

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, March 15, 1990 2:30 p.m.**

Date: 1990/03/15

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

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

O Lord, we give thanks as legislators for the rich diversity of our history.

We welcome the many challenges of the present.

We dedicate ourselves to both the present and the future as we join in the service of Alberta and Canada.

Amen.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly a trade delegation from Mexico, which is visiting our province. I would ask the members to stand as they are being introduced, and when I finish, I trust the House will give them the normal warm reception. The leader of their trade delegation is Senor Segismundo Ayon, Minister of Agriculture for the state of Durango. He is accompanied on his mission by his lovely wife, Julia, and a member of his staff Dr. Nicola Allanta and Dr. Adolfo Expinoza. Accompanying the group from the state of Tabasco are two cattle producers, Senor Luis Abreu Montano and Senor William Villegal Lopez, and from the state of Jalisco, serving as interpreter and a part owner of an export company called Canadian Livestock International, Dr. Enrique Santana. Hosting the group in Alberta and seated in the members' gallery is Drew Mandie, the president of ACABA – that's the Alberta-Canada All Breeders Association – Doug Bienert, our trade director for Latin America with Alberta Agriculture; his assistant Marcia Breitzkreuz; Gary Smith, another owner of Canadian Livestock International; and his lovely wife, Christine. I would tell all my Edmonton colleagues to beware of this Gary Smith. He's such a smooth talker that half of the Mexicans believe the capital of Alberta is Wimborne.

head: **Notices of Motions**

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise under Standing Order 40 to give notice that at the conclusion of the question period I will seek unanimous consent of this Legislative Assembly to deal with the following motion:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta congratulate the federal government for today's proactive and liberal decision to allow Sikh members of the RCMP to wear turbans while on duty.

Mr. Speaker, I have 90 copies of the motion available.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Edmonton – give me a break – Meadowlark.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give the Legislature notice under *Beauchesne*, section 495, to request and debate a ruling on the minister of public works' use and reference to a document two days ago in question period in

answering a question concerning the Oldman River dam. I would like to have that document tabled.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

**Bill 6**

**Alberta Health Care Insurance  
Amendment Act, 1990**

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 6, the Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 1990, which adds a reference to physical therapists as a consequence of the coming into force of the Physical Therapy Profession Act, 1985.

[Leave granted; Bill 6 read a first time]

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 6, the Alberta Health Care Insurance Amendment Act, 1990, be placed on the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MR. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege today to table four copies of the annual report of the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission for the year ended March 31, 1989.

REV. ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to file copies of New Democrat Official Opposition detailed responses to the recommendations of the report of the Advisory Committee on the Utilization of Medical Services, otherwise known as the Watanabe report.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay.  
Solicitor General.

MR. FOWLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table today four copies of the 65th annual report of the Alberta Liquor Control Board.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Grande Prairie, followed by the Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

DR. ELLIOTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chairman of the Northern Alberta Development Council I wish to table the annual report for 1988-89 for that council.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.  
Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to your invitation yesterday, I'm pleased to be able to file five copies of a memo from the Assistant Deputy Minister of Municipal Affairs to the Deputy Minister of Municipal Affairs which clearly details, contrary to the minister's assurance yesterday, the department's...

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Order please, hon. member. It's filing; it's not a time for discussion and debate. One question – is that correspondence dated? – would be interesting. Carry on with tablings, please. No, you just tabled it. Thank you.

### head: Introduction of Special Guests

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly 28 students from grade 9 in the High Level public school. That's in the centre of the largest constituency in the province of Alberta. They are accompanied by two teachers and two parents. The teachers are Miss Kathy Solomon and Mr. Jason Crawford. The parents are Mrs. Kim Roth, Mr. Egon Schwertner, and their driver, Abe Martens. I would ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Edmonton-Belmont.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure today to introduce two representatives of a group of workers who have been walking outside the Legislative Assembly for the past number of weeks, Joe Martha from Slave Lake and James Krezanoski, representing the Zeidler workers. They're in the gallery and they're standing. I'd ask the House to give them the usual warm welcome.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce two groups of students from the Alberta Vocational Centre. I'll ask both groups to rise at the same time. The one group of 13 is accompanied by their teacher, Sheila Montgomery, and the other is accompanied by their teacher, Jane Nicholls. Could the yeal stand, please, and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### head: Oral Question Period

#### Environmental Impact Assessment Process

MR. MARTIN: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct my first set of questions to the Premier. Earlier this week the Premier admitted that the Oldman River dam decision had implications for other projects, and I believe that was confirmed by the Attorney General, who also said it had ramifications for all projects in Alberta. To put this in perspective of what's been happening in the last week or two, first of all we had the AI-Pac review board recommending that all projects be subject to environmental assessments with public hearings. Then we had the Federal Court of Appeal no less telling Alberta that its EIA process didn't provide for full public participation, and now we have the government's own EIA task force saying public involvement must be embodied in all phases of the EIA process. Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is this: why doesn't this government wake up and admit now that full public hearings are necessary in all projects that have environmental implications?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition may have noticed the government's commitment in the throne speech.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, the throne speech doesn't mean anything when you go ahead and say that you're going to go on with these projects regardless of the environment and you flout the law. My question very specifically to the Premier. As the results of this came out from the Minister of the Environment

yesterday, is he saying, then, that he agrees with these recommendations that say that any project now or in the future has to have public hearings?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member should know, the government seeks input from many parts of this province and all the people we can. The hon. member, when there's lots of input and lots of change going on, should try to maintain his stability. Don't panic. The government will bring forward the legislation that deals with the matters that are necessary in this province.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, there is reason for panic. You've given a third of Alberta away. What's the talk about environment if you're not going to follow through? If this Premier cares about the environment and he also wants to obey the law, I ask him this straightforward question: will this government now, then, stop the construction on the Oldman dam and call a moratorium on all pulp and paper projects until proper EIAs are held?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the government does obey the law. The second part of the hon. member's question does not flow from the first part of his question. I ask him to have his researchers do a little better job of preparing those questions. I always welcome the questions of the hon. member. In terms of the second part of his question, no.

MR. MARTIN: That shows a commitment to the environment from this Premier, Mr. Speaker. No more rhetoric from him.

#### Support for Minority Groups

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, let's move over to another minister, the minister of multiculturalism. First of all, I'd like to take this opportunity to offer my caucus' congratulations to the federal government for finally announcing that orthodox Sikhs will be able to serve in the ranks of the RCMP. It was slow in coming, but we want to give credit where credit's due. But it is disconcerting – and I hope it is to all members in this province – to see the intolerance towards visible minorities that is developing. The facts is that racist pins, calendars, and shirts have become big business in this province. I want to say that unfortunately the minister has been strangely silent on this issue. Now, my question is to the minister: why hasn't the minister of multiculturalism been much more forthcoming in condemning racism in this province?

MR. MAIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to be the subject of a question from the Leader of the Opposition, I must say. I concur with him that I am glad the federal Solicitor General has finally made a decision on the Sikh RCMP issue. As a matter of fact, I wrote the federal Solicitor General. I can make copies available of the letter I sent to him urging him to make a speedy decision on this issue, and I'm glad that he has done that. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MR. MAIN: It's certainly my feeling that the delay in making a decision has contributed to the somewhat tense atmosphere in the province of Alberta. It is my commitment – it is certainly the commitment of the government of Alberta – to continue to

advocate for the principles of multiculturalism and to continue to work with all Albertans to ensure that the benefits of multiculturalism are well known. We have been doing that all along and will continue to do so.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the minister, that's not how visible minorities feel about this minister's role.

Now, rather than talk, I want to ask this minister: what specific initiatives is he prepared to tell us about today that he is going to undertake to overcome racism in this province right now?

MR. MAIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, as you're aware, and as members are all aware, we do have a Multicultural Commission that's been in place for a couple of years that has produced a report that is forming the basis for government action in the area of multiculturalism. My colleagues and I are working through the recommendations and the direction provided in that report. We will be bringing forth in due time appropriate legislation, policies, and directions that will be aimed at expanding the understanding in the province of Alberta. I'm sure the Leader of the Opposition is right now developing his own policies that may include things like thought police, ethnocops, and things like that to force people to like each other. We all know that is impossible. What we will be doing will be encouraging people to live in harmony and understanding. In the due course of time the members of the opposition will find that those efforts will bear fruit.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, that was rather a tasteless comment, because there are people under pressure in this government. I want to ask this minister then — the Multicultural Commission was lacking in concrete answers. I want to give him the opportunity today, after the federal government has announced their measure: again, tell us what he is going to do, one thing that he's going to do other than give us rhetoric about improving the level of tolerance in this province.

MR. MAIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have as a department, as a government, as a Multicultural Commission, and as private individuals embarked on a series of efforts aimed at doing exactly what the hon. Leader of the Opposition advocates and suggests, which is helping to eliminate racism. Now, how that happens over a period of time is the result of careful work, of expanding understanding. It cannot be legislated. You cannot legislate an end to racism, although I know that were the opposition in the place of government, they would be advocating that kind of activity. But you'll understand that many people who immigrated to this country came to get here, to get away from exactly that kind of approach, which is a legislated end to racism. The approach of this government is to continue to foster understanding through discussion, through working together, through drawing our diversity together, to have an opportunity to exchange views and develop a basis of understanding, not by legislating thought.

#### Environmental Assessments of Pulp Mills

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, the report of the Environmental Impact Assessment Task Force can only be regarded as a *de facto* indictment of the government's environmental impact assessment process. Projects such as Daishowa, Weldwood, and

AEC have been allowed to proceed without the kind of EIA that the task force contemplates or recommends. The Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act give the Minister of the Environment very sweeping powers to deal with issues like this. My question to the Minister of the Environment is this: will the minister under those sweeping powers agree to delay Daishowa, Weldwood, and AEC until such a time as the EIA as a contemplated and recommended by this task force have been completed for each of these projects? Will he agree to delay?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, with respect to Daishowa, I believe that issue is now before the courts relative to two separate circumstances, and I think it would be *sub judice*.

With respect to the other matters, those proponents played by the rules that were in place at the time. They played according to the rules that were deemed to be acceptable by the federal government at the time. With respect to the Alberta-Pacific pulp mill project, we announced that that project on an experimental basis would be subjected to public review. It indeed was subjected to public review, the most comprehensive, complete public review of any pulp mill project ever in the history of this country. If the hon. leader of the Liberal Party is really concerned, as I've told his colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, perhaps they should go back and do environmental impact assessments on the 176 rotten, stinking, belching, polluting pulp mills that are administered by their Liberal buddies in Ontario and in Quebec and in New Brunswick.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I think it should be noted that all of those projects were built by Conservatives and not Liberals. They've got to clean up the mess.

Mr. Speaker, would the minister then explain why he would not establish an open public review process? He did in June of 1989 for Al-Pac. Why two months later would he allow AEC to commence without the same kind of process that he put into place for Al-Pac?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, as I explained before, the rules relative to the Alberta Energy Company project at Slave Lake were well established in advance of the rules that were established for the Alberta-Pacific project. What I'm trying to say is that this is an evolving situation, and what we are trying to do now and what I know we will complete successfully is to create a level playing field for all future projects. I think we are introducing probably the best possible programs to achieve the laying of that level playing field.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, there is no reason why an EIA can't be done during construction or even after construction. Nothing limits the timing of an EIA. Will the minister agree at least, at least, to do an EIA as construction is going forward on these other projects so at least we can mitigate, we can fix the wrongs that are going to be done to the environment, if there are those wrongs?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I find very interesting the comment of the hon. leader of the Liberal Party relative to environmental wrongs, because in fact we have placed on pulp mill development in this province the highest achievable environmental standards in the world — the highest achievable environmental standards in the world.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Banff-Cochrane.

### Provincial Budget

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have campaigned aggressively and consistently both here in Edmonton and in my constituency of Banff-Cochrane since my election on the matter of fiscal responsibility. With the federal budget cuts to transfer payments and also due to the fact that the revenues that have been generated... [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Thank you.

