

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, March 27, 1990 2:30 p.m.**

Date: 90/03/27

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

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

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

Amen.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to you and members of the Assembly His Excellency Alexei Rodionov, the Soviet ambassador to Canada. His Excellency has been ambassador to Canada since November of 1983 and has visited this province on a number of occasions in the past. His visit here is indeed timely in light of the province's increased efforts in recent months to pursue co-operative activities with the Soviet Union. A recently concluded memorandum of understanding between the province and the Russian republic along with the close ties that exist between Alberta and Ukraine serve as examples of the special relationship that Alberta enjoys with the Soviet Union. I would now ask that His Excellency be greeted with the normal warm welcome by the members of the Assembly.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to file with the Assembly today a document outlining Alberta's interest in the Soviet Union, with a current status report for the benefit of members of the Assembly and the people of Alberta.

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to table with the Assembly the annual report of the Attorney General for '87-88 and, hot off the press today, the annual report for '88-89.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, in your gallery today are three gentlemen I would like to introduce to you and members of this Assembly. The first individual is John Zaozirny. John is a former member of this Assembly, first elected in 1979 and re-elected in '82, and a former Minister of Energy. The other individual is Mr. Art Smith. Mr. Smith is one of Alberta's most distinguished citizens. He is a former Calgary alderman, a former member of this Assembly, a former Member of Parliament, and one of the prime forces behind the Calgary Olympic movement. Along with them, Mr. Speaker, is Mr. Bart Rambough. Mr. Rambough is chairman of the Canadian Petroleum Association. I should say that the three gentlemen here today are attending the Alberta Oil Sands Technology and Research Authority's Oil Sands 2000 convention. I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Glenmore.

MRS. MIROSH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly a former Member of the Legislative Assembly, a former Energy minister, a constituent of Calgary-Glenmore, and my friend, who is sitting in the public gallery, Mr. Bill Dickie.

MR. SPEAKER: There are more Energy ministers than . . .

The Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by Edmonton-Belmont.

REV. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and members of the Assembly 16 students from the Alberta Vocational Centre – they're secretarial students – together with their teacher Ms Kinley. They're in both galleries. I'd ask that they please now rise and receive the warm welcome of the members of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Belmont.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure today to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly a grade 10 student from M.E. LaZerte high school who is involved in the academic challenge program at that high school. While most students are on their reading week, he's involved in the mentorship program and is spending his reading week at the Legislature. I'd ask Bernie Soto to rise – he's in the public gallery – and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Calgary-North West.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Legislature some 31 students from a school in my constituency, St. Vincent de Paul. They're grade 6 students. They're attended here by their teacher Pat McMillan and two parents Mrs. Dyer and Mrs. Gaucher and also their bus driver Heinz Klouth. I'd ask them to rise. They're seated in the public gallery. I ask the members to give them the traditional warm welcome of the House.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, it's a real joy for me to join with the Hon. John Oldring, MLA for Red Deer-South, in welcoming 35 wonderful individuals from Red Deer here with us today. They are senior citizens and members of Downtown House in Red Deer. We'd ask them to stand and receive the warm applause of the Assembly.

head: **Oral Question Period**

Hazardous Waste Disposal Plant

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of the Environment. This government has been going around the province bragging about its new-found commitment to the environment at almost every opportunity. I'd remind you that this is the same government that wanted to build dams all over the province and build pulp mills without EIAs. But we heard about the environment in every other sentence of the Speech from the Throne, and we even got more environment rhetoric in expensive newspaper ads. Well, let's take a look at the fine print of the budget documents. We see that the so-called 10 percent

increase in expenditures on environment is nothing more than smoke and mirrors. If you take away the \$12 million increase in funding for the Swan Hills waste treatment facility, the Environment budget hasn't gone up at all, Mr. Speaker. I ask: how can this minister talk about increased action on the environment when every penny of the budget increase is eaten up by the money-losing Swan Hills facility?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't have to just talk about the environment. I think the action this government has taken relative to the environment more than speaks for itself.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't answer the question either with the record that they have on the environment. Just because you talk doesn't make it come about, Mr. Minister.

The government funding for Swan Hills is going up 48 percent. Compare that to a measly 1.5 percent increase in the budget for recycling, Mr. Speaker. I ask that minister: can he explain why this government is spending 30 times more on waste disposal than it spends on recycling and reducing waste in the first place?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, if the hon. Leader of the Opposition isn't aware, maybe I can make him aware of the Swan Hills facility. It is the only facility of its kind in Canada. We are the only province – the only province – in this country that has the capability of looking after hazardous wastes. Now, if the hon. member of the opposition doesn't think that cleaning up contaminated ground, cleaning up dangerous substances, is important, then his values are a lot different than mine.

MR. MARTIN: I think we're talking about cleaning up white elephants. Mr. Speaker, look at the Swan Hills plant that he's talking about. We've complained that it should have been a Crown corporation to begin with, because either they were going to cut costs or they would come back to the taxpayer for more money. We're having it both ways. I want to ask the minister that just bragged about this facility how much of this \$12 million for Swan Hills is going to pay Chem-Security Ltd. its guaranteed rate of return.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, this will come out quite appropriately in the estimates. The simple fact is that we have a facility in this province that doesn't exist anywhere else in the country. It was a facility that, to me, represented foresight and courage and commitment on the part of this government. It represents foresight, commitment, and courage on behalf of the citizens of Swan Hills, who overcame the not in my backyard syndrome to allow a world-class establishment to be built in that particular community. The estimates will come out during debate in the Public Accounts Committee, and I think I'd be willing to explain and defend to the nth degree the Swan Hills facility at that time.

MR. SPEAKER: Second main question, Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MARTIN: [Inaudible] public accounts, Mr. Speaker, but I think the minister better learn the rules.

I want to stay with the Minister of the Environment to talk about some other creative accounting. Most of that money going from Environment is going into Chem-Security's pocket. That's what the reality is.

Environment Expenditures

MR. MARTIN: To the same minister. I notice also that on page 22 of the Budget Address we have a nice little graph here which says that Alberta is leading the way in environmental expenditures in 1989-90. If you look at the graph, it looks like we're spending almost \$110 per capita. Now, we found this very interesting. I want to ask first a question. Does the Minister of the Environment still stand behind these figures?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I stand behind a budget that has been put in place that will allow this government and this ministry to protect and use wisely the environment now and into the future.

MR. MARTIN: Well, the minister is being very cautious here. I would be, too, if I had the Treasurer putting out the budget that he did.

If you look at this, Mr. Speaker, if this figure is multiplied by the Alberta 1989 population of 2.43 million, the government would have had to spend \$267 million on the environment in 1989-90. The actual forecast in the Budget Address is just under \$124 million, or about \$50 per capita. What is the minister's explanation for this gross discrepancy?

MR. KLEIN: It's all in the eyes of the beholder, Mr. Speaker. Very simply, I can say that Alberta has one of the highest expenditures for environmental protection and enhancement of any province in this country.

MR. MARTIN: Obviously, the minister isn't going to stand behind those figures. It's what we've been saying: this government does nothing but cook the books.

To the Deputy Premier. When is this government going to start telling the truth to Albertans?

MR. HORSMAN: We do tell the truth, but "there are none so deaf as those who will not hear," and that includes the Leader of the Opposition.

Alberta-Pacific Project Report

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, my questions are to the Minister of the Environment. After the Al-Pac hearings the Minister of the Environment said that an additional scientific review was not a backdoor through which the government could override the Al-Pac review panel process. He also said that it would be impossible to ignore some 8,000 pages of evidence, and finally said that the review was the most comprehensive in Canadian history. The Minister of Health after the review panel's conclusions said that certainly that decision can't be overridden. Yet the Premier has begun the process of discrediting the Al-Pac process based on, I believe, a simple assumption that if there are more who speak against than those who come forward and speak for an issue, there must be something out of whack; there must be something wrong. My first question to the minister is this. The Al-Pac lawyer's closing comments before the review panel said:

I think your recommendation, whatever it is, will have the greatest credibility because of the way you have carried out these hearings. Based on those clear statements, how can the government backtrack? How can the minister or the government backtrack from the position that the review panel has taken?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, there is no backtracking whatsoever. As a matter of fact, we are in the process now as a department and as a government of assessing the recommendations contained in the Al-Pac report. We're trying to select an independent consulting firm to examine the scientific evidence that was presented. We take very, very seriously the recommendations contained in the Al-Pac review panel's report, and we will do what is absolutely necessary to implement those recommendations that are reasonable. We will carry out a very thorough and diligent review of those recommendations and put into place those recommendations that are deemed to be proper.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, we're already in the process of putting in one of the recommendations from the Al-Pac report, and that is a recommendation to formalize the environmental impact assessment review process. If the hon. leader of the Liberal Party had been listening to the throne speech, he would have heard Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor announce that we are going to establish a natural resources conservation board to study and . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Thank you, hon. Minister. Let's save something for the supplementary.

Supplementary.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, the question is simple. Is the minister prepared to live up to the recommendations that were set out by the Al-Pac review panel process? Are you prepared to do that?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, obviously the hon. leader of the Liberal Party wasn't listening. He wasn't listening. I said that what we're going to do is undertake a diligent, thorough, honest review of the recommendations and, after that review, put in those recommendations that are deemed to be proper and reasonable. Now maybe he understands.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, it's clear that the government has started to weasel on this matter and has started to backtrack. The matter of the review panel was a joint process of the federal and provincial government, our provincial government. My question to the minister is this: do the federal government officials hold the same kind of views of this review process that now our government appears to hold?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, according to the hon. Mr. Bouchard, the federal Minister of the Environment, they are doing precisely what the province of Alberta has committed to do. If the hon. leader of the Liberal Party would listen, once again: the federal government, like the provincial government, is carrying out an honest, diligent, thorough review of the recommendations.

Meech Lake Accord Task Force

MR. SCHUMACHER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Premier. Can the Deputy Premier advise the Assembly of the composition of the task force on the Meech Lake accord agreed to by the western Premiers and when it will commence its work?

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, the task force has been established, as has been noted in a news conference by the western Premiers in the meeting in Vancouver. The meetings will take place here in Edmonton tomorrow starting at 2 o'clock

in the afternoon. The representatives from Alberta will be the new Deputy Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs, Oryssia Lennie, and Dr. Peter Meekison, the vice-president of the University of Alberta, a former Deputy Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs. They will be joined by representatives from the other four western provinces, all the most senior officials in intergovernmental affairs and attorney general departments from the other three provinces, all at the deputy minister level, and with other senior officials. As I say, those meetings will commence here in Edmonton tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

MR. SCHUMACHER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A supplementary question. Would the Deputy Premier advise the Assembly as to the terms of reference of this task force, what it's supposed to do for us? [interjections]

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that the NDP isn't particularly interested in knowing very much about the task force or the role it wants to undertake, from the sounds and the chatter that is coming from across the way. That's regrettable, because Meech Lake, the future of the Constitution of this country, should concern every member of this Assembly and every Canadian.

Mr. Speaker, the terms of reference are to examine all the proposals which are now being advanced by all the provinces, by the federal government, the most recent initiative of the Prime Minister, who today tabled in the House of Commons the proposal from New Brunswick for consideration and debate, and the public hearings through a special committee of the House of Commons. That will be reviewed, and the task force will be advising the four western Premiers. Very significant for all members to keep in mind is the fact that Manitoba has joined the other provinces in this joint endeavour to make sure that Canada and our future is not imperiled by a constitutional impasse. I hope the members of this Assembly will treat it as the serious matter it is.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Jasper Place.

