

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Title: **Thursday, June 22, 1989 2:30 p.m.**
Date: 89/06/22

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

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PRAYERS

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

Our Father, keep us mindful of the special and unique opportunity we have to work for our constituents and our province, and in that work give us both strength and wisdom.

Amen.

head: INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly the heads of mission of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ASEAN, accredited to Canada. I would ask them to rise as I introduce each of them and ask them to remain standing until all are introduced and then receive the warm welcome of the Assembly. First, I would ask His Excellency Tan Sri Datuk Thomas Jayasuriya, high commissioner for Malaysia; His Excellency Jaya Abdul Latif, high commissioner for Brunei; His Excellency Chawat Arthayukiti, ambassador of Thailand, Her Excellency Professor Chan Heng Chee, high commissioner for Singapore; His Excellency Ramon Diaz, ambassador of the Philippines; and Mr. Bas Sutarto, counsellor of the embassy of the Republic of Indonesia. I welcome them to Alberta on this first visit as a group of heads of mission and ask that they stand, are they are doing now, to receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Edmonton-Highlands

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under the provisions of our Standing Order 40, after question period I will request unanimous consent to deal with the following motion:

Be it resolved that in light of the continued and escalated repression of democratic dissent in the People's Republic of China, this Legislative Assembly urge the government of Alberta to review its current political, cultural, and economic relations with the government of the People's Republic of China, its departments and agencies; that the Assembly urge the government of Canada to increase its diplomatic and economic efforts to pressure Chinese authorities to reverse their policy of repression and respect human rights; that the Assembly express its sympathy to Chinese citizens studying and working in Alberta and to Albertans of Chinese descent who have relatives and friends in that country; and that it make all reasonable efforts to resettle Chinese citizens wishing to remain in Canada.

I have a copy delivered to your desk already, Mr. Speaker, and can have these delivered by the page.

Thank you.

head: TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS

REV. ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to file three copies of the report on the economic impact of the Edmonton summer festivals consortium including: Jazz City, The Works, Summerfest, Klondike Days, Heritage [Days] Festival, Folk Music Festival, and the Fringe Theatre Event. Also, I'd like to table for all members a brief report of the details up the upcoming festivals here in the city of Edmonton.

head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

MR. SCHUMACHER: Mr. Speaker, seated in the members' gallery are some of this year's and next year's legislative interns. Representing this year's interns are Huw Williams and Steven Williams. Representing the interns who will begin work in September are David France, Thomas Neufeld, and Shelley Russell. Leslie Geran, the fourth intern, was unable to be in Edmonton today. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the hon. members of the House 11 students from the Le Goff school, located on the Cold Lake Indian Reserve in the most beautiful constituency of the province, Bonnyville. They're accompanied by two teachers Maryanne Bushore and Dawn Cosman-Warren, and I'd ask that they stand and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, the Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine at the University of Alberta has been awarded a Canadian International Development Agency grant to support the education of rehabilitation personnel in collaboration with the Academy of Physiotherapy in Solo, Indonesia. We can all be proud of our faculty and our university. We have with us in the members' gallery this afternoon Dr. Handojo Tjandrakusuma, the director of the Academy of Physiotherapy in Solo, Indonesia, and Dr. Y.H. Syahlan, the chief of the development and planning department for the Indonesian Ministry of Health. They are accompanied by Dr. Martha Piper, the dean of the Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine at the U of A. I would ask them to rise and receive a very warm welcome from this Assembly.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly 28 students from Broxton Park elementary school in Spruce Grove. The young lady in the wheelchair off to the left is a part of the group. They're accompanied by two parents Mary Weighill and Kent Slaght, and four teachers and teacher aides Mrs. Diane Markham, Mr. Reuben Bauer, Mrs. Shirley Schwindt, and Miss Kathy Huffarth. I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. CLEGG: It's my pleasure today, Mr. Speaker, to introduce to you and through you 15 students from the Bonanza school. If you're not aware, Bonanza is 10 miles from the B.C. border in the wonderful constituency of Dunvegan. They're accompanied today by their principal, Mr. Tom Zieffle, and wife, Brenda, and parents Mr. Allan Wildeman and wife, Gwen. I ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, I have two schools to introduce today. First is 15 members, grade 6 class from the Sparling school in the city of Camrose. They are accompanied by their teacher Janette Rotto and the school principal, Art Pfeiffer. I'd ask that they stand in the members' gallery and receive the usual welcome of the Assembly.

The second group are 23 members of the grade 6 class from the Bawlf school, also in the Camrose constituency. They are escorted by their teacher Mrs. Margaret Piro, two parents Mrs. Bergquist, Mrs. Oppen, and a bus driver Allan Kennedy. They are also in the members' gallery. I would ask that they, too, stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Hazardous Materials Transportation

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, to the minister responsible for Public Safety Services. The report issued by the minister yesterday mentioned that 330,000 truckloads of dangerous goods are shipped in Alberta each year. But there are virtually no training standards for drivers. Last week a contract courier, David Ligertwood, was told by his employer to read a two-page document on dangerous goods. When David had finished reading it, his employer filled out a certificate from this minister's department which said David has, and I quote, and it's right in here from the minister: "... completed training relating to the handling" for transportation of dangerous goods. Now, that's public safety, Mr. Speaker. Read a short document and all of a sudden you're qualified to drive around here for two years with hazardous goods. My question to the minister, very simply, is this: is this what this minister's department considers adequate safety standards, read a document and you can drive around the province with dangerous goods for two years?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, a number of days ago the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark brought to my attention a situation very similar to the one outlined by the Leader of the Opposition. In fact, it may very well be the same situation. An internal investigation is currently under way with respect to the matter. It's a legal investigation to see exactly what has transpired, and I will be getting a report with respect to that matter before too long. But if there is a situation whereby an employer in the province of Alberta has attempted to beat the system in the manner outlined by the Leader of the Opposition, then we would view that one very, very seriously. I think it's important to recognize that if it is a violation of the law, then the appropriate action would be taken, and I think . . .

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, this is unbelievable. Under the minister's documents, all they have to do is satisfy the employer.

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Supplementary question. Yesterday and on a number of other occasions the Chair has given direction that the supplementaries have to be briefer and the answers have to be briefer, and today we're starting. What's the question please?

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, under the government's own regulations all they have to do is satisfy the employer. There is nothing illegal about this. My question is to the minister again.

Does he consider this adequate, what he talked about in his report yesterday? Is he now willing to admit the process is totally inadequate?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I think in response to the first question, I've already admitted that I would view such a circumstance to be totally inadequate. I've also indicated that a report has been requested by me in the last few days as a result of information provided to me by the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark with respect to what appears to be a similar circumstance. If such an event did occur, it clearly falls outside of what we expect to have happen under the regulations and the statutes of the province of Alberta, and appropriate action will be taken.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, supplementary question. The safety standards in this province are a joke, and this minister's becoming a joke. My question to this minister. When is this minister going to admit that the drivel that he handed out yesterday is a total whitewash and show us some leadership at least in training standards? What's it going to take, another disaster?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I indicated in the House and I gave some statistics with respect to the fact that there were some 117 cases that have been brought to trial recently by Alberta Public Safety Services. In those 117 cases, some of them would involve more than one charge. The record to date on the basis of those cases that have been brought before the courts shows that there have been 89 convictions. For an hon. member to suggest that there is drivel with respect to the safety standards in this province I think is far from the truth. We have in the province of Alberta a training centre in west Edmonton, Alberta Public Safety Services training centre, and we have trained hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of individuals throughout this province with respect to their ability to respond. That includes firemen, policemen, other law enforcement officers throughout the province of Alberta. And yesterday as well I . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. minister. Let's try to talk faster.

Second main question, Leader of the Opposition.

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

Environmental Impact Assessment Process

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, my question concerns Alberta's ever-changing environmental impact assessment process, which environmentalists are unhappy with, local citizens are unhappy with, companies are unhappy with, the federal government's unhappy with. Only the minister's happy, and he's paid to be happy with it. Now that the Court of Appeal has upheld the Rafferty-Alameda decision, the era of slipshod half-baked environmental impact assessments is over. I would like to know if the minister will now support new comprehensive legislation this session.

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that nothing is nearly as slipshod or shabby as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place and his particular question. The deci-

sion today in the Court of Appeal will not change the process, which is a process of participating, co-operating with the federal government to put in place an environmental impact assessment process which could serve as a model for the rest of Canada.

MR. McINNIS: The minister talks about backroom deals. Does he fail to appreciate that we're in a whole new ballgame now? The era of "you keep your hands off my projects; I keep my hands off yours" is over. I want to know if he . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Was that the question, hon. member? Let's go.

MR. McINNIS: That's the question.

MR. MARTIN: You just relax.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much, hon. Leader of the Opposition. I'll keep relaxed, but I'd like all members to speed up the process. Thank you.

MR. McINNIS: Does the minister fail now to appreciate that federal intervention can't possibly be avoided until the standard of Alberta assessments is raised at least to the level of the federal guidelines order?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I'll repeat again for I don't know how many times I've had to answer this particular question. We will participate with the federal government . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: You still haven't got it right.

MR. KLEIN: Now, listen hon. member, please.

We will participate with the federal government in developing a good, honest environmental impact assessment process that will be fair to all involved.

MR. McINNIS: Has the minister conducted a review of the four pulp mills already approved to see whether the shoddy EIA process in Alberta has placed any of those projects at risk?

MR. KLEIN: Well, I don't know if the process was shoddy. According to the federal government -- and they examined, Mr. Speaker, our environmental impact assessment process. In a report that I'll be glad to provide to the hon. member, they said that that process was perfectly fine. All we want to do is to take that process with respect to the Alberta-Pacific project and make it even better. That should even satisfy the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place.

Meech Lake Accord

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, a major poll that was released today, a Gallup poll, shows that a majority of Canadians now do not think that the Meech Lake accord is a good thing for Canada. The poll also shows that a clear majority of western Canadians living in the prairie provinces -- Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta -- under Conservative governments also do not agree with the Meech Lake accord. My question to the Premier, who is usually very succinct in his answers, yes or no. Does the Premier have any difficulty believing and accepting the majority wisdom of western Canadians, of Albertans, on this

issue?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has consistently presented such a shallow assessment and references to the Meech Lake accord. This is comprehensive constitutional reform. It has many parts to the package, and it provides many of the initiatives that Alberta has sought over the years in order to remove from the federal government the centralist power they have acquired since 1867 and once again allow provinces to fulfill their responsibilities under the Constitution. Therefore, until we have something that is better than the Meech Lake accord, until we do, then I suggest that it will serve Albertans' interests very well.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Premier has fooled us in the length of his reply today.

I'm wondering if the hon. Premier would muster enough courage to accede to the majority view to repudiate Meech. That's the position that clearly is held by Albertans, Mr. Premier. Will you agree with that majority position and repudiate?

MR. GETTY: I would remind the hon. member that it was the Legislature that unanimously approved Meech Lake resolution, this Legislature, elected by the people of Alberta. All parties unanimously approved the package. I should also point out to the hon. member again, when he has such a shallow approach to such an important issue -- where you have, for instance, for the first time in Canada a made in Canada constitutional package that is accepted by all the provinces in Canada, when you have, in fact, for the first time the equality of provinces enshrined in the accord: these and many others, such as the opting out clause for federal spending programs. There are so many, and I know, Mr. Speaker, you would not want me to go into them all during the question period. But I would urge the hon. member to take some time, expand his thinking, think a little bit more about what the accord actually contains, and not just try and do some political grandstanding.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I think Albertans have to conclude that you have some kind of a sweet deal with the Premier of Quebec. I want to know, Mr. Premier, how much longer you intend to be a handmaiden to the province of Quebec.

MR. GETTY: I gather, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is now yelling to have himself heard over top of the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. DECORE: Answer the question.

MR. GETTY: I guess he's following his lead. He finds: yell because he does.

MR. DECORE: You make a good handmaiden, Mr. Premier.

MR. GETTY: It may be that the hon. member has some views about Alberta's position in Canada. Alberta is leading Canada in constitutional reform. Albertans are very much concerned for their own province.

MR. DECORE: Like you led on interest rates.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Glengarry, perhaps you could listen to the answer. Thank you.

MR. GETTY: As I say, he's following the previous leader's style, Mr. Speaker.

Albertans care very much for their province, as does our government. But Albertans are also nation builders, and we will work with Albertans to build a nation, not tear it down as the hon. member would suggest.

Professional Faculties Building

MRS. B. LAING: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Advanced Education. I understand an announcement was made in Calgary today that the University of Calgary had a new professional faculties building approved. Could the minister confirm this announcement, please?

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, as hon. members know, education is the first priority of this government, and on June 12 in the estimates I made reference to planning funds for the University of Calgary. Indeed, today along with the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills I officially announced to the University of Calgary the establishment of a professional faculties building at a cost of approximately \$47 million. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Bow, please proceed.