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

... in this province have not increased substantially since 1985, there is considerable concern in my constituency of Banff-Cochrane as to whether this government will be able to achieve its pledge of a balanced budget by 1991 and 1992. This concern, Mr. Speaker, is heightened by an impatience that is growing every day in my constituency because we do not as yet have a date established for the introduction of this year's budget. My question is to the Provincial Treasurer. Will the Provincial Treasurer commit to this House today that he will prove the resolve of this government to balance its budget by 1991-92 by reducing significantly the deficit in this year's budget?

MR. SPEAKER: No. Hon. minister. I'm sure we'll hear about the budget when the budget comes down, but if you'd like to dance around that, Mr. Treasurer, go ahead.

MR. JOHNSTON: Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that all Albertans are very anxious to learn of the fiscal plan of the government to confirm once again that this government is on course to its balanced budget. We want to focus that debate, and therefore as soon as possible we want to be sure that Albertans understand that we are in fact on course. I appreciate the Member for Banff-Cochrane raising the question in the context that he did, and I can advise the Assembly that one week from today, at 8 p.m. of March 22, we will confirm once again our fiscal stewardship, and the people of Alberta will be pleased with the results. [interjections]

MR. EVANS: It's interesting to me, Mr. Speaker, that the opposition does not seem to me concerned about the budget until after the budget is out, and then they just love to have their go at. But they're not concerned about what Albertans are concerned about, and that is what this government is doing in a productive sense to improve the economy of the province.

My second question... [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Well, a last report we've only got about another 19 people that want to get into question period, so let's get on with question period. Banff-Cochrane, please. [interjections] Order.

MR. TAYLOR: If they're all as funny as he is...

MR. SPEAKER: Order, Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My supplemental question to the Provincial Treasurer is this. Albertans are not prepared to see their deficit and the balanced budget achieved by an increase in taxes. I would like to ask the Provincial

Treasurer, in fact demand of the Provincial Treasurer today, a commitment that this government will act as a good steward and will balance its budget by reduction of expenditures and not increase in taxes. [interjections]

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, I notice all Albertans will be very interested in learning our plan with respect to expenditures. It is unfortunate that the opposition won't allow my colleague the Member for Banff-Cochrane to raise this very important issue. Albertans know where the opposition parties stand; they would blow the money out of their ears, as I have said before. No concern at all with respect to deficit. They would even erode the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. Surely the Member for Banff-Cochrane has a right to raise legitimate questions in this House.

I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that we have heard the message from Albertans. We the government, the Conservative Party of Alberta, will control expenditures, and that'll be confirmed in this budget on March 22 at 8 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.  
Edmonton-Belmont.

### Use of Replacement Workers in Labour Disputes

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the last number of months MLAs have had the opportunity to witness Zeidler workers, who have been on strike for four years in Slave Lake and two years in Edmonton, picket outside the Legislature. Today we have the potential of another protracted lockout at Lakeside Centennial in Calgary solely due to this government's sanctioning of the use of replacement workers. I'm wondering if the Minister of Labour could define or explain the government's belief in fairness and equity when on the one side has the opportunity to be locked out or go on strike and not have any income while the other side is allowed to continue with its production and its profits.

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a sad day in Alberta when a strike goes on for four years in one place and two years in the other, and I think it grieves all of us here in this House to see people suffering as a result. Nevertheless, in the framework which allows the negotiations to occur, there comes a time when the responsibility is on the two parties to come to a settlement. Unfortunately, in the Zeidler case which the hon. member has raised, the two parties are stuck on a point of principle, and I'm afraid we have to leave them free to disagree in this case, although we are urging both sides to come to an equitable agreement.

But I must point out, Mr. Speaker, that in the case of Zeidler if that strike had commenced under our current code instead of the Act we had replaced, there would have been protection for those very people who are in front of our Legislature day after day, because now replacement workers are not given the only option after a strike is settled; a striking worker is given protection for his job when a strike is settled. They would have been further ahead under our current code.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, maybe we should just look at some of the facts and try and examine what is fair. We can look at Quebec, which the minister alluded to the other day. The minister should be aware that in the five-year period ending in 1983, there has not been a strike in Quebec that has lasted nearly as long as the Zeidler strike has lasted in Alberta. The

longest strike in Quebec has been eight months. Would the minister now agree that the labour laws are grossly unfair and unjust and amended the legislation to get rid of the use of replacement workers during an industrial dispute?

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, it is not the legislation that is preventing these two sides from coming to a conclusion; it is the parties themselves that are refusing to agree. It's a fair and democratic tradition to allow free peoples to negotiate and come to a settlement together. As I've said, we've urged both sides in this case, and we are disappointed that they have not done so. But the responsibility for negotiating a settlement is on the parties that are involved.

Now, in view of all of that, I would suggest once again that it isn't the legislation that is causing this lengthy and protracted and very disappointing situation. Indeed, I might add that of the over 1,300 collective agreements we have here in Alberta, 98 percent of them do come to settlement without any strike and no lockout. When you get that high a success rate, you have to say that the legislation is not contributing to an anomaly such as the Zeidler situation. There are other factors at work here that are preventing a settlement.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Edmonton-Whitemud, followed by Calgary-Glenmore, Edmonton-Jasper Place.

#### **Support for Minority Groups** (continued)

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the increasing lack of understanding and respect for other cultures and religious beliefs, as demonstrated by the issue relating to the Sikhs wearing turbans in the RCMP while on duty, there is more and more of a responsibility on all of us to express our support and to defend the rights of the minority groups, including the visible minorities. This government up to now has not made any positive statements on this issue. The minister responsible for multiculturalism made reference to and waved a letter indicating that he had sent a letter to his federal counterpart or counterparts. My question to the Minister of Culture and Multiculturalism is that the minister prepared to indicate to us as to whether he was in fact supporting the Sikh community, and is he prepared to table that letter in this House?

MR. MAIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm more than glad to table the letter in the House. I have copies here, and I'll be more than glad to make them available to you.

With respect to the issue and the government's position on turbans in the RCMP, this clearly is a matter of responsibility for the federal Solicitor General, who is responsible for the federal RCMP. The government of Alberta has not taken a position on this because this is not an issue for the government of Alberta. There has not been a government of Alberta position on the unification of Germany, and there has not been a government of Alberta position on a homeland for Palestinians, because these are issues which fall outside of the purview. The responsibility of the government of Alberta is to continue to foster an atmosphere of understanding and acceptance for all members of society, and that has been our goal. That continues to be our aim, and that is why we have policies and programs in place now that address specifically that.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, as your minister responsible for multiculturalism is not prepared to defend a minority group of Albertans, are you as the Premier of this government prepared to express your government's support to this visible minority group? Yes or no?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is being surrounded by two or three lawyers over there and is now trying to act like that profession. I might say to him that the hon. Minister of Culture and Multiculturalism has answered his question already.

#### **Special Needs Housing**

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, recently I met with a group of my constituents who live in the community of Haysboro in Calgary-Glenmore. These citizens expressed a concern regarding a change of status in social housing provided by the Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation. In the residential community of Haysboro there have been excessive renovations made to a single-family home to accommodate special needs adults. The residents of Haysboro are extremely disturbed that the AMHC does not require a city development permit for these changes and that this is out of the province's jurisdiction and the province is exempt from the city bylaw when these changes are made.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

I would like to direct my question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Could he assure the citizens of the Haysboro community that there would be some communication, input, and knowledge before these changes are made?

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the question that is raised by the hon. member; first of all, the empathy the hon. member has for the special needs people in the Haysboro community and other communities of this province. I want to assure the hon. members so that she can assure her constituents and community that we're prepared to review the process we have used in terms of providing special needs housing in a community and certainly will look at that aspect and involve the community in the discussions prior to any major changes being made to special needs housing in that respective constituency.

MRS. MIROSH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if the minister could elaborate and perhaps establish a policy governing these changes that may occur throughout the community in Haysboro as well as the province when there are significant renovations made to social housing.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I think that's a very good suggestion of the hon. member. Within the Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation we started a review of all of our programs on November 1, 1989, and this certainly is one of the aspects, but I think this one needs special consideration. What I'd like to suggest to the hon. member is that I would like to invite her to become a one-person task force to review this specific policy as to how we implement special needs housing into communities. If she would accept that, I would prepare the details and material so that a recommendation could come back

to me as minister responsible in that area.

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

### Procter & Gamble Pulp Mill Emissions

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife. A part of its licence requirement Procter & Gamble is required to immerse live fish in pulp effluent. If the fish live, things are pretty good; if they die, well, not so good. I have some test results. It appears that on at least four different occasions, the most recent of which was in March 1989, a majority of the fish died. My question to the minister responsible for Fish and Wildlife is: in view of the demonstrated toxicity of ordinary, regular, Procter & Gamble effluent, I'd like to know what action he took as the minister responsible for the fish on the illegal dumping of, I'd say, something in the neighbourhood of 200 tonnes of additional waste solids from Procter & Gamble with the knowledge and blessing of Alberta Environment.

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, I've explained before in the Assembly that the responsibility for the quality of the water in the river system falls under three departments, one being the provincial Department of the Environment, one being Fisheries and Oceans, and the other on the Health and Welfare Canada. The Minister of the Environment may wish to answer the hon. member's question.

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I've said that that entire matter is under review, and the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place might have noticed that today because it was in the newspaper, and that's where they usually do their research.

Relative to this whole issue of chlorinated organics, Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote from the Alberta-Pacific review panel report. I quote from section 8.2 where it says:

In fairness to governments, it must be noted that the presence of toxic chlorinated organic compounds in pulp mill effluent has only been recently detected.

I would like to go on further to quote from Dr. Schindler. He made these statements at a town hall meeting in Athabasca when we announced we were going to put the Alberta-Pacific pulp mill on hold pending further detailed studies. Dr. Schindler said:

One other one with respect to the chlorinated organics, in particular, I don't think you can really fault anyone. I think the scientific community, in general, was rather caught by surprise in the mid-1980's when dioxins and furans were discovered in pulp mill effluents, and I think both environmental agencies and the industry have moved very rapidly to try and eliminate those.

For example, Alberta Environment by 1987...

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. I hesitate to interrupt the minister, but I think maybe the member has received the message.

The hon. member for Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: Just once I'd like to receive the answer to a question from that guy.

A specific question to the minister responsible for the fish. On March 13, 1989, a Grande Prairie resident filed information with the RCMP about alleged harmful alteration, disruption, or destruction of fish habitat on the Wapiti River. Under federal/provincial agreement it's fallen upon his department to

investigate those allegations. I would like to know why the minister's department has refused a request for some \$60,000 by local Fish and Wildlife officer to conduct that investigation. Why have you failed to fund the investigation?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of it. I'll check into it and report back.

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

### Francophone Educational Rights

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today the Supreme Court of Canada in a landmark unanimous decision declared that Alberta's legislation with regard to article 23 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which deals with minority language education rights, does not assure the full realization of those rights; specifically, that the School Act regulation 490/82, of which I have a copy, in which school boards get to make the final decision, is unconstitutional and violates article 23. The decision also declared that article 23 includes the rights of Edmonton Francophone parents to manage and control their own schools and that this right may be exercised through existing school boards.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

My question is to the Minister of Education. How will the minister restructure Edmonton's school boards to assure the guaranteed representation and guaranteed decision-making powers granted to Francophone parents in the decision?

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all let me say that I welcome the decision by the Supreme Court of Canada because it shows that our government and some school boards in this province have been on the right track in providing Francophone education to students and families who are entitled to it under the Act. What the judgment has done is to help us to clarify various parts of the School Act and various parts of section 23. For instance, the management and control of those schools that students attend has been clarified, as well as the English language education provision within the School Act. It is a complex and very weighty and an important decision, as the hon. member has suggested. We will review it and spend some time reviewing the detailed judgment. Once we've done that, we will consult with a number of groups around the province, including Francophone parents and the Francophone associations, and then we will make a decision.