Alberta-Pacific Project Report (continued)

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 2, close to a month ago, when the government announced its position on the Al-Pac review board report, there was a clear statement that the Al-Pac project could not proceed until further studies could verify its environmental safety. The clunker was the further review board of scientists we're talking about today. The only specific matter referred to by the Premier in relation to this is the matter of some people he met with who were upset because their strong support for the project was not reflected in the report. In so doing, the Premier has made it clear that his concern is a political one, not a scientific one at all. Therefore, there's a long shadow cast on the government's view towards this report. I would like the Minister of the Environment to state clearly today . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Question.

MR. McINNIS: Here it is. Has the government agreed to complete the studies on fish, fish habitat, water quality, and

timber harvesting referred to on pages 90 and 91 of the report before any pulp project is licensed on the Athabasca River?

MR. KLEIN: Obviously, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place wasn't listening to the answer I provided to the hon. leader of the Liberal Party. That is simply that we will carry out in accordance with the Al-Pac recommendations the diligent, proper review of the recommendations and put in place what is deemed to be proper at that particular time.

MR. McINNIS: No, no. A month ago the minister and the Premier said that they endorsed the specific recommendation. Yesterday the Premier said that when he gets together with the boys in his office to divvy up the province, he doesn't have to invite the minister because: "I'm perfectly capable of representing Mr. Klein. He works for me." So I want the minister today to stake his reputation on whether he'll give assurances to this House on the studies, specifically on fish habitat, water quality, and timber harvesting, referred to almost a month ago. Will he stake his reputation that those will be done scientifically before any pulp mills are built on the Athabasca River?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, it has been said in this House many times before that any future pulp mill projects will be subjected to an environmental impact assessment process. All the studies referred to by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place, I'm sure, would become part of that environmental impact assessment process. Surely he should know that. Surely he should know that, Mr. Speaker. That's precisely the kind of process we plan to follow. Obviously, the hon. member wasn't listening when I said that we're in the process now of formalizing and creating a level playing field for environmental impact assessment processes in the future. It's called the natural resources conservation board. In the future hopefully this board will be able to undertake reviews taking into account all the scientific evidence mentioned by the hon. member, in an assessment of a particular project.

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

Worksite Safety

MR. GIBEAULT: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Occupational Health and Safety. Over the last year we've had an explosion of accidents at unsafe worksites in this province, ranging from gassings at Weldwood to a death at Daishowa, poisonings at Alberta Recoveries & Rentals in Medicine Hat. Those are only the worst examples. So I'm going to ask this minister: can he tell us why, in light of that appalling situation, there is no increase in this budget for additional staff in the Occupational Health and Safety department? Why is that? Because you have no influence in the cabinet or what?

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Speaker, we have sufficient people on our staff to do the inspections throughout the province. I would take this question at committee stage when we do our budget and answer it fully.

MR. GIBEAULT: Mr. Speaker, if this minister can't or won't get any resources for his department, will he today make a commitment in the House to amend the Occupational Health

and Safety Act to provide for mandatory joint worksite health and safety committees across this province to try to do something about the appalling rate of accidents we're facing?

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to note that the only thing the NDP think of is police, police, police – force people to do all kinds of things. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MR. TRYNCHY: We have over 1,000 joint worksite committees in place in Alberta working very well, and all of them are voluntary. That's the way we want to see them go, to continue with a voluntary system and not police everybody to the extent that they suggest.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Procter & Gamble Pulp Mill Emissions

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Between July and August of 1988 Procter & Gamble was permitted to exceed effluent limits over 30 times. Under the Clean Water Act the Department of the Environment is required to authorize such discharges by one of two formal, legal mechanisms: a control order or a certificate of variance. In this case neither was issued. To the Minister of the Environment. Will he please explain why his department would not follow its own formal legislative procedures in authorizing Procter & Gamble's discharge overlimits?

MR. TAYLOR: Obviously, he didn't listen.

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, obviously the hon. member didn't listen, nor did he research *Hansard*. Had he researched *Hansard*, he wouldn't be asking the question that he's asking today, because I responded to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place some time ago that I was going to undertake a full and complete investigation of this particular matter. When that investigation is complete, I'll be glad to share the results of that investigation with the members of this Legislative Assembly.

MR. MITCHELL: We've already investigated it, and his department and Procter & Gamble confirm that particular fact.

MR. SPEAKER: Then why ask the question, hon. member?

MR. MITCHELL: Is it not the case – and perhaps he could check this in his investigation – that by failing to issue these two approvals, the department did not have to issue the press release which as a matter of standard practice accompanies these approvals, thereby avoiding the awkward publicity that would have arisen four months before the announcement of the Alberta-Pacific pulp mill project?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm impressed. I'm really impressed. I knew that the Liberal caucus had within its midst a bevy of lawyers. I didn't know they also had a bevy of scientists.

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

Whitemud Drive Construction

MR. GESELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The TV newscast yesterday alleged that provincial funding may be reduced for the Whitemud and Calgary Trail interchange. It also alleged that some of the provincial priorities were somewhat different than the city of Edmonton priorities. In response to a question in the last session of this Legislature the minister responded that alleviation of the safety concerns at the 23rd Avenue and Highway 14 intersection could be achieved through the eastward extension of the Whitemud freeway. That extension is very critical and important to the constituents in Clover Bar. Would the Minister of Transportation and Utilities indicate if there have been cuts in grant funding to the city of Edmonton that may preclude or delay the construction of this extension?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, no cuts have been provided either by way of the city of Edmonton or any of the cities involved in the urban transportation program. It's \$65 per capita. It's \$5 per capita for the safe streets program, and then we have the maintenance program, the senior citizen program – I've got to get the other ones here for you – public transit operating, primary highway maintenance, primary highway connector, and of course the basic capital grant program.

In relation to that particular story, it was interesting. I spent about three minutes with the CBC yesterday doing an interview, and they used the one word that we had at the end, and it was "garbage," properly right for the question that was asked at the time but it didn't give the lead-in to it. So I may just do that right now. The city has suggested to us that they would like some more money for that particular interchange, the Calgary/Whitemud interchange. They can use all of the basic capital grant if they so choose, and this year it'll come to almost \$38 million. I might add that no dollars, no special funding has been provided for the Whitemud from start to finish over the last 10 years regardless of who was the MLA, who was the Premier, who was the minister, or what. It has all been done by the basic capital grant program and will continue to be.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Clover Bar.

MR. GESELL: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There were some indications given in answers to questions last session about the timing of that extension. Could I now ask the minister: what is the timing for completion of the extension of Whitemud Drive to Highway 14?

MR. ADAIR: The best answer I can give the hon. member, Mr. Speaker, is that that decision will be the city of Edmonton's up to the edge of the boundary, and I might say that they're also working on the Calgary/Whitemud interchange right now on approval that was given by us through the basic capital grant program. My understanding is that they'll be doing some of the design work on that, and it is probably due to go into construction about 1994 at the present suggestion from the city of Edmonton.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Centre.

Long-term Care Fees

REV. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government continues to want to increase flat regressive health taxes on

Albertans in just about every devious way they can get away with under the Canada Health Act. Now we have the hypocrisy of the Treasurer saying Thursday night that in fact they were going to be kind and benevolent to seniors and exempt them from paying this over \$400 a year in medicare taxes. Then yesterday the Minister of Health pulled a full \$730 out of the pockets of seniors who are resident in nursing homes and auxiliary hospitals in the province. I want to ask the Minister of Health if she can set the record straight and tell Albertans that in fact seniors have paid their fair share of taxes to this province and that she is prepared now to rescind this regressive tax, which pulls \$2 million out of the pockets of the frail elderly in the province.

MRS. BETKOWSKI: No, Mr. Speaker, I'm not prepared to rescind something that's been committed to in our budget, and I think it's very important to put the long-term care accommodation rates in the context of what we are improving in the level of an additional \$24 million to long-term care in our province. Albertans, primarily seniors who are in long-term care, will remain by far those with the highest disposable income in Canada. We have income support programs for those who aren't seniors. We have, as I said yesterday, ensured that the program is affordable. We are charging a reasonable rate of \$16 a day for room and board in long-term care facilities. Certainly I believe that it's an appropriate charge and well below that charged in other provinces in Canada.

REV. ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, Albertans have just had enough of a government that puts money into the pockets of Pocklington and GSR and takes money out of the pockets of the elderly in nursing homes in this province. It's time for a change to this. So will the Minister of Health, who claims to care so much about seniors and their care in this province, commit to come with me, for instance, to the Glamorgan nursing home in Calgary, talk to the residents and staff, and hear firsthand how they feel about their care and how they feel about \$730 being pulled out of their pockets?

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, I have been around this province a great deal and talked to many people who are not only senior citizens but the 2.2 million Albertans who are very proud of the health care system that exists in this province. Certainly part of the commission that was called by our Premier to look at the health needs of Albertans looked at our health system from its broadest spectrum base as opposed to isolating projects out of that health care system. I believe all Albertans are proud of our system. Certainly I have talked to a lot of senior citizens, but I've also talked to people in our mental health clinics; I've talked to people in active care. To isolate one part of our health system at the expense of another is not, I think, what Albertans want us to do as their government.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Whitemud.

Whitemud Drive Construction

(continued)

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have confirmed that the city of Edmonton Transportation Department's highest priority under the primary highway program is the completion of the Whitemud Drive improvements at Calgary Trail to relieve the increasing bottlenecks, the worst bottleneck in this city. Mr. Speaker, despite two written requests by city officials and a

preference stated by city council, the provincial department of transportation has insisted on funding the Yellowhead outer ring road interchange instead of the Whitemud/Calgary Trail project under the primary highways program, which would see this bottleneck eliminated in two years instead of five. My question, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Transportation and Utilities. Why is the minister not prepared to allow the city of Edmonton to determine its own transportation priorities?

MR. ADAIR: Thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to suggest that a couple of people sitting over on that particular side had the opportunity when they were alderman and mayor to start that particular one.

AN HON. MEMBER: A trio.

MR. ADAIR: Yes, three of them.

AN HON. MEMBER: Wynken, Blynken, and Nod right there.

MR. ADAIR: Wynken, Blynken, and Nod. I didn't mean to wake you up.

AN HON. MEMBER: Just answer the question.

MR. ADAIR: He must be having some gas pains right now.

Mr. Speaker, there is no way that this government is interfering with the decision-making of the city of Edmonton relative to their road priorities within the city boundaries. As I repeated just a moment ago, they will be receiving very shortly \$37,951,680 for the basic capital grant. They can use it all for the Calgary interchange if they so choose, or they can use it, as they have suggested, to do their LRT and then see what maybe they can get from other programs that may be available: community safe streets, \$2.9 million; primary highway maintenance – it's not part of it – \$1.19 million; public transit operating, \$6.4 million. The city of Edmonton makes the decision on anything that is not ring road or continuous corridor, and if they happen to be ring road or continuous corridor, Mr. Speaker, they can apply for additional dollars under the programs we have. If it is not, then they must make the decision to use the basic capital grant, and they have. We have approved it. They are working out there right now.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I made it very clear that I was talking about the primary highways program. Preference was given to the Yellowhead over the Whitemud. Does the minister determine his transportation budget by the way ridings vote?

MR. ADAIR: No, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Wainwright, followed by Edmonton-Highlands.

Drought Assistance

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, and it's concerning the serious farm income situation and in particular the ongoing drought problem in Saskatchewan and southeastern Alberta. There have been statements by the federal government that they have set money aside, over and above crop insurance, to help the seriously affected areas in western Canada. This would only be available

through a joint program with the provinces. Has the minister had any discussion with other provinces or the federal government regarding a workable joint program?

MR. FOX: Farmers are enthusiastic about the spring. He told me that last time.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, I would prefer to answer this one, as opposed to my ag critic from Vegreville.

I can assure the hon. Member for Wainwright that I have been in discussions with the Hon. Don Mazankowski. He has assured me that there will be no program that is province specific. In other words, if there is any response, it will be to all the farmers across western Canada that have suffered from the same circumstances.