MRS. B. LAING: Mr. Speaker, I've had several letters from my constituents with regard to the promised new spaces for the business administration program at the U of C. Could the minister advise the House if any expansion of the university's business program will result from today's announcement, and will these spaces be available this fall?

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, last fall this government through its minister had requested of the various universities the establishment of increased spaces for Bachelor of Commerce programs. The University of Calgary today was informed that some \$3.1 million has been allocated in this year's budget for the establishment of 100 to 200 new Bachelor of Commerce spaces at the university.

MRS. B. LAING: Mr. Speaker, to the minister. What is the anticipated construction time for the new facilities?

MR. McEACHERN: Tough question, John. Do you think you can handle it?

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, it may be of interest to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Kingsway. He seems to want to become involved in the answer to the question.

I'm sure it's of great interest to the members from the city of Calgary. Mr. Speaker, in response to the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow, the plan is to start construction sometime next year, perhaps September, and be concluded in time for Christmas 1992.

MR. BRUSEKER: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Mountain View, followed by Edmonton-Whitemud.

Funding of World Blitz Chess Championship

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For two weeks I've tried to get the Minister of Tourism to tell this House how it was that \$100,000 of provincial taxpayers' money was spent on a defunct chess tournament in Calgary. It's now clear that the minister's initial story of his involvement was designed to obscure the full facts. He was involved in the approval process early and more often than he initially led this House to believe. His brother had an ongoing involvement with the organizers. And the minister has failed to give adequate answers why his department released money after it was clear the project was in deep trouble. Mr. Speaker, will the minister now drop the pretense and spare us the need to pursue this matter further? Will he now admit his first version of the events was a failed cover-up attempt?

MR. SPARROW: No, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Speaker, given that the minister's new stories keep contradicting the old ones and given as a result that the people of Alberta can't trust which statements they hear from this minister are the true ones, will he now do the honourable thing and resign?

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, I don't know whether we're in a chess game or a witch hunt, but no, I will not. I've asked my department to do a complete file for the House of our involvement, and we'll be tabling that to clear the air and the concerns.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: I want to make this absolutely clear. The minister is prepared to table the full documentation surrounding this minister's involvement, his brother's involvement, and his department's involvement around this defunct chess tournament: is that what he's telling the House this afternoon?

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, I've said that I've asked the department to do a complete report on the chess tournament, as did the city of Calgary. My involvement and the government's involvement will be in that report. If you want reports from anybody else, you'll have to ask them.

Community Recreation/Cultural Grants

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, the community recreation/cultural grant program has been a very positive initiative which has been of great assistance to municipalities throughout the province. Unfortunately, the Minister of Recreation and Parks has reduced the amount of funding available to municipalities in the current year by some 16 percent, long, long after local expenditure decisions have been based on previous funding levels. My question, Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Can he tell us how he can possibly justify imposing this unreasonable burden on municipalities and local community groups with no advance warning?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud is indeed right. This has been a tremendous program, some \$240 million committed in 1985 to helping municipalities and volunteer organizations to deliver their programs. Unfortunately, in all fiscal management programs we have to look at priorities and directions in government. This

government, in tabling the budget on June 8, committed \$7.1 billion to three departments: Health, Education, and social services. Those demonstrated a 5 percent increase, and a 5.5 percent increase in Education. In looking at the other programs, I judged that it was necessary to make a priority decision to cut back \$2 a head on a per capita basis and extend the program, a commitment of the same \$240 million to 1992. I ask all communities in this province to share in that fiscal responsibility so that we can deliver those other priorities to the people of Alberta.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Does he not realize that municipalities made funding commitments to their constituents based on a commitment that this government made to municipalities six months ago? Mr. Minister, will you consider delaying the implementation of these reductions until the next budget year so that local municipalities have advance warning and are not made to suffer the consequences . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. You're now with your second supplementary, two set questions in one.

MR. TAYLOR: You have to use the drop of water technique on him.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
Mr. Minister.

DR. WEST: There is no doubt that due to the timing of the budget release on June 8 the information couldn't be forwarded through to the municipalities. Our Department of Recreation and Parks will work with each and every community and with the flexibility they have with these funds to deliver them to the people of Alberta. I state now, as I have before, that there is some \$240 million in commitment, \$163 million delivered to date, and this on a direct basis. The hon. member said 16 percent; it's a cost-shared program in which there is some self-initiative by organizations and municipalities, and on a 50-cent dollar it equates to about an 8 percent cut.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Recently a questionnaire -- I have to commend you for attempting to consult with the constituents, the people you represent. In the questionnaire that you did distribute to gauge the municipalities' response to various government programs, why did you neglect to make any reference, any mention, to this particular program which impacts so directly on . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member-
Mr. Minister.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the question from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. I did write a letter to some 2,500 municipal councillors and aldermen across this province inviting their attitudes on a number of issues. The survey, or issue of request, reads some three pages, and I felt that that would have been adequate for the first survey. At the time of writing the letter, budgets were in preparation and this particular item was not to be noted in terms of a change of budget request. I would say that any information that is relevant to the matter that may be written in by the councillors or aldermen across this province will be noted and certainly conveyed to

the minister. But I would want to add to this that one of the things the municipal governments want to participate in is fiscal responsibility in this province. They are a partner and willing to accept that responsibility, as we are as a government.

Western Premiers' Conference

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, as we all know, early next week the western Premiers will be meeting in Camrose. Certainly there is considerable interest in what may be accomplished at this conference. Albertans generally and the business community in particular are concerned about adequate access to credit in our growing economy. To the Premier. Will the Premier be working with his western counterparts to ensure that there will be a working together or a common approach to convincing the federal government that interest rates should be lowered?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, yes, the conference will be held on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of the coming week, and in consultation with the other Premiers we have crafted an agenda which allows the coverage of a broad selection of issues which they are concerned with. We will have an agenda which includes economic development and western diversification, agriculture and trade, enhancing the family, and federal and provincial relations.

Under the general topic of economic development and western diversification it will be our intention to continue to provide leadership in Canada on the high interest rate issue. As members know, Alberta led the fight against high interest rates. Alberta has consistently been able to convince first the western Premiers, then all the Premiers of Canada to unanimously support us against the high interest rate policy which is currently being promoted from central Canada, from Ottawa. I must say, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the pressure we have brought to bear under the leadership of Alberta has had considerable impact on making sure that interest rates have gone no higher than they have. [interjections] As a matter of fact, while the hon. members may laugh because they could care less, I guess, about people and interest rates and how they impact, we are fighting for the people of Alberta on the interest rate issue and assisting the people as well by shielding them against the high interest rates.

MR. JONSON: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. At this conference will the Premier be working with the other western provinces to arrive at a common approach to negotiating with the federal government on the parameters for environmental impact assessments?

MR. GETTY: That's an excellent point, Mr. Speaker, because Alberta has led the country in environmental concerns, environmental legislation, environmental standards and controls. Alberta has also led the nation on insisting on provincial jurisdiction being respected. Therefore, I'm sure this matter will be raised amongst the Premiers, and Alberta will continue to provide the leadership in insisting that our jurisdiction is respected and that our environmental impact assessments, as the hon. Minister of the Environment mentioned today, will be worked on in a co-operative way, because they are the best in Canada.

MR. JONSON: Given this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, will the Premier be looking for the reaffirmation of support from the western Premiers for senatorial reform in the context of Al-

berta's senatorial selection proposal?

MR. GETTY: Well, Mr. Speaker, you recall that originally when we were the only province recommending a Triple E Senate and Senate reform, we were able to start with the western Premiers and over time work from one to unanimous support from the western Premiers, and now a Premier in eastern Canada as well. So there are five of the 10 Premiers who support the Triple E Senate. We will continue to work together as western Premiers to expand the support for the Triple E Senate. As well, I will be looking forward to discussing with the other Premiers the senatorial selection legislation that we introduced into the House early this year and which will be reintroduced in the Legislature under the current session. I think that piece of legislation and that policy by our government has attracted a tremendous amount of interest all over Canada, and we will make sure that the other Premiers understand the principles which we feel so strongly about in making the Senate play a more important role in representing western Canadians in Canada.

MR. FOX: Your half hour's up.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Vegreville; we really don't need it. The clock is running on your own member.

Community Recreation/Cultural Grants (continued)

MR. DOYLE: Mr. Speaker, I have a letter regarding the community recreation/cultural grants cuts to the Minister of Recreation and Parks from the mayor of Calgary, dated June 20.

Your letter on June 9 was written after Council had approved the 1989 CR/C grant allocations based upon information received from your staff. . . Some 34 community organizations in Calgary were to receive CR/C funds this year. These projects have not only been approved by City Council, but many are in an advanced state of preparation.

To the minister responsible for Public Works, Supply and Services. On July 15 the Minister of Recreation and Parks told this Legislature that shortfalls to community funding could be made up through the community facilities enhancement program. Is this government proposing to use discretionary handouts from their political slush fund to replace the well-established, well-monitored, and accountable system of CRC grants that they have so irresponsibly cut?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member referred to "political slush funds," and I read someplace the other day that another NDP member, from Edmonton-Centre, called it "crass political moves." Yesterday afternoon I presented to the Edmonton Youth Emergency Shelter services a grant of \$250,000 from the community facilities enhancement program. Several months ago the Member for Edmonton-Highlands joined with me when we presented a grant of \$250,000 to the Bissell Centre here in the city of Edmonton. We've provided \$250,000 to the YMCA for the Jamie Platz family recreation centre in west Edmonton, Mr. Speaker. I find it astounding that the NDP would refer to that as slush when we hear them talk about the need for the government to help people. [interjections] This is what we're doing with the community facilities

enhancement program. It's a wonderful program.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. minister. If we're going to have the questions asked, perhaps we could even listen to the answers sometime.

Member for West Yellowhead, supplementary.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, there seems to be a great deal of confusion between this government's ministries, a formula for more broken promises, I believe. Will the Minister of Recreation and Parks please tell the Legislature exactly where community groups that will be affected by these cuts, many of whom are well on in the planning and implementation stages of their projects, will get the remainder of the funds necessary to complete their projects?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, I would trust that the mayor of Calgary has authorized such statements from his letter that was a direct letter to me on a personal basis.

In answer, many of the community organizations draw from a wide cross section of programs that Alberta has put on over the years. We are probably one of the highest ratio of dollars per capita to our associations in the country. Just to reiterate a few of them - I'm sure the hon. member could get his researcher to do this, but we have in my department the Alberta Sport Council, which delivers around \$9.6 million a year to our various organizations throughout the province; the Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation, \$5 million; and yes, the community facilities enhancement program, \$100 million over three years; the Wild Rose Foundation, \$5 million. There is the municipal recreation/tourism areas that flows through to many organizations, of approximately \$8.3 million. The community tourism action plans, which flow through to all communities . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. minister. That's a good start with regard to your estimates.

Final supplementary, West Yellowhead.

MR. DOYLE: Mr. Speaker, I can read very well. I've read those reports.

Given that the minister has demonstrated complete insensitivity to the budget requirements of municipalities and has completely failed to offer some guarantee of alternative funding, will he at least guarantee to implement the proposals offered by municipalities, which include that he reallocate the proposed CRC cuts, keeping the \$12 rate for this year and dropping it to \$7 next year, \$7 the year after . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Order please. Let's not go through the next decade.

Mr. Minister, please.

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, I am quite concerned. We did announce the changes to this at a later date because of the tabling of the budget on June 8. I apologize to the municipalities and will work with them in trying to have some flexibility in their applications. I do acknowledge that we had to make priorities in our fiscal plan, and I ask all Albertans to share in that as we deliver the essential programs. I must on that note point out that the municipalities did get a 5 percent increase in their direct grants this year.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-McKnight, Clover Bar, Edmonton-Highlands.

University Residences

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Student residences at the University of Alberta are currently in a horrendous state of disrepair and, indeed, have been found to present a threat to the safety of students residing there. As a result, the university has felt compelled to approve some \$2.5 million for emergency repairs. Last week the minister during consideration of estimates indicated that he had not yet received any request for assistance from the university. Can the minister advise the Assembly as to whether or not he has yet received and given consideration to this request?

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, my department has received a request from the board of governors of the University of Alberta regarding the Lister Hall complex.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you. This \$2.5 million, of course, is very necessary, but it is only the tip of the iceberg. The university estimates that some \$50 million is necessary. What steps does the minister intend to take to address this very long-term problem of the residences?

MR. GOGO: Well, Mr. Speaker, the government of Alberta is very concerned about the safety of students who are in institutional residences. I would point out that it is the policy of this government, has been for many years, that the construction and maintenance of residences are the responsibility of the board-governed institutions. That's why they charge and collect rents. That is the responsibility of those institutions, to not only pay for them but to maintain them.

