought forward in this Assembly first by the Official Opposition, rejected totally out of hand as being ridiculous, not possible, inefficient by the government. They reject our idea out of hand, and then lo and behold it comes back not only as government legislation but as the Premier's flagship Bill in the 22nd Legislature. So we're doing our job here. We're the source of positive ideas in the Legislature, and we're going to continue in that regard to try and generate some positive ideas and convince the government of the things that we think ought to be done.

That's not to say that we agree with everything in this Bill, however, because as is so often the case when the government takes our ideas and tries to implement them, they fall short. The government doesn't appear to have the courage of conviction. In terms of naming this the Alberta Family Day, they're not prepared to take any action other than naming the holiday Family Day that would indeed help families, all families, across Alberta enjoy this special day.

It's not unlike the government's response to the debate on what was formerly called the Lord's Day Act, the need for Sundays off. The Member for Calgary-Mountain View has proposed in this Assembly on more than one occasion that there be a recognized day of rest in Alberta, that that would be something which had not only religious significance but also significance in terms of the family. That's always been rejected out of hand by this government too. It says, "Well, we don't want to legislate that sort of thing; we want individual communities to decide." That is an abrogation of responsibility, I think, on the part of the government. In fact, by not passing any regulations in that regard, you're determining that there will be wide-open Sunday shopping around Alberta because competition certainly forces communities in and around major metropolitan centres to follow suit. You know, it's had a very negative economic impact on rural Alberta, I can assure you: people from rural areas coming in to shop at the megamalls on Sunday in Edmonton.

So this government in this regard as well has typically ignored its responsibility to come forward with some teeth in the legislation that make sure the day is going to be observed as a recognized public holiday in Alberta so that families, not just the families we're a part of but all families in Alberta, can enjoy it. I must admit that I was more than a little disappointed to hear the Associate Minister of Family and Social Services reject out of hand the many concerns brought to the Premier's attention by the Member for Edmonton-Avonmore, because her concerns are very valid. I would hope that he takes a chance to reread them.

It's not enough to pay lip service to the family in Alberta, just to say, "Well, we love the family; therefore, everything's going to be wonderful for families in Alberta" or "We're going to name a holiday Family Day, and everything will be wonder-

ful for families in Alberta." It's not sufficient, hon. associate minister. There are a number of problems, and I know you recognize them, that confront families in Alberta. A number of problems were highlighted as well by the hon. member to my left here. I think this is an opportunity for us to clearly signal to Albertans our intention to come to grips with those problems, not the least of which is that a significant number of the people who will be forced to work on Family Day are women: women who are heading single-parent families or women who are attempting to make their way in the world, many of whom are employed in the retail sector, who will be compelled to go to work, often part-time work without benefit, and earn their wages, which are typically only a fraction of what men earn. This isn't going to improve their situation. In fact, it's going to be a further reminder of just how unfair the system in Alberta is as far as women in our province.

This is an opportunity for us, I submit, to have a serious debate about the real problems that confront families and not just dismiss them out of hand and say, "Well, we'll name a holiday Family Day, and that'll be enough for all of you." You know, the government's got to come forward with more substance than that. It's not enough to simply redefine programs that come through the Department of Recreation and Parks. You know, you slash CRC grants, and then try and make it up with a community facility enhancement program and say that it's for the family. Well, that doesn't get to the root of the problems. It's not enough to take a street assistance program, that excellent program delivered by the minister of transportation to communities in Alberta, and rename part of it in honour of the family. Now we're paving roads for families and we're fixing community halls for families. Those are important, but that's not enough. There's got to be more than just lip service paid to families. I hope that putting the word "family" in front of the social services department is going to result in more of a serious examination of the problems that can confront families.

With the provisos raised by the Member for Edmonton-Avonmore about this Family Day, I do express my support for the intent of the Bill, because the midwinter holiday is something we've proposed in this Assembly before. I would point out to hon. members, in case there are still some dissenting voices on the Premier's side of the House -- maybe the Member for Lacombe needs a little bit more convincing -- that there are a number of other jurisdictions that have some holidays we don't have. They've been fairly creative in their naming of some of these holidays. The third Monday in August or August 15 in the Yukon is celebrated as Discovery Day. Newfoundland has some extra additional holidays: St. Patrick's Day, St. George's Day; they also have a Discovery Day, Orangemen's Day. These are all holidays that are recognized in other parts of Canada, and I think it's appropriate that Alberta establish a midwinter holiday. The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek suggested we name that holiday after Karl Marx. That was a particularly interesting suggestion that he might want to try and justify with the Premier.

AN HON. MEMBER: How about Groucho Marx?

MR. FOX: Well, Groucho Marx would be more appropriate. Anyway, it was an interesting debate last year.

Because of the proposed naming of the day by the Premier as Alberta Family Day, I think the debate has taken on a lot more significance. I would hope hon. members would give some seri-

ous thought to the issues raised by my colleague from Edmonton-Avonmore about what needs to be done in order for us to signal to families in Alberta, not just the families that we think conform to a particular outdated model but all families, to enjoy this day and to really feel we're doing something for them by the creation of this piece of legislation.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Would the hon. Premier like to close the debate?