The Hon. Shirley McClellan and I had meetings yesterday in Regina with Premier Grant Devine, the minister of agriculture from that province; his associate minister, Harold Martens; and the Minister of Agriculture from Manitoba, Glen Findlay. We did reach a consensus that there were three areas that the federal – and I stress "federal" – government should be responding to the agricultural community in. One, the trade wars, particularly the battles between the Treasurer of the U.S.A. and the European common community that have kept grain prices depressed, we feel is an area that should be responded to at the federal level. Number two, the high interest rate policy in this country, which is leading to an artificially high dollar and hence is costing the agricultural provinces that are in exporting positions a double whammy – first of all, on the costs of their money and, secondly, the reduced return on their product – we feel is a federal policy and should be addressed by the federal government. Thirdly, we agreed that the drought problem is caused by a shortfall in the crop insurance program and hence should be responded to.

We will be meeting with the federal minister and other provincial ministers in Ottawa later on this week, and we will be presenting that case to them.

MR. FISCHER: Thank you.

Given that Alberta's drought area is relatively small compared to the total area, can the minister assure us that we will equal other provinces' participation in the cost sharing?

MR. ISLEY: I think it would be fair to say, Mr. Speaker, that if a program is developed, Alberta producers will participate in it to their relative degree of hurt.

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

Edmonton Northlands' Lottery Funding

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By way of statute Edmonton Northlands is entitled to an annual grant out of lottery funds generated in Alberta, which this year comes to \$5 million. That's on top of the approximately \$1.6 million Northlands gets from other provincial government departments. Now, for the last few years Northlands has been buying up properties in the communities adjacent to the Northlands property, and now they propose to mow down those houses, needed housing stock, in order to put up a parking lot. So I'd

like to ask the minister responsible for lotteries if he's prepared to intervene and tell Northlands that if they don't decide to put up a second tier on their own parking lot, for which they already charge money, he's going to cut the lottery funding off to them and not allow them to destroy needed housing.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, the Northlands board in Edmonton, as the Calgary Stampede board in Calgary, is made up of volunteers that function within those communities, and they both have representatives appointed by municipal levels of government. It is correct that on an annual basis both of these exhibition associations have been receiving a substantial amount of funding annually from the province of Alberta. But it's also not so that the dollars that have been received by Edmonton Northlands in this case are geared or dedicated to a specific purpose. Those decisions that are made by Edmonton Northlands, in much the same way that they are made by the Calgary Stampede board in Calgary, are made essentially for debt retirement on commitments already made, rather than the utilization of these funds for newly acquired or newly initiated projects. So it would seem to me, Mr. Speaker, that the appropriate mechanism is, first of all, clarification for the member in terms of what is the reality today, and I'm sure that Edmonton Northlands will be very, very pleased to sit down and talk to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands about exactly what it is they are doing.

MS BARRETT: Well, Mr. Speaker, their present plan is to destroy two communities to put up a parking lot. If the minister for lotteries won't do anything about it, perhaps the minister responsible for housing will speak up for that important portfolio. He knows the housing shortage that people in Edmonton are facing. Will he lobby the minister to cut off the funds to Northlands if they proceed to use those funds to put up a parking lot in place of existing housing?

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, the hon. House leader for the New Democratic Party is asking me to bring the strong arm of the law into this case. What I've learned in politics over the years is that socialists often parade around with a lot of compassion at heart, but you give them power and they want to cut your throat.

I would have to say that this matter is a local concern, and there is a group of responsible people in this city that have been given the authority to negotiate and consider the matter. I think we should trust in that kind of local consideration.

Child Welfare Report

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, the Department of Family and Social Services has just been served with another glaring piece of evidence proving that the system of child welfare in our province is not working adequately. Since 1984 this government has been forced to initiate several inquiries following tragic suicides of native youths placed in the care of the Minister of Family and Social Services. Judge White, Dr. Thomlison, and Judge Porter all called for serious changes to the child welfare system, recommendations which we find now repeated in the Ombudsman's report. My question is to the Minister of Family and Social Services. All these reports have stressed the need for mandatory native culture awareness training for workers as well as that stressed in the department's own manual. Our estimate is that 2,100 social workers, psychologists, and child welfare

counselors need and should have this training. Can the minister now tell the House: have these workers been given this training, and how many of them have passed the course?

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, the member makes reference to a number of reports that this government has received over the years. I want to say that I've appreciated the input of Dr. Thomlison and Mr. Porter and that this government has acted very swiftly in responding to the recommendations in those reports and has taken that advice very seriously. I think it's fair to say that it has led to substantive improvements in the way we deliver services to children in need here in this province.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, that certainly is not the impression out in the public as to the response from the department.

My second question to the minister, then, is: will the minister undertake right now to make a response in this House to the Ombudsman's recommendations as well as those of Judge Porter, Judge White, and Dr. Thomlison?

MR. OLDRING: Well, I've already in part addressed the response to the Thomlison report and the Porter report. As it relates to the Ombudsman's report, again I would want to say that I really appreciate the time and effort the Ombudsman put into bringing forward 15 recommendations to my department. I received those recently, as you know, Mr. Speaker. They were announced yesterday. I would want to assure the House that I intend to act swiftly on those recommendations. There are excellent recommendations there. In fact, I should point out that in part some of these recommendations are somewhat dated. I think the member knows that this is a result of occurrences that date back to 1988. As I've had a chance to have a quick look at those recommendations, my initial observations are that we indeed as a department have already taken steps to address the majority of the recommendations that are there, but I intend to go through those recommendations carefully and very closely. As I say, we will act very swiftly on these recommendations.

Community Program Funding

MRS. B. LAING: My question is for the Hon. Ken Kowalski, minister responsible for lotteries. Mr. Minister, some Calgary community groups, including one in Calgary-Bow, which is my own constituency, have used the community facility enhancement program grants as matching funds in their applications for the CRC grants, which are administered by the city of Calgary. They were informed last Friday that they'll not be able to use these CFEP dollars as the matching portion for the application. It is their understanding that this has been allowed in the past. Would the minister please tell this Assembly if there has been a change in the policy governing these grants?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I'll accept the question as the Acting Minister of Recreation and Parks. As long ago as 1988 the then Minister of Recreation and Parks clearly stated with respect to guidelines for the CRC program, or the community recreation/cultural program, that funds derived from one government-initiated program could not be matched by funds derived from another government-initiated program to complete a program. That was the policy that was introduced with respect to the community facility enhancement program in the fall of 1988 and has been in place since that time. It appears, however,

that during the summer of 1989 in at least one part of this province of Alberta there was some confusion that may have come out of administrative sectors in the Department of Recreation and Parks which has suggested that, in fact, you could use funds derived from one government-initiated program to match funds received from another government-initiated program. Such is not the case. In recent weeks correspondence emanated out of the Department of Recreation and Parks to clarify that. This matter, it appears, Mr. Speaker, has only been existing in one part of Calgary for a number of months.

MRS. B. LAING: Could the minister please tell this Assembly, then, if there's any course of action that these groups could follow so that these very important community projects are not lost?

MR. KOWALSKI: It should be noted, Mr. Speaker, that in the case of the groups in Calgary that have made application to the city of Calgary for CRC funding – and these are funds, of course, provided by the province of Alberta – the amount of dollars that are in place are very substantial in all cases. It would seem to me that if there has been confusion – and we are dealing with volunteers – that the most appropriate action would be for, in fact, these groups to deal with their MLAs and to see if an innovative solution can be found to deal with the particular concerns before them all. The last thing in the world we want to do is discourage and frustrate volunteers who've worked very hard.

MR. SPEAKER: The time for question period has expired. Might we have unanimous consent to allow the Solicitor General to make reply for information submitted yesterday?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried. Thank you.
Solicitor General.

Impaired Driving Programs

MR. FOWLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the House. In question period yesterday the hon. members for Calgary-Millican and Edmonton-Whitemud raised the fact that the estimates indicated that the impaired driving program initiatives had been reduced by \$280,000. In my general glee and joy to be able to talk about it, I transposed some figures and indicated that that would result in a \$280,000 enhancement and improvement on programs. However, the amount of money that was taken out of the capital side of the impaired driving programs was in fact \$500,000, which leaves a net amount of \$220,000 to improve those programs. I think this is indicative of this government's seriousness in continuing the attack on impaired driving.*

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Millican. Nothing?
Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Solicitor General. Mr. Minister, in terms of the proportion of revenues being received from the sale of liquor products in the province, is not the amount of dollars being spent to curtail impaired driving being reduced?

MR. FOWLER: Yes, Mr. Speaker, it is, and the same applies to the amount of tax being collected and to the amount of motor vehicle licence being collected and, hopefully, to the amount in respect of the overall oil revenues being collected. There's really no connection between the revenues generated from the Alberta Liquor Control Board and the amount spent on impaired driving.

head: Orders of the Day

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried. Thank you.
The Member for Bow Valley.

head: Introduction of Special Guests (reversion)

MR. MUSGROVE: Mr. Speaker, I just noticed that some members of the county of Newell council entered the members' gallery while question period was on. I'd like to introduce them. There's Leroy Nelson, Pete Wallace, Des James, Margaret Douglas, Linda Henderson, Kay Connors, and Kathy Bulger. Would they stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: Written Questions

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I move that all written questions appearing on the Order Paper, except 175, 176, 189, 209, 210, 214, and 220, stand and retain their places on the Order Paper.

[Motion carried]

175. Mr. Chumir asked the government the following question:

- (1) How much did the government spend on public opinion polling during the 1988-89 fiscal year?
- (2) How much did each department spend on public opinion polling during the 1988-89 fiscal year?

MR. SPEAKER: For the government, yes or no.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, the government will not be accepting question 175.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

176. Mr. Bruseker asked the government the following question:

- (1) What was the total cost of producing the 1989-90 edition of Alberta Agriculture's A Child's Guide to Farm Safety and the related materials?
- (2) What was the total amount of the financial support received by the government from TransAlta Utilities Corporation and Alberta Power Limited for the 1989 edition of Alberta Agriculture's A Child's Guide to Farm Safety?
- (3) How many copies of the safety guide were produced?
- (4) How many copies of the two puzzles included with the safety guide were produced?

*see page 266, left col., para. 4

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Associate Minister of Agriculture the government says no.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

189. Mrs. Hewes asked the government the following question:

- (1) What is the number and location of government mental health workers working in rural communities, with a breakdown by profession?
- (2) What is the government's policy as to the required number of mental health specialists per capita?

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the hon. Minister of Health the government would accept that question.

209. Mr. Taylor asked the government the following question: What was the total cost to the government for the luncheon it hosted at the convention of the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties in Edmonton on November 16, 1989?

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I accept question 209 and table the answer therefor.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

210. Mr. Taylor asked the government the following question: What was the cost of the reception held by the Minister and Associate Minister of Agriculture in Ottawa for Albertans attending Agriculture Canada's conference for Canada's agrifood industry at the Westin Hotel on the evening of December 11, 1989?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, I accept question 210 and table the response.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

214. Mr. Taylor asked the government the following question:

- (1) What is the current annual salary of Brian Downey, enhancement co-ordinator for the Alberta Hail and Crop Insurance Corporation?
- (2) What was the last annual salary of the previous enhancement co-ordinator for the Alberta Hail and Crop Insurance Corporation and for what year was that paid?

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the hon. Associate Minister of Agriculture the answer is no.

220. Mrs. Hewes asked the government the following question: How much was paid by the province for medical services rendered to Albertans in other provinces, and of the total, what was the amount paid for each main classification of service or treatment for the fiscal years ended:

- (1) March 31, 1986,
- (2) March 31, 1987,
- (3) March 31, 1988, and
- (4) March 31, 1989?

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the hon. Minister of Health the government would be pleased to accept that question.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

head: **Motions for Returns**

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I move that all motions for returns appearing on today's Order Paper, except 151, 152, 155, 160, 173, and 213, stand and retain their places on the Order Paper.