MRS. GAGNON: Mr. Speaker, that seems to be precisely the problem. I'm wondering if this government would consider the need for providing annual funding for maintenance of the facilities. Obviously, the universities with the present funding cannot . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. The question's been asked; you're not supposed to answer it too. Please, Advanced Education.

MR. GOGO: Well, Mr. Speaker, I just stated the policy of the government. I would concede that there have been exceptions to that policy that perhaps should be looked at. The University of Calgary was beneficiary to many of the Olympic buildings which were constructed for the Olympics, now residences of the University of Calgary. The University of Lethbridge: there was special provision made. So, Mr. Speaker, anything's possible. I would simply point out that the present policy is, as I've stated, the responsibility of the institution. We believe that they collect sufficient revenues to do that, but this government does not have a closed mind to reviewing the whole question of student residences.

MR. SPEAKER: Clover Bar, followed by Edmonton-Highlands.

Blood Dedication and Blood Testing

MR. GESELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is directed to the hon. Minister of Health. The donation of blood is the ultimate gift. I think it's the gift of life. Although the dedication of blood to oneself is permitted, it is not allowed for members of one's immediate family. What steps will the minister take to allow Albertans to dedicate blood to their immediate family, provided the types are compatible?

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Clover Bar is correct that currently an individual can store blood for their own surgery. The Red Cross is currently looking at whether the opportunity to store blood should be extended to family members, and I will be looking forward to their discussions and their decisions in that regard.

MR. GESELL: Mr. Speaker, the testing of blood for acquired immune deficiency syndrome is suspect, and it has turned this ultimate gift of life into one of Russian roulette. Will the minister make representation on behalf of Albertans to improve the testing techniques for the AIDS virus?

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, Alberta Health is represented on the Canadian Blood Committee, which is responsible for reviewing the collection, the processing, and the transfusion of blood by the Red Cross. I would hope that any decisions they make with respect to expanding the capability of donating blood or storing blood will be made on the best possible medical evidence available. Certainly that is the commitment of the Red Cross.

MR. GESELL: Mr. Speaker, the minister has referred to the Red Cross' responsibility, but in emergency situations our hospitals permit the direct transfusion of blood. Will the minister undertake to improve the testing techniques for the AIDS virus within our hospitals during those emergency situations?

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, the medical advice that I have on the matter is that there are not direct transfusions of blood throughout our health care system, and certainly there is no medical proof that blood donated directly is any safer than blood which is thoroughly and appropriately tested. Certainly all Albertans, and I think all Canadians, want to be assured that the most stringent testing to ensure appropriate matching, appropriate fractionation procedures, and appropriate safety for all blood recipients is carried out. I trust that the processes that the Red Cross will be going through as it reviews its policies in this area will be those that are based on the most sound medical evidence.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Highlands.

Municipal Elections Candidacy

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the third Monday in October Albertans will be going to the polls to elect their municipal officials.

AN HON. MEMBER: Not a Senator.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, possibly not a Senator.

A few years ago this government chose to withdraw a certain section of the Local Authorities Election Act that had previously prohibited judges of the court from running in municipal elections. Since that time it's become clear that there are people who are now prohibited from running who would like to run. They are, namely, regular employees of the municipality. I'd like to ask the minister responsible -- that is, the Minister of Municipal Affairs -- why it is that he has so far refused to change legislation inasmuch as powerful appointed people like judges can run for municipal elections but regular employees like bus drivers cannot.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, it's been a long-standing principle with regards to this that those employees of a jurisdiction would not be allowed to run for the jurisdiction. One of the options they have is to take a leave of absence during the time of campaign and if successful can then represent the city in terms of the position of an alderman or the municipality -- rural -- as a councillor or can become mayor. That has been the position. What I've done with this particular issue: because I feel that that kind of a determination and decision should be made by the local government personnel across this province, I've asked the statutes review committee that's under the chairmanship of the hon. member from Fairview to review this matter for me so that we can take a grass-roots position with regards to it and get our direction from local government rather than from the top down.

MS BARRETT: Well, supplementary question to the minister then. In the first place, the rule provincially and federally is that you take a leave of absence. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, with a city you have to quit your job. So my question to the minister is this: if he doesn't know the rules on a municipality-by-municipality basis, will he now consider making one rule, uniform for everybody, just like with provincial and federal elections, and state right in the legislation that they have a right to a leave of absence so that . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Let's get 'er down.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I certainly have a concern that in our democratic process individuals should have that opportunity to run for public office and that legislation shouldn't prohibit. But in terms of this particular matter there is concern about a conflict of interest. Now, in terms of consistency across the province, that is a good point and one of the matters that should be dealt with, and I've asked the statutes review committee to look at that aspect as well. At the present time, at the local level, it's my understanding that a local jurisdiction such as a city can allow for that leave of absence. Now, what the hon. member is asking me to do is to legislate that requirement. That will be one of the options we can look at, and I will take it as an excellent suggestion from the member and maybe a way that we can deal with it as such. So I don't condemn it or refuse the suggestion. I think it's nice that in question period we have suggestions like that to look at as options.

MR. SPEAKER: The time for question period has expired. Might we complete this series of questions?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

Final, Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to say that I'm very encouraged by the remarks of the minister. I am, but I want to ask the minister this: will he do it real fast? Those elections are coming up in October 1989. There's a bus driver in my constituency who wants to run without having to quit his job. Will he do it this session?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you for the question.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I want to just make this comment about my hon. colleague. If I did it as fast as the hon. member raises the question, I would have done it yesterday.

In response, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. member. If that's possible, and where I can receive the endorsement from local government with regards to something like that, I'll look at it and I'll take it as a task.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair believes that we need to vary our procedure again and allow at least one introduction of a school group, if that's agreeable.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried. Thank you.
Member for Lloydminster.

INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

(reversion)

MR. CHERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you a group of students from the Kitscoty elementary school. There's 49 in the group with their teachers Miss Dianna Dixon, Mrs. Ruth Wilm, and Mr. Bob Gerhart. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair would like to point out that there are three points of order and one request under Standing Order 40. Points of order in this particular order will be Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the Minister of the Environment, followed by Calgary-North West

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order. The citation is *Beauchesne* 200(3), which relates to:

The Government House Leader discusses with the House Leaders of other parties, the business arrangements for the House and attempts to reach some compromise in the length of debate on each of various items of business.

Mr. Speaker, the House Leaders did in fact meet some days ago and arrived at a decision related to an adjournment for a summer break in this House. The dates being presented to us were from July 3 to July 7. It now appears from a motion that has been dropped onto the Order Paper that the government has moved to change those dates from July 3 to July 11. This was done without consultation with the House leaders, and it comes to mind that there are other possible -- in fact, probable -- rea-

sons for such an extension, the main one being that the Code report on the Principal affair is anticipated to be tabled on the 6th or the 7th and to be made public almost immediately.

Mr. Speaker, heaven only knows the government has cause to defer as long as possible from facing questions from the opposition on this matter of great concern to Albertans: 67,000 citizens were betrayed by government inactivity . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member. [interjections] Order please, order. Order, please, in all parts of the House. A point of order is with respect to whatever the principle is here. It's not getting into any issues such as the member is currently speaking to, so back to the point of order, please.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, the government has abused the processes of the House by making this arbitrary and unilateral decision, and I think in so doing furthers the whole cynicism of the people of Alberta that any time they please they can abuse the processes of the legislation of the government.

Mr. Speaker, the government in doing this adds to the sort of hunker-down mentality that they have had; in fact, this is *déjà vu*. This is exactly the same weekend they did it on before. Trying to defer the potential for questions from the people of Alberta through their representatives in this House about a matter of grave . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order please, hon. member. With due respect, the motion will come before the House to be dealt with in due course. The member has obviously now stated the complaint with regard to this point of order. The Chair does not regard it as being a point of order, since indeed the motion will be before the Assembly to be dealt with and discussion will take place at that time.

Minister of the Environment. [interjections] Order please. Minister of the Environment.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise under the provisions of Standing Order 23. I know that this may be somewhat of a problem, that these points of order are to be discussed when the particular matter is being discussed in the Assembly. But there is a problem, and I speak to this matter under section (h) of Standing Order 23. A member may be called to order by the Speaker if, under section (h), that member:

makes allegations against another member,
and section (i):

imputes false or unavowed motives to another member.

The problem, Mr. Speaker, is that yesterday the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place accused me of doing something which in fact I didn't do. I've been accused of doing a lot of things, and some of them I actually did, but this one I didn't do. I did not raise it at the time, Mr. Speaker, because, as you will recall, you ruled the question out of order, and I was not allowed to answer. Therefore, I couldn't get my answer into the record.

I also wanted to confirm the hon. member's allegation with *Hansard*. So to quote from yesterday's *Hansard*, page 435:

To the minister, who tells the Sierra Club that he'll only go there if there are no other political parties present

Mr. Speaker, the allegation is absolutely false. My staff, in the normal course of events, was in contact with the organizers of the event in Calgary to determine both the format and the participants involved. But at no time did I or any one of my staff indicate to the organizers that if members of the opposition were

present, I would not attend. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the meeting was a public meeting and was well advertised, so anyone could attend. The hon. member's allegation leaves . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Is there a second part to this? I think the minister, in the opinion of the Chair, has made his point with respect to what occurred. Is there anything else supplementary? Was there a second part to this?

MR. KLEIN: Yes, Mr. Speaker, there is a second part, and that is the allegation, the allegation that leaves the completely misleading impression with the House that I was somehow fearful of attending a forum at which opposition members would be present. Mr. Speaker, as Minister of the Environment I am prepared to debate and discuss environmental issues at any time, anywhere, and with anyone. I simply want to know the format so that I'll know whether I'm going to be involved in honest questions or political rhetoric.

MR. SPEAKER: Point well made. On this particular point of order, perhaps a brief comment by Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: On the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Is this an additional point of order?

MR. McINNIS: No, on the same point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: Very briefly, please.

MR. McINNIS: I attended this morning at the studios of ITV in Edmonton, where the Minister of the Environment was expected for a filming of *Alberta This Week*. The minister was a no-show on that occasion. I would like to say for the record that my information in respect to the statement yesterday comes from an organizer of the meeting. I believe it to be correct information. I also believe the minister's point of order falls into that broad category of dispute of facts among members and in fact is an excuse to get up and make a speech.

MR. SPEAKER: In the opinion of the Chair, the Minister of the Environment has made his points with respect to what he felt to be some imputation against his character. Therefore, the Chair feels that the Minister of the Environment has made his point. The Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place quite rightly brought out the reference with regard to having to accept versions of statements which may, from time to time, appear to be contradictory. However, the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place was out of order in making reference to an event that occurred outside of the House on this day, when the original point of order was dealing with something that happened prior to this day.

Now the Chair recognizes Calgary-North West on the point of order.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order. I'd like to cite *Beauchesne* 408(1)(a) and (1)(b). This is in reference to the questions put today in this House by the Member for Calgary-Bow.

AN HON. MEMBER: What questions?

MR. BRUSEKER: Precisely.

I would just like to read (1)(a) and (b):

- (1) Such questions [regarding oral questions] should:
 - (a) be [questions] asked only in respect of matters of sufficient urgency and importance as to require an immediate answer.
 - (b) not inquire whether statements made in a newspaper are correct.

The questions put forth today, Mr. Speaker, were questions that were regarding: "Gee whiz, are they really true, that I read in the news release? Are they really true, that I read in the newspaper?" I believe the directions from the Chair, as early as the beginning of question period, said that it was the intent that question period move along a little more quickly and that the questions be sufficiently urgent both in terms of the question being quick and the answer being quick. I believe the questions put forth by the Member for Calgary-Bow were neither urgent nor were they sufficiently important to require an answer, since the answer had already been given. She was simply seeking confirmation and I believe wasting the time of this House.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair will recognize Edmonton-Highlands, followed by Red Deer-North, and that will be sufficient discussion on this purported point of order.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly true that the last time the House leaders of this Assembly met, we did agree that question period would be given over to questions and that ministerial statements would be made at the point on the routine orders which is called Ministerial Statements. I mean, it is the practice of parliamentary Houses throughout Canada that one exercises one's legislative rights at the appropriate time on the Order Paper. We've seen several examples where that's not true. So I'd just like to add my voice to this point of order, more directly related to the Orders of the Day themselves. There's ample opportunity for ministers to make those statements. I can tell you that as an opposition member I'd love to have a little section here that says "opposition statements." So I make the case on that point, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, citing *Beauchesne*, which the Member for Edmonton-Highlands didn't do, and referring to the Member for Calgary-North West, I think his ignorance of procedure can be excused because he's a relatively new member. But his bias . . . [interjections] As usual, the truth continues to hurt them.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Order please, in all quarters. The Chair did seem to find that most members were listening to the purported point of order being proposed by the Member for Calgary-North West and the comment made by Edmonton-Highlands. Could we also now please listen to what's happening here?

