

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Title: **Tuesday, June 27, 1989 2:30 p.m.**
Date: 89/06/27

[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: NOTICES OF MOTIONS

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to give notice that it is my intention after question period to rise under Standing Order 30 and make a motion for an emergency debate on the funding of postsecondary education for Alberta's native population. I believe you have been supplied with a notice.

head: INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill Pr. 1

Canadian Union College Amendment Act, 1989

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill Pr. 1, the Canadian Union College Amendment Act, 1989.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill will make an amendment to the college's power to pay annuities and provide that such arrangements are not treated as life insurance.

[Leave granted; Bill Pr. 1 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Highlands, followed by Banff-Cochrane.

Bill Pr. 9

Claudia Elizabeth Becker Adoption Act

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, I beg leave to introduce Bill Pr. 9, being Claudia Elizabeth Becker Adoption Act.

[Leave granted; Bill Pr. 9 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: Banff-Cochrane, followed by Calgary-McKnight.

Bill Pr. 3

Canada Olympic Park Property Tax Exemption Amendment Act, 1989

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill, being the Canada Olympic Park Property Tax Exemption Amendment Act, 1989.

Mr. Speaker, this is a Bill which will extend the current exemption of various facilities at Canada Olympic Park to include the Olympic Hall of Fame. The taxing authority of the municipal district of Rocky View has consented to the exemption for as long as the property is owned and operated by the Calgary Olympic Development Association.

[Leave granted; Bill Pr. 3 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-McKnight

Bill Pr. 8

Omprakash Panjwani Adoption Act

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill Pr. 8, the Omprakash Panjwani Adoption Act.

This bill provides for the adoption of an adult nephew by his uncle, in whose guardianship he has been for eight years.

[Leave granted; Bill Pr. 8 read a first time]

head: TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to file with the Assembly four copies of the annual report on the inspection of animals under the Universities Act for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1988, and the Northern Alberta Children's hospital financial statements for the year ended March 31, 1989.

MR. SPEAKER: I'm pleased to table pursuant to statute the annual report of the office of the Ombudsman.

head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

MR. SPEAKER: Stony Plain, followed by Drayton Valley.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly 22 students from Stony Plain elementary school. They are accompanied by parent Mrs. Eileen Barber and teachers Mrs. Debra Butler, Miss Roberta Milner, Mr. Wayne Turner. I would ask them to rise and receive the special welcome of this House.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Drayton Valley.

MR. THURBER: Yes, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly 16 students from the Lindale school. They are seated in the members' gallery. They're accompanied today by their teacher Eileen Harris and by two parents Carol Fortin and Cheryl Hall. I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional welcome of this House.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and to the members of the Assembly some special guests that are visiting Canada. They're from New Delhi. They're seated in the public gallery, and I'd ask them to stand once I've read off their names. It's Mr. Chaman Lal; he's an employee of the Metal Mineral Trading Corporation of India. He's accompanied by his wife, Mrs. Raj Lal, and their son, Mr. Sudhir Gandhi. I'd also like to introduce, sir, members of the multicultural community,

the immediate past president of the India-Canada Association from my riding, Mr. Lal Narang. He's accompanied by his wife, Mrs. Nirmal Narang, and their daughter, Ritu Narang. I'd like the Assembly to extend to them the usual welcome.

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly 68 students from the beautiful town of Athabasca, even more beautiful than Fort McMurray and Bonnyville. The students are seated in the members' and public galleries, and they're accompanied by their teachers Mr. Larry Armfelt, Mrs. Lucy Bahry, Mrs. Dorothy Ryan, and Mr. Paul Ponich, and also their bus drivers Mrs. Erna Wilson and Mr. Ray Jodry. I'd like them to rise and get the traditional welcome from this House.

head: ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

School Foundation Program Fund Requisition

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Education. Yesterday in this Assembly the minister told us that he would not consider rescinding his department's poorly timed and fiscally irresponsible mill rate hike. Clearly this government cannot be trusted to provide even the most simple financial guidance or leadership in this province. Yesterday also the minister said he was not aware of any municipalities that would be late in making requisition payments. I have here now a motion passed last night by the Calgary city council, and I quote:

Therefore be it resolved that the City of Calgary convey its strong objection to the Provincial Government for the late receipt of the School Foundation Program Fund Requisition and;

That the City of Calgary advise the Provincial Government that it will pay this requisition at the next available tax billing period -- June 30, 1990.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister. Will the minister give assurances to this Assembly that Calgary will not be penalized for any extra funds because of the irresponsibility of this provincial government?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I have not received official notification of that motion by Calgary city council, but of course I read the same media reports as the hon. member did. I would want to discuss that with the mayor and representatives of Calgary city council. But it is our view that we will be asking municipalities to contribute the revenue from that mill rate into the School Foundation Program Fund so that we may be able to continue to fund education as strongly and generously as we are able to in this province.

MR. MARTIN: The minister misses the point. It's because they sent out these requisitions too late, Mr. Speaker.

I want to come back and say to this minister: how can he justify charging the city of Calgary and other municipalities this extra money when they have no chance of recovering it? How can he justify it?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, as I've said in this Assembly before and said publicly on behalf of my colleagues, I regret that we were not able to inform the municipalities as early as we would have liked and as early as we customarily do. But I suggest that the hon. member go back to the law, which all of us in

this Assembly have sworn an oath to uphold. The law spells out that annually the Minister of Education and the provincial government will decide and determine what the mill rate will be and will then so advise municipalities. By the time municipalities had used last year's rate rather than this year's rate, they had not been informed of the setting of any mill rate. So, as I said, we regret the late notice, but in fact municipalities had not been informed at all as to what the mill rate was going to be for 1989.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, the point is that this government did not get their act together, and they had to go on something. My question is: in view of the situation and the problems it's creating right across the province, in view of the fact that Calgary has told you they're not going to pay it until next year, will the minister do the correct thing and withdraw it and bring it back in next year?

MR. DINNING: No, Mr. Speaker. We will still be asking municipalities to contribute that increment to the School Foundation Program Fund, as I have said, so that the province will be able to continue to fund education as its number one priority in this government for all Albertans and for the betterment of all of our young kids.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Second main question, Leader of the Opposition.

Department of Health Act

MR. MARTIN: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct a second question to the Minister of Health. The minister's story about the power she is seeking in Bill 5 seems to change from time to time. First, it had nothing to do with privatization. Then she needed the powers to transfer three facilities just to local boards. Then the third version came up the other day. There are actually four facilities now, and she may privatize some of them. But regardless of this, we the Official Opposition have shown that you can do A, B, C, or D or all of the above with the previous power under the previous Acts. My question to this minister will the minister admit today that the language of the two previous Acts gives her all the power she needs to deal with these four facilities?

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, we're not dealing with the two previous Acts; we are dealing with a Bill that's before this Assembly. I would be happy to supplement the answers I gave in this House on June 16 and 19 when the Bill comes up for second reading and Committee of the Whole study.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, as we've learned in the past, it's often too late. What I'm saying today: if the minister's looking at some changes, will she come clean with Albertans and withdraw this Bill, then, and go back to work today and bring back a Bill that satisfies the narrow power she said she needs?

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is asking me to tell him what I want to discuss during second reading or Committee of the Whole. I believe the more appropriate time to deal with the issue is at those times, and I have already indicated to this House that I will be doing that.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, people do not trust this govern-

ment. We had to fight back one other medicare Bill.

If she's not prepared to withdraw the Bill, then will she at least table some amendments here in the House today so we have time to look at them, so the people of Alberta have time to look at them, before this Bill becomes law?

MR. SPEAKER: Amendments obviously don't occur before we get to the next stage of the Bill.

Madam Minister?

Main question, leader of the Liberal Party.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Point of order is taken. Thank you.

Leader of the Liberal Party.

MR. DECORE: I'd like to defer to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Family Violence

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, recently in a provincial court the remarks made by one judge have proven to Albertans and particularly to women of the province that we've been fooled. We've been fooled because we thought that as a caring and civilized society we had made gains and developed a significant understanding that family violence under any circumstance can't be condoned. But we hear of cases where, following a severe assault on a woman, the police failed to lay charges, and a judge blames women when they are beaten. When remarks like this are made by one as high in public stature, it simply reinforces all of the archaic attitudes that thinking Albertans have been fighting hard to stop. My question is to the Acting Deputy Premier. Will the Acting Deputy Premier now speak out regarding this situation and make a clear and unequivocal public statement that such comments are improper, unfair, and totally unacceptable?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, there's nothing in the preamble to the member's question which the government would object to. As a matter of fact, this question was raised during our caucus discussion just today by some of our members, and the Minister of Labour is prepared to answer that question. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, it is the clear position of this government that family violence is a criminal action. It is not condoned whether it is in private or in public. We do not condone any activities that promote it, and I will be as clear upon that as the member opposite wishes.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's reassuring.

Then to the Acting Deputy Premier or the Minister of Labour. Will the government refer the Wetaskiwin case to the province's Judicial Council for their advice on how to educate and sensitize Alberta judges so that this tendency to blame the victim in assault cases will end forever?

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, I've already given instructions to the Deputy Attorney General to order a transcript of that particular case. That will then be reviewed. If the facts are established

-- and I expect that they will be -- and it is appropriate to do so, the matter will be referred to the Chief Justice of the Provincial Court, and it would be his position then to refer the matter to the Judicial Council, which is the body that is a disciplinary body for all our Provincial Court judges.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The next question, I expect, is to the Solicitor General. This government is on record regarding their supposed determination to take steps to curb family violence. Will the minister now act on this by immediately convening a meeting of all police chiefs in the province to reiterate and ensure that this commitment is followed through at the enforcement level?

MR. FOWLER: Mr. Speaker, all police chiefs in this province are aware that it is their duty to instruct their police officers to prosecute and investigate and charge wherever there are grounds to believe an offence has been committed under any criminal code. It is my understanding and my knowledge that in all departments this is, in fact, being done. There are still the remaining difficulties, though, that have occurred in the past in assault charges, and that's what we're speaking to in this series of questions. In the past many assault charges were in fact laid, but there was no one to come forward with the evidence which was necessary for convictions, which was always a tremendous frustration to the police, to the prosecutors, and to the whole of the Attorney General's department. They are, again, aware that they are supposed to prosecute these and will continue to do so, I am certain.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair hesitates to interrupt but will be reviewing the Blues with regard to the leadoff question because of *Beauchesne* 411(5):

Some further limitations seem to be generally understood. A question may not . . .

(5) reflect on the character or conduct of. . . [certain categories] and members of the judiciary.

That is also picked up with *Beauchesne* 493(1).

The Chair recognizes the Member for Redwater-Andrew, followed by Edmonton-Avonmore.

Sewage Discharge into North Saskatchewan River

MR. ZARUSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Minister of the Environment. I am advised that due to the heavy rains overnight the city of Edmonton has turned on some emergency pumps that pump raw sewage into the North Saskatchewan River, which flows right through the middle of the clean Redwater-Andrew constituency. My question to the minister is: how has this situation come about, where the city must pump raw sewage into the North Saskatchewan River?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, as members are perhaps aware, basement flooding with raw sewerage has been experienced by not only the residents in Mill Woods -- and that sewerage goes into the North Saskatchewan River -- but also in the area of Glengarry, and that raw sewerage goes into a couple of lakes just northwest of the city. It has occurred, I believe, due to some rather poor basic capital works undertaken in the last few years. I regret that it's necessary to authorize emergency pumping. Otherwise the sewage would back up into the basements, and some serious health problems could occur.

MR. ZARUSKY: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question to the minister. As you all know, my constituents are used to clean water. Does this pose a serious threat to the users downstream?

MR. KLEIN: Well, according to the department the effluent is somewhat diluted by the time it reaches the river. But it's not a good situation, Mr. Speaker, and it could become very, very serious indeed if in fact we have sustained rain.

MR. ZARUSKY: Final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. We see that the opposition is worried about the pulp mills at Athabasca, but I think we've got some more serious problems here. To the minister. What is the long-term solution to this problem?

MR. KLEIN: Very, very simply, Mr. Speaker, the long-term solution is to put in a proper sewage system. I've had discussions with His Worship Mayor Cavanagh relative to a program that will put in place a system to protect the water quality in the North Saskatchewan River.

I might add, Mr. Speaker, that as I said last night during estimates, while the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry called me a PR huckster the other day, I would rather be a PR huckster than a former mayor who couldn't seem to put a sewage system in place.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Avonmore, followed by . . .

MR. TAYLOR: Don't flush, Ralph, or you'll go.

MS M. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister responsible for women's issues.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair still hasn't recognized Edmonton-Avonmore. I'm sorry.

MS M. LAING: We heard you say "Edmonton-Avonmore."

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair was attempting to do so, but was feeling somewhat flushed by some of the remarks.