MRS. GAGNON: Mr. Speaker, I believe that Francophone parents have had enough stalling, that the decision is clear, and I would ask that his government immediately amend regulation 490/82 to make it consistent with article 23 of the Charter.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, Francophone parents also know that they have a school; in fact, two schools in the city of Edmonton, two schools in the city of Calgary. When I speak with Francophone parents and listen to them talking very proudly of those four schools that I'm talking about, they're very proud of the efforts and the initiative not only of our government but of the two Catholic school boards in Calgary and Edmonton.

As for the English language regulation, that is something the Supreme Court has definitely commented on. It has also said it is up to the provincial government, to the province, to make it clear just how English language education fits within section 23 of the Charter of Rights, because in the province of Alberta children learning the English language fits one hundred percent with the values and the customs of the people of this province. Students in our schools must be competent also in the English language, and we want to ensure that that is the case in our schools, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Member for Vegreville.

### **Agricultural Outlook**

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the Premier's friend the Deputy Prime Minister isn't busy trying to shove the GST down Canadians' throats, he works as a part-time Minister of Agriculture, who, unfortunately, has been able to work hand in hand with the Getty Conservatives to undermine, destabilize, deregulate, and cut spending for a number of important farm programs like crop insurance, the Canadian Wheat Board, and cash advances, to name a few. The list is longer, but I won't go on.

Given that these callous actions have resulted in our own province's Department of Agriculture predicting a 54 percent decline in net farm income for our producers this year, I'd like the minister to stand up and tell us what negotiations he's had with his federal cousin with respect to immediate action on the serious income problems facing Alberta farmers.

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, it's obvious that the hon. Member for Vegreville is having difficulty communicating with his Member of Parliament, so I will clarify a few things for him. I don't recall the elimination of the advances. I recall a significant increase in the amount of cash advances a farmer can get in this country. Granted, there is an interest rate tied to it now, but there was certainly no elimination of the cash advance program.

We as a province are participating to a greater degree in the Alberta hail and crop insurance program, because our producers desire some very much needed changes and enhancements to that program. Our producers are still participating at the same level that we as a provincial government on their behalf chose to participate to improve the program.

My department has not forecast a 54 percent decline in farm incomes in 1990. That forecast was made, I believe, by Stats Canada. I don't detect too much confidence in the farming community in the accuracy of that forecast. The farmers that I'm running into in most areas of the province today are very enthused, setting their spring work plans, are not delving in doom and gloom, and probably are not talking to the hon. Member for Vegreville.

MR. FOX: Well, it's unfortunate that the Minister of Agriculture doesn't feel a little bit more genuine concern for what's going on out there. But farmers have learned from experience, Mr. Speaker, that Conservatives traditionally pay attention to the real needs of rural Albertans only when it's election time.

I'd like to ask him specifically: given that Don Mazankowski has made some vague promises of federal funding programs to his friend Grant Devine, who may be facing an election the next month or two, to help save his political skin, I'm wondering if the minister can tell us whether or not he's met with Mr.

Mazankowski to make it clear to him that (Alberta producers deserve at least the same kind of consideration Saskatchewan producers do.

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, I think it's fair to say that one of the task forces struck following the Agri-Food Policy Conference in Ottawa in December was to look at agricultural income. There have been discussions over the winter and assessments made of the farm income situation, and yes, I have had discussions with the Hon. Don Mazankowski.

I think there are certain things occurring out there that may have to be addressed and will be discussed at the ministers' meeting in Victoria in March. I'm thinking of things such as the high interest rate policy, which is created in Ottawa and is certainly not helping our farm producers. I'm thinking of things like the export enhancement program and the trade war between the U.S.A. and the European common community which is holding our prices down.

MR. FOX: You guys supported the free trade deal.

MR. ISLEY: My friend from Vegreville should know that has nothing to do with the free trade agreement.

So, yes, the matter is being assessed. Discussions are ongoing. But I repeat: I detect in most parts of this province an enthusiasm among our farm producers.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Smoky River.

### **Francophone Educational Rights**

*(continued)*

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, indeed, today's Supreme Court decision is one that's very significant to the residents of Smoky River, as we have one of the largest Francophone communities in all of Alberta. My question is to the Minister of Education. I wonder if the minister could give us some indication of whether today's decision will increase the number of Francophone school boards, or will it necessitate Francophone school boards within the province of Alberta.

MR. DINNING: No, Mr. Speaker, the decision does not require the establishment of Francophone school boards in any part of the province today. It speaks rather uniquely of a sliding scale of services and extension of rights, depending upon the important provision in the Charter about where numbers warrant, and that where numbers are small or few but the warrant instruction, that shall be provided and, as the movement along the sliding scale, toward the establishment of a school, and the possibility—possibility—where significant numbers warrant, the creation of an independent school board.

But it comments most favourably—because the Supreme Court was asked to, it comments about what is going on in Edmonton today. It suggests that there are sufficient numbers of section 23 students in Edmonton to justify the creation of an independent school such as the one that exists in this city today. In a nutshell, Mr. Speaker, the judgment looks at the sliding scale, and where numbers warrant, that's how we deliver the services to those students and their families.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary, Smoky River.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A further

question to the Minister of Education regarding the time lines for implementation of today's Supreme Court findings. Could you give us some insight as to what time lines you feel you'll be developing to develop the points that were raised by the Supreme Court?

MR. DINNING: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said in an answer to an earlier question, it is a significant decision for the province of Alberta, indeed for all 10 provinces in the country, and we want to review the decision and the judgment very carefully. We want to consult with a number of people and hear their comments and suggestions on it, and then we will make a decision. I have always said on matters like this that I'm more interested in doing it right than doing it fast.

### St. John's Hospital

MR. DOYLE: Mr. Speaker, the Sisters of Service have owned and operated the St. John's hospital in Edson for 67 years and requested in June 1989 that the ownership of the hospital be transferred to the Alberta Catholic Hospitals Foundation. On February 20 of this year the Member for Whitecourt announced to the P.C. association dinner in Edson that the hospital was being transferred to hospital nursing home district No. 86, much to the surprise of many local residents. As many people in this community feel there was a lack of consultation in this process, will the minister inform us who represented her department, who was consulted, and on what dates?

MR. SPEAKER: Three questions in one.

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond to...

MR. SPEAKER: Is there unanimous consent to complete this series of questions?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

MRS. BETKOWSKI: ... the question in a general nature, but as far as the details of dates, et cetera, I don't have that at my fingertips and would ask the hon. member to put the issue on the Order Paper.

The need for a change of ownership in the hospital of St. John's was precipitated by a request from the Sisters of Service to withdraw from that ownership. As a result of that request from the sisters the province exercised its right to determine to whom the facility would be transferred. I asked my deputy minister to consult with many people in the community, including the Catholic Hospital Foundation, hospital district 86, elected officials from several municipalities surrounding Edson, including Edson, and interested individuals who took the time to advise us of their opinion.

MR. DOYLE: In light of the fact that the minister has to date shown little respect for the wishes of the local residents, would she now apologize to those people in the communities and the residents that she has so much offended?

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Well, Mr. Speaker, the issue of consultation was a very important one that we followed to make a very

difficult decision. Certainly as a government we concluded that the long-term objectives for health care in the Edson area would best be complemented by on-board operating both the long-term care and the acute care in the facility.

Certainly I regret the sisters' decision to leave St. John's hospital, because in fact they have provided wonderful service to Edson and the surrounding community. But I must say that I am surprised at the line of questioning being taken by the New Democrats on this particular issue, because this is the party that has consistently argued against any kind of private role, private interest, in our health care system, and here they are completely turning around when we get into the issue.

The second point I would like to make is: where was the MLA when this decision was being made? He was in the weeds, Mr. Speaker. He was in the weeds saying: "Which way is the province going to go? Are they going to go with the Catholic foundation, or are they going to go with the municipalities?" When he found which way the province was going to go, he took the exact opposite point of view. I'm not sure that's leadership for a community that he alleges to represent.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair has just received notice from the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife to give supplementary information from a previous question period. Is there unanimous consent to allow that to occur?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

### Procter & Gamble Pulp Mill Emissions (continued)

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, in response to the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place, the only area that I'm aware of that my department says they were... The RCMP received a water sample, and Fish and Wildlife co-operated with the RCMP in an investigation. There was insufficient evidence to proceed with any charges, and there is no information of any offer of funding to anyone on this matter. So if that's the area that the hon. member was raising, that is the answer.

MR. McINNIS: The information was filed with the RCMP in March 1989 and referred from federal fisheries back to the minister's department under the federal/provincial agreement. It has to do with contamination of fish and destruction of fish habitat by Procter & Gamble. That's what I'd like the minister to look into.

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, that's just what I answered: that they co-operated fully with the RCMP and there was insufficient evidence to proceed with any charges. Nothing further is done. There is no information of any offer of funding to anyone on this matter.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The Chair wishes to inform the House that the Chair has reserved accepting the tabling earlier today of a letter submitted by the Member for Calgary-Mountain View until further consideration has been given to the matter. The difficulty seems to arise from the problem that not only is the letter undated, but it is unsigned. The Chair will report back to the House tomorrow. [interjections] Order



please. Order .

The Chair recognizes the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark on what was a point of order raised earlier .

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My point of order addresses section 495 of *Beauchesne* where it says:

A Minister is not at liberty to read or quote from a despatch or other state paper not before the House without being prepared to lay it on the Table.

I note that on March 13, 1990, the minister of public works made this statement.

The interpretation provided to me by legal counsel makes it very, very clear, I repeat, that the court document "contains no decision or order halting construction of the Oldman River dam."

It's very important that we in this Legislature see that document so that we have the chance to understand the thinking of whoever it is that gave that minister that opinion, and so that we can determine whether in fact the lawyer who gave him that opinion was the lawyer who lost the case in the first place.

MR. KOWALSKI: Well, Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the question. I would ask all members if they wouldn't mind obtaining a copy of *Hansard* of March 13, 1990, because I think it's very important. If you look at the right-hand corner of the text on page 49 of *Hansard*, there is the statement:

The interpretation provided to me by legal counsel makes it very, very clear, I repeat, that the court document and then, Mr. Speaker, in quotation marks

"contains no decision or order halting construction of the Oldman River dam."

Now, Mr. Speaker, *Hansard* reports on every word that's uttered in the Legislative Assembly. There is nothing in *Hansard* that says, "And I quote." So, Mr. Speaker, I do not know the basis on which the *Hansard* editors would have put that statement in quotation marks. But I would, however, Mr. Speaker, refer you and all other hon. members to page 45 of this same *Hansard*. If you look down at the right-hand corner, there's a response, and it says:

Mr. Kowalski: Mr. Speaker, the right thing is to abide by the decision of the Federal Court, and I want to repeat: the judgment issued by the Federal Court of Canada today in Ottawa makes it very clear that the Federal Court document . . .

and then my response goes on:

. . . contains no decision or order halting construction of the Oldman River dam.

Those words are not in quotation marks. Yet four pages later in a statement made by me, identical words to the ones contained on page 45 are put in quotation marks. Mr. Speaker, I did not at that time say, "And I quote", and I did not ask for this phrase to be put in quotation marks. So as best as I can understand what has happened here by the Editor of *Hansard* is that the y have taken a statement that I made on page 45; I made the same statement on page 49, but on page 49 they have quoted from what I said on page 45. Mr. Speaker, if there's a document, the only document is the one that is *Hansard* listed on page 45.

Now, further to that, just above on page 49 in the question put forward by the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark quotes from the document that I presume he's looking for. If he can quote directly from that document, the hon. member already has the document. I cannot believe, Mr. Speaker, that there is a matter of order here at all.

AN HON. MEMBER: Did you get a legal opinion or didn't

you?