MR. DAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. McEACHERN: If he could keep a civil tongue in his head.

MR. SPEAKER: Excuse us, Edmonton-Kingsway?

MR. McEACHERN: I said: if he could keep a civil tongue in his head.

MR. SPEAKER: Would you please keep your tongue in your head, under Standing Order SO. With due respect, hon. member, it's not helpful at this moment. [interjections]

MS BARRETT: That's right. We're not allowed to [inaudible]

MR. SPEAKER: Excuse me, House leader. That is not entirely correct.

Red Deer-North.

MR. DAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The concern is about time in question period. The Member for Calgary-North West, as I cite citation 409, has obviously and with tremendous bias overlooked the time and the violations in 409(2) and (5), especially of the members of both the parties opposite, being the member of the NDP and the member of the Liberal Party. A quick glance over *Hansards* of last week will show that both of the leaders, affectionately now known as the Blues Brothers, consistently took four, five, and six sentences in their initial question -- and you graciously have allowed us three questions, Mr. Speaker -- consistently four, five, and six. And their preambles never, I repeat never, as you look through *Hansard* ascribe to your ruling of bringing out the question quite quickly. In fact, Mr. Speaker, if there's any time being wasted by this House, it's by the members opposite who can't stand the truth and they can't face up to it. I rest my case.

[A member rose]

MR. SPEAKER: No. Please sit down. [interjections] The Chair will not recognize other members on this. The Chair made that quite evident about five minutes ago. And Calgary-North West, on points of order you do not have the right to sum up.

The broader issue, in terms of comments which were made which were ancillary to the purported point of order, dealt with whether or not ministerial statements should be made in the House or if they're going to be made in the House. And the length of time with respect to questions and supplementary questions and also with respect to answers has to indeed be taken into consideration by each member of the House when they stand to participate in question period. Now, that's one whole issue. Hopefully, House leaders, when they do meet, will be able to deal with that in terms of their own relationships and intercommunication with each other and be able to communicate it to their caucuses.

Now, with respect to the purported point of order, while the Chair listened to the Member for Calgary-North West, the Chair would also suggest to the Member for Calgary-North West that government backbenchers don't get all that much of an opportunity to get into question period. In the Chair's recollection and memory this is at most the second time, but I believe the first time, that the Member for Calgary-Bow was able to get into question period. So perhaps hon. members would have, with respect to what is being discussed at the moment -- perhaps a little more consideration should be given to fellow new members of the House.

head: MOTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 40

MR. SPEAKER: Under Standing Order 40 there's a request by Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, in light of actions during the last few days in China, particularly the sentencing of so-called student rioters and immediately putting them to death by execution forces, it is the sentiment of the Official Opposition that a stronger message need now go through this Assembly to the government and also through this Assembly to the federal government with respect to actions . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MS BARRETT: . . . that could be taken to further discourage the show trials and executions being now committed by the Chinese government. It is for that reason that I've presented the motion that I read out under Notices of Motion prior to question period today. I don't see any need to reread the motion. It is simply a more strongly worded motion than that which was approved by the Assembly on June 5, and under the circumstances, I would argue, is desperately needed for consideration.

It's pretty hard to deny that the situation in China is escalating to an emergency situation that has the eyes of the world upon it and has the disgust of the world upon it. For those reasons, and knowing that the federal External Affairs minister has taken to date some measures and that there is probably yet to come a meeting between provincial representatives and their federal counterparts to deal with this issue, the matter should be discussed today so that messages can be sent prior to that meeting taking place and prior to the Rt. Hon. Joe Clark making further decisions as to possible sanctions the federal government might want to consider.

So I believe that would be the case for urgency. I ask members, including the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry who two weeks ago denied unanimous consent, to reconsider that posture in light of the importance and the urgency of the matter.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HORSMAN: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, under Standing Order 23 we are proposing to debate what we have already voted on, in effect. Unless I'm mistaken, we have already dealt with this matter in the Assembly. I would therefore wonder whether or not this motion is in order.

MS BARRETT: On the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: On that point of order?

MS BARRETT: Oh, yes, of course. Mr. Speaker, the motion is substantially different from that which was sponsored by the Government House Leader on June 5. That, by the way, was not only unanimously agreed for consideration but men unanimously endorsed. But the motion that was endorsed was fairly mild. I would like to read it into the record, Mr. Speaker. No? Okay. Fairly mild and fairly first-stage considering the motion that is now in front of us, which asks specifically for the Alberta government to now

review its current political, cultural, and economic relations with the government of the People's Republic of China and adds two other new clauses: that we urge the government of Canada to increase its diplomatic and economic efforts to pressure Chinese authorities to reverse their policy of repression

and then has another one respecting the resettlement of Chinese citizens wishing to remain in Canada.

So on three counts, Mr. Speaker, it is a substantially different motion. On that basis I would argue that it is in order and again urge the approval of the Assembly to deal with it.

MR. SPEAKER: We're going to have three members standing at once here, folks.

MS BARRETT: Pardon me?

MR. DECORE: I didn't see anybody else, sir.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, the Member for Edmonton-Highlands was still standing and still speaking. Edmonton-Highlands, are you now finished?

MS BARRETT: Yes; thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had concluded the argument that the motion is substantially different and therefore not in violation of our Standing Orders.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

To the point of order? To the point of order, Edmonton-Glengarry.

MR. DECORE: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm prepared to agree that the circumstances today are considerably different than they were at the time that the hon. member presented her motion. I think there is urgency to this matter. I think that when people are being shot in the head, you have to send a message, and it's time to do it. I think we should debate this, sir.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, on the point of order, earlier on when the Chair received first notification of this, the Chair had the same concern that the House had already decided on the particular issue. However, in light of the escalation of events in China, the Chair agrees with some reluctance that this motion could go forward for request for unanimous consent under Standing Order 40. But having said that, the Chair would also direct that there would be no further motions with respect to the situation in China during the course of this current Legislature this sitting. It would be very difficult for us to keep passing motion after motion after motion.

Now, then, the Member for Edmonton-Highlands has made a request for unanimous consent to proceed under Standing Order 40. All those willing to give unanimous consent with respect to urgency, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion fails.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

head: WRITTEN QUESTIONS

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, on the subject of questions today, I would move that we deal with a number of questions.

The following written questions stand and retain their places on the Order Paper: 145, 146, 148.

AN HON. MEMBER: Is this debatable?

MR. SPEAKER: We do have a debatable motion indeed. The Chair now recognizes Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the questions mentioned by the hon. Minister for Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs is Question 148, which asks for statistics on tonnage of paper used and how much recycled paper is used. The urgency for this question is that these particular estimates are destined for debate tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I could urge the government to reconsider shoveling this one aside, because it was also a question which was tabled prior to the commencement of this session June 1, three weeks ago. We're dealing with the estimates of the department that deals with this tomorrow. It's a very important issue, and it's difficult to deal with it in the context of the government's spending estimates without some of the background data that's required. I thought by doing the government the courtesy of putting this on the Order Paper ahead of the commencement of the session, we might have this information prior to the estimates of the department concerned.

In view of the importance of the issue, Mr. Speaker, which is recycling and the important role of the government in the recycling process, I'm hoping that the government might reconsider and provide this information in the interests of facilitating the debate which, as I said, is destined for Committee of Supply tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: All those in favour of the motion as proposed by the Government House Leader, please say aye.

[Motion carried]

147. Mr. Wright asked the government the following question:
- (1) What was the number of all actions commenced in each of the last five years of record in the Court of Queen's Bench;
 - (2) of these, how many in each year were actions commenced by statement of claim; and
 - (3) with respect to the most recent year of record, what was the average time between commencement, in any year, and trial?

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, I have to reject this one because we can't provide some of the information. I have discussed it with the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, and I will provide what information we can.

163. Ms Barrett asked the government the following question: How many dollars were spent to host the shortest session ever of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, on February 17, 1989, including the specific costs related to
- (1) the food and beverage reception hosted in the Legislature rotunda and library;
 - (2) the cost of preparing and printing all copies of the February 1989 Speech from the Throne;
 - (3) the per them cost of accommodating non-Edmonton area MLAs, including travel costs, from the 16th

through the 20th of February, 1989; and

- (4) any additional costs associated with bringing on extra staff, such as security, Chamber pages, and any public relations contracts which were let through the Public Affairs Bureau related to the one-day occasion?

[Question accepted]

164. Mr. Hawkesworth asked the government the following question:

How many dollars, as of June 6, 1989, have been drawn from the \$4.2 billion special warrant approved for expenditures by Executive Council on March 22, 1989, and subsequently spent on activities and grants not routinely associated with the day-to-day activities of departments and agencies of the government of Alberta?

[Question accepted]

166. Mr. McEachern asked the government the following question:

For the three Crown Corporations -- the Alberta Opportunity Company, AOC; the Alberta Agricultural Development Corporation, AADC; and the Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation, AHMC; including the Alberta Housing Corporation and the Alberta Mortgage Corporation before they were amalgamated into AMHC -- what were

- (1) the yearly and total values of subsidies from the general revenues of the province to these corporations,
 - (2) the yearly and the total values of write-downs and provisions for losses of these corporations, and
 - (3) the values of yearly and total debt carried on the books of these corporations
- from their incorporations until March 31, 1988, or March 31, 1989, if available?

[Question accepted]

167. Mr. McEachern asked the government the following question:

with respect to the public accounts for the 1986-87 fiscal year,

- (1) how much refund is covered by the sum \$4.5 million, shown on page 26.6, volume 2, under the heading Corporate Tax Interest Refunds;
- (2) where in the accounts is this refund accounted for, and
- (3) is this refund a part of the corporate credits and rebates of \$52 million or part of the corporate small business deductions of \$74.9 million shown on page 26.7?

[Question accepted]

168. Mr. McEachern asked the government the following question:

Does the government confirm the statement on page 26.7, volume 2, of the public accounts for 1986-87:

Revenues:	
Corporate Income Tax	448.6 million

Corporate Small Business Deduction	(75.0 million)
Other Corporate Tax	(52.2 million)
Credit and Rebates:	
Royalty Tax Credits	(425.1 million)
Net gain (loss)	(103.7 million)
and if so, in respect of that information, are the \$425.1 million in rebates all in the oil and gas sector?	
What is the sectoral breakdown of the \$75 million and \$52 million provisions indicated above?	

[Question accepted]

178. Mr. Decore asked the government the following question: On Monday, June 5, 1989, during Oral Question Period, the Provincial Treasurer informed the Assembly that the government had set up a review process to examine and determine how to deal with the province's unfunded pension liability. In that regard,
- (1) when was the review process established,
 - (2) who makes up the review group,
 - (3) who initiated the establishment of the group,
 - (4) on what dates did the group meet.
 - (5) is there a schedule of meetings for the future for the review group,
 - (6) what is the time line for the group providing the minister with its recommendations, and
 - (7) after receiving the recommendations, when will the minister report his intended action to the Assembly?

MR. JOHNSTON: We'll reject that question.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you; 178 is rejected.

head: **MOTIONS FOR RETURNS**

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I move that all motions for returns, except Motion for a Return 169, stand and retain their places on the Order Paper.

MR. SPEAKER: All those in -- is there a call for the question? Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to disagree with the motion. The debate that ensued here a few days ago -- on Tuesday, in fact -- showed pretty clearly that the government looks like it wants to say no to these requests for information that they harbour and at the same time look like they don't want to admit that they're denying the information. On that basis, and because of the type of information that is being sought and the fact that we are in an unusual environment of sitting through a summer, which does not mean that we'll be sitting to December or whatever, it means that we need this information as soon as possible.

Now, I argued last week and I'll make the argument again: the opposition is more than willing to accommodate reasonable amendments whenever they're required. If the information simply cannot be had, or if the information might be contained on memos that would ordinarily be one or two thoughts jotted down by a minister and then tossed away, obviously we don't want that kind of information. What we are seeking is systematic information that is contained in a few ministers' offices.

In the instance of the motions for returns that are being spon-

sored by the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place, I would argue that this is particularly important. We have at this point no assurance of the type of EIA that is going to proceed, Mr. Speaker, respecting the various pulp mills projects. We know that people are desiring to have information so they can be informed when they get to those environmental impact assessment meetings of whatever description that take place.

Now, if the government wanted to release this information and completely ignore the component within the Orders of the Day that allows us to make a written request for these returns and simply table the information, I'd be the first one to assure the members of this Assembly that the Official Opposition New Democrats will drop our requests for that information. The problem, Mr. Speaker, is that we can't say, "Okay, take your time boys," when we don't know if they ever plan to deal with these issues or if they plan instead to deal with them in the way that they attempted on Tuesday, which was to almost negate the motion seeking the information.