[Motion carried]

151. Mr. Taylor moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a map of all fibre-optic lines outside the cities in Alberta that have been installed to date by Alberta Government Telephones and a map showing the fibre-optic lines proposed for installation in the next 10 years.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I really don't see any problem or why they'd hold back here, because the fibre-optic lines even in the hottest part of the . . .

MRS. HEWES: Just move the motion.

MR. TAYLOR: Oh, I'm sorry. I was going to speak to . . . I was a little p u z z l e d . [interjection] Oh, I see.

I would like to move Motion 151 as it stands on the Order Paper.

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, the government has to reject this particular motion. We are entering really into a new era in telecommunications, certainly one of greater competition, and one of the aspects of the motion, I think, would unfairly disadvantage AGT from the standpoint of a competitive atmosphere in telecommunications. As well, I think it could severely compromise the security position.

I can advise the hon. member that AGT has installed approximately 2,500 kilometres of fibre cable connecting switching centres, and they will of course be placing further lines, additional fibre, in some portions of the distribution loop as, of course, economics and the actual technology justify in the future.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, this is . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Westlock-Sturgeon, closing debate.

MR. TAYLOR: Can I speak?

MR. SPEAKER: You're closing debate, hon. member. Westlock-Sturgeon, closing debate. Thank you. Which one of you is standing?

MR. MITCHELL: I'm standing. Isn't that obvious?

MR. TAYLOR: He's standing on the chair, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Perhaps hon. members will give some care to this complicated process, because the Chair did recognize Westlock-Sturgeon. We'll make the exception, Edmonton-Meadowlark, but not in future.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I stand to speak in favour of this motion. It just seems to me that it's a very obvious and easy request to fulfill. It is interesting to me that the minister would argue against providing this information on the basis of competition. I'd only have to ask the questions: one, who is it that Alberta Government Telephones competes with; and two, in the absence of an answer other than the obvious – that is, with no one – there must be another answer, and that is that clearly this government is considering the sale of AGT. If that is the case, then a broad, public understanding of where fibre-optic cables exist is extremely important to the public's ability to assess whether or not rural Albertans will be serviced properly under some other fiscal, financial ownership arrangement for AGT other than what exists currently. His argument, therefore, Mr. Speaker, doesn't diminish the importance or the need for this information to be public. Quite the contrary. It enhances the importance and the need for that information to be public. Therefore, I would urge all members of this House to vote in favour of this motion.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, summation.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I did not want to rush to my feet in case there was a horde of other speakers that wanted to descend on the minister for his rather improper decision here.

It's rather difficult, Mr. Speaker, to understand, outside of maybe a Pavlovian commitment to secrecy that these ministers exhibit when you ask them anything from their birth date to anything that should be public knowledge. I cannot understand – and if it was anyplace else, it would be hilarious – why someone would hold back a map. Now I am suspicious. Could it be, Mr. Speaker, that after all the sanctimonious psalm singing that this government has done here about what they're doing to help the rural areas – and the rural areas cannot develop unless they have proper communications, because in the 20th and 21st centuries, arteries of commerce will be the electronic arteries just as rivers were maybe a hundred years ago, and they will control how development goes in this province. Is it possible, Mr. Speaker, that this minister is hiding the fact that fibre-optic lines are not out through the rural areas, that rural development is nothing but a hollow sham without fibre-optic lines, and all he has, possibly, is a few fibre-optic lines between the main cores of Edmonton and Calgary?

I can see no other reason why he would huddle in secrecy behind his bunker, behind an organization that owes nearly a billion dollars of taxpayers' money, and refuse to tell the taxpayers what they were doing with that money, when one of the most important ways of developing the rural economy is fibre-optic lines. Mr. Speaker, it's unbelievable, and it's something that's really going to be interesting. It'll go down in *Hansard*, I think, for the next 25 to 30 years as the ridiculous suppression of information about what's being done with the taxpayers' dollars.

[Motion lost]

152. Mr. McEachern moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of the report prepared by Dominion Securities Inc., commonly called the Alexander report, regarding the privatization of Alberta Government Telephones.

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, it's like déjà vu, this matter having appeared on the Order Paper last year, and again the government would reject the motion. The motion refers to "the report." I'm not sure that, indeed, "the report" even exists. It may be that they have received certain advice from Dominion Securities – that is, AGT – directly under contract with AGT, but it may be an ongoing thing from the standpoint of that advice and that consulting service. It is not a government doc or bit of paper. It belongs to AGT as a Crown corporation, and even if it were considered in any way to be a government paper or a document, I would submit that it would be exempt pursuant to *Beauchesne* 446(2)(a), being "advice provided for the use of the government."

MR. FOX: Well, I appreciate the citation given by the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications. I guess he might make the case that he could not be compelled by the Chair to table such a document, but what we're dealing with here is a matter of principle and a matter of propriety. We did indeed deal with this motion for a return, a similar one, last year, and the minister tried to make the same specious, semantic arguments about whether or not "the report" – and whether it was prepared by Dominion Securities or the former Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, Mr. Keith Alexander. Those are all beside the point, Mr. Speaker. The essence of the issue here is with regards to the government's plans to privatize Alberta Government Telephones.

I'd have to say it's sort of the worst kept secret that has come along in a long time. It should be no surprise to Albertans that a government with a philosophical bent of the Lougheed leftovers would seek to privatize whatever assets of the province they can get their hands on to cover the depth of the fiscal mismanagement and bungling that is the record of the Premier and the Provincial Treasurer who, in only four years in power, only four years with their hands on the levers of government, have built up a total debt in excess of \$10 billion. So it's clear they want to try and privatize AGT, if they can, to try and soften the impact of that deficit, and I really think it's an example of this government's, you know, sort of putting their philosophy before common sense that would compel them to do that. It's really a case of short-term gain and long-term pain as far as we're concerned.

It doesn't make any sense for the government to try and privatize an income generating asset of the province. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, anyone with basic business experience would understand that if you take that approach too many times towards balancing the books, pretty soon you have nothing left to generate income. It's like a farmer trying to settle his account with the bank and selling a quarter section this year to do it and a quarter section next year to do it. Pretty soon he's not farming anymore. I submit that if the government wants to pursue that tack, pretty soon they won't be providing any service to the people of Alberta anymore.

All we're trying to do is get the document out on the table so we can discuss it and have an open public debate. We all know that AGT was spooked enough by references made by members of the government to their plans to privatize AGT that last week they had installed in AGT offices all over the province of Alberta little speaker systems so that the president or chief executive officer – whatever he may be called – of AGT could make a speech to the employees on Friday at 2 or 3 in the afternoon, explaining whatever fate this government wanted to hand them as a result of the Treasurer's statements in the

budget. Evidently the government backed down, and we've got this opportunity again today to challenge them on their agenda: get it out in the open; let's have an open, public debate on whether or not privatization in general is an appropriate way to try and balance the books, whether service can be provided to Albertans through that kind of limited agenda, and debate the specifics of Alberta Government Telephones.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, as a rural MLA I have great concerns about what might be in that report that might lead this government to feel that privatization is an appropriate thing, because there are a number of services that AGT has provided over the years to rural Albertans that have fallen into their mandate. That mandate is to provide service to Albertans and to act as an instrument of provincial development and to do that in the most cost-effective, efficient manner possible. The bottom line has not always been to generate a profit for the shareholders, which I submit is the sole mandate of a private corporation. But if this company is to be privatized, I submit that rural Albertans would not be able to enjoy programs like extended flat rate calling, which enables people in one exchange to have toll-free access to neighbouring exchanges. It makes it easier to conduct business and cope with the kind of, I guess, rural depopulation that has come about as a result of a number of other policies of this Conservative government. I could refer to the individual line service program, which is, I guess, another good idea that the New Democrat Official Opposition suggested to the government and they took us up on. It's just about completed: another year, perhaps a year and half, to provide individual line service – private line service, if you will, Mr. Speaker – to 100,000 rural telephone subscribers. Now, that program would not be possible were AGT a privatized corporation, out there to make a buck at any cost, a service-be-damned kind of an operation.

I think the government needs to be challenged on this agenda. Alberta Government Telephones is a public utility that has provided good service to Albertans over the years. They've certainly been on the leading edge of technology for some time. They provide employment for a lot of Albertans. I think the people of Alberta are very proud of their telephone company and want to see that entity maintained in the future as a vibrant, forward-looking Crown corporation that can provide service to Albertans. And if they happen to be so fortunate as to make money over and above their expenses based on their reasonable rates, then that money is returned to the people of the province of Alberta and enables us to spend it in other ways, Mr. Speaker. So I think the government needs to be challenged on this agenda.

We've been trying to flush them out of the bushes, if you will, and get them to engage the Official Opposition in a debate. I guess what the hon. Member for Edmonton-Kingsway is asking here is that a return be issued to provide this document so we can at least see – give the government the benefit of the doubt – what sort of misinformation they're basing their wrongheaded conclusions that AGT ought to be privatized on. That would give us an opportunity, perhaps, to be a little more sensitive in debate with them and to understand what would lead them to arrive at that conclusion.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, the minister has made his statement that he again will turn down this motion for a return, but I do recognize that there are some members of his caucus who represent rural areas and who probably share the same concern that I do for adequate telephone service. The Member for Lloydminster shakes his head. I'm sure if you thought about it,

Member for Lloydminster, you would have a concern for telephone service for rural Albertans and want to make sure that the quality of that service is maintained in the long term. Perhaps through the course of debate here this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, some members of the minister's caucus would be persuaded to join with the opposition and insist that an order of the Assembly be issued for the return of that document.

Let's be clear what we're talking about: a document prepared by a former member of the Conservative government, Mr. Keith Alexander, the Premier's golfing buddy, with regard to the privatization of AGT. Now, whether you call the document one thing or another, the fact is, a document exists. We'd like to see a copy of it, the people of Alberta want to see a copy of it, and we're giving the government a chance to be open and up front with the people of Alberta and provide that to us. I'd like to hear some better reasons than the semantic kind of arguments the minister has used, that we might have not used the right word in making this request to him.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-North West.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would stand in support of this motion for a return. I think many of the arguments have been dealt with already by the Member for Vegreville, but I think there are a few things we should note.

Alberta Government Telephones is a service which is used probably by almost one hundred percent of the population of the province of Alberta. If people don't have a telephone in their home, they tend to use one at some point in time in the course of their daily lives, so it is an issue which touches virtually everyone in the province either directly or indirectly. For that reason I think that if the government is going to be making a decision regarding a possible privatization – and the Treasurer has been talking about doing a privatization process for a number of years now – it behooves the government to provide the information so not only the government members but opposition members and, in fact, all Albertans can make a decision based upon as much information as possible.

Now, whether the information in the Alexander report or Dominion Securities report or whatever you want to call it, is accurate or inaccurate remains to be seen. I must confess that I am a little disappointed that the minister did not choose to address my motion that I have on the Order Paper, Motion 202, a motion for a return dealing with a similar kind of thing. But I think we need the information . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, order please. Let's keep our references specific to this particular motion for a return. Thank you very much.

MR. BRUSEKER: I think the request is a fairly straightforward request. I think to argue about the name of the document is splitting hairs and is arguing semantics. What the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway is asking for is some information that he believes exists. If the name is different than what is presented here, I would hope the minister would overlook a minor difference that may, in fact, exist there and provide the document. I think that it serves only in the best interests of this government and in the best interests of the people to provide the documents. So I hope that he will overlook the smoke screen of this citation from *Beauchesne* that was provided, and provide this document for us to have a look at.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Mountain View has disappeared. Okay. Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, found the citation from *Beauchesne* interesting. I think all members can learn from our parliamentary forms and traditions, and it will help educate us as we proceed through these debates during the course of this session. But I do want to remind the minister and all members that the purpose of *Beauchesne's* standing orders is to decide which questions shall be before the Assembly. They're not to protect a secret of government particularly. So if the minister wants to argue that there's reason for this report not to be made public, I think he should do it on his own hook and leave Mr. *Beauchesne* out of it, even though he probably is beyond caring about such matters.