MR. SPEAKER: This is not a back-and-forth discussion, hon. member. Perhaps the Chair should remind members of the House that when it comes to points of order, the point is made by the member, and if there's response from each of the other parties in the House, so be it, and that's generally it.

The whole thing is somewhat academic, hon. members. If you turn to *Beauchesne*, citation 446(2)(a), we have the reference here about "legal opinions or advice provided for the use of the government" should be "exempt from production." However, in spite of all this and with regard to the references to *Hansard* and the placing or deletion of quotations marks, the Chair will have to take that into consideration and report back to the House tomorrow, having had discussion with the editors of *Hansard*. Thank you.

#### head: Motions Under Standing Order 40

MR. SPEAKER: Now, under Standing Order 40, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, speaking to the urgency.

Mr. Wickman:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta congratulate the federal government for today's proactive and liberal decision to allow Sikh members of the RCMP to wear turbans while on duty.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Speaking to the urgency of the matter, it is obvious, and I believe all of us would agree here, that we are faced with a very urgent situation where we see growing intolerance, and we see it on a daily basis. We see an increasing lack of understanding and respect for members of minority groups, including the visible minorities. This is, of course, demonstrated to a large degree by the question of Sikh members of the RCMP and their desire and right, now, to wear turbans. What happens is that when we as Members of the Legislative Assembly sit back and remain silent, it creates an uncertainty about what minority rights are all about and what members of the visible minority can expect of us.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. Back to urgency. Standing Order 40 is very specific. Urgency, please.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, my concern is that if we are not prepared to deal with this matter urgently to demonstrate our support, to deal with it today when the decision has been made by the federal government, we miss the opportunity, and I believe the key opportunity, to demonstrate our support and to show that we are prepared to defend the ethnocultural groups and the rights of visible minorities. Otherwise, Mr. Speaker, without the urgency of dealing with this item, we allow a situation where that intolerance, that lack of understanding and respect continue to grow, it continues to mount, and it's damaging to all of us. It's damaging to Alberta as a whole. On that basis I feel it is a very urgent matter.

MR. SPEAKER: All those members who believe that this is an urgent matter, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No .

MR. SPEAKER: Motion fails. [interjections] Hon. members, the issue is important. The question was Standing Order 40, urgency.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Written Questions**

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, with regard to Written Questions, I can advise that the government is not prepared to accept Question 145 but will accept the balance of the questions: 146, 147, 148, and 149.

head: **Motions for Returns**

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

[Motion carried]

head: **Motions Other Than Government Motion s**

201. Moved by Mr. Cardinal:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to undertake a pilot project in the constituencies of Athabasca-Lac La Biche and Lesser Slave Lake to establish human resource development offices, which will further combine and co-ordinate the delivery of services provided by the departments of Family and Social Services and Career Development and Employment.

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to stand before the House today to speak to Motion 201. I believe the Assembly will soon see that this is an extremely important motion. This motion is important because it addresses the need for a new, innovative system that would further co-ordinate the delivery system of Family and Social Services, Career Development and Employment in the community. Mr. Speaker, I'm talking about initiating a pilot project to establish human resource offices in communities across the constituencies of Athabasca-Lac La Biche and Lesser Slave Lake.

Some may have a question today as to what I'm talking about when I say "human resource development offices." I would like to clarify that question to those people who may not be too clear on what I'm talking about. The human resource offices that I'm recommending are not the human resource development offices that were established jointly in the early 70s in northern Alberta by the provincial and federal governments. These new offices would act as a liaison between not only the Department of Family and Social Services and the Department of Career Development and Employment but also the community members and the individuals on social assistance. By harnessing and channeling the effort of both departments, the effort of the people themselves and the community, the human resource offices will be able to help foster independence among the people rather than continuing a cycle of dependence on welfare.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

I'll give a brief example to the members of this Assembly as

to what I'm talking about when I talk about these new structures. These new structures would be co-ordinating the delivery of the income security portion of the programs handled by Family and Social Services jointly with the programs provided by Career Development and Employment, specifically career counseling and career assessment and placement programs.

This proposal I'm talking about today is not a proposal that I alone am proposing. I have consulted thoroughly with individuals and families on social assistance as to how they may perceive change taking place in the delivery system of our government in relation to social services. They have recommended, number one, to change the name of the income security portion of the program to human resource development in order to make it more positive.

What these offices would have in each community – and we're proposing Athabasca, Lac La Biche, Lesser Slave Lake, and possibly High Prairie and maybe other communities. What they would have in the existing offices, so that the dollars as far as a requirement for new dollars for these new programs would be very, very limited. . . . What I'm proposing is to incorporate the employment section of Career Development and Employment – the career counseling, the assessment and placement section – in the offices of Family and Social Services, the income security section. Therefore, when an individual goes to this office, they're not only going for social assistance, but they will have an opportunity to access career counseling, career assessment, and possibly placement directly in a training institution or a job. The reason I'm proposing this, again, is that this is what the clients are requesting in my area.

In order to justify some of the changes I'm talking about today, I'll explain a bit about how northern Alberta is structured and specifically the Athabasca-Lac La Biche constituency and parts of the Lesser Slave Lake constituency. The Athabasca-Lac La Biche constituency has a population of over 20,000 people. I have seven municipalities, a number of hamlets throughout the constituency, two Metis settlements, three Indian reserves, and a number of summer villages. As I have told this House before, prior to 1950 a majority of the residents living in these northern Alberta communities were completely self-sufficient. There was no welfare; welfare was unheard of in that part of the province. Unemployment was nonexistent. People lived off the land. There was no problem with alcoholism; alcohol abuse was unheard of in northern Alberta. That's less than 40 years ago. There were virtually no family problems to speak of. People even had their own medical system.

In the early '50s some major change took place that would change the life-style of these residents forever. The changes that took place include the forest management area, where large tracts of timber were allocated to large companies centralized away from these small communities, which took away a portion of the community's life-style. The fishing industry: when the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation was formed, the majority of the small commercial fish plants that were established across northern Alberta were closed, and the fish processing plants were centralized, I believe, amongst three different offices in the north half of the province. Trapping and hunting: that industry at one time was very active in northern Alberta, but due to changes in the weather pattern, oil and gas exploration, tourism, big game hunting, that industry also disappeared. During this period the welfare system was introduced to replace it.

By 1968 nearly 80 percent of our residents in northern Alberta were dependent on welfare. There were marriage breakups,

cases of child abuse, complete breakdown of family units, alcoholism, loss of culture, loss of language, and the death rate was very high. Some of our communities were losing close to 10 percent of their population due to poverty, alcoholism, and welfare. A complete deterioration of an integrated way of life in less than 20 years.

Realizing the scope of this problem, the government of the day introduced various initiatives. This government in the early '70s and '80s introduced many new programs to work towards resolving these problems. New schools were established, new school board structures for the communities, some completely run by native people. New housing programs were established, land tenure provided to people. Community infrastructure plans were provided with the people's involvement, and adult academic upgrading programs, other training programs, water and sewer development, road upgrading, airport upgrading, alcohol treatment programs, and many short-term job creation programs. Mr. Speaker, I applaud governments for those initiatives. There is no doubt that our communities are better off in a lot of ways now. But the fact is that despite all these improvements, unemployment in the Athabasca-Lac La Biche constituency is still high and unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, the average unemployment rate in my constituency of Athabasca-Lac La Biche is around 17 percent presently. In some areas the unemployment soars to a staggering 70 to 80 percent, some places 90 percent. Even in some of the communities with a population of 4,000, the unemployment rate still runs 70 to 80 percent. It is even more unacceptable when one considers that the average unemployment rate for the province is less than 7 percent. Mr. Speaker, this level of unemployment cannot exist without taking it out of the constituents and the constituency. The people are plagued with low morale, which often translates into a poor attitude, thereby continuing to foster the cycle of dependency. Even worse is that the constituency is losing its most valuable resource, our youth. Because of the disparity in economic conditions between my constituency and others in the province, our youth are leaving the region for other parts of the province.

Mr. Speaker, the welfare situation is unacceptable. Out of a population of 10,595 people serviced out of the Athabasca social services district office, there were 382 files covering 940 men, women, and children on assistance, running approximately 9 percent. In Lac La Biche, which is the place where we have the highest rate per capita on welfare in the province, the Lac La Biche social services district office serves a population of 8,755, has 619 social allowance files presently involving over 1,600 people, at an average of 18.3 percent of the population. This is not acceptable. The present Alberta average is 6 percent.

To be blunt, Mr. Speaker, my constituents are tired of this life-style. They are tired of being on welfare; they are tired of being unemployed. They want jobs, and not short-term jobs; they want permanent jobs. These people want alternatives other than being on social assistance, and I believe that this government has a responsibility to help them discover and establish these alternatives. I also believe that we can do so by endorsing this motion.

Mr. Speaker, establishing a human resource development office is not a new concept. The pilot project for Athabasca-Lac La Biche and Lesser Slave Lake would be patterned after the very successful community initiatives project in Calling Lake, which is in my constituency. I would like to give a bit of history on the project in Calling Lake, how it worked there, and what it did to a community like that.

In 1985 the community of Calling Lake decided that their community members were unhappy with being unemployed and living in poverty and on welfare. They decided themselves that they would do something about it. They approached the local social services office in that region, and that department provided the required dollars and a consultant to assist the community to move forward with their plans. Some of the plans this community developed were action on job creation locally, job creation within commuting distance from the community, and a training placement office staffed by local placement officers. They also kept a labour force inventory of jobs available in the area and also training programs available in the area so they could place people. They also developed a long- and short-term economic action plan.

The fourth part, which is the critical part, which would be very similar to what I'm proposing today, is a joint delivery system of the income security portion of the welfare program delivered by Family and Social Services. The part the province played in this project was basically as a facilitator, and the project was very successful. Within the year and a half the project operated, it saved over half a million dollars for the taxpayer and put almost all of the residents back into the labour force or training for employment opportunities. The alcoholism in the community dropped when people started working. The crime rate in that community dropped. At any one time in that community prior to this program, the RCMP used to carry up to 20 files of people in trouble with the law. When this program was introduced after one year, these files had dropped to one, two, and sometimes none for two or three months. The school attendance improved drastically. Because families were working, the children got organized also and attended school very well.

I would also like to draw my hon. colleague's attention to the fact that the Department of Family and Social Services has been very accommodating and supportive of the Calling Lake project. Members of the community association have been very quick to recognize the contribution of the department. Thus, Mr. Speaker, this is the system on which Motion 201 is based. My colleagues should understand that the Calling Lake initiative project has been very successful, and it's definitely an alternative to welfare. It saves tax dollars, but the best is that it saves lives.

Motion 201 proposes that we duplicate this system in human resource offices throughout the communities across Athabasca-Lac La Biche and Lesser Slave Lake in order to provide the people with a way of breaking the cycle of dependence on welfare. Now, before any of my colleagues decide prematurely that this project would be nothing more than a duplication of one or more existing programs or that this is meant to replace one or more of the existing programs, let me put those thoughts to rest. Mr. Speaker, we are not trying to reinvent the wheel. This project is not just another Career Development and Employment program or social services program. Motion 201 speaks to the specific need for an office to co-ordinate these two departments' programs along with the community. This project will further increase the effectiveness of these programs. Motion 201 will ensure, through the development of these human resource offices, that these programs are utilized to their fullest extent. And as I have shown, the human resource development offices proposed in Motion 201 will accomplish that by combining and co-ordinating the existing efforts of our government and the people out there.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure there are some hon. members who are asking themselves right now: well, then, if this is such a wonderful plan, why am I only proposing to implement a pilot

project in these two constituencies? I would reply to those members that I am so convinced of this project that I would be more than willing to pursue a provincewide plan. However, I am also sure that there are other hon. members who would prefer to first observe the system in operation before having it expand across the province. Thus, Mr. Speaker, this is one reason why the motion only proposes a pilot project for Athabasca-Lac La Biche and Lesser Slave Lake. The other reason why the motion speaks to Athabasca-Lac La Biche and Lesser Slave Lake specifically is because in these constituencies we must initiate this kind of action. We need these kinds of measures desperately, and we have no time to lose; too many of our constituents live in poverty.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support me in this motion. Thank you.