These things are urgent, Mr. Speaker. We have a federal government breathing down our neck on the environmental projects, and rightfully so in my view, because they don't believe that the provincial process to date is adequate to meet the concerns of future generations; as one Indian person that I know says, "seven generations hence," which is the generation that should judge our actions. Now, if we can't have this information, how can the people who need to make interventions with respect to these various mills make them on an uninformed basis? Well, that defeats the purpose.

Now, I challenged the government last week to declare that this Assembly would sit for however long it takes to get this information across our desks. I got no response to that challenge, Mr. Speaker. I can only assume that the motion that they stand and retain their place is a motion to delay until the House no longer sits for this session.

It is not just the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place who I believe has arguments about the urgency, although I'm sure he would speak to that, but it seems to me that there are other members of the opposition who have requests for information that will not be satisfied by the motion to leave them stand and retain their place with the exception of one. I think it is fair enough that in this sitting we finally be entitled to information that was sought last year when the various ministers of the Crown argued inside this Assembly that they had all sorts of studies and surveys, et cetera, et cetera, to conclude to the satisfaction of themselves that the free trade deal would be good for Alberta. We never did get that information, Mr. Speaker. Now, the FTA has since been implemented, but in our ability to monitor, first of all, the consequences of the implementation of the FTA, it would be very helpful to be able to compare that to the projections the government said that it had with respect to that agreement.

Similarly, Mr. Speaker, now Bill 7 -- I can't recall the exact title -- has already been approved by the Assembly and I understand will get . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. With due respect, hon. member, Bill 7 is certainly not involved in a motion for a return. Let us deal with the motion in terms of urgency, requests for information. We're not going to go through a whole debate on each one of the motions for returns, let alone get into Bills.

MS BARRETT: Well, Mr. Speaker, within about five seconds

of my uttering that statement, I was about to say that that doesn't mean that we don't need the information requested under Motion for a Return 177 sponsored by the Member for Vegreville. That is important information for the member in his own riding and to assess the ability of the fund, in terms of how or what percentage of it is being eaten up by fees and what percentage of it is being used for the purposes for which it is established. I think that's a very valid request under the circumstances. The Member for Vegreville, as I said, was happy to see Bill 7 come forward, but that doesn't mean that he doesn't still require this information. So I don't think we should be told that it should just stand and retain its place.

I would just love to go into the details of motions for returns 179 and 180, but I suspect that that would keep us in debate for a very long while. The fact of the matter is that there's information sought there that is long overdue, Mr. Speaker, and I don't believe the government has established any reason in its motion for not providing us with that information.

Similarly, Mr. Speaker, the requests under motions for returns 181 and 182 I believe are appropriate in this very sitting of the Assembly, as we are currently debating not just the estimates of the Assembly but the implications of revenue coming from the federal government. That is a provincial issue as much as it is a federal issue. And I think we have a right, as the watchdogs in this Assembly of the money being spent, to have that information. I believe the government has the responsibility to provide that information and not simply say every Tuesday and Thursday that they move that these requests for information stand and retain their place. I don't think it's good enough.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I think the requests that are being sponsored by the Member for Edmonton-Centre are again well related to the budget estimates. Now, what are we supposed to do? Sit down, behave ourselves, and say, "Okay, you're the government; do what you want," and then we don't have the information if the Department of Health estimates come up before the information requested is tabled? I don't think that's a very fair process.

Now, we sometimes wait for six, seven weeks during a regular spring sitting of this Assembly -- we wait for quite a while -- before we start debating the motion, usually sponsored by government in the early stages of a sitting, that motions for returns or written questions stand and retain their place. We're not going to hold our breaths that we're in for a long sitting this time, Mr. Speaker, although I will be formally requesting it, and I'll be formally requesting a fall sitting. We have to be realistic; we know that the Conservatives are going to outvote us on those issues, and if they don't want a fall sitting or a long sitting in the summer, they're not going to have one. We might not be able to get this information. That's the reason that for the last week I had stood to argue that . . .

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

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

MS BARRETT: What's your point of order? What's your citation?

MR. SPEAKER: It's up to the Chair, thank you, hon. member, not Edmonton-Highlands. A point of order is being requested of the Chair, not Edmonton-Highlands.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I'm extremely reluctant to interrupt the hon. member, but I quote for your benefit, Your Honour, Standing Order 23(b), where a member

speaks to [a matter] other than

(i) the question under discussion.

In my understanding, Mr. Speaker, the question under discussion is Motion for a Return 169, very clear and very simple, and the government has indicated the government is not prepared to disclose that information.

MR. SPEAKER: No. Point of order fails.

Concluding remarks, Edmonton-Highlands. Because there is some hope by all members, including the Chair, that in terms of trying to find information we might, indeed, get to Motion for a Return 169 sometime today.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, I do look forward to the information on 169. I'm talking about the importance of the other motions for returns.

I will conclude my remarks with the following suggestion. The Government House Leader and I have met on this subject with yourself, Mr. Speaker, and discussed that on Tuesdays and Thursdays a regular format would be presented to the Assembly so that we know what's being asked to stand and retain its place and what's going to come forward for consideration and possible acceptance. If it is the intention of the minister -- in this case, for instance, the Minister of the Environment or the Government House Leader -- to assure us that sometime during the next few weeks we will get the information we ask, then there's no need to keep debating the motion that they stand and retain their place. I asked for that most reasonably a week ago. A simple preamble or an inclusion into the motion of that reference would be enough, Mr. Speaker. So until we get that, we have no choice but to continue to make our case for the importance of getting this information as soon as possible. And it sure would be nice to have it before some of these departments' estimates come up for consideration.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, it comes full circle. There are some words that I've remembered for a very long time. The words are: We believe in open government; we believe this principle must be protected against the comfortable drift to government by order in council.

MR. SPEAKER: No orders in council are mentioned in any of these statements.

MR. McINNIS: Pardon me?

MR. SPEAKER: No orders in council are mentioned in any of these statements. It's talking about motions for returns.

AN HON. MEMBER: He's making a quote.

MR. SPEAKER: Sorry. On motions for returns, hon. member. Proceed.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, is this a ruling? I don't understand.

MR. SPEAKER: The member was talking about orders in

council. The Chair, even with any kind of quick reading of this, sees nothing about orders in council. We're talking about motions for a return. So we're talking about relevance in debate. The motion is to have all of these stand on the Order Paper with the exception of 169.

Could we please focus debate with regard to motions for a return and urgency. Thank you.

MR. McINNIS: I understand the point. I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker; I didn't understand what you were saying.

The words I quoted were the words of the Hon. Peter Lougheed, who was at that time the Leader of the Opposition. It was one of the guideposts of the Progressive Conservative Party which the Progressive Conservative Party used to take over the government of this province in 1971. The words refer to open government. The drift to government by order in council refers to closed government, government in which information is not available to the citizens, timely information about absolutely crucial matters of public policy. Mr. Speaker, the words are relevant because they refer directly to the situation we're in today. After three weeks of delay on the question of whether the government would be prepared to table information about agreements and understandings that exist between the government and various forest companies operating or proposing to operate throughout the province, for three weeks the government moved that these motions stand and retain their place on the Order Paper.

I do recognize that I may have been involved in voting against one of those motions from time to time. Nonetheless, there was the situation in which we found ourselves on Tuesday, when the government decided to take an entirely different tack. Rather than simply have them stand and retain their place on the Order Paper, there was an amendment brought in to radically restrict the type of information to be made public. Mr. Speaker, I believe that motion resulted from a great deal of confusion in the government ranks as to exactly how it was going to handle this issue.

I'm hopeful that the government would reconsider this particular motion so that we might clarify some of the confusion, particularly on the part of the members of the government caucus. I would like to cite, for example, the statement of the Member for Clover Bar, who said on Tuesday:

In respect to the deletion of the word "correspondence," as has been referred to by the hon. House leader, there is confidentiality there that precludes release of that information, and again, it's part of the negotiating process.

I think that certainly shows . . .

MR. GESELL: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. Under section 23(f) we are debating here an amendment that has been discussed by this Assembly and has been decided.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, I'm not debating any such amendment at all. I'm debating confusion in the ranks of the government as reflected by the motion before us today. [interjection] Well, the confusion appears to be in the mind of the hon. member, and I think I need to refer to a few other hon. members, so that we have this straight. The confusion is that the government members have been told by somebody that what's being sought is some information that's part of negotiations, when in fact we're not even close to the area of negotiations in the context of this motion.

Another statement, by the hon. Member for Calgary-Millican, in which he says he doesn't understand what other documents mean, and goes so far as to refer to:

. . . studies . . . projections, calculations, working papers, reports, speech notes, minutes of meetings, and "What did your wife think about the whole thing?"

Now, Mr. Speaker, I draw the line at speech notes. I don't want any speech notes tabled in this Legislative Assembly pursuant to any of my motions for a return. If I want speech notes, I'll certainly be capable of writing a motion to make sure that speech notes are concluded.

But I suppose the prize for confusion goes to the Minister of the Environment, who refers to this matter as making a "mockery out of a reasonable request for information." It's clear that the minister is not a mod and he's not a rocker, he's certainly a mocker, because if he believes that it's a mockery to ask for agreements which exist and understandings which exist between the government and forest companies, then I believe the mockery is on the part of the person who occupies that portfolio. And the reason is very, very simple, Mr. Speaker. The minister is in the final stages of organizing an environmental impact assessment process which is to take place primarily in the Athabasca region of the province. But I believe sensibly that it would take place in other parts of the province as well, because we're talking about the future development of a provincial resource.

With all respect to the Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche, I know that he has concerns about his constituents' economic role in that project. Those are valid concerns, and he's absolutely right to debate them. But there are people who have a concern about the future direction of our province, about forestalling other possible development options, and certainly about the environmental impact of this deal.

Now, the deal is between the government of Alberta and the Alberta-Pacific corporation, which, as I said earlier, is a subsidiary . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Please, hon. member. Thank you for taking us for a tour through some of the constituencies of the province. We are now not going to get into the detail of any one of these specific motions for returns. We're speaking to urgency, I trust. Let's conclude on that, please, so that hopefully later in the day the Member for Calgary-Mountain View might stand a chance to deal with his motion. Thank you.

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You anticipated the direction of my remarks in a very precise fashion.

The minister has announced that there will be a citizens review panel struck by the government, that there will be persons appointed to that panel, some possibly from the federal government. A number, clearly, have been identified as being persons in the local area. He announced on Monday evening, outside the Chamber admittedly, that the government will make \$75,000 of taxpayers' money available to and I think through local municipalities to other groups, so that they may make studies and prepare argument for the proceedings of that citizens review panel.

Now, the point I'm making, and I wish the minister were here to participate in this debate, is that the people who may be in receipt of that \$75,000 need to have certain information before they can conduct their evaluation. What they're to evaluate, what the whole environmental impact assessment

process is to evaluate is: whether this particular deal is going to have an environmental impact on the subject area, which is positive or negative; what is that environmental impact; and is it in the public interests of the province to proceed, knowing that environmental impact is taking place.

Now, at this time there is no pulp mill that exists to evaluate. Rather, it's only a series of documents. It's some plans; it's some agreements; it's a series of things that collectively constitute an understanding. My argument is simply this: that it's not possible to do a proper evaluation or even an assessment of the impact of a project, of a deal, unless you know what that deal is. I'm saying that the government has to come forward with the information, has to come forward with the understanding that exists between the government and the companies before the work can properly commence in preparation for those hearings.

I've listened very carefully to what the Minister of the Environment has said, and what he's said is that this review panel is to be structured within the next few weeks, that he anticipates they will begin their hearings during the month of July, that a report or a conclusion to the proceedings might be expected in the month of August. I think he's been very consistent in outlining that time frame. I do appreciate, Mr. Speaker -- and perhaps someone from the government may reveal whether this is what they're thinking -- that the court decision announced today, the appeal on the Rafferty-Alameda decision, and the involvement of the federal government might knock that timetable off stride. That's a possibility, but it's not a certainty.

MR. SPEAKER: That's not part of the motions for returns.

MR. McINNIS: I'm speaking to the time frame within which the information is required. I'm saying that the time frame announced by the minister is one thing -- that's a time frame that extends for completion of the whole process between the end of the first week in August and the end of the third week in August 1989. I'm admitting the possibility that that time frame may be expanded by events that are beyond the control of any member of this Assembly. But I'm saying clearly that, number one, it's a waste of taxpayers' money to be granting funds to study a project without the government being prepared to reveal what that project is. I also feel that the funding for intervenors should not come from the taxpayers in the first place, that it should come from the proponent. However, I'd be out of order if I made that point, so I won't make it. Instead, what I'm attempting to say here is that the proceedings are, as we speak, Mr. Speaker, unfolding in the case of the Alberta-Pacific project. The train is rolling; it has left the station. We have to come to terms with whether or not this government is prepared to make the information available.