MR. SPEAKER: That's inappropriate, hon. member.

AN HON. MEMBER: He meant *Beauchesne*.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. *Beauchesne*.

The minister says that this report is not to be made public because it provides advice to the government. I listened very carefully to what the Premier had to say about the issue of AGT privatization the other day, and what he said was not that the Tory caucus is studying the Alexander report or not that they're looking through a lot of other information to come to an informed conclusion, but rather that this had become a philosophical debate within the caucus between those who felt the government should be involved in business activities and those who felt that they should not be involved in business activities. That was the sort of flavour of the debate that rages, or rustles, within the Tory caucus at the present time. If that's the case, then it seems likely that the information is of interest not so much to the government at this stage of the game but rather is of interest to the public in assessing the direction this government is going to go.

I simply want to relate to members the experience I had living in the province of British Columbia, where they had to suffer with a privately owned telephone company which was, in the nature of these things, federally regulated. The service was considerably poorer than it is in the province of Alberta. The rates were higher. That's for starters. When it comes time to deal with such issues as rates and service, technological change, employment, labour negotiations, all of these very important things that affect the telephone service in the province, it was all federal jurisdiction. Every person in British Columbia who had an interest in the telephone company or any matter pertaining thereto would have to try to communicate with Ottawa through the CRTC or the federal Department of Labour or any one of a number of federal regulatory agencies that deal with the phone company. Why should we in Alberta look to that model? Why should we look to a situation where our people have to go to Ottawa to deal with a complaint about the phone company? I suppose that's a philosophical argument as well. We can only assume that if Mr. Alexander did a credible job, he would deal with some of those issues.

The other thing I suspect is within the Alexander report is financial detail, and I think financial detail is relevant to this situation because, as my colleague from Vegreville mentioned, there's a cost and a benefit to this type of sale. Obviously he feels, and I agree with him, that it's a mistake to sell major assets in order to pay current expenditures. If the motivation of

the government is to obtain some cash to pay operating bills, that's the equivalent to selling your house to pay the groceries. Now, I submit that if you have a situation where you are not able to pay the groceries, you're better off trying to find more income or trying to find a way to eat more cheaply than you are to sell your home, because if you sell your home, eventually you're going to be paying rent. That's the analogy I'd like to draw. I believe an analysis such as that prepared for the government by Mr. Alexander, if it's a credible one, would explore those issues and would give Albertans some basis upon which they could become involved in the decision over the future of AGT.

For that reason, Mr. Speaker, I urge members to support this particular motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I tried to pick up all nuances of the hon. minister's comments in speaking on behalf of the government in refusing this motion. If I understood him correctly, he was saying that this document might not even be a government document. I presume he meant by that, Mr. Speaker, that it might be within the hands of the Alberta Government Telephones Commission. If that's what he was saying, I would question the fundamental, I guess, relationship between the government and its own Crown corporations. I mean, does a commission not act on behalf of the government? Does it not reply to requests that might be made to it from the government? Quite frankly, I don't accept his argument.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

If they want to produce this document, they could very easily do so, and they could certainly require or ask the commission to provide it to them. If, in the unbelievable situation the government doesn't have that document in their own hands yet – that is, if they haven't had a chance to see such a document – I would be shocked that that would be the case. But if he was saying that he would need the concurrence of the telephones commission in order to release it, I don't know who's running who here. I don't know who's in charge of this operation if it's not the minister opposite. It would seem to me that the commission is accountable to him, not him being accountable to the telephones commission, and if the minister wanted to produce it, he could well do so. I don't see any rationality in the argument he presented earlier. Quite frankly, the minister should have simply said that he chooses to turn down the request, not because of the document being in somebody else's hands. The whole question of accountability of a Crown corporation would indicate to me that a simple matter of producing a document is nothing more than a phone call from the minister's office requesting it to be released, and that permission being given.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the whole question of accountability arises as well in whether the public should have the right to review such a document. Let's consider two scenarios. Let's assume for the moment that the government has no interest in pursuing the privatization of Alberta Government Telephones, in which case, if that's the decision or the direction the government chooses to take, there would be no harm in releasing such a document to this Legislature, because if the government is not going to privatize in any event, it would just be a matter of academic interest what such a report might say about some

potential privatization. It would be of interest perhaps to academics and those who follow the industry, but if they're not privatizing it, there would certainly be no harm to either the government or Alberta Government Telephones in releasing such a document.

Now, in a second scenario, Mr. Speaker, let's presume for the moment that the government, then, is deciding or considering or has made a decision to privatize Alberta Government Telephones. Now the scenario has changed. But in such a situation, review by such an individual as Mr. Alexander and Dominion Securities might perform a public benefit in that such information might provide information to the public by which the public then could evaluate whatever offer was made to the government for the purchase of Alberta Government Telephones, in which case, if the public has some independent information or some additional information on which they could evaluate such an offer to purchase, it seems to me only the public good could be served by that. If the government were to privatize and to do it at fair market value or whatever, such a report certainly wouldn't harm the interests of the government or the public. In fact, the government could maybe point to such a report as support for what they're planning to do.

But let's take the scenario that they're going to privatize and they're going to sell it at fire-sale prices. Ah, now, Mr. Speaker, such a report might be very detrimental to this government's political objectives, which might be the real reason why they're afraid to table this document for us this afternoon. That, to my view, is a far more likely reason and explanation for the failure of this government to table the document, not the pale and lame excuse provided by the hon. minister this afternoon, that it's simply not within the ownership of the Alberta government.

I would say this, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. minister and to the members of this government. If the scenario that I have outlined comes to pass, if this government is prepared to take an asset such as Alberta Government Telephones which has served the province well for many decades and generations, if they're prepared to sell it to their friends at fire-sale prices, there'll be a political price to pay for doing that; not only a financial price but a political price. Whether the information from some report comes out or not, somewhere, somehow, this government, I can assure them, will pay a political price. If they no longer see their mandate as to serve the people of this province, and if they see their mandate as no longer using an asset, a Crown corporation such as Alberta Government Telephones, to serve the people of this province, I can assure the hon. minister that all the lame excuses, all the pale reasons that he wants to provide in this Legislature to prevent the people of Alberta from getting the full story on what's going on with AGT and their plans for privatization, all of that, Mr. Speaker, will be for naught, because eventually the people of this province will not allow a fire sale of an asset such as Alberta Government Telephones to the private sector for anything less than full market value or for good value.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, if this mandate of the corporation changes as a result of privatization so that it no longer is intended to serve the people of Alberta but to simply be a privately owned monopoly for the purposes of making a profit for its shareholders, that kind of change in the mandate of Alberta Government Telephones the people will not accept.

Thank you.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Kingsway, to conclude.

MR. McEACHERN: Mr. Speaker, I was purposely slow in rising because I was hoping the minister would have stood up and tried to answer some of the questions and some of the concerns raised by the people on this side of the House. But we know that this government doesn't have any answers. They just use their big majority and silence to override a perfectly reasonable request.

Mr. Speaker, one might wonder: why would the government be so secretive about a document of this sort? I suppose you could even ask the question: why would they want to privatize AGT and then regulate it under the Public Utilities Board regulation? As a matter of fact, it is a natural monopoly, and the Public Utilities Board model isn't such a great one. I think of the Canadian Utilities situation a few years back, where the heritage trust fund actually loaned Canadian Utilities I think it was – I forget the numbers of millions of dollars, but it was at something like 13 and three-quarters percent. Meanwhile, the Public Utilities Board regulates that this monopoly company can make at least 15 percent, and of course it allows it to make about 17 percent or sometimes upwards of 20 percent before they make them rebate some back to the people of Alberta. So it's a pretty good deal, eh?

So I guess, really – is the government thinking of taking care of some of its friends? Are there some particular Tories that would buy this company so they could get onto a good wicket? I mean, AGT by itself is a good wicket. It's a good deal for the people of Alberta. It has provided good service for the people of Alberta, and this government is foolish enough to think they should sell it off to some of their friends for what? To pay the debt? This company makes money year in and year out, and there is no reason why the people of Alberta shouldn't get the benefit of that new money being available to upgrade the equipment of AGT.

But the main benefit of AGT is to rural people of Alberta. There is no doubt that if a private company was in place now in Alberta, they would not have provided the service to rural Albertans at the price that AGT has been able to do. You go to B.C. or you go to Ontario and see what Ma Bell or B.C. Tel charge: absolutely exorbitant prices for people living out in the rural parts of those provinces. So it is totally ridiculous to have the Alberta government spend \$500 million, which the Premier was bragging about just yesterday, to upgrade the single-line service to rural Albertans and then hand it over to some Tory friends to milk the system. I mean, it's just nonsense, Mr. Speaker.

I guess there's another aspect of this whole telephone thing that bothers me, and it shows up with the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications: his apparent lack of fortitude in sticking up for AGT in the regulatory wars with Ottawa. Is this idea of selling AGT part of that giving in to the idea that the feds can regulate telecommunications, that the province doesn't have any say in the services it provides to its own people, that that era is done? If we allow the feds to regulate, as they've already started to do, and start allowing this so-called competition – although how you can have competition in a monopoly kind of enterprise like a utility, I don't know. What we do know is that Bell telephones is already starting to lower its long distance rate. B.C. Telephone is co-operating with them on that. The prairie telephone systems may be required to get involved in that, and that will mean higher rates for rural Albertans.

Now, the Tories in this Assembly, most of them are from rural Alberta. And if you guys think that the number of MLAs from

Alberta is what's supposedly going to protect the people of Alberta when we get arguing about the number of rural Alberta MLAs and the number of urban MLAs, if you consider that the Tories have had the majority of the seats in rural Alberta for nearly 20 years and that they have been a majority within the Tory party and that the Tory party has been a big majority government in the province of Alberta for 20 years, how come you're selling out your rural Albertans with the telephone system? How come, if people in rural Alberta have got problems, you try to blame other people? You guys have been in charge, your MLAs have been in charge, and you haven't done the job. The discontent in rural Alberta should be focused on the quality of their MLAs, not how many they've got. If they had some New Democrat MLAs, as the three we have now, maybe they would get better service than they've been getting out of the Tory MLAs.

So, Mr. Speaker, this government continues to hide behind the usual secrecy tactics, that we don't want a public debate. Oh, no. I mean, we're going to privatize AGT. Everybody keeps saying it over and over again. The Premier says it; the Treasurer says it. AGT was ready to make a big announcement last week; for some reason they postponed it. And yet they don't have the courage to put the information before the people of Alberta and have a full-blown debate. I mean, I'm quite prepared to debate the merits of privatization. Why aren't they? They're the ones that are going to do it. They're the ones that should be making the information available, and the Alexander report should be available to the public. The annual statement of AGT is not adequate information. It's really hard to pin down from it, for example, just exactly how many dollars AGT could get out of it. They don't have an equity shares section so that you can say, well, they've got this many equity shares they could sell. So it is not clear exactly what assets they can sell.

They have a debt of some billion dollars to the heritage trust fund. As a matter of fact, if the government wants to get a billion dollars out of AGT, it's simple enough: sell those debentures from the heritage trust fund. They would bring a premium. People could buy them. But that's debt capital; that's not ownership capital. The ownership would still stay with the government of Alberta, and that's what should be the case, Mr. Speaker. We should not be selling the ownership of AGT. It's okay for AGT to get a billion dollars from the stock markets or some other pension fund or wherever they can find it. They do not have to have that billion dollars out of the heritage trust fund. That money could be returned to the heritage trust-fund, and that's not a problem. But that's debt money; that's not equity shares.