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

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche for his comments. I very much appreciate them. I've looked at the motion and want to offer a few comments today.

I'm pleased that the member outlined the program that happened in his constituency with Calling Lake. I know there was a awful lot of work that went into that program, and the co-ordination effort that took place between departments was really quite impressive.

I think the hon. member went through a number of attitudinal changes that are important to highlight. They had training placement; that was different than what they had before. They had a labour force inventory for the first time. They had a long-term economic plan, and boy, that's extraordinarily important. They also shared information, which sometimes departments fail to do. He pointed out a couple of things with that. He talked about how it saved half a million dollars of taxpayers' money, how alcoholism decreased greatly, and how school attendance increased dramatically as well. All of those things, I believe, come up that there's a new attitude inside the community, and that's a sense of pride because people are no longer dependent upon handouts; that people would far rather work than just receive handouts.

I was shocked, quite frankly, and surprised to learn — on many occasions I've heard, and I've gone to the unemployment statistics that are provided to us by Statistics Canada and through the Department of Career Development and Employment — that the unemployment average in your constituency is at 17 percent. In the statistics that come out, the northeast zone is the zone that contains the constituency of Athabasca-Lac La Biche, and the northwest zone is the zone that contains the constituency of Lesser Slave Lake. I know that we don't get a proper breakdown by constituencies, but I went through those zones — I went back and did a little bit of hunting — and I saw that the unemployment rate in the northeast zone for February was 7 and a half percent, and in the northwest zone, 7.8 percent.

I checked with Edmonton, and we're at 8.3 percent. I know that in my constituency, with the number of workers that tend to travel to some of the projects around the province, when unemployment at Edmonton levels is 10 to 12 percent, we in the northeast end of our city can have an unemployment rate of 25 percent as well. We do have problems there. Part of the problem, quite frankly, is that government departments don't communicate, so we don't have that labour force inventory that

is so very necessary to send people out into the workforce where the jobs might be.

The member talked about the need for a new system to co-ordinate those programs. Well, recently in British Columbia, I've been made aware of their government's action. It's something called interministerial protocols. That's just a rather fancy name for senior-level bureaucrats in various departments to agree to communicate together so that they can sit down and talk about the programs and policies that are being delivered, and how they can start sharing the information, accessing the information and making sure that the delivery system is getting to the person that requires it: the client at the front end.

Now, I'm not sure if we've got that to the degree that we ought to. I see the hon. Minister of Career Development and Employment nodding to me that we do. I know that in some areas, if we've got it, then it doesn't seem to be working to the degree that it ought to. In my constituency I've got people that fall through the cracks because they might go from — I'm thinking of a couple of examples where they've had attendants and care provided for them by the department of hospitals and medical care in the facility, and then they're put out into the community for reintegration and they end up back in the fold of Family and Social Services. There's a time line there where they fall through the cracks, and we see some rather sorry examples of what happens to people when they're left without the services that they so readily require.

So if the Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche is trying to promote increased communication and dialogue between departments, I'm all in favour of it; I'm certainly supportive of that kind of action. But I want to only throw in one caution, and that is that in our city, in the capital city of Edmonton, we too have a problem. It's inner-city related, and to a degree some of the peripheral areas of our city as well, where people are, I suppose, forgotten to a bit of a degree. We have a similar problem that has to be addressed. I know that the hon. member and I have traveled the province together recently on the Electoral Boundaries Committee, and we've heard a lot of people in some of the outer regions of our province talk about the needs of their constituencies, and they've tried to develop the assets that they have in the corners of our province. I want to only throw out the caution, though, that we ought not to do it at the expense of the capital city, because our economy is based very differently than the economy of our sister city in Calgary. Calgary has private-sector investment that is, to a degree, very different than what we have in Edmonton. Their unemployment rate is consistently lower than ours is.

So when we speak of providing service in the rural constituencies or the outlying constituencies — as I said, I support that, but I don't want to see us take programs and jobs. And I'm sure this isn't what the hon. member intended. I don't want to see those programs and jobs leave the capital city to go elsewhere.

I've talked with people at the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees and asked them what the caseload was in some of the outer areas where they can't get social workers, and there is no doubt we have caseloads of 300 to 400 for an income security adviser. How in the world would you possibly manage that kind of a caseload? You can't. The problem is that the cases get stacked up. The paperwork just barely gets done so that the cheques get out, and the people aren't getting what they really need.

Child welfare caseloads: up to 40; again, extraordinarily high. There is a problem there, but the problem is that we've got to

get more people out servicing the clients so that the ratio goes down. But let's remember, at the same time, we have that need here as well.

So while I support the motion, I support it for increased program funding and not at the expense of one over the other. Both are extraordinarily necessary, and I thank the member for bringing the motion forward today.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to support Motion 201, which my colleague from Athabasca-Lac La Biche has so eloquently spoken on and which the Member for Edmonton-Belmont supports. I'm very pleased to see that. I believe we can all see that this is an exciting project, something that I agree we should definitely consider implementing in other communities in the Lesser Slave Lake and Athabasca-Lac La Biche constituencies.

As members are aware, my constituency of Lesser Slave Lake is experiencing many problems similar to those found in Athabasca-Lac La Biche. Although the general standard of living, education, and work skills has improved drastically in the past 15 years, some of the northern communities still face a high unemployment rate as high as 80 percent of the employable residents: much different than what I think we've just heard. Some of the contributing factors are geographical location of the woods manufacturing and fishing industries, lack of proper utilization of training programs, poor access to training facilities, lack of inventory of local manpower skills, and a general lack of co-ordination and planning of programs operating in these communities.

Over the years, briefs to the Northern Alberta Development Council from these communities have focused on employment and economic development issues and on a need to radically change the destructive influence of the present welfare system. The Calling Lake community initiative's program has been very successful in dealing with some of these problems. An evaluation of the project completed in 1988 highlighted why the project has been very successful. The goal of the project, as the Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche has already pointed out, is to move people from social assistance to employment; not simply to get them out of social assistance. At the time the evaluation was completed, nearly half the people who were on social assistance at the start of the project were classified as successes under the program. Successes are usually defined as those who are employed, serving in the Opportunity Corps, or enrolled in training, and those who are still receiving some measure of assistance but are also now employed or in training.

Mr. Speaker, it would appear that the project is having a positive effect. The evaluation report states that there is some evidence of change in the whole spirit of the community, of a new attitude of some people about their lives and about the community, of new pride and confidence, and of a new readiness and ability to participate in economic activity. This change has not reached all people, Mr. Speaker, but it has reached some, including some who have been considered hard-core social service families. There is no single reason for the change. Rather, it is a result of all the many diverse components; that is, the community association, its board members, staff and support personnel, the Alberta social services, the community initiatives office and the social worker in particular, the Opportunity Corps, and the government agencies which have co-operated with the

community's efforts to expand employment. The change is still fragile in the sense that solid, long-term employment may not have been created. If it arrives, for example, in the form of an oriented strandboard in my particular constituency, the community has at least reached a point where it can most benefit from it.

The circumstances that have made the Calling Lake community initiative's project a good one are unusual but not necessarily unique to Calling Lake. Among the contributing factors that have made this particular project successful are the availability of local leadership with the necessary skills, time, and interest; the availability of technical and personnel support from an office that was able to combine the resources from the government with the enthusiasm of the community; the preparedness of local and government agencies to subscribe to the community's agenda and co-ordinate their activities; and four, substantial commitment of funds both for the operations of the association and for projects that create jobs.

Mr. Speaker, a real problem existed in the Calling Lake community, but with a flexible attitude on the part of both local people and government agencies, the resolution of that problem is now a reality. I think the real key to the success of this project lies in the fact that the resolution to the community's problem came from the community. At the time the community initiatives project was started, there was a growing awareness that the community was becoming excessively dependent on welfare and was showing alarming symptoms of social decay. Community leaders decided something needed to be done to break the pattern and took the initiative to enlist government support. Both these leaders and the government are to be commended, Mr. Speaker. This was an important and powerful formula. Anytime you can get community leaders working with the government, this really, truly is a powerful formula.

There is no evidence in northern Alberta's experience, including Calling Lake's, to suggest that government's resources can be used to spark the process initially or that outside agencies can carry the developmental responsibilities themselves. There is all the difference in the world between a work-for-welfare scheme imposed by the government from outside and a developmental alternative to welfare plan whose seeds are planted by a community's alarm at its own dependency and a desire for change. The mechanics of the two may be very similar — the simultaneous creation of jobs and tightening of welfare policies — but the spirit will be very, very different, and that difference is very important. The spirit cannot be created by simple application of the mechanics.

This is the main reason I support Motion 201, Mr. Speaker. I think it is a fine working example of the policies stated in last year's Caring & Responsibility document. It is a new approach to helping Albertans help themselves. Giving them the tools: that's the key. It can be likened to selling tractors and seed and teaching irrigation methods to underdeveloped countries instead of selling them grain. Our paramount responsibility as legislators is to establish programs and policies that promote and facilitate individual initiative, self-reliance, self-sufficiency, and responsibility. These communities know best what they need. Giving them the tools to carry out their own reform is the best use of government resources.

Most of all, Mr. Speaker, they want to be active. Many communities want to be active; they want to be productive. They want to be involved in our society as members of the society. In the Lesser Slave Lake area, the economy is not strong, and unemployment is high, particularly for the native people. There

are social problems in the communities, and the number of people on welfare is increasing. These unfamiliar with the effects of poverty and welfare frequently suggest that welfare benefits are too high and discourage motivation to work. I disagree with this commonly held opinion. The people in my constituency want to work, but they need an opportunity, an opportunity which will help them transition from a welfare system to a working mode.

In reality, living on welfare produces a negative self-image which decreases one's aspirations, one's motivation and determination to develop skills and abilities. With undermined self-respect and confidence, people begin to regard themselves as failures, and their situation is hopeless. The resulting discouragement and apathy lessen their ability for self-improvement.

We need to do two things in these northern communities: create long-term, viable economic diversification, and give the people back their spirit, initiative, and dignity. Unemployment is a severe problem in isolated and slow growth areas like many of the communities in the northern part of our province. It is particularly prevalent during the winter when construction, transportation, and unskilled jobs decrease. Underemployment is also widespread, as many people can only find seasonal or part-time work. Such work is usually low paying, and provides little training which would make it easier for them to get another job. Native people are overwhelmingly faced with this lack of employment opportunity. They are confined usually to the lowest occupational levels, if they can find a job at all, and most of these jobs are not available in the smaller communities I represent, Mr. Speaker.

With the continuous decline of the natives' traditional game harvesting and in the absence of economic development and new employment opportunities, the people in the north have been forced to accept welfare. It is an unavoidable necessity for many of them because of extremely low income from other sources. Many of the people that I represent, Mr. Speaker, do not want to be on welfare, but without any other alternative there is no hope for them. So with this kind of an idea of having someone come in and help them help themselves, then we have created something for them to go on.

Most native people realize that their traditional forms of employment — hunting, fishing, and trapping — will not continue to support them to any large extent in the future. They do, however, require assistance during this transition period to adapt to a changing society. Education and skill levels are major factors affecting the employment opportunities available for any group of people. In today's labour market jobs requiring little skill and training are declining. As technological advances demand adaptable and quick learners, employers feel the higher educated will perform better, and thus give them the jobs. Consequently, industrial development will bypass the poorly qualified. Yet these are the people most in need of jobs. I believe that once we get something in place which will help them make this transition, they will be able to acquire those jobs that are so necessary for them to have economic stability.

New industries in these areas may be forced to bring in more qualified people from outside the area, with the result that the local unemployed are seldom any better off for the new development. They share very little in the new prosperity and, relatively speaking, become even more disadvantaged. Inadequate technical skills, poor education, and a lack of job-seeking skills are all factors that contribute to the unemployment in the communities we are discussing today.