Now, if they're not, then presumably all of the parties to that proceeding will have to live with that, and they will have to make their plans and their preparations accordingly. But where we are today, June 22, the government has not revealed whether it is prepared to make that information available or not. Therefore, anyone contemplating commencing a research program in preparation for those hearings will not know whether to wait and see whether this information is to be provided, or to proceed on the assumption that the information will not be provided at all.

I think you can appreciate, Mr. Speaker, that there are many, many thousands of Albertans who are anxiously awaiting their opportunity to participate in this process because they have questions, questions that need to be answered. And I feel that

I'm here as a representative of people to help them to obtain the information they need in order to ask relevant questions and, in some cases, even to have those questions answered by a tabling of material in the Legislative Assembly. So Motion for a Return 150, which is the second one up on the Order Paper, has a very clear time frame to it in the context of the hearings of the citizens review panel.

Now, Motion 151 is a different matter altogether.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member; we're not going through them individually. The admonition was given before. As a matter of fact, the member is in danger of being ruled out of order under 23(c): needless repetition.

The Chair's still standing, thank you. So perhaps taking that into account, we won't hear any more repetitious material. Perhaps you can come to a lightning-like conclusion. Thank you.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, the material has not been repetitious so far, but in view of the comments of the Chair . . .

MR. SPEAKER: With due respect, hon. member, in the opinion of the Chair it is. So please continue.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, we've seen the government go from delay to devious tactics to frustrate and back to delay again. For that reason I urge members to vote against the motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Call for the question.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: All those in favour of the motion as proposed by the Government House Leader, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion carries.

169. Mr. McInnis moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of sampling data and all reports prepared on sampling data respecting water quality and aquatic biology in the Wapiti River since January 1, 1972.

[Motion carried]

head: **MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS**

204. Moved by Mr. Hawkesworth:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to take immediate action to vigorously oppose plans by the federal government to impose a regressive goods and services tax on Albertans.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm looking forward to the debate that's going to occur on this particular mo-

tion. It'll be interesting for me to know what the other parties of the House are going to do with this particular motion, so I'm going to keep my remarks relatively brief in order to allow them to speak to this motion. But I want to say at the outset, Mr. Speaker, that the position of the New Democratic Party has been clear and it has been consistent throughout the public discussion regarding this federal sales tax. Not so clear, though, has been the position the other parties have taken; those positions are not quite so clear. So it'll be interesting for me to listen to the debate as it unfolds to see how the other political parties respond to this particular vote on the motion in front of us.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

I notice, for example, that it wasn't too, too many months ago that the leader of the Liberal Party, for example, said that this tax would make good sense if it was applied properly. He also said that we're going to have to look at some sort of manipulation of the tax regime to collect more money; presumably this tax was going to be, and he seemed to indicate it was this tax that he supported in order to do that. Well, I'd like to know whether that's still the position of the Liberal Party in this Legislature.

I notice the Provincial Treasurer adopted, in one of his speeches before an audience here in the province, the same position. He had to end up saying, well, he was just fooling; it was just a joke. So that's fine and dandy, but it left a lot of Albertans wondering just who it was that spoke for the provincial government, the governing party in the Legislature, and wondering just exactly what their position was.

So we've got the motion on the floor. I'm pleased to have made it, to ensure that we get on the record what everybody in this Assembly thinks. So I'm presenting a choice, Mr. Speaker, to the members of the Assembly: adopt the motion and prove that we're still committed to fighting the federal government on this value-added tax or this regressive goods and services tax. I'm saying: let's choose between action and inaction. There's a choice before the Assembly: adopt the motion, vote on it, or talk it out. That's the choice before us, and it will be interesting to see whether all hon. members in the Assembly would be willing to allow this to come to the vote to ensure that the position of each member in each party in this Assembly is on the record.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the move to impose a regressive goods and services tax on Albertans has been widely discussed; there have been all sorts of analyses presented about this tax. And I would just like to highlight some of the reasons why members of this Assembly should support the motion. First of all, it's inflationary. That's a position the Provincial Treasurer himself has argued at one time in relation to this tax. We can just see, Mr. Speaker, a recent example. The recent inflation index figures were announced, and I notice that the analysts have said that the reason inflation went up to 5 percent could be directly attributed to the increased taxes announced in the recent federal budget, that in fact the taxes announced recently by the federal Finance minister had the effect of increasing inflation. According to the Conference Board of Canada, they have now estimated that if this tax were to be introduced as proposed, by itself it would add 7.3 percent to the inflation index.*

Mr. Speaker, this tax is regressive. It means that it's not based on the ability to pay. It's based on what people spend. It's obvious that people of lower incomes, where a greater

* see page 5678, right col, para. 4

proportion of their incomes is spent on goods and services than those who are wealthy, are going to end up with a significantly larger proportion of their income going towards this particular tax. So rather than making the system more fair, this particular tax is going to make it more unfair. Despite the assurances that the federal minister has given us that there will be tax credits and moves to give some money back to people of low income, we've seen what direction he's been taking with some of his other social programs and promises, particularly for the old folk. Just simply, Mr. Speaker, to expect these rebates by themselves to make the system more fair -- I don't think we can rely on those assurances, nor should we rely on those assurances.

This tax will lead to higher unemployment. Again, going to the analysis that has recently been done by the Conference Board of Canada, the tax is expected to take \$5.5 billion out of the pockets of consumers. They'll in turn cut their spending, it'll lead to a slowdown in economic growth, and in 1991 it's expected that there will be a loss of 72,000 jobs. It's a significant number, Mr. Speaker, and one that we should be very, very concerned about.

This tax will also intrude on provincial powers. I'd like to allude to that a little bit later, but it's obvious that the provincial government and the provincial jurisdictions should always be very cautious when the federal government is intruding or proposing to intrude on our powers, and we should be sure to ensure that we stand up for what comes under our mandate and our jurisdiction in this Assembly.

And here's the irony, Mr. Speaker, of all ironies. As a result of this proposed national sales tax, if adopted, it will force, for the first time, Canadians to pay more for our own natural resources than the people we sell those resources to. That I don't believe is fair to anybody. Any right-thinking Albertan will not accept that kind of move by the federal government.

Well, those are just the highlights, Mr. Speaker. I could for each point go into a lot more detail. I'll leave that to other members, if they wish. But I think the important question is this: given that this tax is going to have these kinds of ramifications in our province, what is it, in essence, that we can do to stop or prevent this tax from being imposed? First of all -- and I think this is important and I've already made this point Mr. Speaker -- let's pass this motion. Let's have the Legislature of Alberta go on record that we do not want this tax imposed on Albertans. That's the first thing that could be done. An important first step is to simply say: "As the Legislature of Alberta, from all corners of this House, we agree: Mr. Wilson, we're not wanting you to impose this tax on our province."

Number two, the second idea, the Provincial Treasurer and the Premier could highlight a strategy to lobby the federal government in terms of -- vigorously, not . . .

Mr. Speaker, I see that given the hour . . .

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Excuse me, hon. member. Pursuant to Standing Order 8(3), we need to move on to the next order of business. But hon. member, would you care to adjourn debate?

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker; I would.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Having heard the motion, would all those in favour say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

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

**Bill 203
Freedom of Information and Protection
of Personal Privacy Act**

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to speak to . . .

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. Proceed.

AN HON. MEMBER: Where's the rest of your caucus?

MR. DECORE: I don't need them all like you do, hon. member. This powerful argument will be so overwhelming that even you will vote for it, sir.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please, hon. member. The Chair was endeavouring to achieve a smooth transition into the next item of business. Would you please proceed.

MR. DECORE: I'm delighted that the hon. Member for Cypress-Redcliff is interested in this issue of freedom of information, which is what I now rise to speak to, Mr. Speaker. I speak to second reading.

Mr. Speaker, something happened today that very much reinforces the need for this kind of legislation to be enacted in Alberta. I was surprised by the hon. Provincial Treasurer's rejection of a question that I put on the Order Paper asking for further and better particulars with respect to an answer he gave on June 5, 1989, during Oral Question Period. At that time he indicated, pursuant to some questions that I had put to him, that a process of review had been set up to look at the sensitive issue of unfunded pension liability. I thought it was admirable that the Provincial Treasurer had taken up that action, that he was concerned about it and had taken positive action and something was done. I put a question on the Order Paper saying: "What's happening? How did this process get established? What are the time lines? What are they supposed to do? What's their mandate? When will they report to the minister? When will the minister report to this Assembly?" And to have the minister stand up today and say that he rejects answering the question was surprising to me, because usually he's a very forthright, accommodating individual.

I look at the Order Paper, Mr. Speaker, and I see other examples of the desire for information to be made public. There are some 15 motions -- at least there were 15 motions until one was agreed to be answered -- from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place with respect to environmental matters. My colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo indicated to me that a number of letters he sent to ministers during the last Assembly to disclose information regarding government guarantees on loans were never answered, that there was always a shutting up or clamping up of the release of that kind of information.

So we had today a long debate from members of the New

Democratic Party on the need for information to be given to us so we could better fulfill our duties as Members of this Legislative Assembly. It seems to me it's so clear that when you have information, you're better able to perform your duties. When you have more information, when matters are clear, it's a given that you'll have better government, that there won't be any possibility of wrongdoing. Bureaucrats who are behind cabinet ministers will have to give information, and they can't hide anything. There is no possibility, no suspicion -- nothing can in any way create a perception that wrongdoing or impropriety or inaction is taking place.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to note that a number of provinces in Canada have already dealt with this issue. Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Quebec, Ontario, and Manitoba have all passed freedom-of-information legislation. Of course the federal government has freedom-of-information legislation. I couldn't put it any better than to read from the federal government *Hansard* on December 19, 1974, and quote the comments made by a distinguished Albertan with respect to this issue. That Albertan said:

I am attempting, by this bill . . .
He had introduced a Bill on freedom of information.

. . . to reverse the practice that exists in Canada, namely, that no information is given by the government unless it sees fit to do so.

Then he said:

My bill provides that it not be left to the government to make the final decision whether a subject matter or information comes within areas which are excepted. . . this must be decided by the courts. In other words, I am not prepared to trust any government. I am not prepared to trust a Liberal government, a Conservative government and . . . an NDP government [in that regard].

This distinguished Albertan, of course, we all know to be Ged Baldwin.

The debate also was spoken to by the minister now of the federal Crown, the hon. Mr. Beatty, when he said during that same time, December 19:

Today we have been discussing a piece of legislation which deals with the ability of a member of parliament to serve his constituents.

It's as basic as that. We're better able to serve our constituents; we're better able to serve Alberta; Alberta is a better place for it.

Mr. Speaker, I looked around at the legislation that exists with respect to freedom of information, and I want to congratulate the hon. Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn for the Bill he has submitted to this Assembly for consideration. The intent of the hon. member's Bill is the same intent I have, and that is to open up the process to allow information to be given to Members of this Legislative Assembly. With the greatest of respect to the hon. member, I don't think the Bill goes as far as it should. The Bill limits itself in the definition of section 1(a) to really actions of this government. The Bill I'm speaking to, Bill 203, is extending the freedom-of-information provisions much beyond this government or its agencies to include virtually all aspects of public life in Alberta, so that municipal governments would be subjected to the same kind of legislation we as the Alberta government would be subjected to. A development appeal board in Lethbridge or in Medicine Hat would be subjected to the same kind of necessity to give information out as an arm of a municipal government.

With the greatest of respect, the other problem I see with Bill 235 that my hon. friend would be speaking to is the fact that

exemptions aren't clearly enunciated, so I think there may be some difficulty in determining what exemptions should or shouldn't exist. And I have some difficulty with the argument, in spite of what Mr. Baldwin said in the House of Commons, that courts should be the final arbiters of disputes. I think courts are overclogged now; it's difficult to get matters through the courts. With the kind of demand that I think would exist, you need a special legislative officer, an officer who reports to this Assembly, that would deal in an independent way with issues involving freedom of information.

Mr. Speaker, the Act I have proposed is an Act that comes out of the work that was done in the province of Ontario. I should just bring to the Legislative Assembly's attention the fact that a Mr. James Breithaupt . . . I'm sorry if I've mispronounced that name. This Bill in Ontario was the work he specifically did as the chairman of the Law Reform Commission of Ontario. He looked at a number of other jurisdictions, hearings were held, and I think this Act is one of the leading Acts in Canada with respect to freedom of information. They had the opportunity as well to look at other legislation in Canada from New Democratic governments, Conservative governments, the federal government and, I think, perfect the kinds of experiences that had taken place. The legislation in Ontario was fairly recent legislation.

It's interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, the first section of Bill 203, which sets out the principles of the need for freedom-of-information legislation and for a personal privacy Act as well. I'd like to just read that first section when it says:

- 1 The purposes of this Act are,
 - (a) to provide a right of access to information under the control of institutions in accordance with the principles that,
 - (i) information should be available to the public,
 - (ii) necessary exemptions from the right of access should be limited and specific . . .