So I think if this government is really serious about privatizing AGT, they need to put before the people of Alberta some information, and a start would be this Alexander report. Now, it may be out of date, and it may be time that the government got together some more information and started to make their case. If they really intend to do this to one of Alberta's most important companies, one of our best Crown corporations, then they'd better come clean and bring forward this report and put together some more up-to-date information, quite frankly, for the people of Alberta.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: All those in favour of Motion for a Return 152 as moved by the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The motion is defeated.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

[Eight minutes having elapsed, the House divided]

For the motion:

Chumir	Hawkesworth	Mjolsness
Doyle	Laing, M.	Sigurdson
Fox	Martin	Taylor
Gagnon	McEachern	Woloshyn
Gibeault	McInnis	Wright

Against the motion:

Adair	Fischer	Nelson
Anderson	Fowler	Oldring
Betkowski	Gesell	Paszkowski
Black	Getty	Payne
Bogle	Gogo	Schumacher
Bradley	Hyland	Severtson
Brassard	Jonson	Shrake
Calahasen	Klein	Sparrow
Cardinal	Kowalski	Stewart
Cherry	Laing, B.	Tannas
Clegg	Lund	Thurber
Day	Mirosh	Trynchy
Elliott	Moore	Weiss
Elzinga	Musgrove	Zarusky
Evans		

Totals:	Ayes	—	15	Noes	—	43
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[Motion lost]

155. Mr. McEachern moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of the lease agreement between the government of Alberta and Olympia & York Developments Ltd. regarding the rental of office space at 10155 – 102nd Street, Edmonton, and all other documents and reports that provide information on the cost of this agreement to Alberta taxpayers.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, Motion for a Return 155 is not much different in its 1990 vintage than it has been on numerous occasions in the past. The most recent occasion on which it was dealt with was May 12, 1988, and there are comments in *Hansard* on page 1015 of that particular day. At that particular point in time the position was put forward by the government that the release of such documents would breach "commercial confidentiality," and, Mr. Speaker, that position remains true to today. I would cite as well *Beauchesne*, section 446(2)(e), which would give further credence to the argument put forward that such papers could have an impact on the marketplace and what does happen in the marketplace. For that basic reason, Mr.

Speaker, I would ask the Assembly to defeat this request for Motion 155.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Belmont.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just briefly, 446(2)(e) is a rather cute clause in that it doesn't have any time lines to it.

Papers containing information, the release of which could allow or result in direct personal financial gain or loss by a person or a group of persons.

Mr. Speaker, it is our understanding that the contracts have been signed, and the probability is that those contracts won't be broken. If they were about to be broken or violated or amended in any way, they wouldn't have been signed in the first place, so I don't know who can profit or who can lose by the release of the information. What we've got is a government that doesn't want to release the information, pure and simple, not that there's going to be any profit or loss by one group over the other. The building isn't going to stop being there or being under construction because we release contractual information. The fact of the matter is that it's an embarrassing contract. It cost us more than it should have by a great amount. So we don't have anybody that's going to profit or anybody that's going to lose because we throw open the books.

MR. McEACHERN: Just the government. They'll be embarrassed.

MR. SIGURDSON: Just the government. They're going to be embarrassed. And it's shameful: behind-closed-doors deals, a sweetheart deal for somebody. Some friends just got a good deal.

AN HON. MEMBER: Who?

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, I'm not sure. Who got a good deal? Friends, friends of the government.

But you see, Mr. Speaker, the people that aren't getting a good deal are the taxpayers of Alberta. Those are the folk that aren't getting a very fair shake at this present time. They have a right to know how much the contract is worth, and they ought to. They ought to, Mr. Speaker, and that's why the motion for a return is very clear in its request. And it's shameful that the government is going to hide behind its cloak of secrecy and say that we can't have the information because somebody's going to lose or profit from it. It's just shameful.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Speaker, there should simply be nothing that prevents public money, particularly millions of dollars of public money, being disclosed when spent or being disclosed when contracted to be spent. There should be nothing against that. Were this an ordinary commercial transaction not using public money, I don't care whether it would be confidential in those circumstances. No government has a right to spend public money confidentially; it's as simple as that. And this garbage about its being a confidential commercial contract is just that, it's garbage, and it's unworthy of any government to produce that as an excuse for the confidential spending of public money; all the more so when it amounts to millions of dollars over the length of the contract. Shame on you.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

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

MS M. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can only reiterate what the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona has said. This is money that comes from the taxpayers of Alberta to be spent in an atmosphere of trust by this government. To suggest that somehow they treat it as their money, without any accountability to the taxpayers who have paid in that money, is simply unacceptable. We hear over and over again in this Assembly how members of the government do not want to be accountable or responsible to the taxpayers of this province. How can they say, then, that this is a democracy? They repeatedly try to deny democracy, openness, accountability, and responsibility by not being open and honest about how the taxpayers' dollars are spent.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Kingsway, to close debate.

MR. McEACHERN: Again, Mr. Speaker, I rose somewhat slowly and reluctantly hoping that the minister would have some answers to some of our questions and points made on this side of the House, but of course again, as usual, they have no answers.

MR. KOWALSKI: Let me speak and I'll speak, but I can't, by the rules.

MR. McEACHERN: You had your opportunity a minute ago, and you didn't say much of merit.

Sure, I would deal to him as long as I can get back in. Mr. Speaker, is that fair in the rules? Can he speak and then I follow him?

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please proceed, hon. member.

MR. McEACHERN: Okay. So I guess he says we can't. Well, that's okay. That's saved the minister from embarrassment, because he doesn't have any answers to our questions and our charges.

The lease agreement with Olympia & York is something that we've been asking for for a long time, as he rightly pointed out. I guess, Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the actual hard facts on a piece of paper in front of me, I'll have to ask the question: what is it that we do know about the Olympia & York deal? Well, we do know that the Reichmann brothers, Olympia & York, were not interested in investing in Edmonton just a mere few years before this deal was put together. We do know that there were lots of empty spaces for rental offices downtown in many other buildings, and many local Edmonton businessmen were in fact quite furious when this deal was struck. We do know that Les Mabbott, who was the co-chairman of Don Getty's leadership race for the Tory party, was one of the principals in putting together this deal. I think we also know by now, Mr. Speaker, that this was a real sweetheart deal for Olympia & York, the Reichmann brothers, or they wouldn't have come back into Edmonton to build it.

We know, for example, that the lease – or at least we're pretty sure of this. I suppose he could produce a document to prove me wrong, but let him do that then. We believe and have gleaned from a number of different sources that the government

has leased from Olympia & York some 400,000 square feet for a 20-year period at \$18 or \$18.50 per square foot – I can't remember exactly which figure – which was incredibly high considering that the going rate at the time was about \$10 per square foot. We know that Les Mabbott and his lawyer friend that pulled the deal together made a small fortune, something like \$12 million on the deal. At least, we're pretty sure of that; it may not be exactly correct.

But it seems to me that if the government is going to enter into those kinds of deals, they have an obligation to lay it out to the people of Alberta and let them know what they're doing with their dollars. It's the taxpayers of this province that pay the bills. And there's no reason why that government should sit over there in silence on these motions and not explain themselves and not give us any good reasons, but just stall and stall and sit in silence and then vote down motion after motion asking for information that is paid for by the taxpayers of this province. And it is; the cost of government is paid for by the taxpayers of this province. The minister that negotiated the deal, the money made by the principals in setting up the deal, and the money that's going to be paid out to Olympia & York so that they can make a small fortune at the cost of the Alberta taxpayers over the next 20 years: all that's paid for by the taxpayers, and this government has the gall to sit there and say they don't have any right to know what the terms are. It's unacceptable, Mr. Speaker. It is exactly the kind of thing that's going to get this government unelected in the next election.

AN HON. MEMBER: You've been saying that for 20 years.

MR. McEACHERN: No, I haven't been here for 20 years. I've only been here for four. Another three years and we'll get you, on exactly this kind of secrecy and exactly this kind of thing. That's why the people out there are starting to say enough is enough. It's time to turf this government out of office, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please.

All those in favour of Motion for a Return 155 as moved by the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The motion is lost.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung]

[Eight minutes having elapsed, the House divided]

For the motion:

Chumir	Laing, M.	Sigurdson
Doyle	Martin	Taylor
Fox	McEachern	Woloshyn
Gagnon	McInnis	Wright
Hawkesworth		

Against the motion:

Adair	Elzinga	Nelson
Ady	Evans	Oldring
Anderson	Fischer	Paszkowski
Black	Fjordbotten	Payne
Bogle	Fowler	Rostad
Bradley	Gesell	Schumacher
Brassard	Gogo	Severtson
Calahasen	Hyland	Shrake
Cardinal	Klein	Sparrow
Cherry	Kowalski	Stewart
Clegg	Laing, B.	Thurber
Day	Lund	Trynchy
Dinning	Moore	Weiss
Elliott	Musgrove	Zaruský

Totals: Ayes – 13 Noes – 42

[Motion lost]

MR. WEISS: Mr. Speaker, I wish to rise, sir, on a point of order.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes. The minister, on a point of order.

MR. WEISS: Mr. Speaker, if you refer to *Beauchesne*, page 151, 493(4). In listening to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Kingsway speak previously with regard to motion 155 – and I apologize for rising at this late moment, but I did try and get your attention prior to the call of the vote. I'd like you to refer to the remarks that were expressed by the hon. member, who did use, I believe, the sanctity of the House to either intentionally or unintentionally defame an individual who, under *Beauchesne*, is a person who does not have the opportunity to reply in this House. The remarks were something to the effect that Mr. Mabbott made some \$12 million. If the hon. member can substantiate accurately, then I would ask him to do so, but I certainly don't appreciate the member opposite using it and paraphrasing what one individual may or may not do. I rise on that point of order, Mr. Speaker, and ask for your ruling, sir.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Kingsway on the point of order.

MR. McEACHERN: Yes. Mr. Speaker, I did not say that Mr. Mabbott made \$12 million; I said he and his lawyer partners. If the government has the facts that show otherwise, let it go ahead and release them. [interjections]

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. Order.

On the point of order that has been raised by the hon. Minister of Career Development and Employment, the Chair listened carefully to the remarks and did not find any direct violation of that particular standing order. However, as chairman I would like to reserve judgment until we can review the Blues on that particular question.

160. Mr. McEachern moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of reports during 1989 regarding the financial prospects and viability of General Systems Research Inc., including a report done by Touche Ross Limited and a report done by the Department of Technology, Research and Telecommunications.

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, General Systems Research is a public corporation listed on an exchange. The motion refers to certain reports they obtained during the period of 1989 and also refers to a specific report of Touche Ross Limited. Those indeed, to the extent they may exist and ordered by the company, obviously are under the control and management of the receiver manager. The receiver manager has control of all the assets and liabilities and other business functions of the company at this time. There's no entitlement of the government in respect of those reports.

Insofar as the latter portion of the motion is concerned, a report done by the Department of Technology, Research and Telecommunications, that is obviously an internal document, one for the use and advice of government. It's upon that basis that indeed our government did act in order to preserve the technology, allow for its further development, and continue the employment of some very skilled people at that company. As a result of that and acting in that fashion, Mr. Speaker, indeed those employees will continue, the technology will continue to be further developed, there will be further investment in that company as time goes on, and there will be opportunities for the government to receive royalties by virtue of the agreement if indeed it is closed and not appealed and concluded on the basis upon which it was tendered.

The NDP – I noticed their position with respect to this matter much earlier on – were all set to put the padlock on the door, which would have meant the loss of that technology in which the investment did take place, and the employees would have been lost. For MLAs who supposedly represent the city of Edmonton, I found that most shocking and revealing.