I firmly believe that the unemployed in my constituency have a real desire to participate in a productive way in our society, but they lack the resources to explore the best alternative opportunities, opportunities I feel that we can give. Usually the jobs they might qualify for are not advertised locally, particularly if they live in rural or isolated areas. Mr. Speaker, they have inadequate sources of information, and this is one way for them to know what is available.

The Calling Lake community initiatives project recognized all of these same problems in their community. The project addressed the problem in a stringent, forward, pragmatic way, and the results are really impressive. The mandate of the project is to create jobs, train people for jobs, and match people with jobs. The association has prepared an inventory of employable people with their training and experience, and has developed a filing system so that the information can be conveniently stored and retrieved. The names that are on the system are of people either on social assistance or seeking work. This system is operating smoothly and is used by employers to locate prospective workers. It is administered by a job placement worker hired with funds provided by the regional office of Family and Social Services. This system has been effective in making local hiring easier for both the employers and the job seeker. Some examples of what the project has accomplished are: helping to arrange for a heavy equipment operator's course, a secretarial training course, and an enhanced forestry training course. These are realistic and responsive initiatives. The association is well tuned to the needs and abilities in the community.

One of the most important aspects of the project, of course, is liaison work. There is one social worker who deals with all the Calling Lake cases, and through close liaison between that worker, the job placement officer, the district social service office, and the association, the community's specific needs are well served. If such assistance is available within the community, the stress of seeking help is much reduced.

Mr. Speaker, I have three basic recommendations stemming from today's debate on this motion: that we continue to think about the hard work for long-term job creation in these communities; that this government continue to give the kind of support it has given to date for the community initiatives project in Calling Lake; and three, that we seriously consider helping other northern communities initiate similar projects.

Thank you.

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

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In rising to speak on this, I won't go over the part that's been so well covered, which is the part with respect to creating employment in the native and Metis communities. It has been done very well by the Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche and the Member for Lesser Slave Lake. But I would like to suggest, being that it's the pilot project, that it would take a broader focus — I'm not sure if that's the right word — a broader area than just the two constituencies mentioned, which certainly have a great deal of the native and Metis problems in there. But there's more to poverty and retraining than native and Metis.

I would like to suggest, because of the proximity of my constituency which lies between — the rose between two thorns. If you look at the "rose" constituency, because poverty in my area largely results from some lower income people and a great

deal of single parents who live in the constituency but commute and work in Edmonton, it's a type of poverty we see much more of in North America than we have in years past. They move out to the fringes of our cities, where their rent is cheaper, and also there is a certain amount of space maybe, away from the crime and squalid conditions that are often present in our cities. They're able to get out to our suburban communities and obtain housing at reasonable prices, and also get out of sort of the sociological poverty ghetto that they're forced to live with in the cities because of just a natural segmentation by income which happens in the city. In a small town the millionaire lives elbow-to-elbow with the poor, and consequently those people of our urban poor who want to try to find something for their children, who are trying to build their families, will often move out to the constituency adjoining the town. This is what has happened in a great deal of Westlock-Sturgeon.

In some ways the type of poverty that a person has out in that community is more grinding and more oppressive than you might find in Lesser Slave Lake or in Athabasca-Lac La Biche, because there is in my constituency a tremendous amount of wealth. Whether you want to go out there and live and keep your racehorses or whether you want to go out there and live as a single parent to try to get by with a cheaper home, you're living cheek by jowl or adjacent to each other, and maybe the next becomes even more evident how much you are behind the mainstream if you are in this poverty cycle.

Consequently — if I may put in a word, speaking here — I would love to have seen the motion include Westlock-Sturgeon. Maybe I would invite the two members to include it next year to give sort of a broader base to the area to cover the retraining and the amount of self-respect that has to be engendered in these types of projects. I'd like to see a pilot project that would cover the Westlock-Sturgeon area, too, because as I mentioned, there's a terrific number of urban poor who have moved out adjacent to the town. Also being a pilot project, it might give a better feed-in across the board.

Also I might mention that I, of course, have Metis and Indian and aboriginal people living in my constituency, and there would be interest, too, because here again, from the native communities that are . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, but according to the clock, the time allotted to this order of business has expired. We must now move to Public Bills and Orders Other Than Government Bills and Orders.

**head: Public Bills and Orders  
Other Than  
Government Bills and Orders  
Second Reading**

**Bill 201  
Alberta Environmental Rights Act**

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to move second reading of Bill 201, the Alberta Environmental Rights Act.

The work of this Legislative Assembly has a profound influence on the future of our province. It's one of the reasons that we're all willing to undertake the commitment to serve in public life. I think it's one of the things that is behind the desire of the New Democratic Party to put forward the Alberta

Environmental Rights Act as our first priority Bill in this current session of the Legislative Assembly. The New Democrat Official Opposition has a vision for a healthy future and an agenda to make that vision a reality for ourselves and our children. We believe a healthy future for Alberta means taking control of our economy and taking care of our environment. I would like to point out, Mr. Speaker, that those two things go hand in hand. It's very difficult to secure the future of your environment unless you have control over your economy. The more pieces of land that are given away, the more control of the forest that's given away, and the more we allow foreigners to own our economy, the more difficult it is for all of us to gain control over the economy and to gain the measure of care and stewardship that we must bring to the protection of our environment. The New Democrats will introduce a comprehensive set of initiatives this session to guarantee that kind of healthy future we all want for our province.

This is Bill 1 of the 1972 session of this Legislative Assembly, by a newly minted Progressive Conservative government, was the Alberta Bill of Rights, a landmark piece of legislation in the history of our province. What we need to do and what this Bill does today is give individuals the necessary legal instruments to end their current role as supplicants before environment ministries and tribunals. Citizens are protected in themselves by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Alberta Bill of Rights, which I refer to, and their property is protected by the entire fabric of our legal system. Any mediocre lawyer will tell you that most of the law these days has to do with who owns what piece of property and who has possession of it. But the environment, which underlies both people and property, is left at the mercy of antipollution laws, which are often inadequate — certainly inadequate in the province of Alberta — administrative mechanisms which are sporadic to say the very least, and initiatives of environment ministers which come and go as the political winds and political fortunes do.

I appreciate very much the presence of the hon. Minister of the Environment in this debate today. I want to say I appreciate that he has a reform agenda and that he's working very hard to pursue it. I wish him a good deal of luck and a great deal of support in that endeavour. I intend to offer a few ideas of my own, and I hope he'll consider them very carefully. From time to time, yes, there will be some criticism; so be it.

The Environmental Bill of Rights is designed to endow citizens with sufficient rights, information, and funding to permit them to play an active part in protecting the environment. There are plenty of opportunities to take part in decision-making on the environment, but citizens don't always have the power and the resources to participate effectively in that decision-making. That's what a number of the provisions of this Bill are designed to effect.

For example, in the province of Alberta an individual can't sue another party for environmental damage unless that individual's private interests are adversely affected and that individual can prove it in court. If you can prove you are personally affected and your property is personally affected in a way nobody else's is, then you have a tort and you can sue and you have some chance of recovering damages. But if you're in a situation where you're suffering environmental damage the same way as everybody else in our society is, the only thing you can do about it is complain to government and hope they take some action. Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, that doesn't lead to a successful result.

We dealt with one such case today in the question period. A

group of individuals who live in the vicinity of the Wapiti River noticed some degradation of the fish habitat in that river and connected that through information they became aware of; you know, not least of which, there was an awful lot of effluent being dumped from a pulp mill, sometimes within an and sometimes without the permit issued by the department. So they put their information forward to the RCM Panel and said, "This is what's happened; we'd like you to investigate it." Well, that information found its way to the Justice department and Fisheries and Oceans in Ottawa. They sent it back to Alberta Fish and Wildlife, part of the Ministry of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife, for an investigation. The minister says today that they looked at the complaint and said it wasn't justified. Well, of course it wasn't justified. If you don't do an investigation, no complaint is ever going to be justified. My point is simply this: citizens are at the mercy of government officials so on what type of investigation they're prepared to make on environmental complaints, what type of action they're prepared to take, and what type of follow-up there is. That simply isn't good enough. That's why we need legislation like this, the first element of which is to grant standing to all citizens to sue for environmental damage, irrespective of damage to their own person and property. That's the first and, I think, the most significant provision of this particular Bill.

The second major principle is citizen knowledge of and participation in all activities pertaining to the environment. This is a Bill that empowers citizens to know what's happening in their environment and to be able to participate effectively in influencing the course of those proceedings. There is widespread dissemination of environmental knowledge today, but the point of this particular legislation is to make certain that citizens have timely information about not just the new projects as they come along — we tend to focus in this debate about somebody who is going to build a pulp mill or a new oil sands plant — but about existing policies of the government, about existing industrial activities. It's a dead end that things that are happening in the environment now have just as much chance of causing environmental damage as new activities. In fact, you might argue that with the advancing state of pollution control technology, existing industrial activities, existing policies, and existing procedures have the potential to do more environmental damage. So the second major principle is that citizens have the right to know what's going on and to understand in ways that are comfortable to them.

I'd perhaps refer members specifically in this regard to section 2 of the Act, which defines the broad purpose, 2(a) in particular:

To facilitate the right of the people of Alberta to participate and be heard in decisions affecting the environment and their common interest in a healthy and sustainable environment.

I think public participation is the most important aspect of this particular Bill, because our history, especially the recent history of Alberta, shows that we get better environmental decisions when more people are involved. Look at the pulp industry: five projects licensed for construction by this provincial government in the absence of public hearings. The decisions that were made, I think, are questionable on a number of grounds, and I'd be pleased to debate those as we move through the estimates and other stages of these proceedings. But those decisions were made by government because they didn't involve a broad spectrum of people in making the decision at a very early stage.

The sixth project, the Alberta-Pacific project: the government was persuaded by various means — and I don't think any one individual or agency or organization can take full credit or responsibility — to open up the process, and when that happened

the whole ball game changed. It snowballed; it mushroomed. A great number of communities wanted to become involved in having a say about the future of the northern third of Alberta. A great many individuals marshalled their own time, their own resources, and prepared a tremendous number of extremely well-documented, well-researched briefs, most of which were provided to the review panel without any charge or any funding whatsoever. There was a tremendous outpouring of volunteerism, if you like, the type of volunteerism that's often touted by the minister of social services, who's anxious to reduce spending in his department, but a type that I think should be recognized and rewarded and should be provided for in legislation, not as a matter of political whim but as a matter of right for all Albertans. That's the second major principle that's contained in this particular legislation.

I think it's ironic in a way that so much of this is resisted by people in government, because I think when you get more people involved, you get better decisions. There isn't a government around that can't use improvement in its decision-making process, because a better decision makes for a better future, a healthier future, and that's what this is all about.

But we have to understand that citizens' participation will remain a mere formal right unless the means are available to participate effectively. Court action or the preparation of briefs is a time-consuming and costly venture. Before such actions can be instituted, individuals must be assured in critical instances of some type of compensation. The provision of such intervenor funding is a third major element of the Bill, and it's one that I think should be enshrined in legislation. There was intervenor funding provided in the case of the Al-Pac hearings, and I think the people who were recipients of that funding were very grateful for the provision that was made by the Minister of the Environment. I quarreled, of course, on who should pay the bill in that particular case. My view is that the applicant, Alberta-Pacific, should pay the Bill rather than the taxpayers of Alberta.

Other provisions of this Bill include establishing the government as trustee of public lands, water, and resources, and to impose obligations on the government to conserve and maintain those resources. I think that's an extremely significant provision, Mr. Speaker. Government sometimes treats the resources of the province as if they were bartering chips that could be traded back and forth across the negotiating table. In fact, at the end of the day they won't even reveal to the Legislative Assembly what they agreed to, witness the debate in the last session about whether the government would simply reveal the understanding that exists between the Crown and the forest companies of Alberta. They won't even tell you at the end of the day what it is they've agreed to. I think that that's a shameful proposition for any government.