Edmonton-Avonmore, followed by Calgary-*Buffalo*.

Family Violence (*continued*)

MS M. LAING: Thank you. To the minister responsible for women's issues. In 1984 the Alberta interdepartmental committee on wife battering made recommendations to the Attorney General to formally emphasize the criminal nature of wife assault and to communicate that position to police forces, Crown prosecutors, and judges. Other bodies such as the Northern Alberta Development Council, the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues, and the department of social services have echoed these recommendations, including charging of offenders by police. To the minister. Given that the Solicitor General and the Attorney General seem to be backing away from those recommendations made by their predecessors, as evidenced by their action in the High River case, will the minister, who represents all women in Alberta, act to remedy this situation?

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is unfortunately under a misapprehension. The ministers she has mentioned in fact have not backed away from the instructions given

to the prosecutors and to the police through their police chiefs, and of course we don't run the judiciary.

We have received those recommendations of 1984, and that is true. Those recommendations came from women's ministers who led the way on this issue, and we've made a lot of progress in the last five years. We have given instructions to police officers to lay the charges. We have given instructions to prosecutors to be particularly sensitive in this very, very delicate area. We have had discussions with chief judges over the years, and they have, in turn, had discussions with their colleagues.

One of the recommendations, for example, was to have a conference on this issue, family violence, including the judiciary. This government did support that three years ago. We did participate in it, and the judges, as a result, have been far more aware of the issue as well. There have been a lot of things that have gone on in this province. We are regarded across Canada as one of the leaders in our attempts to help victims of family violence. I'll say it again: we do not condone family violence. It is a criminal action whether it is done in private or in public.

MS M. LAING: Mr. Speaker, we all appreciate the recommendations and the directives, but what is the minister responsible for women's issues doing to ensure that these recommendations and policies are being carried through? Because we certainly hear from women who are not having that experience.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you for the question. Supplementary.

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, I would be more than happy if the women would come to either myself, the Attorney General, or the Solicitor General and bring specifics of those cases. We would investigate them and follow them up, because once again I say: it takes many different approaches before family violence will be stamped out. One of the ways it will be discouraged, we believe, is through the criminal courts and the proper processes in those courts. It has to be handled sensitively but firmly. If any of these women have allegedly received treatment that they do not agree with, would they please come forward and let us look into those cases?

MS M. LAING: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for her answer. I would, however, refer her to a study, Family Violence in Northern Alberta, where the very recommendation is that the police are not responding appropriately in all cases. I would therefore again ask her to commit herself to monitoring the action of all police forces and all Crown prosecutors throughout this province.

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, again I commend the member for her continued concern in this area. It is one we all share.

In northern Alberta I do know that there are still ongoing concerns about family violence. It's one of the reasons we have committed more funds in this budget in order to create six satellite homes as well as a shelter in Peace River to help the victims. Also, we've announced a community-based program that will fan across Alberta. We will be funding that, but it will be a community-based program to help in the fight against family violence. Particularly in the northern area, I would imagine that those community-based networks, when they are set up and properly funded, will be very helpful in pursuing the points that the member has raised.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Reporting of Budget Deficit

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Provincial Treasurer is quickly getting a reputation as the Harry Houdini of Canadian Legislatures, with a bagful of accounting tricks which serve to hide and obscure the true financial position of the province. The 1989-90 budget deficit is understated by \$306 million because this amount has been funneled through the Capital Fund, created in 1986. Now, if this amount were included in the deficit and the heritage fund expenditures and the Crown land sales properly accounted for, the deficit would be \$2.2 billion instead of \$1.5 billion, as reported by the Treasurer. I'm wondering whether the minister is prepared to confirm that this use of the Capital Fund indeed has the effect of reducing the budget deficit by about \$306 million over what it would have been had the accounting practices of 1985-86 and prior years been followed.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, I don't know where the member has been for the last three years. This is the consistent approach that we've followed since 1986, as the member points out, and it has been understood by this Legislature since 1986, when the member was elected.

MR. CHUMIR: Well, the practice certainly has the convenient effect of reducing the budget deficit. Since I've been unable to find another Canadian province which follows this particular practice, I wonder whether the minister is able to tell us what other provinces feel, that this is the proper way of accounting for capital expenditures, rather than including them in the budget deficit.

MR. TAYLOR: Argentina does it that way, Dick.

MR. JOHNSTON: Well, it sounds like the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon is at it again.

Mr. Speaker, let me make it very clear that there is no attempt here to hide anything at all, but what is here is a very sound principle that anybody in the private sector would understand; that is, if you buy an asset such as a school, a hospital, a university, a dam, for example, it's well understood by the people of Alberta that that asset has a life longer than one year. All we have done here is ensure that we can record the life of that asset over an extended period of time. In doing that, what we have done is simply make a provision annually in those departments, the cost of that asset based on the servicing of the debt, and that's properly disclosed in the financial statements of this province on a budget basis.

That clearly and consistently reflects the accounting principles that CAs and others have put forward. Other provinces, as a matter of fact, have used that approach, Mr. Speaker. It's a sound approach. It's consistent with accounting principles. It's consistent with the real world, which the Member for Calgary-Buffalo seldom understands, and does give a good picture as to how the life of that asset will be reflected in the use of that asset on an annual basis. It's an appropriate process. It's been done since 1986. When the accounts are all consolidated, of course it comes together, and the bottom line is fully shown.

MR. CHUMIR: I understand, Mr. Speaker everyone else is wrong.

Will the minister confirm that the statement on page 20 of his Budget Address that the annual growth in program expenditure in this province has only been 1.3 percent since 1985-86 is in fact wrong, Mr. Speaker, because the 1985-86 figures include all capital expenditures and current expenditures . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. The question has been asked.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the member raised that point, because we're very proud of our expenditure record here in the province of Alberta, despite the wrong-headed approach taken by the opposition party, particularly the Liberal opposition party. We have a record that we're proud of, a record which speaks to our expenditure control, which speaks to our fiscal responsibility, which outlines a plan for us to deal with the deficit. We're the government that will do it; we're that party that can do it. We're on course, Mr. Speaker, and we're committed to that balanced budget.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Highwood, followed by Edmonton-Centre, then Calgary-McKnight.

Mortgage Interest Shielding Program

MR. TANNAS: Mr. Speaker, during the recent election, many homeowners in this province were led to believe they might receive financial relief from high mortgage interest rates. To date they have received nothing and may only take comfort from the admonition that verily they looketh for help and it cometh not. Will the Minister of Municipal Affairs assure this House that these people will not be betrayed by this government?

MR. R. SPEAKER: I appreciate the frustration of the hon. member, and I appreciate that he becomes my critic. I'm sure he's representing some of his constituents who haven't received that mortgage interest rebate to this point in time. I apologize for not making a public statement prior to this, but I want to give a standard government answer to the hon. member. The cheques are in the mail.

MR. TANNAS: My final supplementary would be to inquire whether or not we'll respect him in the morning.

Anyway, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. If it is in fact the case, will the cheques that are going out in the near future reflect interest from June 1, June 26, or just what date will they pick up the interest from?

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, the cheques will reflect a March 1, 1989, date. The number of cheques we've sent out this week is 1,100. We have received some 9,000 applications for that mortgage interest shielding program, and we are meeting our commitments. We've sent out something like \$100,000 in mortgage interest shielding this week. So I appreciate the question and the critic.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Centre, followed by Calgary-McKnight.

Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation

REV. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has led the way in human rights legislation with former Premier Lougheed being the first to bring in the Individual's Rights Protection Act. Many Albertans are optimistic about the appointment of Fil Fraser as the new chairperson of the Alberta Human Rights Commission. However, we are now falling far behind at least four other provinces when it comes to prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation. Does the minister responsible for the Human Rights Commission think it is fair for individuals in Alberta to be fired from their jobs or evicted from their apartments solely on the basis of their sexual orientation?

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, I'm on public record as indicating that I will take forward a proposal to our caucus to include that amendment to the Individual's Rights Protection Act. I will do that. This House will know what decision that caucus has made when the Bill is introduced into the House.

REV. ROBERTS: Well, Mr. Speaker, given the examples of denial of public services and ongoing harassment faced by gay and lesbian people in Alberta, will the minister at least direct the Human Rights Commission to do a public education campaign to further promote tolerance and understanding for all Albertans in this regard?

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, there's no question. I have had people come to me and share the experiences they have had. Some of them are very sad. Some of them are, and rightly so, afraid of losing their jobs, afraid of not being promoted, afraid of losing their homes. I think it would be most appropriate for the Human Rights Commission to conduct an awareness program, and certainly the new Chair and I have discussed matters of awareness generally and how he might go about doing that. I will be very supportive of the Human Rights Commission in any program where they attempt to raise the level of tolerance and understanding for all Albertans.

REV. ROBERTS: Well, getting back to the specifics, then, Mr. Speaker, when will the minister and her colleagues, many of whom have publicly and privately endorsed this position, finally take the leadership and enact legislation to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation in this province? When will she in fact table that legislation?

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, that's a matter for our caucus discussion and is confidential.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
Calgary-McKnight, followed by Vegreville.

Speech Therapy Services

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In October 1988 the delivery of speech language therapy was shifted from school systems to community health services, removing speech therapists from direct involvement with a multitude of other school-based professionals and creating anxiety for parents who fear a reduction in the effectiveness of services. My question is to the Minister of Education. School boards, parents, and boards of health are being dragged into this new approach. Why was

there no consultation with these people before the new program was announced?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, there was in excess of five years of consultation amongst school boards, amongst health units, and amongst members of this Legislature and a number of citizens across the province. We as a government made a decision to vest the responsibility for speech therapy services within the Department of Health so that all Albertans, not just school-age children, but preschool children, school-age children, and adults would have access to a comprehensive range of speech therapy services.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you. That certainly is not what my information has been.

Since schools, and I'm talking about the children who are in school, stress an interdisciplinary school-based approach to student needs, does the minister truly believe that a medical model provided by an outsider is the most appropriate model?

MR. DINNING: No, I don't, Mr. Speaker. That is why my colleague the Minister of Health and I have ensured and have sought assurances from the boards of health and boards of education across this province that speech therapy services will be delivered by speech therapists as part of the education team, to ensure that the needs of children who are in need of speech therapy services are met and continue to be met, as well as they have been in the days past but even better in the days ahead.

MR. SPEAKER: Final.

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you. Because people involved in this are calling it a screwup and the whole thing chaos, would the Minister of Education in consultation with . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. I'm sure that with your own extensive background in education you'll find another phrase instead of the one you used and withdraw it.

MRS. GAGNON: I withdraw it.

Because of the chaos, would the Minister of Education consider a one-year delay so that proper consultation can take place?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, my colleague the Minister of Health may want to supplement, but it is my belief in speaking with school boards across the province that by and large this transition is happening successfully with the certainty and the assurance of those boards and those boards of health that children's needs will be met, and more importantly we will begin to expand our delivery of speech therapy to preschool-age children and to adults.

MR. SPEAKER: Vegreville, followed by Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Grants and Loans to Peter Pocklington

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has the unfortunate reputation of behaving like Scrooge when it comes

to addressing the real needs of Alberta families and behaving like Santa Claus when it comes to dishing out taxpayers' money to their wealthy and powerful friends. In particular, Mr. Peter Pocklington has been promised benefits that exceed \$171 million in the form of loans, loan guarantees, and outright grants over the past couple of years. Specifically, Mr. Pocklington was promised a \$4.4 million grant and a \$12 million loan over three years to build a hog processing plant in Picture Butte. I'd like to ask the minister of economic development what assurances he can give the Assembly that enough construction has proceeded on this facility to justify the money Mr. Pocklington has received so far.

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted to share with the hon. member that no grant money is forthcoming until construction has started. No construction has started, so there is no grant money forthcoming.

MR. FOX: Mr. Speaker, in respect to the \$4 million in the minister's budget last year for that plant loan and \$4 million allocated in this year's budget, I'd like to ask him how much of that money has been given to Mr. Pocklington, apparently in exchange for no construction at all.

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I just answered the hon. member as to what grants had been given to Mr. Pocklington. I should indicate to the hon. member that no money has been given to Mr. Pocklington. We have loaned Mr. Pocklington \$6 million of a \$12 million loan.

MR. FOX: Six million dollars for no construction. I'd like to ask the minister if there are any specific time lines that require he complete the plant by a specific time before he receives the balance of the \$12 million and the \$4.4 million grant?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to repeat for the benefit of the hon. member, as I did to his initial question, that in the event that construction does not start, none of the grant money will be forthcoming. I'm happy to repeat it again for the hon. member if wishes me to, because it's exactly as I indicated in my initial answer.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Responsibility for Building Dams

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year the Minister of the Environment acknowledged a long-standing conflict of interest and promised to transfer the responsibility for building dams from his department to the Department of Public Works, Supply and Services. This would presumably provide the minister with some objectivity in evaluating the environmental implications of dams. To the Minister of the Environment. Would the minister please explain why only seven members of his department were transferred to public works under this initiative.