In other words, if we can make them as clear as possible, we should do so. Don't leave something to allow lots of interpretations to occur.

- (iii) decisions on the disclosure of government information should be reviewed independently of government.

That's the same principle the distinguished Albertan spoke of in the House of Commons in 1974, that those decisions should be independent of government. It shouldn't be the whim of government to say yea or nay: we'll release or we won't release.

I think the other important thing to draw to the Assembly's attention is the definition of "institution" in the Act, Mr. Speaker, that sets out a very much broader requirement of those agencies or institutions or entities that must provide information. And this is where I think the hon. Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn and I differ somewhat.

Mr. Speaker, when somebody comes to the government and says, "I want to do a development on the Eastern Slopes" or "I want to do a development in Athabasca" or "I want to do a development in Whitecourt, and I would like the consideration of the government in giving a grant or a loan or a guarantee," I think when a business comes to the public purse, it is fundamental that every Albertan who has to give out of his pocket moneys for that grant or that guarantee should know what the facts are. They should know what the complete facts are, the complete information on whatever that arrangement is. We had a situation not too long ago in the Kananaskis area where a group of developers got funding from the provincial government backing

up a position. If they went into a deficit position in a particular year, the government agreed by an agreement to back them up. There was a reluctance to give that information out. I think it's just a given that as soon as somebody comes and says, "I want to use money that Alberta taxpayers have given to this House, entrusted to this House to be given out," the true facts and all the facts should be made known.

Mr. Speaker, the Act calls for the establishment of this officer of the Legislative Assembly who would deal with a problem that arises when somebody comes to a ministry or an institution and says, "I want such and such information." If that institution says, "We won't give you the information," the onus -- and this is important -- falls on the government to show to the legislative officer, that commissioner, why it shouldn't give that information, why it would be harmful to Alberta's best interests not to give that information. It's not the onus on the person requesting; the onus is on the government to prove that they shouldn't give it. This is a very important principle here. When that refusal is given, the person asking for the information can go to the officer and within 30 days that decision has to be made. The process is quick, expeditious. The information is either decided in favour of the person asking for it or the government is upheld by the commissioner if it's in the public interest of Alberta not to release information.

The Act clearly sets out the things that should be exempted. For example, if there are discussions in the executive committee of government, if there are draft positions that are proposed, if information is coming that's being discussed in cabinet, I don't think that should be something anybody should be able to get hold of. Those are the kinds of workup documents that are required by government. But there are lots of things that should be made public and are not being made public.

Mr. Speaker, the other aspect of this Bill is the privacy aspect, and that is to protect people in the information they give to governments about themselves so that third parties can't use that information in any way detrimental to that person. We had a perfect example in this Legislative Assembly of that case. The Workers' Compensation Act is fuzzy. The Worker's Compensation Act isn't clear as to what the duties of a minister are with respect to getting information and giving out information. It seems to me that it's hard for a minister to do his duty unless he has the ability to call up a file and look at it and react to it. We had the unfortunate situation of a minister of the Crown of this government having to stand up and apologize for information he let out on the Spencer affair. That shouldn't happen. He shouldn't be put in that kind of position because of fuzzy wording in a Workers' Compensation Act. This cleans that up. This overrides all the Acts in Alberta and says that when it is clearly to the detriment of the person and the government has information on that person, then there can be a stoppage of giving that information out to the public or to a third party. It sets out how and when that can be done. Again, that legislative officer would look after that area.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill makes ministers accountable, makes Members of the Legislative Assembly accountable, and makes government accountable. It's a process that is used in the majority of the provinces of Canada. It's my understanding that many municipalities in Alberta have freedom-of-information bylaws and that it would be most unusual for Alberta to continue with this kind of cloudy inability to get freedom-of-information legislation passed, to allow fuzziness to occur, to allow people to be put into some difficulty, having their posi-

tions prejudiced, or in not allowing members of this Assembly to get all the facts to allow them to do their work properly.

MR. DAY: Like your buddy designing city hall.

MR. DECORE: Well, like my buddy designing city hall. The hon. Member for Red Deer-North doesn't know the facts on that issue, and I wish he would look that up. If he went to city hall and looked at the freedom-of-information bylaw, he could see the minutes and how the decision was made and the cost and the contract and what was paid and what will be paid, and that's very much unlike the kind of attitude he or this government has. It's unfortunate that they won't do that.

Mr. Speaker, I urge . . . [interjections] I'm glad I'm getting a rise out of the hon. members from the government, because I think they are upset with the action of their Premier and their ministers in hiding information from Albertans: day after day, month after month, year after year, hiding things from Albertans. When one of the members of the opposition stands up and ascribes, as I think we had to and must, a motive to the House leader today that an action was taken in order to hold back something, that's part and parcel of the kind of atmosphere they've created by not allowing information to come forward.

I urge all hon. members of this Assembly to vote for this legislation, and I move second reading accordingly.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for Olds-Didsbury.

MR. BRASSARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the surface this Bill would appear to be ideal in its search for freedom of information and gathering of personal information, but I think it goes too far. It also, I believe, infringes unnecessarily on the practices we already have in place in this government and certainly here in Alberta. I'd like to talk about three of them, three reasons why I would oppose your Bill. First, as I mentioned, is that I find it unnecessary given the provisions and practices that are already in place here in Alberta; secondly, because of the negative repercussions the details would have; and finally, Mr. Speaker, I don't honestly feel there's any public demand for it.

I'd like to talk a little bit about the safeguards we have in place that balance the accessibility of information with the protection of personal rights. The member has implied that we have no freedom-of-information Act per se, and I say that he is wrong. In Alberta all information that is not available through conventional sources, such as department and agency public records, can be obtained through public motions or motions for a return or written or oral questions in the Assembly.

I'd like to talk just a little bit about this question period, Mr. Speaker. It's probably the most democratic process we have to obtain information. It's an opportunity for the opposition to hold the government accountable for its actions, but too often it is used for political posturing and scoring political points and is abused, and that's truly unfortunate, because it doesn't serve either the opposition or the government or the people we all serve to any degree. I might add at the same time that we enjoy the longest question period of all jurisdictions in Canada. I think it's an opportunity to provide all Albertans with the answers the hon. members seek, and I think it should be used for that purpose.

I'd like to talk a little bit about the access to personal information, Mr. Speaker, which is already available through areas

such as vital statistics, and business information through land titles and corporate registry. This accessibility is appropriately tempered by general departmental policy to protect the confidential and personal and business information from abuse. The department of social services, for instance, has client information confidentiality as part of its mandate. Treasury protects information about individual businesses. Public service in Alberta functions under the civil service oath of confidentiality, and a breach of this oath, as you know, has very serious repercussions because this is a central means through which Albertans' right to privacy is indeed protected.

The underlying provision of all these things, as I see it, is the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Charter has served to elevate and strengthen civil liberties in Canadian criminal, constitutional, and administrative law. We've already seen in many other instances how this Charter has changed the shape of rights of the individual in Canada. I think the Charter must therefore be included in this equation we're referring to today.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we have an office known as the office of the Ombudsman. When all else fails, when every other effort to obtain information has been exhausted, we can rely on the office of the Ombudsman to at least have the final word in making certain that the information that should be released is indeed released and, by the same token, making absolutely certain that the individual's privacy has not been infringed upon. So with all that, I think there is already enough opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to obtain information if that information is properly sought and justifiably sought.

I believe that the pursuit of the principles of this Bill are redundant. I think the problems the Bill might create go beyond a mere question of redundancy, however. I think there are some repercussions that the ins and outs of this Bill may provide, and they may have a detrimental effect on all Albertans' ability to access information and still have their privacy guaranteed. I'd like to read from the Bill an example of what I'm referring to.

In section 21 (2)(a):

The disclosure is desirable for the purpose of subjecting the activities of the Government of Alberta and its agencies to public scrutiny.

Sounds good, Mr. Speaker, but the release of information could be legally sanctioned at the expense of and with absolutely no consideration for the privacy of the Albertan.

A third criterion, Mr. Speaker, is also very disturbing to me. It claims that personal information is free for public perusal, and I read in section 21(2)(c):

Access to the personal information will promote informed choice in the purchase of goods and services.

I shudder to think how such a clause could be interpreted and what private doors it would throw open.

I read in section 21(3):

A disclosure of personal information is presumed to constitute an unjustified invasion of personal privacy where the personal information,

(h) indicates the individual's racial or ethnic origin, sexual orientation or religious or political beliefs or associations.

I think we would all have to change our family names to numbers to satisfy this requirement. I think it's an unworkable piece of legislation.

The categories of information that this Bill lists, Mr. Speaker, will always be incomplete, but if the Bill becomes law, the courts will be forced to interpret them as though they were

complete. We will have to identify and deal with pieces of information based on what category they fall into whether common sense tells us that is right or not and whether it indeed is an appropriate interpretation that is being placed on it or not. I prefer the flexible policy that is not hemmed in by lists and categories of types of information that twist the intent of this particular Bill.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I'm concerned about the massive bureaucracy this could entail. We're talking about the office of the commissioner. It would add new and amazing dimensions to the workload of the heads of government and agencies and departments, because they would have to notify every individual Albertan when any information about that person is recorded, would have to inform him or her in writing about the legal authority for the collection, about what the information is going to be used for and, as I read it, who the individual can contact to get more information about the records. I think that's an intrusion, Mr. Speaker, and I ask you once again: are Albertans really asking for this service?

The hon. member should consider what it is that the average Albertan is concerned with before proposing such sweeping pieces of legislation. He mentioned that it is available in other jurisdictions. It is indeed almost a carbon copy of what Premier Peterson brought in to Ontario. It would appear that it is a stylish Bill in Liberal circles these days, but in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick the use of this Bill is hardly ever utilized by the average citizen. In fact, their use is absolutely minimal.

I'd like to read a statement from the hon. E.M. Culliton, former chief justice of Saskatchewan, in his 1983 report that there was no growing demand amongst citizens of that province for such a piece of legislation. I'll read it to you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll read it to the opposition member as well:

The real watchdog of the public's right to know is the elected Member of the Legislative Assembly. Under our system of government, he has various avenues by which to obtain information. It is he who makes the laws which govern us. When we deal with confidentiality in law or in conventions, we should realize that these two concepts embody the will of the Legislature and not that of an individual minister.

The adoption of Bill 203 would only undermine convention, as I point out, Mr. Speaker, by taking away the reason for members of this Assembly to make proper use of this House for gathering information.

I believe the details of this Bill pose a pointless risk, and I would ask all members to defeat this Bill.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn.

MR. PASHAK: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's with a great deal of pleasure that I rise to speak in support of the principles embedded in Bill 203, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Personal Privacy Act. I might say at the outset that there are some sections in this proposed Bill that I think would improve the Bill I presented earlier in the Legislature, Bill 235, which I entitled somewhat similarly, the Freedom of Information and Personal Privacy Act. I think, though, that there are some deficiencies in Bill 203 as it has been presented, and I'll return to those later.

Of course, the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry and myself are not alone in advocating such measures as are contained in Bill 203. There are a number of prominent Canadians and other

Canadians who over a long period of time have advocated such measures as this particular Bill. Going back to 1965, the Member of Parliament for the New Democratic Party, Barry Mather, introduced a freedom-of-information Bill in the House of Commons, and he brought it back on three subsequent occasions. The Member for Edmonton-Glengarry referred to Ged Baldwin, a very prominent Tory, a highly respected person at that. He quoted some remarks Ged Baldwin made when he was debating the Bill at an earlier point in time historically. Just by coincidence they happen to be the same remarks I read into *Alberta Hansard* on March 24, 1988, when this Bill was last debated, so I commend him on his sagacity for selecting that particular passage.

In addition to that, Grant Notley, our leader for so many years, who sat in this House by himself and was the only real member of the opposition, introduced this Bill, I think, on at least half a dozen different occasions, as did our current leader, Ray Martin. I believe that Walter Buck got into the debate, supporting the notion of freedom of information and right to privacy. Even John Kushner, who preceded me in Calgary-Forest Lawn, advocated and supported a freedom-of-information Bill. During the debate a little over one year ago Eric Musgreave, a well-respected member of the government side, came out in support of freedom-of-information and personal privacy measures. I reread the comments by the Member for Lethbridge-West, and although he didn't advocate support of the Bill, he said that there was much to be commended in the measures that were being proposed.

Somewhat rather shockingly, I thought, when we last debated my Freedom of Information and Personal Privacy Act when it came before the Legislature, government members actually allowed the Bill to come to a vote, and they voted against it. What was even more disturbing for me was that I thought this was somewhat of a precedent, in the sense that it's not very often the government side ever lets an opposition member's Bill even come to a vote. They usually talk it out. Given the strong concern the media had to champion a freedom-of-information Act, I was rather surprised that the fact the government voted against it didn't receive very much public attention.