We have to establish in law somewhere that government acts as a trustee in respect of those resources and that there are certain obligations that fall upon the government in respect of its trustee role. I would like to see it established, in particular with the forests, that a forest is a complex of values. It's not a commodity; it's not cellulose fibre waiting to be run through a pulp mill. It consists of flora, fauna, water, wilderness, aesthetics, spiritual soils, economic diversity, and other inherent benefits which are derived from forest land. A forest is something that means a lot to a lot of people. We hear lip service in government to multiple use and integrated resource planning and all these concepts that sound good to the ear, but what we get out of government are forest management agreements which are secretly negotiated between a minister and his officials and



international forest companies headquartered in the United States or half the way around the world.

These are two different paradigms, if you like, and what we're arguing for here is a shift in paradigm, a shift in the role of government from a resource broker to a trustee of those resources on behalf of the public. In forestry we need an obligation on the part of government to preserve the natural ecological diversity in order to perpetuate or, in some cases, restore the integrity of functional ecosystems. It's very important to maintain a balance of ecological and economic outputs over a period of time from the forests so as to maintain the balance of use which passes our forests on undiminished to future generations. That particular provision is in this Bill, and it is the fourth major principle.

There are a number of technical revisions in the law which I think are important, because in the environmental area we've had a tendency in the past to apply concepts from criminal law into regulation of the environment and it doesn't always work. The principle of criminal law is that you're innocent until proven guilty, and the standard of proof is "beyond a reasonable doubt." So a lot of people, you know, sometimes get off criminal charges because there is reasonable doubt as to whether guilt has been proven. You never institute a charge until after the crime has been done. Well, if you apply that to the environment in the way the courts have had to, the environment can be destroyed before anybody gets around to doing anything about it, and the burden of proof, as the Minister of the Environment must very well understand by now, is what makes Alberta's current environmental laws totally unenforceable. In fact, it was more than two years ago that the government made public a panel of experts' report, the environmental law enforcement task force, which made that flat assertion: Alberta's environmental laws are unenforceable. That, I think, was known to most people in the environmental community anyway prior to that, because the government didn't have very much of a record in obtaining convictions. I'm hoping beyond hope that we'll start to clean up some of those laws.

In this legislation you see a shift to a more relaxed standard of proof, which is what's required if environmental laws are going to have any real effect in preventing damage and catastrophe. A relaxed standard of proof substitutes the balance of probabilities, which is used in civil proceedings, from the criminal notion of beyond a reasonable doubt. A provision of this kind is necessary because tracing the cause of environmental contamination is scientifically extremely difficult, if not impossible.

Further, this Bill allows for class actions in respect of environmental contamination. It allows individuals to sue on behalf of others so they can establish a principle upon which damages or compensation might be awarded to a broad range of people who are affected by environmental degradation.

Finally, this Bill protects employees who report environmental abuses by their employers. It's a whistle blowers protection Act, which I previously introduced as stand-alone legislation. Who knows? I may do that this time. I think that that principle is particularly important, because people who have access to information about what's happening in pulp mills tend to be people who are employed in those operations. The same applies in the oil and gas business and anywhere else across the board. If it's permissible for employers to discipline or fire employees for reporting violations of environmental statutes, you would have to have an environmental policeman or policewoman on every jobsite in order to see that these laws are being upheld.

Of course, that's not a practicality, and it's not something that's in the cards as far as the enforcement of environmental laws is concerned.

So these are the major provisions of the legislation that's before the House today. It's fairly complex and it's legalistic in some areas, but I think it does establish these major principles. Above all, it does empower citizens to be effective in protecting their environment and in having the kind of healthy future we all want and deserve.

I want to say just a word about public participation. I think many Albertans were kind of shocked at the level of cynicism involved in the communication strategy prepared for the provincial government on environmental issues, how the government hoped to get the upper hand politically on environmental issues through a number of communication initiatives. I took particular note of the section that said that the way to do that is to establish a whole bunch of processes in which groups and individuals are encouraged to buy into the objectives of the government. Well, I think if we ever had a minister who was skilled at establishing processes to try to get individual and groups to buy into government objectives, it's the minister who occupies the Environment portfolio at the moment. We have a very large number of road shows and task forces and reviews and inputs and community forums and these kind of things, starting with the AI-Pac process.

Now, I feel that the AI-Pac process has made a major contribution to the history of the development process in Alberta, but I have to remind this minister that the very first major event I recall at those hearings was Environment Canada coming forth and stating that studies haven't been done to make a decision on this project. Now, at the time he was somewhat concerned about that message and, I recall, made some personal comments regarding the bearing of the message, Dr. Robert Lane, who was appearing on behalf of the three government departments. Well, at the end of the process Alberta Environment was taking the same position at the hearings, and in fact that was the significant finding of the panel, that the work had not been done to justify the project, therefore a delay. I think when you go through a process in which the information base is inadequate and the conclusion is, "Let's delay this project until the information base is complete," then you have a process that has a very unsatisfying character to it.

I submit that a public involvement process has three phases to it, and these should be taken down and noted by the minister in particular. The first phase is to make sure that you know what you're talking about. You've done the technical work, you've done the technical studies, and they're done correctly and comprehensively. Now, that first stage has been the sum total of the EIA process to date. It's been scientific and technical people from company consultants sending memos to scientific and technical people in the government about the adequacy of studies. Usually what has happened is that the clock has run out and they say, "Well, that's good enough," and the project has been approved anyway. But that, even if it's done completely and successfully, is still only phase 1.

Phase 2: you take the studies out to the people, you explain them to them, and you give them the opportunity to ask questions and to become comfortable with their understanding of the information. During phase 2 provision should be made for intervenor funding and additional research that has to be done. That's the second phase, the education phase.

The third phase is public hearings. That's when you get your road show. You don't necessarily go to the road show right

away. Right? I think that's a very important part of it. In Alberta we had studies done halfway, the road show — no public education phase, and the studies were not complete.

You look at the next major input process, the watercolour dreamscape of Alberta, the threefold document printed on recycled paper, which has been sent to 25,000 Albertans, complete with a blank sheet of paper that says, "Send us your environmental vision of Alberta." On the backside of the watercolour dreamscape you find a mandate written by the officials presumably in the Department of the Environment. I have some questions I want to raise with the minister later on about the origin of that document. But the document itself is a dreamscape as well. It contains notions about what is current government policy that cannot be found in policy and legislation. Nonetheless, that's being put out to Albertans along with blank sheets of paper, which are being sent back, I understand, by the thousands to the minister's office. There must be, because I'm getting hundreds of copies in the mail. I don't know how he finds time to read through thousands of these blank sheets of paper that contain environmental visions for Alberta, but I don't see how any one person could possibly absorb that much qualitative input into a process that's going to result in anything. It's the kind of road show without the studies or the educational process. I don't know how to describe it, but it's not a particularly effective way to structure the input that's needed into legislation in particular.

We have a new document, a new report, on environmental impact assessments, some of which I like very much, and I understand that's going to be the subject of public hearings as well. The n today there was an announcement of a new consultative process on greenhouse gases, on the production of, I think, carbon dioxide, sulphur dioxide, NO<sub>x</sub>, vocs, and other types of waste gases from the energy industry. So you have a new input process as well.

Now, somebody once told me that if you want to wreck the environment movement, all you have to do is create enough different forms and enough different proceedings that they'll be scrambling from one to the other, unable to cope with what's really happening out there. Now, I don't know that that's part of the communication strategy of the government, but I do know that there is a notion of trying to get Albertans to buy into objectives rather than deal with real and concrete situations. I say, if we're going to have public input, let's put some laws and some structure around it, let's put some obligations on the part of different people, and let's make sure it works effectively. This, I submit, is a major step forward toward the healthy future and the healthy environment we all want, and I urge all hon. members to support it at the second reading stage.

Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of the Environment.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise in debate on Bill 201, the Alberta Environmental Rights Act. I would like to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place for his remarks and comments regarding the environment and his concern for the protection of our environment.

Let me say at the outset that if nothing else, the Bill as it is written will certainly make the lawyers and the consultants in this province happy. The Bill, Mr. Speaker, is simply an attempt to take decision-making out of the hands of elected officials and

place it squarely in the hands of the lawyers and the consultants and the courts. As a matter of fact, this thing has already become quite a growth industry in itself, the whole environmental issue. We now have environmental auditors, environmental accountants, and environmental lawyers. We have environmental psychologists, and from time to time I think we all need environmental psychiatrists, especially the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark. Mr. Speaker, while the New Democrats might feel that that is what responsible government is all about, I can assure you that this government believes the ultimate decision-making powers should rest with the people through their elected representatives.

Let me first turn to section 2 of the proposed Act, which outlines the purpose of the Act. In doing so, let me say that the government basically agrees with the four points outlined in that section. However, we are of the position that with a number of new initiatives recently outlined by this government, we are already meeting those goals. Specifically, let's take a look at section 2(a), and I'm quoting:

To facilitate the right of the people of Alberta to participate and be heard in decisions affecting the environment and their common interest in a healthy and sustainable environment.

Well, Mr. Speaker, with the introduction of our new legislation, the right of the people to participate and to be heard will be enshrined. As a matter of fact, this government endorsed the concept of sustainable development in the February 1989 Speech from the Throne. The government has announced the formation of the natural resources conservation board specifically for this purpose: to give the people the opportunity to be heard through a formal process. The most recent Speech from the Throne announced the formation of a natural resources conservation board, a board that will create a level playing ground for all the participants who want to address the environmental worthiness of a project, specifically projects that are not related to the energy industry, because those projects, of course, are addressed through the well-established and well-respected Energy Resources Conservation Board.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out as well that all the initiatives suggested by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place will be addressed within the formation and the implementation of the natural resources conservation board. There will be intervenor funding. The proponents of projects will be required to fund those people who want to legitimately intervene, not people who want to intervene for purely political reasons. Intervenor funding will be properly and most appropriately adjudicated. There will be full opportunity for the people of Alberta to participate and be heard on environmental matters. This process, Mr. Speaker, will extend to not only pulp mills but dams that are being built to manage water, certain highway projects, perhaps municipal annexation projects: just a multitude of projects that in this day and age need to be examined from an environmental perspective.

As well, our new legislation will outline a new environmental impact assessment process based on the report of the EIA Task Force, released yesterday. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place just referred to that task force report and, as a matter of fact, said that he was pleased with, I believe, a number of the recommendations contained in that report. We will also take into consideration the report of the Alberta-Pacific review board panel and their suggestion as to how a new board, a natural resources conservation board, could be established and how it should operate. We will be taking into consideration the recommendations contained in a deputy minister's task force with respect to a new process for public involvement in environ-

mental impact assessments.

Mr. Speaker, now turning to section 2(b) of the proposed Bill: To recognize the right of the people of Alberta to an environment that is adequate for their health and well-being and sustainable into the future.

That, Mr. Speaker, is essentially the mission statement that drives Alberta Environment today, and I will quote to the House our mission statement. It was sent out to 25,000 people. I think now we have received some 8,000 responses. Yes, we've asked the people to reply on a single piece of recycled paper, to jot down their thoughts, not to tick off a multiple choice. I don't know if that's the kind of information that's coming back to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place, the kind that can be ticked off on a multiple-choice type of form. The kind of information that's coming back to me is well-thought-out information, information from well-meaning and good thinking Albertans who want to contribute to the environmental future and the environmental protection of this province. Eight thousand responses, Mr. Speaker, and we're doing computer extrapolations of those responses right now to put them together and to help this government form reasonable legislation that will take us not only through this decade but well into the next century.

Mr. Speaker, I will quote from the mission statement, the very key recommendation: to achieve "the protection, improvement and wise use of our environment now and into the future."