MR. KLEIN: I would assume, Mr. Speaker, that it's because the construction of the dam is purely a public works issue. The environmental issue comes into effect once the dam is built, and that issue involves the headworks and the irrigation systems

downstream. So I hardly see the need during the construction stage for a lot of environmental experts. I do see the need for a lot of engineers and construction people, but not environmental experts, during the construction stage.

MR. MITCHELL: Surely the minister would want to explain why there aren't more transferred. Doesn't he understand that in fact where we need them is before these dams are built?

My second question, Mr. Speaker is: is it not the case that 520 employees of his department and almost 40 percent of his total department's budget are still committed to the planning and operating of water management projects such as dams?

MR. KLEIN: Well, "such as dams" is a very, very subjective kind of thing. Water management is an altogether different thing that encompasses the subject of dams. Certainly my department has under its jurisdiction the responsibility for water management. Very simply, Mr. Speaker, the delivery of water to accommodate farming activities and other rural and municipal water use activities has to be environmentally safe. That's why we're involved.

MR. MITCHELL: Will the minister please explain how his department can possibly maintain its environmental objectivity in assessing dam construction and dam projects in this province, when it still has this huge commitment to the planning and operating of dams and in fact has transferred only seven of 520 employees involved in water resource management projects in this province?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have some people assigned to monitor the construction of the dam to ameliorate any environmental impacts that might occur and to make recommendations. Our responsibility is to assess the environmental impact of the project before it's built so we can determine as a department whether a licence to operate and/or to construct should be issued in the first place. That's the role and the function of the Department of the Environment. Then after the dam is built, we want to make sure it's operated in an environmentally responsible way. That is our function, and I think we fulfill the function very, very well indeed.

Report of the Multicultural Commission

MR. GIBEAULT: Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Culture and Multiculturalism. Last fall the Alberta Multicultural Commission held hearings around the province asking for the input of Albertans regarding a revitalization of multicultural policy for the province. Yet six months have passed, and we still haven't got this report. A lot of the ethnocultural communities are wondering if this government is still committed to a multicultural province. So I'd like to ask the minister this: after half a year of stalling, how much more foot-dragging is there going to be before this report is finally released publicly and we can find out whether or not the government listened to the people of Alberta?

MR. MAIN: Mr. Speaker, we discussed this matter at some length during my department's estimates. Had the member been paying attention that night, he would have heard me say that there has not been foot-dragging, that there has not been stalling, that in fact the process of consultation is going on, that the members of the commission, who work long and hard at

their jobs all day long, in fact spend many weekends away from their families working on this report. As we speak, it is being worked on right now, today. I expect that when the work is completed, I'll have the report, and I'll be more than glad to share the recommendations of the people of Alberta with the member opposite.

MR. GIBEAULT: Still no date, no commitment, but let me ask the minister this then. Since many of the groups who made submissions to the government's commission during Interchange '88 recommended that the government take some action to introduce programs of employment equity, I want to ask the Minister of Culture and Multiculturalism whether or not he supports programs like that, commitments that have been made by the city of Calgary and other jurisdictions for fairness in the workplace. Will he support those recommendations or does he not care about fairness?

MR. MAIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, there are two or three or four questions there. Again, they were dealt with in some detail on the evening when we discussed my estimates, but let me just go over it again. Perhaps the member would care to take some notes. We do not have a date yet for the report of the Multicultural Commission because I have not yet received it. But as I said that night, as I said just a couple of moments ago, and I'll be glad to say again, that report will be in my hands very soon, within a matter of weeks. I don't have a date yet. If I had a date, I'd be more than glad to share it.

With respect to employment equity it's the commitment of this minister, the commitment of our department, the commitment of this government to deal fairly, equitably, honestly, and forthrightly with everyone. If you have specific complaints about employment, jobs not being granted in a fair and even-handed manner, I'd love to hear them, as would the chairman of the Human Rights Commission, I'm sure.

AN HON. MEMBER: Where is he?

MR. MAIN: He's not an elected member of the Legislature; perhaps you haven't noted that.

MR. GIBEAULT: Mr. Speaker, given that the report of the public service commissioner was tabled in this House just a few days ago and it highlighted a number of the government's initiatives to assist women and to assist Albertans with disabilities but ignored any effort to assist Albertans who are members of visible minority communities, can the minister tell us, will he give us some commitment today to work with the minister responsible for personnel administration to bring in an employment equity program in the public service before the end of this year. Will he make that commitment today?

MR. MAIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll be glad to work with anybody, but I'm not exactly sure what the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods is talking about when he's talking about employment equity.

AN HON. MEMBER: Nor is he.

MR. MAIN: There seems to be some question about his knowledge about his own question.

Employment equity: I'm not really sure what we're talking

about here. If we're talking about a fair and equal opportunity for everyone to have access to any job, then yes, that commitment has been stated. I've stated it. My predecessors have stated it. The Premier has stated it. The government has stated it. We're on record; we do it. But if the member opposite has some notion about some sort of an idea that people should be forced to hire certain people because of their race, colour, creed, origin, gender, whatever, then I would suggest that it's not going to happen. [interjection]

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Kingsway, it can wait for a supplementary or a future question. Thank you.

The Chair recognizes Westlock-Sturgeon.

Grants and Loans to Peter Pocklington

(continued)

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the minister of economic development, and it's further along with what the hon. Member for Vegreville has been asking about. I think there's a great deal of concern in the agricultural community that indeed the government and Mr. Pocklington aren't proceeding forward at the pace the government had so joyously described would happen last year. The first question to the minister of economic development is: what exactly are the \$6 million in loans for that Mr. Pocklington has received in the last two budgets?

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

Mr. Minister.

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I recognize that both the Liberal and New Democratic parties are not concerned about the creation of jobs or the establishment of further food processing . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. ELZINGA: . . . developments within the province of Alberta. We're very concerned with the job-creation aspect, and that's why we've been so forceful as it related to the economic downturn over the last number of years in offering support so that our Alberta population would be assured of having stable employment within this province. In addition to that, we want to make sure our farming population does have access to processing plants whereby their products can be processed and we can involve ourselves in further value adding, which is so, so crucial to the agricultural community.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, obviously he either doesn't know or won't answer.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Westlock-Sturgeon, not a statement.

MR. TAYLOR: Okay, Mr. Speaker. A supplementary to the minister then. Has the minister had a meeting with Mr. Pock-

lington in the last 60 days to ask him what he is going to do about building a new plant?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, as other individuals have indicated, too, we had the opportunity of having our estimates before the House last week. I understand that the opposition party has designated myself again for Wednesday, and I look forward to having the opportunity of answering in a very detailed way questions that they might deem advisable to be put at that time.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, it is not only Mr. Pocklington that handles greased pigs.

Has the minister had a meeting in the last 60 days with Mr. Pocklington to discuss what he is going to do with the Gainers plant?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, let me indicate to the hon. member that he should not be so quick to judge others by his own low standards, and to share with him, as I've indicated earlier, that if he is legitimately concerned, I will have the opportunity tomorrow to respond in any way that they wish when my estimates are before the House, when those questions are more appropriately put.

MR. SPEAKER: Question period has expired. Point of order, Leader of the Opposition, with respect to a question to Minister of Health.

MR. MARTIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, under section 410 of *Beauchesne*. I was curious why the intervention at the time, because I was asking the minister just for a point of clarification, as has been the practice with many Bills, if the minister would table the amendments in the House. I recognize that she doesn't have to answer, and she chose not to, and we all can take what we want from that. But it is an important question. I go back to Bill 14, which they withdrew, and Bill 22, on which they brought in amendments ahead after we had raised questions. I was just curious, and we think it's an important Bill to pursue in that aspect.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair agrees entirely with the Leader of the Opposition. The Chair was just too much interested in having its own 5BX for the day. I totally agree that the question was in order. Thank you.

Standing Order 30. The Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

head: Request for Emergency Debate

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I rise under Standing Order 30 to try to point out the emergency of my request that the House debate the question of postsecondary funding of education for the native peoples of Alberta. I base my reasoning on the emergency of the debate on four reasons. The first is that the federal government has announced that they are going to cut funding for postsecondary education for our native population across Canada, and they've also announced that they might be reconsidering it. On the fact that they're reconsidering it, the Legislature of Manitoba has already moved in and last week moved that the federal government indeed reconsider it. They believe that the native peoples of the west have a legal right to funding of postsecondary education.

The second reason for emergency debate is that the first ministers of the western provinces are gathered together in Edson on the east, called Camrose, to debate issues and to talk about common action. It would be nice if this Legislature, before that meeting convenes tomorrow, was able to tell that group that they would like the group to emphasize to the federal government that the federal government take on its responsibility of funding postsecondary education for natives.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, as you know, and I know you were very prominent in the academic communities in the past, the planning for students as they go to school this fall is very important. The money that's available is very important, and we have many of our native students now with no idea where they will stand because of the possibility that the federal government will try to weasel out of their responsibilities to finance postsecondary education of native people.

Those are the main arguments I have for the emergency of the debate now, Mr. Speaker, and I would ask your permission to let the debate go forward.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I well recognize the feelings of the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon in moving his motion under Standing Order 30. The point I would question, Mr. Speaker, is that the hon. member is asking that the business of this House be suspended, be adjourned, so that we may consider a matter that, in the eyes of this hon. member, he feels is urgent.

Well, I don't question for one moment that it's very important. I don't question for one moment that there are many native people out there who are wondering what the government of Canada is doing in terms of its review. But I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, the matter before the House today that hon. members have put forward, particularly the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, under Motion 204 is to deal with what I submit is a much more important issue, and that is to advise the government of Canada that we oppose, in any way, the goods and services tax. That is a regressive tax that would affect the citizens of this province in a much more severe way, and I think that's more urgent. Therefore, I would oppose the motion of the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. minister has just stated, the next item of business is a motion standing in my name. I do agree that it is a very important issue, and it's my hope that the Legislature will get to it before the day's business has elapsed. But, Mr. Speaker, I also believe that the position put forward by the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon is equally important, and I also don't see any reason why we can't debate both those issues this afternoon. I would imagine that all hon. members would see the importance of the change in the educational policy affecting native Indian students, and I certainly would have no objection to sort of stepping aside in order to allow the hon. member to put this motion.

Thank you.

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, I concur with the position taken by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West in connection with the urgency of this. The proposer of the motion has put it in terms of emergency.

The Standing Orders I think have to be looked at, Mr. Speaker, and that's the one that sets out that it's to discuss a

"matter of urgent public importance." No one denies the importance of the subject matter, no one denies that it's a matter of public importance, but I think some meaning has to be given to the word "urgent." When you look at the dictionary, which is really, I guess, the base of interpretation with respect to that, it's a matter "calling for immediate action" and "pressing." The matter and the substance of the motion, which of course has merit on its own, is a matter that is not before us, but it's the matter of urgency that is before us. The whole substance of education for natives is a matter of long-standing debate, long-standing negotiations through treaties, and it's obviously a very important matter. But I think we have to give some credence to the word "urgent," and that's the word; not "emergency," as indicated by the hon. member.

MR. SPEAKER: Under Standing Order 30, indeed subsection (1) was complied with. The matter was brought to the attention of the office of the Speaker with the two hours' notice, and the Chair thanks the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon for carrying that forward.

The matter of urgency is indeed an important issue, and in this regard the Chair has had to take into consideration the fact that the issue as put forward in what would be a proposed form of motion focuses in on an area whereby the funding for native people with respect to postsecondary education would be the topic. In that regard, with a perusal of the estimates, the estimates for Advanced Education have not been completed, could well be recalled to the House for consideration, and that might be one forum in which the issue could be dealt with. In addition, other funding areas fall within the jurisdiction of the Department of Municipal Affairs and could be brought forward at that stage as well.

The whole matter with regard to urgency and the issue could indeed be raised in any question period by the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon or any others and could deal with, for example, making strong representation to some ministerial counterpart in the federal government. That may indeed be one of the areas to proceed with.

The proposed motion which was sent to the office by the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon would in itself be out of order, because the way our Standing Orders are presently worded, under Standing Order 30 no motion would indeed be debatable, but it would be the matter of the issue that would be debated. The Chair also points out under Standing Order 30(6): "An emergency debate does not entail any decision of the Assembly." That can be a frustration to all hon. members and is, perhaps, one of the ongoing frustrations with regard to our Standing Orders in their present form. The Chair, along with other members of the House, including the Table officers, looks forward to us having a substantial revision of Standing Orders in the near future.