MR. McINNIS: Well, Mr. Speaker, I have a particular concern about this matter related to the suggestion by the minister that he doesn't want to release certain information about the government's involvement in GSR. The motion asks for copies of reports during 1989 regarding the financial prospects and viability of General Systems Research Inc. and cites a particular report done by Touche Ross Limited. Within my constituency – and the minister is familiar with some of the details of this – there's a company called S & D Tech* which has a technology to print signs basically. They tendered some work for GSR in December of 1989 involving bicycle trail signs in the river valley in McKinnon Ravine. I contacted the minister's office in respect of this matter, because my constituents had not been paid for the work that was done or certainly not all the work that was done. I believe they received half payment. They have a concern that they did business with this company, GSR, on the basis of an assurance made by the minister of financial prospects and viability of General Systems Research, which assurance was made during 1989, the period referred to in this particular motion.

So I have an interest on behalf of my constituents in finding out on what basis judgments were made about the financial prospects and viability of that particular company, because when I inquired through the minister's office about the fate of this particular matter, I was told that the bill from my constituent's company could not be paid on the grounds that the city of Edmonton, who had the contract with GSR, had not paid GSR. The suggestion was made that there was an offset against some city taxes owing by this firm, which at that point was in receivership, and they had not paid GSR; therefore, GSR had not paid my constituents. That was a matter of some concern to me, so I took some time to investigate with the city of Edmonton and

found that 100 percent of that bill was paid in respect of that contract. So what happened was that the funds went from the city of Edmonton into GSR coffers and from there disappeared somewhere else. They were not paid to my constituents, who had done their work.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Now, S & D Tech happens to be a very small family-owned company; it's run out of residential premises. In truth it's good, sound technology. I believe if they get over this particular burden of having had the misfortune to do business with this government-backed operation, they will indeed survive and prosper. I certainly hope that happens. But for the time being they've been sent reeling by the fact that they have not and, I'm told as recently as yesterday, will not be paid by GSR on account of the receivership situation.

Now, I understand fully that in a receivership situation you have secured creditors and unsecured creditors, so my constituents unfortunately happen to fall within the category of unsecured creditors. All they did was trust in the financial viability and the future financial prospects of that particular firm on account of assurances that they feel they took from the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications.

Now, if indeed there were reports at that time which suggested that the finances of that operation were viable and were pointing in a rosy direction, then perhaps my concern is not so much with the government as it is with Touche Ross, who may have provided that particular advice. I don't know. But because of the unique situation my constituents have been placed in and the particular stress and hardship that's been put upon them by the failure of GSR to settle this account, I would certainly like to know at what point the government became aware and at what point GSR became aware of their lack of financial viability. Because if it's the case that they went out and took product from my constituents and sold them to a third party and collected the money and spent the money for some other purpose, then I think my constituents have a very legitimate complaint. After all, they did their part. They supplied the goods that were ordered, and all of that's been duly notarized and duly receipted. If, indeed, all of that was done after the government and GSR were aware that the company was not viable financially, then I think there was some money that was taken from them improperly, because they have to pay their suppliers and they did the work and GSR was paid for it.

So what happened to the rest of the money? Well, obviously it disappeared down that sinkhole along with a lot of others. So it's not just the government and the taxpayers through the government that have taken a bath on GSR, but I submit there are a lot of innocent businesspeople who did business with GSR in good faith who also have been placed in some financial jeopardy as a result of it. Now, if the Touche Ross report can shed some light on this situation, then I believe it should be made public.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to just start out by correcting one of the things the minister said. He said that the New Democrats would have put a padlock on the door, and that is specifically not true. I have very carefully been very moderate on this issue during the last year, other than to

*This spelling could not be verified at the time of publication.

ask the minister for these reports in the House last August. Of course, I got the same kind of answer and the same runaround.

GSR was an experiment in the government getting involved in high technology. I recognize that's something we would like to see, some diversification and some development of high technology in this province. But you'd better use GSR as a lesson as to how to do it and how not to do it. What this government did – and make no mistake; they lost \$31 million of taxpayers' money, Mr. Speaker, on this deal, so they should at least have learned some lessons from that if nothing else. One of those lessons should probably be that they not be so secretive in the future. He sort of implied for a moment that he didn't even know if the Touche Ross report existed. Well, we know the Touche Ross report existed, because there was a reference to it in the briefing notes to the new Minister of Economic Development and Trade when he took over last year, suggesting it would cost the government \$26 million over five years to put this company into a positive mode that perhaps could help it succeed. But that was the only reference we were able to get, and the government never owned up that in fact they had the report or what else it said.

After seeing that and hearing that the government was putting in another \$3.8 million on top of the money they'd already put into GSR over the years, I suggested to the government that they might either get in or get out. The minister himself said that they had put together a report in the Technology, Research and Telecommunications department – and in fact they admitted today that, yes, they had done that – and they used that report to tell them it was time to get out, I guess. But it's a little bit late to get out, Mr. Speaker, after you've put \$31 million in. Make no mistake about what's happened here. The government kept picking up the debts of this company. It isn't that they ever gave the company a chance to really succeed; they merely kept picking up the debt year after year after the company had already spent the money and was having difficulty meeting its payments. Obviously they didn't help them meet all their payments, as my colleague from Edmonton-Jasper Place has just testified.

What that kind of approach does in trying to develop a high-tech company, Mr. Speaker, is hamstringing the company from ever really becoming viable. The government can pick up the debts, but the company itself never has the extra money it needs to go out and do promotion of sales and go after commercial contracts it needs to become viable. What you develop is a *situation* where other companies in the same technology industry sit back and watch this company burning up taxpayers' dollars at a fairly incredible rate, actually, when you think about the amount of actual hardware that was placed in the GSR factory – I suppose one could use that word – or plant. What happens is that those other companies sit back and watch while the government pours money down the drain, so to speak, and wait for the government to get tired of doing that, because with that kind of policy they're never going to really succeed or get off the ground. When the government gets tired of doing it and says "Well, \$30 million is enough" and decides to stop there, then the other companies bid at fire-sale prices. I mean, \$1.4 million for this company which has had over \$40 million poured into it – not just the \$31 million of government money but, as my colleague from Edmonton-Jasper Place said, money from all kinds of other businesspeople that did business with them and other investors.

They had over \$40 million invested in that company, and we sell it for \$1.4 million. I say we, but it is the government that sold it; make no mistake. The government had four of the

members of the board of directors and owned that company for the last few years, Mr. Speaker, so they have full responsibility for what happened with that company. If they support any other company in the same manner, they will not succeed. What they will succeed in doing is handing over a bunch of taxpayers' dollars at incredible cost to produce a little bit of hardware that somebody else picks up dirt cheap. That is most extraordinary, and it's time . . . This government is putting together a council on science and technology, and I suggest to them that if they get into the same kind of mode in a lot of different areas, there's going to be a lot of taxpayers' dollars wasted.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's incumbent on this government to tell us what the prospects were. What was in those reports that made it clear it was time for the government to get out? In other words, I'm questioning the decision, and unless we have more facts . . . And this is something I have consistently told the press. The minister tried to imply a minute ago that we said we'd shut it down and put a padlock on the door. I have never said that. Every time I've been asked by a reporter, "Well, what would you do; did he do the right thing?" I've said, "We really don't know, because we don't have those reports." We don't know whether getting out was the right thing. Maybe you should have got out when you only put a million or a couple of million dollars in; maybe that was the time to get out. Certainly putting \$30 million in and getting back nothing isn't much of a deal. Maybe a few extra bucks – maybe the Touche Ross people were right; \$36 million over five years would have given us an industry that really would have got off the ground. But we don't know because we don't have those facts.

That's all I have consistently said, so the minister is quite wrong in implying that we didn't want that company to succeed. Of course we wanted that company to succeed. But it's this government that messed it up and has to take full responsibility, and they should come clean now and tell us on what they based their decision.

[Motion lost]

173. Mr. McInnis moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a detailed breakdown of the expenditures provided for under each of the following special warrants indicating to whom the funds are paid:

- | | |
|-------|--|
| 42/90 | \$850,000 to investigate, assess, and provide emergency containment <i>in and</i> along the Bow River, |
| 43/90 | \$630,000 to ensure appropriate public consultation on the government's environmental principles and policies, and |
| 46/90 | \$150,000 additional funds referred to develop a comprehensive recycling program. |

[Motion as amended carried]

213. On behalf of Mr. Mitchell, Mr. Taylor moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the report from Enviro-Test Laboratories giving an analysis of a fly ash sample from the Millar Western teepee burner at Whitecourt that was given to the Hon. Peter Trynchy, minister responsible for Occupational Health and Safety, on December 2, 1989.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to speak briefly on the motion for a return requesting lab reports on the Millar Western pulp mill. This is a pulp mill that was announced by the government on April 17, 1986. They announced construction of a chemithermomechanical mill to begin in the fall of 1987. The significant details were that the government provided a participating debenture in the amount of \$120 million, with the balance of \$65 million to be financed privately.

At the time, the Premier, who made the announcement – and this is a kind of standard piece that comes in all the press releases; I think it's power, right button, number 2 on the word processor. It says:

The Whitecourt plant will incorporate the latest state-of-the-art environmental controls and will more than meet all regulatory requirements.

How often, Mr. Speaker, have we heard that particular assurance? The announcement said very clearly – and this was before any environmental impact assessment had been done – that the pulp mill would be built on the existing Millar Western sawmill site within the town limits of Whitecourt. Now, Mr. Speaker, that was a very significant decision made by the government in consultation with the company and one that I believe was probably a mistake. It's not the first time this particular mistake has been made. I think of the Pelican Spruce Mills at Drayton Valley, which spews a lot of soot and ash all over the town, because that one is also located within the town limits. When do we learn that if you do a proper environmental impact assessment, you can make better decisions not just on whether projects are good for the environment in a general sense but about where they should be located? It's been drawn to my attention that Pelican Spruce Mills would be equally productive and contribute almost equally to the town of Drayton Valley if it were located 10 kilometres out of town. You might say the same thing about the Millar Western pulp mill in Whitecourt.

Now, the announcement back in 1986 went on to say that Pollution effluent from a CTMP pulp facility is minimal. The process is completely different than the sulphate kraft pulp process, resulting in very low level of plant emissions. The major emissions from a CTMP plant are in the form of steam only.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think you could go anywhere in the town of Whitecourt today and find anybody who would agree that the major emission from this operation is steam only. In fact, two different families have sent me photographs of their surroundings, which are covered with soot and ash and all kinds of very unpleasant and unpalatable substances. The motion for a return today seeks a laboratory analysis of some of the soot and ash material, which I think is very important for the psychological well-being of people in that particular community as well as for other reasons which I would like to deal with briefly.

The licence to operate the Millar Western pulp mill under the Clean Air Act, Alberta licence number 88-AL-251, was issued by the director of standards and approvals on behalf of the Minister of the Environment on October 31, 1988. That particular licence is valid until July 1, 1991. I want to refer your attention to 2.2 of the licence, which states:

The plant shall be operated such that

- (a) waste material from the debarking and chipping plant and the primary clarifier will be combusted in the existing Millar Western Industries Ltd. sawmill wood waste burner or disposed of in an approved landfill.

The key words, Mr. Speaker, are "waste material from the debarking and chipping plant." Now, it's my understanding that

in this particular plant they have been burning waste pulp from the pulp mill, which is not provided for under this licence. The licence provides for waste from the debarking and chipping plants, not from the pulp mill. My understanding is also that the pulp that's being burned is wet. It's basically pulp that can't be marketed and they don't know what to do with it, so they're throwing it on the burner from the sawmill. That's what has been at least in fair measure responsible for the material that's now being spread all over the town.