Mr. Speaker, before we deal with the current situation relative to Alberta Environment as it relates to Bill 201, I think we should look back and examine in detail what this government has accomplished in terms of environmental enhancement and protection in the past, because it's only through examination of past accomplishments that we can get a good handle on our approach to the environment today and into the future. I would like to remind the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place that this was the first provincial government in this country to establish a stand-alone Ministry of the Environment. It was established in 1971, long before other provinces were thinking about it. The first minister was the then hon. Bill Yurko.

We were the first province in this country to put in place something as simple and as elementary, so elementary that even the opposition could understand it and perhaps understand it today, as deposit for return on beverage containers. You know, there are some states where people are still allowed to throw their pop bottles and their beer bottles and their pop cans out the window because they have no program of that nature.

We were the first province in this country to put in place a state-of-the-art facility to do environmental research. It's at Vegreville, and the hon. member's friend from Vegreville, the representative for that particular area, should have told the hon. member about that facility, because then he would understand that some of the finest environmental research in the world is taking place at that centre: research into chlorinated organics, research into incineration, research into dioxin and furans.

Those who want to examine the history of the environmental achievements of this province might want to know, if they don't already know, that this is the only province in this country capable of handling hazardous waste. That was leadership. Other provinces are scrambling to find facilities and scrambling to find ways to treat hazardous waste with absolutely no success whatsoever. [interjections] Well, if the hon. member would take some time, Mr. Speaker, to visit the research centre at Vegreville and find out what things are all about, maybe he will learn a little bit about dioxin and furans, because some of the best research in the world is taking place at that centre. That

gives us an example of what this government has achieved in the past.

My only quarrel would be that while the opposition wants only an adequate environment, we know from our leadership role in the past that we can do a lot better than that. Section 2(c), Mr. Speaker:

To recognize the obligation so forth the Province of Alberta to conserve and maintain the resource so forth the Province for present and future generations.

Again, Mr. Speaker, our mission statement commits us to this principle. As well the Environment Council of Alberta, which is to advise the minister on matters of conservation as referred to in section 2(c), has recently been rejuvenated under a new chief executive officer. So that, in fact, is being done.

Finally, section 2(d):

To give a right of standing to any person to seek legal remedies in protecting and conserving the environment.

Well, Mr. Speaker, a number of recent decisions across the country have shown that citizens already have the legal right to seek environmental protection through the courts. Indeed, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place has reminded us of that on at least three or four occasions over the past week or so. So my point is that the expressed purpose or goals of this Act are already being achieved, more than being achieved.

Mr. Speaker, other members on the government side of the House will speak to other aspects of this Bill, but I would like to review some of the initiatives currently at work within Alberta Environment, simply to show that most of the issues raised in this Bill are already being addressed. You know, an outside reader of this Bill would think there are simply no mechanisms or agencies whereby the people of Alberta can have input into environmental decision-making, and that simply is not the case. We have, as I alluded to earlier, the Al-Pac recommendations – recommendations that came out of an experimental process, the first process of its kind in Canada, the most comprehensive and most complete environmental examination of a pulp mill project anywhere in this country, an examination of a pulp mill that stretched all the way from Edmonton, all the way up the Athabasca River including numerous communities along the river, through Lake Athabasca, up Slave Lake to the Great Slave Lake, and all the way up the Mackenzie River to the Arctic Ocean; a process that lasted some 27 days; a process that cost \$1.5 million; a process that provided intervenor funding to those people that wanted to challenge the findings of the proponent; a process that involved for the first time on the review panel representatives from the government of Alberta, the government of Canada, the government of the Northwest Territories, ordinary citizens; a process that concluded that yes, indeed, with respect to chlorinated organics there was a lot more work to be done; and a process that resulted in this government accepting the recommendations in keeping with our promise of being environmentally responsible, that unless a project was environmentally right, it wouldn't go ahead.

MR. TAYLOR: I'll shut down Carbondale.

MR. KLEIN: Well, we can shut down your toilet too if we want to. So, Mr. Speaker, on the basis of the Al-Pac recommendations we have put in place, as I said before in this House, a model. The recommendations of that report will indeed be used to put in place the new natural resources conservation board, and we will be paying very serious attention to those recommendations along with the recommendations of the Environmental Impact Assessment Task Force and the deputy minister's

committee.

I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, that we're putting in numerous processes for public participation on environmental matters. I mentioned the Environment Council of Alberta and getting that agency back on track. Of course, the natural resources conservation board has been mentioned numerous times. I would also like to mention our commitment to the Alberta round table on the environment and the economy, another forum to allow Albertans from a cross section of this province to come together in the spirit of reasonable debate on the environment, not the kind of politically motivated, emotional debate that we've been exposed to in the past that accomplishes absolutely nothing but a round table that can provide the forum for good, solid, well-thought-out debate on the environment and what the environmental agenda should be. I think that the new legislation in the future should not only bring together a number of laws and strengthen those laws, which that legislation will do, but should set down for Albertans an environmental agenda, an agenda that will take us through the '90s and into the next century. We hope that the Alberta round table on the environment and the economy will play a key role in developing that agenda and in monitoring that agenda.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, the information we have obtained through feedback as the result of our mission statement will be taken into consideration. We will be tabling in this House this spring a draft Bill. We'll be taking that Bill out to the public during the summer months and the fall of this year to get more public input on a face-to-face basis, and over the winter months we'll be drafting a new Bill, hopefully for final passage in the spring of 1991. But we're going to make sure that this Bill, which will enshrine a lot of the points that have been outlined in the hon. members' proposed Bill, will have come about not as the result of a political lie but as the result of public consultation and the input of Albertans. That's what's most important, because as I said before, we are setting for ourselves not only a set of new laws but an environmental agenda. So, Mr. Speaker, let me say that with all these initiatives, the people of Alberta have proper input into environmental decision-making and will have even greater input in the future as many of these initiatives come on stream.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude by saying simply that all of us in this House share the desire for environmental protection. On the government side we feel that Alberta has been a leader, and I've demonstrated that through some examples. We will continue to be a leader with many of the new initiatives that I have outlined to you today. On the New Democratic side of the House, of course, they feel that more can be done, but as I've said many times in the past, I don't happen to believe that environment needs to be solely a political issue. Some will try to make it so, and some will try to make it completely a political issue, but I disagree. I think the issue is far more important to make it the political and emotional issue that, unfortunately, it has become in some cases. We have the same vision for an environmentally protected Alberta, but I guess we disagree as to how we best go about achieving it. So in summary, it's not a bad Bill, Mr. Speaker, but we are already way ahead of what the hon. member is trying to accomplish. Nonetheless it is flattering to see the hon. member is at least trying to follow the lead of this government.

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

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to address Bill 201, the Alberta Environmental Rights Act, and I do that with mixed feelings. On the one hand, I believe that this Bill is certainly well intentioned. I think certainly it is based upon some principles which are very, very good and deserve to be supported. I am particularly impressed by its specific endorsement of a right for Albertans to a clean environment, and it gives Albertans, in the same breath, the right to test that right in the courts and to pursue that right elsewhere. I applaud this Bill's emphasis on public input and public hearing before certain boards that at this point do not include or involve themselves in the public hearing process. I applaud the Bill's effort to establish class actions, and I applaud the Bill's effort to address the issue of access to information.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I see that there are some weaknesses in this Bill which give me and my caucus colleagues some concern and which raise questions in our minds about the quality and effectiveness of this Bill. The first problem that I see relates to the role of the Environment Council of Alberta. This council has been established by the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place in previous legislation, his environmental impact assessment legislation, as playing a role in adjudicating environmental policy and regulations. That role was established in his attempt at environmental impact assessment legislation, and that role is re-established, in fact furthered, under this piece of legislation. I have a tremendous amount of difficulty with the confusion of roles that this piece of legislation and the environmental impact assessment legislation presented last session by the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place create. Experience with administrative tribunals indicates that there must be a separation between policy-making and the adjudicative role. In fact, this government, to its credit, has recently moved to split those two roles under what was originally the operation of the Alberta Securities Commission. The flaw in the role of the council as defined by the Member for Edmonton-Jasper-Place is carried over into this Bill and damages the effectiveness and the manner in which this Bill could work were it to be passed.

The Environment Council of Alberta is given a number of key roles in this Act. One is the review of information requests, and another is the review of decisions appealed to it, decisions that were made originally by the minister or certain boards under certain legislation which is listed in the schedule appended to this Bill. That role, defined in those two ways, amounts to an adjudicative role. It is a role that is in contravention of the policy-making and policy advisory capacity of the Environment Council of Alberta as it is currently structured, and it is a conflict in roles which, I believe, renders this Bill highly questionable.

A second concern I have with this Bill relates to two of the at least three processes of appealing decisions made by government or certain quasi-autonomous bodies or boards associated with government. I believe the appeal processes as outlined in this Bill suffer from redundancy and a lack of objectivity and for those two reasons would be, in many cases, doomed to failure. Why, I ask, would we insert in the appeals or review processes the need to take a government decision or lack of government decision back to the Minister of the Environment before that decision could be further appealed to the Environment Council of Alberta? Why is it that we would take certain decisions back to various boards, as defined in this Act, before those decisions

are appealed directly to this appeal board, the Environment Council of Alberta? Even if the Environment Council of Alberta were the board to which such decisions should be appealed – and I've disagreed with that – it's hard to understand why we would ask an Albertan to appeal first to the minister or to some other board a decision that should have been made properly in the first instance by that minister or by that board.

My point is this: the minister, the department, and the various boards defined in this Act should, by definition, operate to serve the public interest. If they don't, then the public should be able to approach the man and expect that they would respond to a public request. There need not be some kind of basis in this kind of legislation that that should occur. When it doesn't occur, then it shouldn't be that that decision would be appealed back to the body that's responsible for it not occurring; it should go immediately to a higher level. That level shouldn't be the Environment Council of Alberta; it should be, among other things, an environmental impact assessment board.

The Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place says that the task force report is a good report. The task force report is a good report. It runs directly in the face of his conception of how an environmental impact assessment process should work, because it establishes an independent board. That board should be one line of appeal on certain kinds of issues: a major project that hasn't been reviewed properly, where decisions haven't been made properly, where a member of the public of Alberta could appeal that decision or lack of decision to an environmental impact assessment board and say, "We want that board to do a proper assessment." It should be and it could be that a decision is appealed to the courts, and to this Bill's credit that provision is outlined. However, what concerns me about the emphasis placed on appeals to the courts is that that is extremely expensive, very intimidating for many people, and would lend itself to the appeal of major decisions.

What is missing in that concept is a more broadly based appeal mechanism, and that is why I and my caucus are proposing an environmental ombudsman Bill, which would give citizens of Alberta a much more readily accessible, much more flexible, much more objective and powerful mechanism, in many cases,

to review government decisions with respect to the environment or lack of government decision with respect to the environment. So we would see an appeals process not encumbered by board upon board and going back to the minister for yet another unnecessary step but instead an appeal process with three features: to the courts, yes, supplemented by appeal to an environmental ombudsman and supplemented in turn by an appeal to an environmental impact assessment board when the issue would dictate that that would be appropriate.

Finally, I and my caucus are concerned with the manner in which this Bill deals with access to information. Yes, Albertans require access to information legislation for environmental matters and for all matters that relate to government activities and mandate. To establish in this Bill a separate mechanism to achieve that just for environmental matters is highly cumbersome, would duplicate a bureaucracy – a bureaucracy that should be established once, under access to information legislation such as the one we have presented and will present again, and should be supervised by a properly appointed board of experts who would of course establish expertise in that area. Again, to have the Environment Council of Alberta undertake this role is to encumber it with a process and responsibility that simply is inconsistent with what that Environment Council of Alberta should do.

Mr. Speaker, I do whatever I'm supposed to do now: move that we adjourn debate.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, it is not proposed that the Assembly sit this evening.

[At 5:28 p.m. the House adjourned to Friday at 10 a.m.]