The other difficulty that arises is the matter of jurisdiction with respect to the issue. In this regard, reference is made back to a decision of this House November 6, 1974, with regard to another issue. The final decision of the Chair was stated in this case, and I quote:

It is very difficult to say that under this rule an emergency which has been caused or contributed to by an action which is outside the jurisdiction of the province should be the subject of this very special kind of debate

within this Chamber.

Therefore, aside from any sensitivity with regard to the issue,

the importance of the issue, one which I know is indeed near and dear to the heart of many members of this House, including the Member for Calgary-Mountain View and the Chair itself as well as the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, under Standing Order 30(2) the Chair then rules that the request for leave is not in order.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

head: WRITTEN QUESTIONS

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

MR. SPEAKER: Deputy House Leader, could that be two motions, please? The first one with respect to questions.

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

[Motion carried]

head: MOTIONS FOR RETURNS

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

MR. McEACHERN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak to that motion, and of course I will speak against it.

We are about to move into a summer recess, and I think the government should be more forthcoming with the large number of questions there are on the Order Paper. I myself have two on there: one asking for a copy of the report prepared by Mr. Keith Alexander regarding the privatization of Alberta Government Telephones; that's Motion 171; and also Motion 170:

... all the Alberta government studies, surveys, documents, projections, calculations, working papers, reports, speech notes, and meeting minutes which the Alberta government generated using Alberta taxpayer dollars that were used to conclude that the free trade deal would be good for Alberta, as well as those which showed there would be negative consequences.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the AGT one first a little bit. The report that we're referring to here was prepared by one Mr. Keith Alexander, who was an MLA from the constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud at one time. We have a pretty good idea what's in it, but it's about time the government released it so that we'd actually know. I mean, that report had been prepared a year, two years ago; just how far back it's really hard to tell, when it was actually ready. The government seems to be sitting on it. It makes me think that it's part of their hidden agenda, that they don't intend to be up front with Albertans. They could have released that report before the election and told us what they had in mind, whether they would accept the recommendations of that report. We don't know exactly what's in it, but we on our side of the House fear what's in it. Mr. Alexander is a well-known financial person who is high on private enterprise and the rights of private industry and how much better they can do everything than government can do things. Here we are taking one of the best Crown corporations of Alberta and putting it at risk. Or at least we've no reason to as-

sume that it is not at risk, unless they release the report and tell us their attitude to that report.

We're in a position, I think, on this side of the House to say that a telephone system is like so many other utilities: it's the kind of thing that's a natural monopoly. You can't run two lines into the same home and give a person the choice as to which company should supply the telephone service to that home. So therefore you're sort of left with saying that you either do it as a government utility or you give it to private enterprise and give them a situation where they've got a total monopoly and can take people for a ride and make huge profits. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, we'd like to know what the agenda of the government is.

The heritage trust fund has had a rather large investment in AGT, and we notice that the government has reduced that recently. It used to be \$1.5 billion, but it's now down considerably. I just wanted to check here the latest figure. Alberta Government Telephones now has about \$1 billion of heritage trust fund money where it had about \$1.5 billion just a few years ago. Now, I don't really object to that. There's no doubt that the Alberta government can still keep control of AGT, and AGT can get its debt funding from sources other than the heritage trust fund. Nonetheless . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, hon. member. The Chair realizes the member's own frustration, but we are discussing the motion by the Deputy Government House Leader that all of the motions stand and retain their places on the Order Paper. While the Chair allows some leeway to discuss some specifics with regard to urgency, how the member wishes to vote against this motion, so be it. But to get into any extensive detail with respect to this particular Motion for a Return 171 or any other is really beyond the parameters of debate allowed with regard to the motion proposed.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a final comment on the telephones one then, and I'll talk a little bit about the other one and why I think it's urgent.

The telephones information is really important. The Edmonton city council has had to recently decide whether or not they wanted to privatize Edmonton Telephones. I think that decision would have some impact on what this government might do, and so it would be nice now to complete that picture and find out just what is the direction of the telephone utility in this province. So I would say to the government that they should make that information available. And one would rather not wait until after our summer break and on into who knows when and how long or whether we'll even get the information or not.

I want to speak briefly, then, to Motion 170. The reason for this motion, Mr. Speaker, is that the Alberta government all through last session, back in the spring session of '88, kept talking about how free trade was going to be such a great deal for us. In fact, they started talking about it even sooner than that, back in '86 and '87 to some extent, but also in '88. They always talked about the studies they had and the information they had and how this showed conclusively that there would be jobs and all this sort of stuff. And they never once ever produced any statement of any merit that said: we have done this research and we now have these facts and we now know this, and therefore free trade will be good for us. The only information we got that was government generated was from the Mulroney government, and it had all the negative parts zapped out of it. What

I'm asking for here from the government is anything they have that would indicate what is good about free trade for this province and anything that is bad also. Because the dialogue about that should be up front and should be on both sides of the issue.

So we have gone for three years Mr. Speaker, without having any substantive backup to any of the claims made by the government about what free trade will do for Alberta. And it's time they put their money where their mouth is or put the written word, if you like, and say: "Here it is; we have done this study. We now know that this industry will do well. We now know the glass industry will go down the tube. We now know the beer industry has had it, but we think we can make up the jobs in this industry." We have not had that.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, those are the two motions that I have on the Order Paper, and I know that some of my colleagues have the same feeling of urgency towards some of these other motions. I just don't think that the government should be allowed to get up and say, "Oh, we'll just let them stand on the Order Paper and wait for another day." It's time we had some answers from this government. It's just part of their general tendency towards secrecy and letting information out later. "Later we'll tell you what we're doing with your dollars. We'll make the deals now, but we're not going to tell you the cost until later. It'll show up in public accounts a year or a year and a half from now." But you don't need to be up front and say: "Here it is. This is why we're doing what we're doing. Here's the information." It's time they changed their ways, Mr. Speaker.

REV. ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I too would just like to speak against this motion that all motions stand and retain their place. I have two motions, 184 and 186, that I really need to have answers to to begin to do some work which is rather imminent.

I am rather disappointed in the amalgamation of the departments into one Department of Health. It just becomes a huge bureaucracy over there, and it makes it very difficult for members of the opposition to do some effective work in terms of trying to get the information which we need.

I'm discovering, Mr. Speaker, that in two documents which recently have been tabled in the House and had information in them beforehand up until this year, somehow this year a lot of the information in them has been left out. I'm referring particularly to the Health Facilities Review Committee, who for the first time failed to put any mention in their report of the kinds of complaints they received throughout last year. Now, I think it's rather important as we look at the number of health facilities in the province and the kind of funding they're getting, looking at how accountable they are in terms of the quality of care in those facilities, that we should know the nature of those complaints. I'm not asking the specific complaints or anything other than what's been in those reports in past years, so I think it's only reasonable that I have that kind of information. I'm sure the Health Facilities Review Committee has kept the listing of those complaints, and I can't see why it's been up to two weeks now before any kind of information has been forthcoming in this regard.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, again in the government's estimates they have lumped together huge numbers of hospitals under different votes within vote 3 into one line in the budget, whereas in past years they would itemize line by line the various hospitals and the operating fundings they were getting. So we were able to be clear about some accountability and some quality of care measurement, what was going into that with respect to the fund-

ing they were getting. But that's all been lumped into one line now, and I think that's totally unsatisfactory and totally breaks with past practice of this government in their estimates. So I've asked that before we get into health estimates, we have this kind of information.

I was a bit alarmed that Health was mentioned to be up Thursday night. I'm told now that it will not be up, so I guess I could wait until Thursday, but I would like to tell government members that I think it's rather urgent and important that they get this kind of information out as they have in past years. I don't see anything wrong with keeping up those past practices, unless there's something that they're hiding, and enable not only members of the opposition but members of the general public to know what's going on, where the funding's been allocated, so we can have a much healthier debate about the nature of health care and quality of health care in our facilities throughout the province.

So I just would like to urge the government to be forthcoming on these motions and others at least by Thursday, Mr. Speaker, of this week.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, here we are again. A good number of the motions for returns -- one of those that's being asked to stand and retain its place -- obtain to the agreements between the government of Alberta and the various forest companies which are commencing, have commenced, or are sometime in the future to commence operations in our province. I merely want to point out that the clock is ticking, Mr. Speaker, and the calendar moves onward. Two of these agreements are in the process of negotiating forest management agreements, one of which is in the final stages of environmental impact assessment. There will be public meetings. There will be public hearings. All those who care about the future of the northern third of our province are concerned to know as much as they can. What I don't understand, Mr. Speaker, is why it's possible for the government to come to a decision on these things and to announce certain information, but it's not possible to come to a decision on whether or not the information is to be made public.

Two other motions concern water quality data for the Peace and Athabasca rivers, which are intimately involved with these two projects. Daishowa, of course, is on the Peace River, and Alberta-Pacific, or Mitsubishi/Honshu, is on the Athabasca River. The baseline water quality data are of very significant importance to the people who live in that area, because that has a lot to do with the extent to which the rivers are capable of absorbing the additional pollutions that these mills would cause and are also important in terms of establishing what is the background level of water quality under different conditions into which that effluent would be absorbed.

So I do believe that there's some urgency to these motions, and I'm also against the motion to stand and retain their places.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, in closing debate on this motion, I would hope that hon. members are aware that it is Tuesday and private members' day, and there is a very important item on the Order Paper by the Member for Calgary-Mountain View. The government's position was that it has not yet made its decision as to those motions for returns. The government felt it would be appropriate to move that they stand and retain their places on the Order Paper so that the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View could get on with what I'm sure is a very important motion to him, Mr. Speaker. For that reason I would stand by the

motion that was made.

[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.

[Adjourned debate June 22: Mr. Hawkesworth]

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the comments made by the hon. Minister for Advanced Education on a couple of occasions already this afternoon. I'm very much looking forward to the debate on this motion as well. I've already read it into the record, and it's on the Order Paper for today.

I want to pick up on the comments that I made in introducing this motion last week, Mr. Speaker. The first point I think I need to make is that I first of all have to ensure that the record is straight in terms of the position taken by the Conference Board. As you know, last week when I was making a number of points about this tax, I emphasized its regressive nature; I emphasized that it makes the system more unfair, that it will lead to higher unemployment. I of course referred to the Conference Board analysis, and as well, it is an inflationary tax. I want to make sure that members understand that the Conference Board, in doing its analysis, indicated that this sales tax, if it were introduced in 1991, would have the effect of raising the inflation rate from the present rate of about 5 percent to a 7.3 percent rate of inflation. So it would have a cumulative impact on the economy of approximately 2.3 percent as an inflation factor. I think that was not quite the way that it came out in *Hansard* in my remarks last week, and in reviewing those, I wanted to ensure that the record was corrected.*

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

I guess the question, Mr. Speaker, is this. Agreed that this tax is going to be wrong in all those many ways that I've already stated and which others have already stated as well, the point is: what can be done? I think the first thing I'd like to emphasize is that it's important that we be on the record as a Legislature, that we address this motion today, and hopefully from all concurrences in all parts of the House we can agree to it and accept it. The second thing we could do once that is in place, as a position of the people of Alberta through this Legislature, is to begin to lobby the federal government. I understand that the federal government is intending to issue a new discussion paper on this tax to clarify what they've already said and to add and change from what they've previously said about this tax. That new discussion paper is likely to be issued after the House of Commons goes into its summer recess; sometime later in July is the latest estimate, as I understand it. But it will be followed, Mr. Speaker, by some cross-country hearings, which means that people in Alberta ought to have an opportunity to make comment on this particular tax. It would seem to me that if the Legisla-

*see page 471, left col., para. 5

ture were on record, it would make for the basis of perhaps an all-party submission, if we feel that strongly, and that might be a very dramatic way of communicating to the federal government our concern.

Another idea, and I'm trying to be as positive as I can in my suggestions this afternoon, Mr. Speaker the government could begin taking out ads in the news media, as they did during the debate on the free trade legislation federally. Ads were taken out to help carry the flag for the government's point of view on that. The federal government apparently is undertaking, or considering undertaking, a news media campaign or a communications campaign. If the government and the Legislature of Alberta feel strongly about this issue, it may be important -- and it is important, I believe -- that we get our point of view across.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, my fourth point is that this government can just simply resist going along, and that they've done already. They've made that clear to the federal government. I commend the Provincial Treasurer for finally being clear on that before his meetings with his colleagues in Ottawa, that they will not go along so far as the collecting of this tax is concerned.

But there's also another issue that I think is very important which also has a part to play in this, and that is: how is this tax going to apply to provincial Crown corporations? The province of Alberta has jurisdiction over the regulation of utilities; for example, such as electric utilities. Alberta has a special case, Mr. Speaker, in that there is the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission, which handles approximately one-fifth of all our crude oil sales. Those are two examples. I guess another one might be the Alberta Liquor Control Board; that's another one that might fall under federal jurisdiction as far as the collection of this tax is concerned. Now, given that the provincial government has such leverage, what is important here is that the government has some levers available to it. As well, there's a constitutional authority, which the provinces enjoy, to tax consumers. It's unclear now to what extent the federal government can intrude on provincial jurisdiction.