It does highlight one point, though, that the Member for Olds-Didsbury just raised; that is, people do want this Bill. There are all kinds of editorials. Even as late as March 28, 1988, the *Calgary Herald* wrote an editorial calling for freedom-of-information measures to be taken by governments across Canada, but particularly here in this province. And the *Herald* isn't alone. I looked at a whole clipping of different groups from one end of the country to the other that insist that we ought to have, we must have, freedom-of-information measures in this country.

Now, why do we need this kind of information? Well, I can give you some examples from the federal scene. A lot of Canadians were concerned back in the early '80s when Petro-Canada took over Petrofina. Some \$1.7 billion of our tax dollars were involved in this acquisition, and we couldn't get any information as to whether it was in the public interest for Petro-Canada to take over this company. Our party was denied access to the federal government studies of the impact of the Mulroney trade deal on this country. We asked for them repeatedly but were turned down repeatedly in seeking information about decisions that were being made that really affect the course and future direction of this country. Taxpayers across this country were concerned about the billion dollar tax break that Dome re-

ceived in 1984, yet we couldn't get information from the federal government with respect to that.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry has cited all kinds of examples where provincially we were denied information that seemed to be reasonable; also, it would have been in the public interest had that information been made available. Last year during the debate I mentioned that we'd sought information on the trade deal from this provincial government, but we hadn't been able to get the studies they'd mentioned during debate. They mentioned studies on unemployment. They mentioned studies on the relationship between minimum wages and how that affects employment, but none of those studies were ever presented despite our requests for that information. Historically we've wanted information about contracts with respect to the Oldman dam, arrangements involving Olympia & York that we think would have been in the public interest, but we couldn't access that information. So those are just some of the needs.

A matter that is increasingly coming to our caucus that's creating a lot of difficulty: whenever we phone over to try to get information from government departments that is relevant to our critic areas, we're always told, "I'm sorry, but we can't give you that information directly." Even if it's a rather mundane kind of information, they say, "You have to contact the minister's executive assistant." By the time you get through to him, it's a week later, and by the time he gets the information, if you get it at all, it's often completely out of date.

Today the Minister of Energy was quoted in the *Edmonton Journal*, for example, as having said that he's got this important communication from Mr. Clark with respect to whether or not the minister should be allowed to go to OPEC meetings and this sort of thing. Well, I think it would be in the public interest to have a copy of that letter made available. I phoned over to the minister's office this morning. I still haven't heard back from the minister's office with respect to whether or not I can get a copy of that letter.

Just a few weeks ago, I had a researcher phone over to the Department of Energy just to get some simple information that you'd think would be an automatic part of the public record. I wanted to get some information on the current status of all the government's subsidy programs in the energy sector. Well, we couldn't get that information. We were told to go back to the minister's office, and by the time we finally got hold of it, it was a long time after that information would have had any relevance for us. So there is a real need to provide greater information to the public, whether it's to members of the opposition or to the public more generally.

with respect to the practice in other jurisdictions, as has been mentioned, the Parliament of Canada in 1982 passed an Access to Information Act and a Privacy Act. Quite contrary again to what the Member for Olds-Didsbury was saying about people not availing themselves of these opportunities when they are present, there have been 16,000 requests to the federal government for information, and some 35 percent of those requests have actually been honoured. Of course, there are a lot of key issues, like some of the ones I mentioned with respect to the Dome deal, where the government wasn't forthcoming with information. Usually those cases involve issues where there are some kinds of cabinet documents that are being circulated or whatever. In any event, that does indicate that there is a lot of interest on the part of the public to get this kind of information.

In Canada only the western provinces -- now I'm not quite

sure whether Manitoba has actually proclaimed legislation on freedom of information. They've certainly introduced the legislation and it's been passed, but whether it's been proclaimed or not, I'm not quite clear on. Certainly P.E.I. and the western provinces are the only ones that don't have freedom-of-information and right-to-privacy legislation.

The Bill before us, which the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry introduced, is clearly drawn on the Ontario model, which in turn was drawn on the Quebec model. The major weakness in the Ontario Act at the moment, although this may be remedied shortly, is that it excludes exactly what the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry said was the big difference between the Bill I'd proposed and the one he's submitting. As I understand the Ontario Act, it excludes public boards such as the police commissions, schools, hospitals, colleges, and universities. If the Bill I introduced didn't include those, I certainly think that would be a good remedy, to have it include those boards as well. Now, it may be desirable, though, not to have them included right away. We may want to see how the Bill actually works out when we're just dealing with provincial government information. In any event, I wouldn't object to seeing those included in the Act.

[Mr. Moore in the Chair]

I might point out, again contrary to what the Member for Olds-Didsbury said, that today it's relatively easy, using computers, to store information and to provide it in a way that's reasonable and accessible to the general public. I might just comment on a practice that is developing in the United States, where they seem to have a greater -- I mean, we're often critical of the United States and their practices, but in this particular case the United States seems to have a greater historical commitment to providing information on the part of its government than we in Canada have.

In Santa Monica at the moment -- and this was reported in the *Calgary Herald* on February 23, 1989 -- residents of that community are offered four types of services using computers. They have bulletin boards that individuals, either through their own computers or through any kind -- and some of these terminals, by the way, that allow for this kind of access are provided in public facilities such as universities. They can scan up topics such as job openings, in their particular case earthquakes, safety tips. The second feature of the way in which they're approaching this question of public information is that they have an electronic mail system so that individuals who are concerned about important public topics can type into the computers their positions on issues, and then other individuals can access whatever has been typed in. They can get a kind of debate going that way which should be of interest to politicians when it comes to framing public policy. They have access to computerized library cards and all this kind of thing. So these are tilings that could be done.

When it comes to deficiencies in the Bill that's before us right now, I just draw attention to a couple of points. Under section 61 of the Bill that the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry introduced, offences require the consent of the Attorney General before prosecution can be commenced. In our Bill prosecution could be "commenced by the Attorney General or by any person claiming to have suffered from the alleged violation." I think this would be important in a case that actually came before the Nova Scotia government in which a minister was actually con-

victed and fined \$100. R.V. Morris, who was a welfare mother, in 1988 prosecuted the minister for release of information in her situation. After the Attorney General had refused to do so, he was convicted and fined. In our Bill we call for fines and imprisonment both. The Bill that the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry presented just calls for fines, not to exceed \$5,000, for violation of the Bill. Now, that may be a good measure; I don't know. I would certainly welcome the opportunity to have Bills like this come before Committee of the Whole so that we could go through clause-by-clause study and look at each of these issues in some detail and thereby maybe arrive at an even better Bill than the ones that are before us.

The Member for Edmonton-Glengarry's Bill sets out all kinds of exemptions that go beyond the numbers we have. I believe that we have six exemptions in our Bill; he has 11 in his Bill. Then he has exceptions to exemptions, which cover such things as environmental protection, product tests, and factual information. These are exempted. The point I'm trying to make is that his Bill has a lot of almost contradictory sections in it, and some time would have to be spent in terms of straightening out what I think is some confusion within the Bill that's before us.

Although there are some good definitions contained in Bill 203, another deficiency that I think exists within the Bill he's presented to us is a section that exempts all the above exemptions on the basis of compelling public interest reasons for disclosure. Now, obviously the question that arises here is: just what is meant by compelling public interest reasons? It would seem to suggest that any measure, any request for information could be denied because of compelling public interest reasons unless that section is clearly defined to prevent that from occurring.

So, Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, in our caucus we support Bill 203 in terms of its principles. We have a long history, a long legacy of supporting freedom of information and the protection of personal privacy. However, there are some deficiencies that I think we could amend through further debate.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to support this Bill with just a couple of points . . . I might be going too far. I don't know if that's a Freudian slip, Mr. Speaker. I nearly fell into the NDP trough there.

Mr. Speaker, particularly when the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury suggested that there was no feeling out there, no thought that such a Bill was required . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Obviously not in his constituency.

MR. TAYLOR: Obviously not in his constituency, as one of the members said. The point is that I believe the very fact that all parties are rushing to the parenthood of an issue such as this is good evidence that it is an idea whose time has come. Certainly an Albertan, Mr. Baldwin who was a Progressive Conservative -- rather confusing nomenclature for a name -- a Conservative gentleman from Peace River, who represented that area for many, many years, campaigned . . . And like many people of the north he had vision far beyond those who are clouded by the smog and the hurly-burly of the south and was able to see the value of a right to information Bill and pressed for it even prior

to the Diefenbaker years. Eventually, of course, the federal government came through with it. The fact that the Liberal Party and the ND Party are claiming that it's their idea is very much like that old saying: success has a thousand fathers, and defeat is an orphan.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

Consequently it shows that it is something the public is denying, and maybe we should take a moment to analyze why the public -- and I think most of us elected in this Chamber have a deep faith in democracy, and although the public may from time to time wander and appear to be stampeding in one direction or another, the ultimate truth or the ultimate evolution to a better and higher government lies within the people, and they eventually get there. They may fumble around, vote Tory for a few years, but they're back on track again, Mr. Speaker, and go on to ever and ever greater expectations.

I know certainly both left-wing and right-wing philosophers have said that knowledge is power, and you can take the quote from either Friedman or Galbraith. If anything is power today, it is knowledge. It isn't the dollars in the bank as much as it used to be. It isn't the soldiers. [interjections] I hear a lot of chattering. It always reminds me of that story, Mr. Speaker, of the cowbell. When the fox first discovered it, he said that he didn't know what it was, but it had the longest tongue and the emptiest head of anything he'd ever seen.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Going on from there, Mr. Speaker -- if the cowbells will shut up over there -- this thrust for knowledge, if knowledge is power, which Galbraith and Friedman both argued, means that the public realize that without that knowledge they will not be able to get the type of government they deserve, to get the type of government to react when they want. So knowledge is power, and any government that withholds knowledge from the public is in effect almost taking the 20th century equivalent of the Chinese army and getting rid of opposition. When you withhold knowledge from the public and the public's representatives, the MLAs who are elected, you in effect are taking away power that the people themselves want to exercise if they're going to make the proper decisions.

I go on a step further in this thrust for knowledge. One of the areas that's changed so much in the last hundred years is that government now is very often a very active participant in the business or the oppression that people may feel. It's very rare that an Upgrader or a pulp mill, or a highway or a swamp for that matter, that is taken over has not got government participation in it.

In times of yore, Mr. Speaker, the government was very much like a judge. It was an arbitrator to see that fairness took place and occasionally to pass laws to see that there was fairness in the marketplace as well as in social endeavour. But today when you talk about the marketplace, regardless of whether you're a Liberal or a Conservative or an NDPer, you're often looking at the government being present in the marketplace, particularly in an economy such as ours, where the government often forgets that they're really only a trustee for the people who are residents of this province. But when the government has access to and has the right to develop the resources, whether they be timber or gas or oil or sulphur or coal or whatever it is,

forming these huge combines that can affect people's businesses, people's lives, yea, even people's health down the road, to try to keep this in the dark seems to be the lowest use of the power they have at their fingertips.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that if one examines the thrust today, it has to be for knowledge to the people, and the only way that knowledge can get through to the people is if the questions that the people's representatives may find necessary from time to time in conducting the business of government are answered fairly and honestly and quickly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a few remarks with respect to this Bill, which deals of course with a very, very important topic. I think we have to continue to strive towards a possible improvement with respect to providing information to the citizens of the province. But I would just like to caution the members of the Assembly about the references that have been made in the debate this afternoon with respect to the avowed success of this approach where it has been taken in other jurisdictions.

There were several examples, Mr. Speaker, that I was going to deal with and reflect upon, but there is one that I would just like to briefly refer to in the time remaining. This is Ontario. As I see it, the Bill is very much modeled after what has occurred in Ontario, and they are having considerable difficulty with the implementation of that legislation. The legislation provides for the charging of fees. In some cases the fees charged for information have run into the hundreds of dollars, thus inhibiting people in the whole process that the legislation was in-

tended to accomplish. So I would caution hon. members about pursuing the particular model that is in this legislation. It certainly is a topic that bears some further debate.

Mr. Speaker, there are other items I would like to deal with, but in view of the time I would adjourn debate.

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the motion by the hon. Member for Ponoka-Rimbey, those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. The motion carries.

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, by way of advice to the members concerning the business of the House tomorrow, the members will sit in Committee of Supply for consideration of the estimates of Public Works, Supply and Services. In addition, Royal Assent will be sought from Her Honour on Bills 2, 3, 4, and 7.

Mr. Speaker, I move that when the members assemble at 8 p.m., they do so in Committee of Supply.

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the motion, those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. The motion stands.

[The House recessed at 5:26 p.m.]