MR. GETTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was reading this report here. It was kind of nice to read.

The members opposite from the Liberal and ND parties are surely a hesitant, fearful, timid group, unable to bring themselves to look at something in a positive way. I guess they've been in the opposition that long that they just can't turn around their minds in a positive, thoughtful way and think of the kinds of things they could have raised to support Family Day and talk about the exciting things that will happen in the future in Alberta on Family Day. Instead we heard a series of complaints and fears, and that's really sad. Now, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar feared it so much -- we'll make sure, I guess -- that she won't even participate in Family Day; she thinks it's so terrible.

Mr. Speaker, they're just unable to accept something new, something exciting, something building, something that is going to be strengthening Alberta. To hear the hon. members talk about their winter holiday -- this isn't a midwinter holiday. This is not some time for Edmonton-Avonmore to sleep in or something like that. This is a Family Day. This is a special day in the future of Alberta. It's going to be stressing the importance of this foundation of our province. So it's not a day just to break up the winter. If the members go into it like that, then surely with that kind of thinking on their part no wonder they weren't able to carry the House's view last year on their holiday. It must have been the terrible arguments the hon. members put forward.

We want to support families in all their diverse forms. We want to rededicate our thinking to the family. I thought the Member for Fort McMurray made a really good point, because when I think of when you're buying, as I did just recently, an anniversary card or when you're buying a Mother's Day card or a Father's Day card, you read them and think about what they say and think about what the person you're buying that card for really means to you and the thoughts that go into it. I think you really think of the sentiments and the meaning. We will have this thinking of Family Day, thinking of the importance of the family.

Both the NDP and the Liberal members said: will people participate; will they actually get together as families? Their view is: force them to; use state control in some way. Force them to. Make it the law that you've got to get together. Now, what kind of nonsense is that? Surely that's the kind of centralist, socialist thinking that is so wrong and the reason why they're where they are, Mr. Speaker.

So what we have done is capture the importance of the family. We have stressed it. We believe that many of the problems we face as a modern society -- problems of family violence, yes; problems of drug abuse, alcohol abuse, problems of divorce -- are growing and growing, and it surely can't be that every year the statistics will be more. There have to be answers. One of the important answers, surely, is for our young

people to rededicate themselves and for all of us to rededicate ourselves to the foundation of the family. In this modern world when things happen too fast and communications are too instant and changes come at you so quickly, surely it's helpful for young people as they're faced by this bewildering change to know that they should hold on to their families, hold on to their brothers and sisters and their mothers and fathers and grandparents, get together and spend that time together and know that they can always turn to that foundation, that they can turn to that basic family unit and know that's where you'll have love and understanding and caring.

So, Mr. Speaker, those are the thoughts behind this Family Day. I urge the hon. members to think of the positive features, and I hope they'll support this Bill in second reading.

[Motion carried; Bill 1 read a second time]

Bill 9 Parks Towns Act

MR. EVANS: Mr. Speaker, after hearing the stirring words of our Premier regarding the positive attitude about some of the very important pieces of legislation that are being brought forward in this House, I look forward to an equally positive response to an historic piece of legislation, Bill 9, the Parks Towns Act. I would like to begin by moving second reading of Bill 9, the Parks Towns Act.

Because this is such an important piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to walk through the legislation with the members of this House. The legislation is historic in that it gives the people of Banff townsites an opportunity to become fully involved in the business of being a part of the province of Alberta. The process of incorporation is that the minister will enter into an agreement with the federal minister when our provincial minister is satisfied that the residents are in support of incorporation. I had the honour of bringing first reading of this Bill before the House on June 13 of this year, one year to the day that a plebiscite was held in Banff townsites, at which time 65 percent of those who came out to vote, those numbers being again about 65 percent, voted in favour of proceeding to incorporate. The process is dealt with through the Lieutenant Governor in Council by incorporation by order. The intent is that this incorporation order would take effect on January 1, 1990.

It's important, I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the members of this House are aware of the powers of the town that are incorporated into this Act. The town will have all the powers that are described in the agreement which is referred to in the Bill, and these will mirror as closely as possible the powers of an ordinary Alberta town, if there is such a thing as an ordinary Alberta town, but be reflective of Banff's unique position in the national park and the continued federal land ownership, and that's an important feature to bring to the attention of the members of this House. The control of land ownership will remain with the federal government. The town will be treated as a normal municipality in the province of Alberta for the purposes of all grants, administrative supervision, and so on, except as provided in the agreement.