So taking all of these examples -- the Alberta Liquor Control Board, the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission, our regulation of provincial utilities -- the province has a number of important levers at its disposal. It is going to have to decide whether it's going to submit to this federal initiative or whether we will carry on in resisting this federal initiative. I await to know what the government's final intention is. But it would seem to me that with this motion having been passed by the Legislature, it would put the government in a strong position in terms of resisting this intrusion by the federal government.

Those are my introductory comments, Mr. Speaker. Given the introductory comments I made last Friday in terms of the wrongness and unfairness of this federal tax, I think and hope that all members of the Legislature will concur with those remarks, and I look forward to the points that they make in amplifying that.

In conclusion, I would leave all hon. members of this Legislature with this one point, and that is this, Mr. Speaker: that having passed the motion, it would give tremendous impetus to the government in which to act, and failure to do so today, I think, would be unfortunate. Given that this debate is going to go on for some time nationally, I think, it would be good to have this vote on the record.

Thank you.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Red Deer-

North.

MR. DAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm clearly on record both in this Assembly and in my own constituency as being in opposition to a federal sales tax, a goods and service tax -- as a matter of fact, many points of the federal budget.

The motion as has been brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Mountain View does give me some pause, however, and I would like to reflect on the foresight shown by the Member for Calgary-Mountain View and his party, because they're proposing an idea which we've been actively pursuing for about two years now. His motion is asking us "to take immediate action to vigorously oppose" the federal tax. That's a little bit like asking the government to begin, or asking somebody to begin, a prizefight which has already progressed through several rounds. The fight is on. I don't know where they've been. And to suggest "take immediate action" is to suggest that we haven't already taken a number of initiatives.

Now, there's no question at all, Mr. Speaker, that I am opposed, as I said, to a goods and service tax. But it's this reflection that we possibly haven't been doing anything which needs to be examined in light of this motion. It's very interesting if you look -- not to our own sources, which might be perceived as being biased. If we just stand here and talk about what we've done and these initiatives already, people will say, "Well, you have to say that; that's your party, and you've got to say you've been taking some initiatives." Well, let's look, if we can, to an outside source, which says this:

You have to say for Alberta Premier Don Getty that he was in at the start of what might well be the next battle for the heart of Canada's Confederation.

... Getty opposed right from the outset Ottawa's plan to levy a national consumption tax instead of the old manufacturers' sales tax. Other premiers made lukewarm sounds of approval, but Getty was left to carry the fight.

AN HON. MEMBER: Who said that?

MR. DAY: I'm glad you asked that question, hon. member; I just happen to have the answer. It comes from the *Calgary Herald*, May 11, from William Gold.

It's obvious that our Premier has led this charge significantly ever since Ottawa came out with this ill-conceived idea. Now, the reasons for being concerned about a federal sales tax, a goods and service tax, are many. As a matter of fact, I would suggest they are legion. I'll just touch on a few here today.

The federal people tell us that actually we will eventually see some long-term gains from this tax. However, the macro-economic effects of the new federal sales tax on the economy are going to be devastating. That's the long term. The short term is going to be very serious and probably last several years. The Institute for Policy Analysis at the University of Toronto has projected approximately a 3.5 percent rise in the consumer price inflation index just because of this goods and service tax, and possibly a substantial ripple effect lasting for another three to seven years. Once that kicks in, of course, interest rates will be driven up because the Bank of Canada has this obsession, preoccupation, about accelerating inflation, and we know they battle that by raising the interest rates. And we know, in this province, the effect of rising interest rates, how it's cutting into our resurging economy, and how we're opposed to that. This goods and service tax will only aggravate that problem.

Higher inflation, of course, raises expenditures directly

through higher costs of health, education, social services, higher wage demands in general. But lower real income and reduced domestic expenditures are going to dampen provincial revenue. You couple that with the inflation driven expenditures, and you have an enlarged deficit. All of these things have a snowballing and a very negative effect on our economy.

The thing I'm really concerned about, Mr. Speaker, is that this new tax may actually result in a shift of the fiscal burden from the federal to the provincial governments. I believe it's a real move by the federal government to pass their deficit problems on to provincial governments. That brings us to a more fundamental concern with the federal sales tax reform, and that's the increase in federal power over taxation in general.

MR. McEACHERN: What about the mill rate?

MR. DAY: I appreciate that members opposite seem to have awakened to that and are alarmed with that, as we are.

Right now, with the limited presence of the federal government in the sales tax area, provinces have some tax policy flexibility. But this new sales tax is going to greatly limit that provincial tax flexibility, especially if this is administered by the federal government, and especially for us here in Alberta, who have the greatest sales tax flexibility in that we have no sales tax. And we're standing firm on that, that we will have no sales tax on our citizens. So in this case all major taxes would be under the effective control of the federal government. They would be defining the tax base for income taxes and sales tax. There's a very serious erosion of provincial tax capabilities here. Provinces are going to be left with very little room in the tax policy area.

You know, Mr. Speaker, somewhere and sometime I think governments, be it federal, provincial, or municipal, have got to get ahold of the reality that we as governments do not have some kind of God-given right to tax people to death. In fact, what's happening here as the federal government layers on more and more taxes, it seems as if governments and the federal government have missed that. You know, we talk about death and taxes and both being inevitable. One thing about death: at least sometimes it's sweet. Taxes never are, and in this case they're particularly bitter.

Now, not only the tax problem but the actual implementation of this tax is going to be a horror story and a nightmare in itself. Just consider the area alone where people have been asking for exemptions, and different groups have been asking for exemptions. Already the feds are saying that exemptions will be granted; for instance, some types of groceries, what they call basic groceries. Who's going to determine what a basic grocery is? Well, I'd venture a guess. Thirty or 40 bureaucrats will probably sit down for the next 10 years and try and determine that. Products of farmers and fishermen will be exempt, and I have no problem with that; I'd like to see everybody exempt. But who's going to determine how far those products go and if they'd be called the product of a farmer or a fisherman? We're told by the feds most education services will be exempt. Most? Who's going to determine which ones? What about music lessons? How about diet classes? How about private fitness clubs that have aerobic programs? The list goes on.

AN HON. MEMBER: Public speaking classes.

MR. DAY: Public speaking classes. A good one, which the

member opposite might be interested in signing up for.

Who's going to determine? Mr. Speaker, the federal government is opening us up to a nightmare, to a quagmire of bureaucratic interpretation that's going to -- I guess the only positive thing is there's going to be some job creation. But again it's government job creation; therefore it's false creation; therefore it's going to be regressive in the long term because people are going to have to pay more taxes than benefits which will come from those jobs being created.

Then they talk about partial rebates to the municipalities, to universities, to schools, and to hospitals. Again, the determining process, the policing process of determining those rebates and the exemptions; is going to be a nightmare. They talk about there will be some allowances for small business and trade. I'm glad to hear that -- but again another whole layer of bureaucratic interpretation, and the hiring of legions of people to sit down and try and sift through all that. We're just opening ourselves up to the continuing of a system whose ultimate effect, I believe, is going to be to drive Alberta businesses and other businesses underground and increase the underground economy. People are simply getting more and more fed up with excessive taxation, and they're going to go underground. Then, of course, we'll have to hire underground tax policemen to go digging underground to find out who's evading these excessive taxes, and more bureaucracy, and more people in the courts system, and more disincentive to work and to produce and to profit.

We hear from the Canadian Organization of Small Business when their president, Dan Horigan, who estimates that this type of tax would be a "nightmare," claims that their studies show that:

this tax could cost each of Canada's 720,000 small businesses as much as \$10,000 [just] to reorganize and deliver the new tax to Ottawa.

Ten thousand dollars apiece to small businesses, as an estimate, just to be able to figure it out and hand it over. That's over \$7 billion being laid on the backs of small business in our country to try and come to grips -- that's just to deliver the tax.

Winston Churchill said something interesting. He said that the only thing we learn from history is that we don't learn from history. I think we need to look at some very recent history in terms of a goods and service tax or value-added tax. We can look at the pattern of events in Britain. It introduced a value-added tax. After it did, inflation rose to 18 percent. It only came down to lower rates at the cost of higher interest; again, their bank responding the same way our Bank of Canada would, by raising interest. That meant more unemployment. New Zealand introduced a goods and service tax in 1986. Initially, that raised the inflation rate to 16 percent; it previously had been at 6 percent. They introduced their goods and service tax, it went up to 16 percent, and for the year ended June 30, 1987, it stood at 18.9 percent. They didn't know what the effects would be or how long it would take to start going down, but in April of that year, 1987, the central bank discount rate in New Zealand stood at 28.4 percent -- that's their central bank discount rate -- just to try and curb the raging inflation that was brought on by the goods and service tax. Why can't governments learn from history? Why can't our federal government look at some of those disasters and learn from the history of it?

We've had people in Alberta opposing this tax -- our government people opposing it -- for quite awhile. Actually, back as far as 1987 we had the mayor of one of Alberta's biggest cities, a gentleman by the name of Ralph Klein, lash out at a proposed

federal sales tax, then calling it "disastrous and insidious." He said a city study at that time threatened that tax would cost Calgary residents at least an extra \$10 million annually. To quote the former mayor -- now, I understand, a cabinet minister in one of the leading governments in this country -- he said, "This will be absolutely disastrous," and looked to other mayors to oppose it also.

Another negative effect of this tax is going to be the effect it's brought on our domestic oil and natural gas prices. Canadians are actually going to wind up paying more for domestic oil and natural gas than Americans, beginning in 1991. Sounds like a return to the national energy program which was so lovingly embraced by the Liberals and the NDP. The reason we're going to be paying more for oil and gas is simply this: minister Michael Wilson has agreed not to tax exports of Canadian oil and natural gas to the U.S., but he does plan to impose the new sales tax on home heating fuel and other untaxed petroleum products. So, in effect, Canadians will be paying more than Americans for our own gas. Some estimates are that our federal sales tax could add nearly \$50 to the average \$560 annual natural gas heating bill in Alberta, another good reason for Albertans rising and opposing this tax.

Now, the hope and the discussion is that putting this tax in place, maybe the feds will lay off a little in some other areas, maybe on their surtax which they slapped us with.

AN HON. MEMBER: Not likely.

MR. DAY: Well, a correct observation, hon. member. Not likely is the correct answer. The income tax surtaxes which increase in the federal budget will not be lifted as promised when the proposed national sales tax takes effect in 1991. As a matter of fact, Finance minister Wilson in an interview said:

I'd love to get taxes down but I also know that we must get this deficit and debt problem under control.

Yes, [the surtaxes] will stay.

Layer upon layer upon layer of taxes. I have to tremble at the reasoning that increased taxation is somehow going to bring the deficit under control. When you take people's spending power away from them, when you take their incentive away from them to work and to produce, I don't know how you think you're going to generate more revenue for government coffers and thereby reduce deficits. There's a basic problem with philosophy in terms of economics here.

We believe in Alberta, of course, that lower taxes mean more money in people's pockets, more disposable income, more generation in the economy of production, and therefore taxing at a lower level actually creates more revenues to bring into government coffers. We've tried to set that as an example to the rest of the country and to the federal government by virtue of the fact that our tax regime allows Albertans to enjoy the lowest level of taxes payable of any province in this country, and in return we know that we will provide the best level of public services available in the country. Just as an example, a family of four living in Alberta with a gross income of \$40,000 will pay about \$3,300 in provincial taxes. But if that same family was to move to Ontario, they would have to pay somewhere in the region of \$4,700 a year in provincial taxation, a difference of over \$1,400. I daresay all of us can imagine some good uses for an extra \$1,400 in our pockets every year, and that's what this government has provided to the citizens of our province. But it has the possibility of being eroded away by this tax.

We understand the pressures that face the economy nationally and provincially. We understand the effects that increased taxation and higher interest rates have on our provincial economy. That's why we haven't introduced a provincial sales tax, and that's why, Mr. Speaker, we're committed to keeping the lowest level of taxation anywhere in this country. We've stated that again and again.

AN HON. MEMBER: How about the world?

MR. DAY: Well, I haven't got a world analysis, but it might be a good thing for the members opposite to research, because they sure haven't been researching anything else.

If I could just reflect for a moment on what I quoted from a newspaper: that our Premier has led the attack on this from the start, has been alone in that charge. And I want to say that I agree in principle with the Member for Calgary-Mountain View. As a matter of fact, I have a motion on the Order Paper myself along these lines. I believe mine is a little more explicit and provides opportunities for us here in the Assembly in very concrete ways to oppose this. I won't get into talking about that motion because that would be out of order, but I just say that to reflect on the fact that I am in agreement with the principle of this motion that the member's brought out, and I believe that we need some positive co-operation from all parties. I don't believe that it's a time for political grandstanding. I believe it's time for Albertans to take a stand against this. There are a number of ways we can do it. I can't get into my motion itself, but I am taking a stand here in the Legislature opposing this, as I hope my colleagues are. I do know there's a grass-root feeling out there that is against this taxation that's coming onto us.