The people in the area, I think, have very good reason to be concerned about it. If you look at the Clean Air Act general regulations, there is a definition in the regulations of burnable debris. It gives a whole list of material, which includes solid waste from sawmills or planing mills, but there's also a further list of prohibited debris. This is the list that I would like to draw the attention of the Assembly to:

"Prohibited debris" means any inflammable debris or waste material that, when burned, may result in the release to the atmosphere of dense smoke, offensive odors or toxic air contaminants.

And there's a whole list of things that are included in that area. I think there is a strong possibility that the material that's being combusted falls within the category of prohibited debris. One such item enumerated in the regulations, item (x), is

solid waste from sawmills or planing mills with an annual production in excess of 4 million FBM.

The possibility exists that it was either in a general prohibition or within that specific one that that particular pulp mill, Millar Western, may be burning something they're not entitled to burn according to the Clean Air Act general regulations, which of course are subsidiary to the Clean Air Act.

Now, I'd like to contrast the way Millar Western has been dealt with in the province of Alberta compared with how that same company has been dealt with in the province of Saskatchewan. Here, as Adam Zimmerman* once observed, the forest industry is kissed on both cheeks and given grants. I guess Millar Western's experience is not far off that mark, with a \$120 million participating debenture to build this type of pulp mill, which in operation causes all kinds of waste material to be spread all over the town. In the province of Saskatchewan the selfsame company, according to my understanding, has received no grants towards building a \$330 million pulp mill at Meadow Lake. Not only do they receive no grants, but they also are proposing a type of pulp mill which has no liquid effluent. Now, I appreciate there are potentially some environmental questions that come out of that, but Millar Western announced in February this year that they were going to build a mill at Meadow Lake which will recycle any of the chemicals and most of the water used in processing the pulp. Only a small amount of ash and fibre will be hauled away afterwards and incinerated, whereas this particular pulp mill in Whitecourt is, in fact, spewing all kinds of ash all over town and people quite rightly are concerned about it.

So given that the licence to operate contains the provision that it does – that it doesn't appear to allow for incineration of waste pulp, which is known to be wet – and given the situation in Saskatchewan with the same company, I would like to urge members to support this motion so we can find out about the analysis of the material in a very timely fashion.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
Vegreville.

*This spelling could not be verified at the time of publication.

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just join my colleague from the Liberal Party and my colleague the MLA for Edmonton-Jasper Place in urging the minister of Occupational Health and Safety to provide this information to us. I think it's not only important for the issue at hand but it would be important for the minister to adopt a kind of new policy of openness, I guess, in keeping with the spirit of Getty glasnost that seems to be sweeping the province. I think the minister would want to be open and share this information that he apparently has in his hands, delivered to him December 2, 1989, regarding this fly ash emission from the Millar Western teepee burner in Whitecourt.

I mean, I understand the minister's in a little bit of a difficult situation because it's his own backyard as well as his responsibility as minister to keep an eye on this sort of thing. But it would give the minister a chance to demonstrate to members of this Assembly and to Albertans that he's not only on top of things but willing to share information with Albertans and perhaps erase some of the impressions left in people's minds. When a lot of concern was expressed about the working conditions at the Weldwood plant in Hinton, when members of the opposition had raised the concern with him, when other people including the unions responsible had raised concerns with him, and when finally the issue got to be so serious it couldn't be ignored any more, the minister made statements in public that "Nobody brought this to my attention, and I didn't know about it. If only someone had brought it to my attention, I would have dealt with it much sooner."

So I'm hoping that perhaps a positive response to this motion for a return will give the minister of Occupational Health and Safety the opportunity to not only provide useful information but sort of set the record straight, get started on a new path here and demonstrate to his colleagues, to his constituents, and to people who work in these plants across the province that he's prepared to deal in an open and firm sort of way with the abuses that seem to occur on a very regular basis at plants across the province.

MR. SPEAKER: Westlock-Sturgeon . . .

MR. FOX: Don't they have to respond?

MS BARRETT: Yeah. Don't we get an answer.

MR. SPEAKER: They don't have to.

MR. FOX: Well, what are they doing with it? Are you accepting this?

MR. SPEAKER: They don't have to indicate one way or the other, hon. members.

Minister of the Environment.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, speaking against the motion.

MR. TAYLOR: Surprise.

MR. KLEIN: Really.

I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that at this time to comply with the request would be to give information that is totally inconclusive at this particular time, because the Department of the Environment just a few days ago went to Whitecourt to conduct further tests relative to the fly ash situation. I would think that

for a report to be absolutely correct and conclusive in its finding, all the information should be brought into account.

I can tell you that the studies that were done, again in isolation, showed no dioxins or furans or chlorinated organics, and the report concluded that there was no danger to health. But just to make sure, we sent officials from the department to conduct further tests. Those tests have not yet been analyzed. Until they are, I think that to comply with this request would be to provide an inconclusive report.

I might add, Mr. Speaker, that the teepee burner that has been the cause of the problem in Whitecourt has been shut down. It was shut down on March 23. It will be relocated, and that relocation, of course, will be subjected to an environmental impact assessment. I can tell you that I've had conversations with Mr. Millar, and he feels quite badly about this situation, has co-operated throughout the process with the Department of the Environment and my hon. colleague. To the fullest extent he feels bad about it. He feels somewhat embarrassed about it and has done all in his power to alleviate the situation in that community in co-operation with the MLA and my department, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The Member for Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Listening to the response of the Environment minister, I have to wonder what country I'm in. Perhaps he hasn't caught up with the 1990s or the democratic revolution from around the world. He says he wants to assure the Assembly that the report – and he says this is a sort of interim report subject to further analysis – says that X, Y, and Z were not found in the fly ash and therefore one cannot assume there was anything dangerous. Well, to the minister I ask: if there was nothing dangerous in there, why is it, first of all, that it's had to undergo four months of testing since the report was handed over to the minister? In the second place, what are they hiding? If he's so confident . . . I mean, this minister should realize that the words spoken in this Assembly are important, and if he is so confident that the words he just spoke are true, then why doesn't the minister responsible for this matter, the minister of Occupational Health and Safety, who almost on a daily basis assures us that workers' health and safety is his government's top priority, hand over the document and let people see? Let the public decide whether or not the information contained therein has been rigorously analyzed to the point of satisfaction. Let the public at large and the scientists know what was in that report. Maybe they could even help the government, which obviously cares to drag its feet on issues like this, do its job. There's no excuse for this, Mr. Speaker.

You know, I don't know what's in that report. I know that last week and the week before people out of a Medicine Hat plant were in hospital because of lead poisoning, that children who don't even work in the plant were in hospital because of lead poisoning. I remember politicians telling us, Mr. Speaker, 20 years ago that we didn't have to worry about lead, that it was just a rump group of so-called environmentalists – in fact, they didn't even have the courage to call us environmentalists in those days; they had nasty names – that were claiming that lead was bad. Ten years later the politicians, the equivalent of this minister's job, were telling us that asbestos was fine. "Stop worrying about this and the problem will go away." Well, how do we know if the contaminants, if there are any contaminants

in this fly ash, are dangerous to human beings and under what circumstances?

This minister hasn't even had the guts to get up and respond himself, considering the request is made of him. I challenge the minister to tell us why it is that he can't hand over a report. Don't give the Assembly and don't give the public this nonsense about the apologies and the regrets of Mr. Millar. I'll bet you if Mr. Millar were here, he'd have the guts to stand up and hand over this report. Let's have it, Mr. Minister.

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to set out the facts on this. In my constituency it was December 2 that I was asked to visit a residence in Whitecourt where a number of people were gathered. In that meeting I was presented with several samples of fly ash that were taken off the back step of the house, off the top of a car, and off a table in the yard. I took those samples and presented them to the Minister of the Environment for testing. Those tests came back from Environment at Vegreville, and the Minister of the Environment has notified the people in the riding that there were no hazardous chemicals within those tests.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to be certain beyond that, and we submitted a sample to a private firm in Edmonton that did another test on the sample that was taken off the back step. The return from them was the same, except they found some chemicals in it. I was concerned about that, so I asked a question: where could these chemicals have come from? The response was that it could have come off the step of the house, and it also could have come from the broom that they swept it up with or a number of places, and how were the samples taken?

Well, that raised a question: how were the samples taken, and were they, in fact, properly taken? So I asked the Minister of the Environment to go to Whitecourt with his staff and take additional samples, which have been taken. I think it's incumbent upon us to provide the answers to those tests that were taken by Environment, the true tests and the true samples. I would hate – and I think the opposition would like this to happen – to send to Whitecourt information that isn't accurate, information that could be wrong, to scare the people. Well, that's not what we're here for. We're here to provide the true answers to the tests that have been taken, will be tested. The results of those, Mr. Speaker, according to the Minister of the Environment, will be presented to the people of Whitecourt. I think it's important that they get the facts, not what's out there.

I also maybe want to say that when I talked to my constituents, I suggested to them – and they asked me: was it hazardous? I said, "No, it's not, but if you have small children playing in it and they were to eat it, it may have some effect on them." Now, Mr. Speaker, they could also eat the dirt in Whitecourt, in Mayerthorpe, or in Edmonton and get the same results. So the samples taken by Environment last week were from the playground, from a residence, from a garden, from a number of spots. Let's have those tested and give them to the people of Whitecourt. That's what they're looking for. They're not looking for something that could be contaminated. Mr. Speaker, for the question to come up and suggest let's give those results that aren't factual is without a doubt wrong.

So I would suggest to the hon. members that we turn this down.

MR. SPEAKER: Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess in closing the debate, I must first of all congratulate the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands for being able to flush out the groundhog of the cabinet. Usually the hon. member only comes out once a year and sees his shadow and then disappears again for the rest of the year. So if you can get him up saying anything, I'm quite pleased.

With respect to fly ash samples, surely the minister is not asking the people of Alberta to take solace from the statement from the Minister of the Environment that there was nothing harmful in it. The Minister of the Environment who didn't even know where the Wapiti River is, by his own admission here a couple of weeks ago, now has become an expert on what hazardous chemicals are. I think the public would like to know what the chemicals are and make up their own minds as to whether it's hazardous. To say that they're now out taking samples – I think there's nothing more terrifying than to hear these two ministers say those first results were so bad and scary that they're all out there busy now, taking other samples, hoping the new results will be such that the public will be safe. I can't think of anything that would frighten me faster. Hopefully, the minister is in a position to buy up all the houses of people that want to move out. To say the first samples were so bad that you have to go out looking for new samples so you can add solace and peace to the minds of the people must indicate that the first tests were extraordinarily bad, Mr. Speaker.

I don't understand why a minister who's exercising any form of responsibility to society in general, let alone his government, would not rush to put forward the samples and say, "These may or may not be representative, and we're out there taking more of them to make darn sure one way or the other," instead of: "No, we've hidden the first ones. Ha, ha. We're a little afraid that you may be a little afraid of them, fellows, and we're going to go out and take some more, and maybe they'll be all right."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: All those in favour of Motion for a Return 213, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: It fails.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung]

[Eight minutes having elapsed, the House divided]

For the motion:

Barrett	Laing, M.	Taylor
Doyle	McEachern	Woloshyn
Fox	McInnis	Wright
Gagnon	Sigurdson	

Against the motion:

Adair	Fischer	Nelson
Ady	Fjordbotten	Oldring

Anderson	Fowler	Orman	Dinning	Moore	Weiss
Betkowski	Gesell	Paszkowski	Elzinga	Musgrove	Zarusky
Black	Gogo	Payne	Evans		
Bogle	Hyland	Rostad			
Bradley	Isley	Schumacher	Totals:	Ayes - 11	Noes - 46
Brassard	Jonson	Shrake			
Calahasen	Klein	Sparrow	[Motion lost]		
Cardinal	Laing, B.	Stewart			
Cherry	Lund	Tannas	MR. SPEAKER: Order please.		
Clegg	Main	Thurber			
Day	Mirosh	Trynchy	[The House recessed at 5:30 p.m.]		