In preparation for the incorporation, the minister may authorize the school board in Banff townsites to do anything necessary for the incorporation, and that would include the hiring of staff, putting various systems in place, and acquiring office ac-

commodation, for example. The minister may also authorize the board to pass bylaws that any town council could pass. These automatically become the bylaws of the town on incorporation, but don't become effective until the later of three potential dates, those dates being the date of incorporation, when a condition of the agreement is satisfied, or when the federal regulation which the bylaw replaces no longer applies to the town. This allows the removal of federal regulations and the simultaneous application of Banff bylaws so that there's no gap in the authority that is granted unto the town, nor is there a gap in enforcement.

Now, it's important to also realize that there will be continued school board functions, Mr. Speaker. The board will continue to have authority to carry out its municipal functions in the area of the district outside the town and may agree to have the town carry out taxation functions for it. This means that recreational and other facilities in the town currently administered by the school board may continue to be supported by all of the assessment in the district. It also allows for administrative efficiency in having one system for assessment and taxation records rather than duplicating these functions in the town and the board offices, such that we will hopefully have as fiscally responsible a situation in Banff townsite as is humanly possible.

The election of the first council will take place on October 16 of this year, which is of course the date for local elections throughout Alberta. Those who are elected on that date will hold office until the next general election in 1992. The standard procedures of the Local Authorities Election Act will be followed, and Municipal Affairs will provide a senior municipal adviser to serve as returning officer for the first election. This is at the request of the school board. We anticipate that that request will be forthcoming.

It's important also to speak about the various assets which are part of the transfer that will occur upon the incorporation. It's important because Banff is a very visible part of Alberta and does have certain unique costs that may not be shared by many of the other towns in Alberta. So that was part of the agreement process, Mr. Speaker, and I'm happy to say that the transfer of assets will include the brand-new sewage treatment plant, a modern water treatment plant, and various infrastructure and equipment. These municipal assets will be transferred from the school board to the town, as authorized by the minister. In order to be sure that there won't be any loss of jobs or other interferences to those who are currently employed in the park, arrangements have been made to protect the interests of employees of the board and also employees of the Canadian Parks Services who may be affected by the transfer of responsibilities.

The agreement will include federal, provincial, and municipal cost-sharing arrangements for the required reconstruction of Banff Avenue. This has been a problem for a number of years in Banff townsite, and I'm sure any of you who have been to Banff townsite recently will note that it's a continuing problem. There are a number of underground springs underneath Banff Avenue which create annual problems because of heaving and things of this nature. We are enthusiastic about the opportunity to work with the three levels of government to try to eliminate that problem.

Mr. Speaker, Banff will be the first town to be incorporated in a national park in Canada, and the only other place where it is likely for this to happen in the future would be the townsite of Jasper. So this is truly a uniquely Alberta arrangement. Because of that, there are no models to follow, and each step along

the way to incorporation is breaking new ground. There's been tremendous co-operation between the federal representatives, our provincial representatives through the Department of Municipal Affairs, and the local authorities in the school board. We're quite optimistic that that co-operation will continue through the election process and into the beginning of next year, when incorporation will take place.

There's also been extensive consultation with the people of Banff throughout the process, either directly in information pieces and public meetings or as represented by elected officials of the school board. The process has been a model of federal, provincial, and municipal co-operation, and the representatives of the Canadian Parks Service, Alberta Municipal Affairs, and the school district have worked as a team in developing a model and preparing for the implementation.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to discuss the provincial obligations of this new incorporation. The town will be eligible for all provincial grant programs on the same basis as any other town in the province. The practical effect of this is that in addition to the grants the school board already receives for municipal functions, the town will be eligible for the street assistance program and the municipal water supply and sewage treatment grant program administered by Alberta Transportation and Utilities, as well as the law enforcement grant program administered by the Alberta Solicitor General. Alberta Municipal Affairs will also be required to provide advisory and support services such as are available in other municipalities.

The benefits of incorporation to the people of Banff, Mr. Speaker, are quite numerous. I'll just refer to a few. The property tax money will remain in the community for local use. Currently lease fees are federal general revenues, and Banff has to compete for a federal budget allocation with the rest of the parks system. Local decisions will hereafter be made by local people. Currently these decisions would be by bylaws in other Alberta communities and involve federal regulations for Banff, and therefore they're ultimately made by the Minister of the Environment federally. Decision-making -- and this is a very important issue -- will be accelerated. Currently because of the extensive consultation process for regulations under the National Parks Act, Banff regulations require at least 270 days to pass. Such nationwide consultation wouldn't be required for bylaws passed by the Banff town council.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I think this is a very positive move both for the people of Banff and for the province of Alberta. I'm proud to sponsor this Bill, and I urge all members to support it.

Thank you.

MR. EWASIUK: In light of the hour, Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of debate.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Having heard the motion of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly, all those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Carried.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, this evening it's proposed to deal in Committee of Supply with the estimates of the department of occupational health and the Workers' Compensation

Board and tomorrow evening, by way of advance notice, the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

I would therefore move, Mr. Speaker, that when the members assemble at 8 o'clock this evening, they do so as the Committee of Supply.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Government House Leader has moved adjournment of the Assembly until the Committee of

Supply arises and reports. Does the Assembly agree with this motion?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed? So ordered.

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