I would recommend any number of methods that our citizens can come up with. I understand that the *Alberta Report* magazine has suggested Resolution One as an effective means of people taking a stand against it. I would recommend people looking at that. Resolution One seems to have some merit from the grass roots. But I need to test the sincerity of the members opposite, because they're suggesting we haven't been doing anything in this particular vein. I say we have been doing a lot.

I therefore would like to have this motion amended to reflect the nature of the present battle as it is. I think we need to test the sincerity of the members opposite and see if it's just political grandstanding that they're up to here, or are they really sincere about joining us in the fight we have launched.

I would, therefore, like to move this amendment as it is being distributed.

by striking out "take immediate action" and substituting "continue in its efforts".

Simply that; that if the members are serious and want to join us in the fight, we delete "take immediate action," because that would be sending a message down to Ottawa that we haven't done anything, when in fact they know we've done a lot.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View either just woke up to the fact that the proposed federal sales tax is an issue of concern in Alberta or he has a very selective memory regarding the discussions in this Assembly over the last two years. To refresh his memory, I'd like to quote from *Hansard*, May 7, 1987. In a response raised in the question period, the Premier stated:

A federal sales tax is certainly within their jurisdiction. For our part we do not believe a sales tax is appropriate in Alberta, and therefore we will resist one at every opportunity.

That was two years ago, and we're still fighting this.

By the way, the answer is contained in a series of questions which were not initiated by the Liberals or the NDP but by a gentleman who was concerned about this whole issue some 25 months ago, who is now sitting on the front benches of the Alberta government. That's the minister now responsible for Municipal Affairs, the Hon. Ray Speaker, MLA for Little Bow. It was he who brought this to our attention, not the opposition.

But, Mr. Speaker, it's instructive to note that the very same day the New Democrats and the Liberals in their usual Johnny-come-lately fashion asked supplementary questions, not about opposition to the imposition of these federal tax proposals but about analyzing our own tax system and sharing the burden of the federal initiative. Can you believe it? And I quote again: asking us to share the burden of the federal initiative. Here, listen to this:

... we need to launch into a reanalysis, if you like, of what our tax structure is and hence make an enlightened response ...

We have the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway to thank for those words of wisdom.

The hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, who at that time was the leader of the party in this House, had the audacity to stand up and suggest we co-operate with the federal government, and I quote:

Has there been any input to the federal powers that be to think about the new tax in the way of a shared tax the same way that income tax is shared ...

In other words, let's join the feds to beat the backs of Albertans. That was coming from the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

Where did that leave us, Mr. Speaker? I'll tell you where. The New Democrats wanted to study our tax regime because they didn't understand it, and see where we could accommodate; the Liberals wanted to roll over, play dead, and comply with the feds in their attempt to make a \$10 billion tax grab. That left the Progressive Conservatives of this province being the only party willing to stand and be counted against these federal tax proposals.

You know, Mr. Speaker, in 1988 the federal NDP and the Liberals were party to a unanimous finance committee report supporting sales tax reform, and you know their positions haven't changed now, and it seems like their provincial counterparts are only beginning to get on this bandwagon that we launched two years ago opposing this tax.

The Member for Calgary-Mountain View has implied in this House that the government has not vigorously opposed these plans, yet I note that the very same member recognized the wonderful job our Premier is doing in opposing the federal sales tax when he was quoted in the source of all eternal truth which the opposition refers to, the *Edmonton Journal*, of May 12, 1989. It says:

Bob Hawkesworth noted that Getty made his opposition to the sales tax a major issue ...

He acknowledged it right there, but won't acknowledge it when he stands to debate in this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I am asking for a show of sincerity. If they are truly interested in joining forces with the attack and the initiatives that we have so effectively led, then let them see this as a good amendment to encourage us to continue in our action and send a unified message to Ottawa. Anything short of that Ottawa will only interpret as political grandstanding by the opposition in a vain attempt to try and leap on a bandwagon that they've been trying to leap on, which is a bandwagon of good

government and solid government, and I hope they've learned something from trying to get onto it.

But, in fact, Mr. Speaker, what I'm asking for is unanimous support that this amendment be agreed upon, and then we can provide that united front to Ottawa and show them that Albertans want no part of this tax and that our government should be looked at as a model of keeping taxes low and services high and a model of providing an economic environment that encourages growth and prosperity and the creation of wealth for all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: We have an amendment before the House. Speaking on the amendment, Edmonton-Belmont.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's not very often I have the opportunity, or ever want to take the opportunity, to agree with the Member for Red Deer-South on any particular point that he may ...

AN HON. MEMBER: North.

MR. SIGURDSON: North? I apologize. There you go; Red Deer-North.

... on any particular topic that he may bring to the Assembly or even have outside the Assembly. In fact, when he started his remarks today I thought, gosh, you know, that sounds like maybe I might be able to agree with him once; just maybe there might be the opportunity afforded us on this side of the Assembly to agree with the hon. member. And I was interested when he made all of those points about how regressive the tax system that's being proposed by those eastern Conservatives is. I agreed with the points that were being made.

But then, you know, all of a sudden he wants to soften the motion that's on the Order Paper. Isn't that regrettable? I wondered, you know, just for a while what trouble the hon. member got in, because what he was having to do was stand up and criticize a tax system that's been brought in by his federal counterparts. What awful thing did that member do that he would have to stand up and criticize his federal cousins? I don't know what it could be. Because last November when there was the opportunity to go out and speak on certain policy matters that were before all Canadians -- not just Albertans but all Canadians -- I didn't see the hon. member standing up and talking and addressing the topic of the federal proposed income tax at that time.

I went out, knocked on doors, talked to constituents in Edmonton North and in Edmonton East, with sheets that showed what a 9 percent proposed federal sales tax would cost average Albertans. I went out and talked about this. And they were amazed; they weren't aware that it would be coming out of their pockets. They always know that any time there is going to be a tax grab by a Conservative government, it comes out of their pockets, but we were rather explicit with it. We showed what those costs would be: 9 percent on top of a box of Pampers, 9 percent on an automobile, 9 percent on certain grocery items, 9 percent on the cost of a house, 9 percent on music lessons, as the hon. member suggested. We talked at the doorstep.

Now, in Edmonton East we elected a New Democrat, and Edmonton North came close. But I also recall that during that campaign period the Treasurer was out there knocking on doors in Edmonton Strathcona, because in Edmonton Strathcona it

was a little uncomfortable for Scott Thorkelson. The current Member for Edmonton-Parkallen and now government minister was out there hustling votes, and so were we, and so were the Liberals. And who was talking about value-added tax then? I remember it was the minister for culture who back then talked about a value-added tax and the negative consequences it would have. Look at him now, supporting it. In all probability he's going to support those people he was opposed to a few short months ago. Times have changed a little bit. Times have changed a little bit. You know, half a million dollars was spent during that election campaign by this government. [interjections] Was it more than a half million? We tried to find out on a motion for a return how much money was spent. Didn't get an answer. Wonder why? Don't want to come out and tell the truth about how much money was spent supporting their federal counterparts, those kissin' cousins? Don't want to tell us, Mr. Speaker? Might be a little embarrassed about how much money it cost the Alberta taxpayer to help elect 25 Conservative Members of Parliament. How much? What did it cost? A lot of money. A lot of money. And what are we getting for a return? You know, normally when you make at least a half million dollar investment, you'd expect . . .

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

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. Order. Red Deer-North.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, the member obviously is clearly in violation of Standing Orders by not addressing the amendment which is talking about taking immediate action as opposed to continuing its efforts. He's off on another typical tangent and wasting the time of the House and not dealing with the amendment because it is such a good amendment.

MR. SIGURDSON: To the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. [interjections] Order please, Westlock-Sturgeon. Thank you. I noted the statement of the Member for Red Deer-North. However, he did not refer to any rule or citation or any part of Standing Orders, and I think we all know the amendment that is before the House. I would suggest that the Member for Edmonton-Belmont continue with his speech.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, I want to assure the hon. Member for Red Deer-North that I am speaking to the amendment because this amendment tells us that they want to strike out "take immediate action" and substitute "continue in its efforts." Well, I've got to be opposed to that, because the efforts to date have been so abysmal that they don't deserve support. That's the problem. What I'm trying to do is point out to the member opposite that the support to date hasn't been very good. The support to date was to go out and canvass for a whole bunch of federal Tory candidates so they could go to Ottawa and vote for a regressive tax system that comes back and hits all Albertans. Now, it would be different, you know, if that hon. member had stood up back in November and said, "You know, I want to find out what the position of my candidates is." Well, somebody didn't tell you the truth. If that's the case, you either bought the story they were telling you . . .

MR. DAY: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: State your point of order, Red Deer-North.

MR. DAY: Standing Orders, under 28. I did very clearly make that point in November on television and in the newspaper. It's a matter for the record. I just wanted to bring that to his attention, because he's off the amendment again and the point of order is that he's off the amendment, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Did the hon. Member for Red Deer-North say 28? I fail to see the relevancy of Standing Order 28. Would the Member for Edmonton-Belmont please proceed.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, you see, Mr. Speaker, there we have Standing Order 28, which is a motion to adjourn, and I'll bet you that's the kind of guarantee that member looks for. He probably asked a Tory candidate somewhere in Red Deer what the position is and the guy said: "I don't know. Got to wait and see what it's going . . ."

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, I did ask you to proceed with your speech on the amendment to the motion.

MS BARRETT: I think he's doing a great job.

MR. SIGURDSON: Indeed, what I'm trying to do is point out that we don't want to continue in the weak, soft efforts this government supposedly is taking with their federal cousins in Ottawa. That's the entire point. They had an opportunity. There was an opportunity last November to do something constructive. They chose what they thought was constructive at the time. Perhaps they even still feel that way. But the truth of the matter is that last fall when we had a general election, this government spent all kinds of money trying to support their federal counterparts -- all kinds of Alberta tax dollars spent on an advertising campaign -- and that's part of this "continue in its efforts"; that's part of this amendment. That advertising campaign, I submit is part of that "continue in its efforts" to oppose the national tax the federal government proposes to inflict on all of us. There was an opportunity, then, to spend money that said, "Look, this is what the government proposes to do; we object" but that didn't appear. That didn't appear in any of the papers I saw -- nothing sponsored by this government. The ad said: "Go out and support them. Let's put them back in so they can come back at us." Nine percent. Nine percent. Thank you very much. What a treat. If only the Alberta Treasury could get back even 9 percent of what they spent on the national advertising campaign or on the provincial advertising campaign, we might be further ahead, but that's money already gone.

You know, Mr. Speaker, if the hon. Member for Red Deer-North . . . [laughter] I can't remember which constituency is his, so I'm just sort of merging the two. If the hon. Member for Red Deer-North were truly interested in fighting what his federal counterparts are doing, not mine -- in fact my Member of Parliament Ross Harvey, has been opposed to this. He's the only Alberta Member of Parliament that has stood up and opposed the value-added tax. The only one.

AN HON. MEMBER: What about Calgary Northeast?

MR. SIGURDSON: Oh, I'm sorry. I forgot there's that other fellow Kindy from Calgary Northeast, the one that a lot of Tories don't even want to talk about anymore.

AN HON. MEMBER: They can have him.

MR. FOX: Is he a messiah or a pariah?

MR. SIGURDSON: Mr. Speaker, if the Member for Red Deer-North were truly committed to fighting the value-added tax, he would have supported the motion my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View presented to the Assembly today. It's so regrettable that he wants to weaken that motion with this amendment I'm opposed to it.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for Rocky Mountain House.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It certainly gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise and support this amendment. Ever since the white paper was introduced, I was opposed to this value-added tax and all the rest of the things it would do to our economy in Alberta, the one place we don't have any sales tax and then to have the federal government want to move in and take that area over.

But to say that our government hasn't been doing anything -- I would like to draw to the attention of the Assembly a number of articles I have before me, dating all the way back to May 7, 1987, when the hon. Treasurer of our province made the comment that a sales tax is not negotiable in Alberta and he would not join the federal/provincial sales tax as proposed by the federal minister. He said that our not having a sales tax helps the low-income families in this province. Of course, that's one of our objectives, to be a caring government and to look after all the people in the province of Alberta. Moving on into June 1987, we see once again that the Provincial Treasurer is expressing his dislike for the sales tax. He was moving out and talking with many groups in the province, telling them about the dangers of allowing this regressive tax to be imposed upon us. Moving then through to August 1987, we see once again that the Provincial Treasurer is talking about it being a constitutional problem and that we may have to take some action in that area.

I know the Member for Red Deer-North mentioned the former mayor of the city of Calgary and how he came out and opposed the federal sales tax in very strong words. Of course, we know what a great job he is doing for the province of Alberta now in his new capacity, not just making a great city out of Calgary.

Why would we oppose this tax, Mr. Speaker? I think there are a number of things we want to keep in mind as we're looking at this. There's certainly no question that it is nothing more than a tax grab. The Minister of Finance, Mr. Wilson, had said that it was going to be a neutral tax. Well, after our Premier and Treasurer and many other groups put a lot of heat on him, he finally came clean and admitted that, yes, it was going to generate about \$10 billion for the federal Treasury. Mr. Speaker, \$10 billion means about \$400 for every man, woman, and child in Canada, and that certainly is a lot of money to be taking out of the hands of the people, who've got to buy food, clothing, and all these other things. There's no question it would be

catastrophic for Alberta if in fact a tax like this is implemented.

As the Member for Red Deer-North mentioned before, the inflation factor it would create amounts to about 3.5 percent. Well, we know how Mr. Crow or Mr. Snow or whoever it was . . . We say it's Mr. Crow, but I guess our hon. members across the way have somebody in mind; I don't know who he is.

AN HON. MEMBER: Snow job.

MR. LUND: Anyway, we understand and know how he reacts -- I'm talking about Mr. Crow now -- to the increase in inflation and the way interest rates take a huge jump. Can you imagine what he would do if all of a sudden we looked at 3.5 percent inflation just because of one tax? I can see our interest rate 17 or 18 percent in a very short time.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, the interest rates rising like that have a ripple effect all down through the whole economy. Because of high interest rates, we can see unemployment going up dramatically. As a matter of fact, there's an estimate that by 1995 we would have some 156,000 fewer jobs in Canada simply because of this sales tax on goods and services of 9 percent.

Let's take a quick look at what effect this would have on agriculture and small business. As we all know, of course, the primary producer can't pass on his costs. He has to absorb them. So here we are adding 9 percent to an industry that simply can't afford it. The net return to the farmer is not 9 percent, so how are they going to absorb an increase like this? The problems the hon. Member for Red Deer-North identified to do with the collection and remission of the tax: what a great burden that's going to put on small business, farmers. They have to get themselves geared up and hire extra people just to collect and remit this. So, Mr. Speaker, it's no wonder that our government recognized this problem way back in 1987 and . . .

MR. PASHAK: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. With all due respect, I believe the member is speaking to the main motion and not the amendment, as directed under Standing Order 20(b): "a member speaking to the amendment . . . must confine debate to the subject of the amendment."

MR. DAY: He's right on it. Wake up!

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, I was just giving the reasons why our government was into it in . . .

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Just a moment, hon. member. It's 20(b)?

MR. PASHAK: Yes.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Any other speakers on the point of order?

MR. DAY: Just to reiterate, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Rocky Mountain House is exactly and precisely on the amendment. He is talking about the continuing efforts and not just immediate action. He's dead on. The members opposite just can't recognize that.

MR. SIGURDSON: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, just to follow up on that. I would offer to the Member for Red Deer-North that he ought to look up *Beauchesne* 494, which is that

members that come into the Assembly will only speak that which is true. I don't think the Member for Rocky Mountain House is even remotely close to the amendment, so I just offer that as well.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Having briefly had the opportunity to refer to the points of order raised by the hon. members, I would rule that the hon. member's remarks are in order and would ask him to proceed, please.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said before the interruption, I was simply demonstrating why our government started this action way back in 1987 and why the amendment to the motion is so much in order.

Mr. Speaker, another area that concerned our government back in '87, why we started this initiative and took this hard stand and led the rest of the country opposing this tax, was the fact that in our view the federal government is now moving into a jurisdiction that is normally the jurisdiction of the provinces. Certainly there is only so much area that can be taxed, and as the federal government moves in and takes over areas that normally are provincial jurisdiction, that squeezes the province into an even smaller area and doesn't allow for much movement.

Getting back for a minute to the problems it will create for small business, we have to recognize that these added costs, particularly in businesses operated by families -- of course, with the added workload, the added costs, we can see many of them going out of business along with the farmers.

As I mentioned earlier, back in 1987 the Provincial Treasurer suggested that possibly these would even be unconstitutional, although I'm thinking now that the likelihood of that standing up in a federal court would probably be doomed to some failure.

Mr. Speaker, I've outlined why we were opposed to this tax back in 1987 and why we continue to fight this tax. I think to send a message to Ottawa from all members of this House that we are continuing this fight started back in 1987 would be a message they couldn't overlook and would have to address. So I would urge all hon. members to support the amendment so we can send that message to Ottawa.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You can always depend on Red Deer-North for a bit of unconscious humour, as we have here with this amendment. Let me simply say that the only way anyone could support the amendment is if they were suffering from total amnesia combined with the gullibility of the voters of Red Deer-North.

However, the resolution is a good one and nobody can reasonably question the need to reform the current manufacturers' sales tax. It kills jobs and favours imports over exports, and that's not acceptable. Similarly, no one reasonably challenges the need of the federal government to raise more revenue, and let there be no mistake that despite the statements of the Finance minister, this goods and sales tax is calculated to that end of raising more revenue. The question, however, is whether the poor policies of the federal government with respect to the manufacturers' sales tax, the difficulties that exist with respect to the manufacturers' sales tax, and the desperate financial plight of the federal government justify this particular goods and sales tax at this point in time.

Now, let me say that I approach this matter with some degree of ambivalence. It isn't an easy question and it's not totally a black or white situation. Each policy decision involves trade-offs, and the question we have to face is whether or not the benefits in this particular instance justify the downsides with respect to the goods and sales tax. I suggest that in fact they do not.

What are the objections and the problems with respect to this tax? The first objection, of course, is . . .

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please, hon. member. I would remind hon. members that there is an amendment before the House and the occasional passing reference to the amendment would be helpful in the debate. I believe the previous speaker -- and I judged this way -- was making reference to the progress of representation by the government over a number of years. Whether the hon. member wishes to pursue that or not we must have some reference to the amendment. Thank you.

MR. CHUMIR: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was following the very, very clear precedent that had been established and was not noticing any reference to the amendment so I thought we had some fairly elastic rules. I will throw in the occasional reference to the amendment but the obvious goal is to get my comments and thoughts on the record before time has totally evaporated on this issue.

Now, the first objection, which has not been addressed by the amendment or by the government to date -- and the objection has been noted by prior speakers -- is that sales taxes are regressive ones. They bear more heavily on a proportionate basis on the lower income members of our community. This, of course, is particularly of concern, and it hasn't been addressed in the amendment or in the actions of the provincial government. In fact I don't believe the provincial government has ever been heard to express any concerns about lower income Albertans with respect to this. I'm straining to remember references and concerns with respect to lower income Albertans in other contexts by the government and unsuccessfully straining in recent times. So this problem of regressivity is of specific concern, since lower income Canadians have been disproportionately taxed through the fiscal policies of both this provincial government since 1986 and the federal government since 1984. Indeed, the gap between rich and poor Canadians is steadily increasing. The number of Canadians in poverty is increasing. I know, Mr. Speaker, there is a proposal to increase the tax credits to low-income Canadians in order to compensate, but this proposal is fraught with a number of problems which are not addressed by the amendment or any actions I've heard the provincial government taking.

The first difficulty is that low-income persons, to benefit from this particular proposal, would have to be involved in the income tax process. They would have to be filing. Many poor Canadians, of course, are not part of the tax system and not likely to be a part of the tax system and accordingly will not benefit.

The second concern, of course, is that like helium balloons, the sales tax undoubtedly will rise. In Europe it's presently in the 24 to 25 percent range in many nations. But there is a better than excellent chance, tantamount to a guarantee, that the level of rebate support will decline in future. Because as we have noted, lower income people tend not to be as vocal and, as a result, they can be more effectively squeezed by our tax system.

I know that the government says trust us, but as Frank Fenecpost, that wonderful W.P. Kinsella character, once said, trusting the government is like asking Colonel Sanders to babysit your chickens. So in effect the bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is that the price of many goods and services will rise and lower income will find themselves increasingly priced out of these goods and services. This is something that has not been addressed by this government to my knowledge.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

The other major concern with respect to the goods and sales tax is the impact, of course, on small business. We're about to turn this nation into a nation of tax collectors. Small business is going to be faced by a veritable mountain of additional paperwork to add to the frustrations of dealing with the plethora of red tape which currently exists. The goods and sales tax is going to magnify that.

These are the primary concerns, and I've dealt with them only briefly. There are other concerns, however. Another concern which has not been addressed by the amendment or by this provincial government is that the abolition of the manufacturers' sales tax is something which redounds primarily to the benefit of central Canada, which bears the brunt and the primary cost of that tax as the manufacturing centre. However, while that tax burden will be reduced for central Canada, the burden will then be shifted onto the shoulders of people in the regions and particularly here in Alberta.

Now, there is one dimension that is of particular concern to Alberta that I would like to hear the government addressing and it hasn't been addressing so far, and that is a burden which falls particularly heavily on the oil industry. That relates to oil and gas operations which result in the drilling of dry holes. As we all know, the concept of the goods and sales tax is that it is to be passed on to the ultimate consumer. That's all well and good when hydrocarbons are discovered and the product is sold and it includes that tax, but when a dry hole is drilled, the oil or gas company has been subjected to the goods and sales tax through the charges and levies by the drilling contractors and the goods that are consumed in that capacity. But if there's no product from that particular well, there's no way in which that can be passed on. Accordingly, this high-risk industry and other high-risk industries, resource industries, are particularly heavily impacted by this particular tax. I would be interested in hearing members of the government tell me how this particular amendment or actions of their provincial government have been taken to address that particular problem. What changes are going to be implemented in the sales tax to deal with the dry hole problem, Mr. Speaker?

There are many other problems. As we know, the tax rates will undoubtedly increase in future years. The goods and sales tax will in future become known as Mr. Wilson's cash cow. This, of course, is less of a problem if the amount of the tax is clearly and openly disclosed. This was the initial promise: they were going to get rid of the hidden sales tax, manufacturers' sales tax, which killed jobs. Lo and behold, just recently we have the announcement that we're now going to have the hidden goods and sales tax. This is clearly unacceptable, Mr. Speaker. It's contrary to the promises we've had from the federal Finance minister. If they really want to do something effective with respect to this issue, I would call on his government to make a clear and precise announcement that they are going to take ac-

tion to require that that goods and sales tax, if it does go through, is clearly disclosed in respect of all sales in this particular province.

Yes, many other parts of the world do have taxes of this nature, but there are few nations with the abundant resources and natural wealth that we have in Canada. Few nations, on the other hand, are as badly governed as we are at this particular moment nationally and in this province. But instead of managing better both in terms of expenditures and revenues, we take the easy route out through the proposal to implement this goods and sales tax. It's a tax that should be rejected, the same way as we should reject the amendment to this particular motion by a member who would lead the people of this province and the members of this House to believe that the government has been taking action on this matter when in fact it's been dozing and when all its actions have been involved in trying to figure out which communities to move Premiers' conferences to and which members of land compensation boards to give plum appointments to. While they've been focusing on those particular matters, the government has been neglecting the true and important issues of this particular province, and the amendment must be rejected, Mr. Speaker.

MR. THURBER: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have to support this amendment, because it's the only way this motion should go forward for any Albertan-thinking type of person. I think the opposition has finally recognized that they are part of Alberta and they do represent the same type of people the rest of us represent. We should all get together on this. There's such a thing as trying to get on the bandwagon. It's become the popular thing to do, so we should all work together on that. I also believe it is so important to the economy of Alberta that everybody should be together on this. I have no doubts at all on that.

But to go back to the amendment, this government has recognized right from the start that this would fuel a round of inflation that we will all suffer from for a good many years, I think primarily in the agriculture sector alone because farmers, contrary to a lot of beliefs, not only produce goods but consume goods. They are some of the largest consumers of goods in the province or in the country. I can just well imagine what kind of position this is going to put farmers in, because they also buy TVs, toasters, disposable diapers, and the rest of the things consumers buy, only they probably buy more. It goes on and on, the things agriculture people buy. This tax is going to fit onto them, and they have no control over the end price for the product they sell, so they have to absorb this. I can see some hardship coming to the farmers because of this. This government has recognized that for a long time and has helped the farmers, and the farmers of Alberta certainly appreciate the type of help and the type of support they've gotten from this government.

But this tax coming from a federal level is something that, you know, we're going to have to ride roughshod on somehow to stop. We do need co-operation even from the hon. members in the opposition in order to stop this thing or at least nullify the things that are going to happen in this province because of it. I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that if the opposition really wants to get on the bandwagon, they should be phoning their members who are in Ottawa, the NDP characters who are down there, and maybe getting their support as well, the same as the Conservative members in this Legislature have done. I'm sure there are lots of us who have talked to our federal counterparts over the

last few years and told them: "Look, this is a bad thing. It's going to hurt Alberta." Now let's get on with it, and let's try and kill it and nullify the effects of it.

If you look at the average small businessman in Alberta -- this government has done that, and they've continually supported the small businessman. But just let's take a little guy who's only operating on \$40,000 or \$50,000 input costs per year. Maybe he's bidding so tight in a competitive market where this \$3,600 or \$3,700 that he's going to have to pay in this federal tax is going to make the difference between him surviving or going broke. I think this government has come out publicly in support of that small businessman, and I think we have to try and protect him to the utmost of our ability.

I do have to commend some of the people in the opposition for their foresight in coming forward finally. But I don't understand their opposition to the amendment; I absolutely can't understand that. Because if they were really serious about supporting the government and supporting the people in Alberta in fighting this sales tax, they would have jumped on this amendment right at the first and passed it and said: "That's good news. Let's all work together for all the people in Alberta, and let's get the job done just as quickly as we can."

I think, Mr. Speaker, it is evident in my mind and it should be evident in everybody's mind that this government has supported the areas of tourism, road construction, and energy diversification in this province, and they have recognized the damage that's going to do in a province that's just coming back from a recession. I think we can't stress that too loudly to the federal government. I don't care whether the federal government is Conservative, Liberal, or NDP; I think we have to stress that They are not doing this in the best interests of Albertans. I think if everybody is agreed that we're trying to do this for the province of Alberta and the people in Alberta, we have to stay together, we have to work together. I urge you to pass this amendment and then we can get on with the job. That will be good for the people of Alberta and good for this government and good for yourselves.

Thank you.

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

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak against the amendment to the motion here. Perhaps I can explain why for the benefit of members like the Member for Drayton Valley. My colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has been a consistent long-standing opponent to the value-added sales tax, as have all members of the New Democratic Party coast to coast. We've been consistent, united, and national in our perspective. We oppose the tax, we oppose it consistently, and what we're trying to do is get the government to join with us in some vigorous opposition to this sales tax. For many of the reasons mentioned, there are some good reasons to oppose the sales tax, because it is a regressive thing that would hurt families in Alberta.

The motion as amended would urge that this government "continue in its efforts to vigorously oppose plans by the federal government" to implement this tax. What efforts, Mr. Speaker? Continue its efforts to vigorously oppose? If they vigorously oppose this sales tax, it sure hasn't been obvious to Albertans, because it's been a pathetic fight in that regard. It reminds me in so many ways of other fights this government has supposedly taken on on behalf of Albertans with the federal government,

much like the Premier fighting high interest rates. You know, the record of success is stunning. Ever since he took up the cause, the interest rate has done nothing but go up and up and up and up. It's been a pathetic fight in that regard.

The Conservatives fighting high interest rates: can you imagine anything as ludicrous? A party that's financed largely through donations from banks fighting banks on interest rates? I mean it just doesn't make sense: a party that represents people who earn interest rather than people who pay interest being opposed to high interest rates. They set up straw men, Mr. Speaker, because they're not opposed to high interest rates. They're the party of high interest rates, and the fight of this government has been pathetic in that regard. I submit that their fight on the value-added sales tax has been equally pathetic.

They had a chance to vigorously oppose the implementation of this regressive value-added sales tax when Mr. Mulroney and his colleagues put their agenda before the Canadian people. It was called a federal election, in November, hon. members. When the New Democratic Party coast to coast was fighting high interest rates and the value-added sales tax, where were the Conservatives in Alberta on the issue? Silent. You didn't hear a peep out of them. In fact, they went out and took taxpayers' money and spent it advertising Mr. Mulroney and his mean-spirited agenda. I mean, I was offended as a taxpayer that my money would be used to promote Brian Mulroney and his narrow, mean-spirited political agenda. But that's exactly what this government did, and several of them, the Treasurer included, the man who flip-flops on value-added sales tax -- sometimes he thinks it's a good idea if it's used for deficit reduction; other times he's against it. He was out door knocking on behalf of Scott what's his name and helped him get elected, and now they're going to stand up and pretend they're opposed to the value-added sales tax. It hasn't been a vigorous fight in that regard; it's been a pathetic fight, one they have no intention of carrying forward.

It's like the fight on Senate reform, the Premier leading the charge on Senate reform. By golly, we're going to spend lots of money and bring in a Bill to elect a Senator that Brian Mulroney may or may not appoint to a body that's become largely irrelevant because it's dominated by Conservative and Liberal political hacks. It's another fight that's been pathetic, and certainly I can't encourage them to continue in their efforts to carry the fight on the value-added sales tax because there's been no fight.

Mr. Speaker, the chance to really nip this issue in the bud was during the federal election when Canadians had a chance to defeat Brian Mulroney and his tax, tax, tax the average person agenda and his agenda to unite Canada with the United States through the free trade agreement. They had a chance to join with us as New Democrats and oppose the value-added sales tax. They remained silent, Mr. Speaker, and it's not unlike the flip-flops we see from the Liberals on the issue, because we had a chance, with respect, hon. members, to defeat the Conservative government.

Who elected the Conservative government nationally? It was the majority vote in the provinces of Alberta and Quebec, where the Liberal Party was led by people who were in favour of the free trade agreement. I submit that the confusion presented the people of Alberta by the Leader of the Liberal Party in Alberta, the confusion presented the people in Quebec by the Leader of the Liberal Party in Quebec caused them to elect a majority Conservative government and brought us the value-added sales tax. It's coming down the pipe, and they've done

nothing to oppose it. I can understand the members of the Liberal Party feeling some reluctance there, because unlike their leader they seem to be opposed to the value-added sales tax. He's spoken in favour of it. They seem to be opposed to free trade; he's spoken in favour of it. I don't know if they'll ever get their act together.

The matter at hand here is whether or not we support the amendment to the motion from the Member for Red Deer-North: "that [we] urge the government to continue in its efforts to vigorously oppose" the value-added sales tax. There have been no efforts. All it's been is talk, Mr. Speaker, cheap political talk. What we're urging, what my colleague the Member for Calgary-Mountain View is urging, is that we join together and get out there and be vigorous in our opposition to that thing.

What's this value-added sales tax going to do for the Conservative Party? Let's say it's brought in and it applies to houses, for example. A house may cost 100,000 bucks. Bring in the value-added sales tax and now it costs \$109,000. Well, the government gets \$9,000 for their Treasury, but the person buying that house, the woman or man that has to go out and borrow the money for that house, ends up with a mortgage that has \$9,000 extra tacked onto it. What happens to that, Mr. Speaker? Well, that becomes part of the excess profits that banks in Canada extract from people, and that gives them more money to donate to the Conservative Party at election time. It's a convenient plan. I can understand why this government would be so half-hearted in their attempts to oppose the value-added sales tax.

I think the members of the Conservative Party in Alberta should take the lead from the MP for Edmonton East, Ross Harvey, who has been consistently the only MP in Alberta to oppose the value-added sales tax. The Member for Drayton Valley suggests we talk to our MPs. Well, the silent Sams from Alberta -- there was a time when MPs from Alberta had a voice. I recognize that some of them have fought for Alberta, but that time is long past. There's a whole litany of things that this federal caucus has failed to speak up on behalf of Albertans for.

AN HON. MEMBER: What about Alex Kindy?

MR. FOX: Alex Kindy. Even Alex Kindy has to break ranks with them.

No, I urge hon. members to vote against this amendment to the Member for Calgary-Mountain View's motion because it just doesn't make any sense to urge this government "to continue in its efforts." That is to urge failure, Mr. Speaker, because this government has not opposed in any substantial way, short of some cheap political rhetoric from the Premier, the plans the Mulroney government has to impose a regressive value-added sales tax on average Canadians.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Culture and Multiculturalism.

MR. MAIN: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been endeavouring to get into this fray for some time now, because I feel this is an issue that cannot just be left to the rantings of a few. Everybody has to have a chance to rant on this. I'm just looking at this; I just want to make sure we've got all of this straight so we all understand what we're talking about here. The original motion says:

that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to take immediate action to vigorously oppose plans by the federal

government to impose a regressive goods . . .

Okay. We agree that it will be regressive, so that's no problem.

Now, the amendment from the hon. Member for Red Deer-North suggests that we strike out "take immediate action" and substitute "continue in its efforts." To me this makes eminent sense, because in actual fact this government has been taking all kinds of action: immediate, day-by-day, right from the word go. There has been all kinds of action.

I really wanted to get into this discussion to talk about what the Member for Edmonton-Belmont had to say on this regard. I notice that he's left now and is not here to . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Point of order. Order.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Minister, it's not appropriate to comment on people's presence in the Chamber.

MR. MAIN: Well, I'll certainly withdraw. I apologize to the hon. member. I'll have to speak louder, I guess.

Nevertheless, to refer to what he said earlier in his remarks, he referred to my previous life as a candidate in the federal election and made some suggestions that I was in fact campaigning for a federal sales tax. Now, obviously the Member for Edmonton-Belmont was off discussing whatever it was that he and Ross Harvey talked about, which nobody understood, because he would have known, had he paid any attention, that I in fact spoke vigorously against a federal sales tax. I was very pleased to see when I arrived here, and in my discussions with the hon. Treasurer and others, that this opposition to this federal sales tax not only was being expressed in vigorous terms but was ongoing at the highest possible levels.

What I did say during the federal election campaign was that the only good thing one could say about a federal sales tax was that it would be visible, because that was the assurance at the time. Now the federal Minister of Finance indicates that it may or may not be visible, and that indication from Ottawa produced yet another round of action by our Treasurer, our Premier, our government addressing this specific case. The opposition to this sales tax is evident: it's everywhere; it's ongoing; it's long lasting.

Now, the Member for Vegreville suggested we do something more than talk. He suggested we take vigorous action. I guess we can speculate on what vigorous action would be if we opposed the sales tax. We could do handsprings. We could do burpies. We could engage in Participation type activities taking vigorous action against the sales tax. But I'm sure the Member for Vegreville would agree that what's required here is talk. The type of talk that's been going on on the federal sales tax from this government has in fact been ongoing and of a type that will produce results. We've seen Alberta leading the fight, being out there first and foremost, on the forefront, laying out very clearly what the negative effects would be of the sales tax. We've seen with each passing day, with each week, with each month of this discussion and as things developed that there has been ongoing activity, there has been talk. I would suggest that the ongoing opposition, that the continued efforts of this government have in fact had a big impact not only in this province but certainly in Ottawa and certainly with governments right across the country who have now joined in the debate, in the efforts to stop this sales tax from going forth.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Let me just conclude my remarks, if I may, by saying that the amendment as proposed, that the government "continue in its efforts," makes a great deal of sense; that the notion that the original motion says, "take immediate action," suggests a situation that is in fact not true, not real, not extant. We believe that the ongoing support for the people of Alberta through the Provincial Treasurer, through the Premier, and through other members who have spoken to this matter in their constituencies is in fact the way this should go. I would urge all members to support the amendment, and we would in that way reaffirm the government's decision, firm commitment, to speak loudly, forcefully, continually against the federal sales tax.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Mountain View on the amendment

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to have the page distribute a subamendment that I'd like to introduce. While that's being done, I'd like to address the . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Calgary-Mountain View. The amendment to the amendment to your motion.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I couldn't believe when this amendment came onto the floor that the government members would be so defensive about this motion. The motion said nothing about the government's past efforts. It just said that we call on them "to take immediate action." But all of a sudden the Member for Red Deer-North tried to make that an issue. Now, why would that be an issue to the members opposite unless I had already hit a sore point by even introducing the issue initially?

You know, this government really knows that the efforts they've made are incredibly weak. You don't even have to mention their efforts. You just have to talk about an issue and all of a sudden all the defences come up and the alarm bells go off and immediately the member had to introduce an amendment to make it clear: oh well, we've been working all along. The hon. member knows that they have something to be defensive about and that's of course why they felt they had to introduce this amendment.

Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleagues have made a number of points about those weak efforts, and I think those points are well taken, but in the interest of compromise I'm quite happy to pro-

vide some wording that hopefully the members opposite could accept. If adopted, Mr. Speaker, this is how the motion would read:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to enhance substantially its efforts to vigorously oppose plans by the federal government to impose a regressive goods and sales tax on all Albertans.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, that kind of compromise might enjoy the support of all sides of the House, and given the hour, I'd like to at least leave the opportunity with members to vote on it.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-McCall . . . [interjections] Order in the House.

Calgary-McCall, speaking to the narrow confines of the subamendment.

MR. NELSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, considering the hour, I wish to adjourn debate.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: Motion carries.
Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I move that when members assemble this evening at 8 p.m., they do so as Committee of Supply.

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the motion by the Deputy Government House Leader, those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

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

