

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**

Title: **Tuesday, May 8, 1990 2:30 p.m.**

Date: 90/05/08

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

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

Our Father, we thank You for Your abundant blessings to our province and ourselves.

We ask You to ensure to us Your guidance and the will to follow it.

Amen.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to introduce Mr. Edgar Hinman, a former Member of this Legislative Assembly who represented the constituency of Cardston. Mr. Hinman was first elected in 1952 and served in the Social Credit government for four terms. During that time he served as Minister of Municipal Affairs and later as Provincial Treasurer. He's accompanied by Merlin Litchfield. They are seated in your gallery, and we'd ask that they stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

MR. SPEAKER: The Solicitor General.

**Bill 28****Victims' Programs Assistance Act**

MR. FOWLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 28, the Victims' Programs Assistance Act. This being a money Bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this Bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill addresses the use of fine surcharges levied against those convicted in Alberta of federal offences under the Criminal Code of Canada, the Narcotic Control Act, and the Food and Drugs Act. The surcharge funds are intended for use in programs aimed at assisting victims of crimes. The introduction of the surcharge against federal offences is in response to a growing public sentiment that victims have been ignored by the criminal justice system while offenders have been the focal point.

The Bill sets out a process by which surcharge funds would be collected, pooled, and administered in Alberta. It includes the establishment of a victims' programs assistance committee appointed by the Solicitor General to determine how the funds may best assist victims of crime.

Thank you.

[Leave granted; Bill 28 read a first time]

**Bill 229****An Act to Amend the Students Finance Act**

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 229, An Act to Amend the Students Finance Act.

The purpose of this Bill is to democratize the Students Finance Board by allowing members nominated by the Council of Alberta University Students and Alberta college and technical institute student executive councils to be members of the Students Finance Board for Alberta.

[Leave granted; Bill 229 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife, followed by the Minister of Health.

MR. FJORDBOTEN: Mr. Speaker, I rise to table a response to questions 224 and 261 as accepted by the government on Tuesday, April 3, 1990, and May 3, 1990, respectively.

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table with the Assembly the response to Motion for a Return 241.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased today to table with the Assembly copies of the Farming for the Future Progress Report for the year ended March 31, 1989.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table two documents. The first is a document entitled Workload Standards/Management Project: Initial Child Protection Standards, prepared by M. Jones, August 17, 1989. And the second document is the Child Welfare League of America 1989 updated standards.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Calgary-Millican.

MR. SHRAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased and really delighted today to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Legislature three members of the Calgary Chinese Cultural Centre Association. They're from Calgary, and Calgary, of course, as you know, has the most vibrant Chinese community in Canada. These three hard-working volunteers are trying to build the best Chinese cultural centre in Canada. I'd ask them to stand as I introduce them. We have with us the president, Victor Mah, and two members of the executive, two very hard-working members, Danny Ng and Malcolm Chow. They're sitting in the Speaker's gallery. I'd ask the members of the Legislature to give them the warm welcome of the Legislature.

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure and my privilege to introduce to you and to the Assembly 52 students from the Charlie Killam school in Camrose. They're seated in the members' gallery and escorted today by three teachers: Mr. Errol Moen, Mr. Bob Wall, and Mr. Art Fadum. I'd ask that they all stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce through you to members of the Assembly today members of local 6 of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees – they are social workers – in the galleries. I'd ask all members to join us in welcoming them.

MR. SPEAKER: The Solicitor General.

MR. FOWLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly 37 visitors from Marguerite D'Youville school, a French language school in St. Albert. In that group are 17 students from the province of Quebec as well. They are accompanied by Mr. Ron Pashko, M. Michel Nault, Mile Lisa LaRose. I would ask them to rise and accept the customary acknowledgement of the House.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. members, I think you all will join with me in celebrating the fourth anniversary of those members who were elected four years ago for the first time.

#### head: Oral Question Period

#### Social Workers' Strike

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the Minister of Labour to answer a pretty straightforward question about the United Nations International Labour Organisation's criticism of this government's legislation for public employees. I'm sure the minister will recall, seeing it was only yesterday, how she danced around – I thought I was at Arthur Murray's studio – and refused to admit that the ILO said that the legislation needed to be amended. Now, the question was plain and simple, and the point was that nobody – nobody – except the government thinks this legislation is fair. Even Mr. Justice Cooke said that these laws were a blunt instrument. Now, I don't want another tap dance from the minister. I want this minister to answer this very straightforward question: will the minister now undertake the ILO committee's request that the government

re-examine the provisions in question in order to confine the ban on strikes to services which are essential in the strict sense of the term?

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, as I recall, the judge said that an injunction is a blunt instrument, and I think I tend to agree with him on that. It is not a course of action that any government wishes to take at any time. But when you have two parties at the table, management and social workers in this case, employees, there is always a third party at the table, and that third party is the public. We have in this House and in the government an overriding responsibility to the public. We must be concerned about their well-being, and we must be concerned about their safety, particularly for those most vulnerable members of our society who have nowhere else to go for the help they need. In fact, I believe the judge did agree with us on the public safety issue, and that is the reason the injunction was granted.

MR. MARTIN: Well, I know I can't comment on the answers, Mr. Speaker, but . . .

It's interesting that they're so worried about the vulnerable people in society. I remember this government cutting the rates, they were so concerned about them.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, the nurses went on strike; the government introduced Bill 44. There were labour problems in

the construction industry; the government introduced Bill 110. In response to labour activity in 1986 the government sent Speedy Reidy and the jet-setters around the world, and we got Bills 21 and 22, the most draconian labour laws in Canada. I want to ask: when will the minister realize that the right to free collective bargaining is a fundamental principle? Legislating it won't stop it from happening, Mr. Speaker. All it does is make criminals out of valued employees.

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, when one is participating in a political debate, it is always a pleasure to be able to agree with the Leader of the Opposition on at least one point, and that one point is: these are valued employees. On that I wholeheartedly endorse the leader's comments. But at the same time, we have always to balance the larger public interest against those interests of the workers in this case.

I return to this point: how do you measure whether legislation is working or not working? Why don't you look to see whether the pay and caseloads are fair in comparison to the other provinces? Remember that we have not got another group to measure against because we employ virtually all the social workers in Alberta, so we have to look beyond our borders. B.C., Saskatchewan: they have a different process. I agree that they have a different process. Civil servants in B.C. and Saskatchewan have the right to strike. Fair enough. Have their civil servants got an extraordinarily high rate of pay, salary and benefits? Do their civil servants in social work have an extraordinarily low caseload? No, Mr. Speaker. The answer to those questions is as follows: they have roughly the same pay and benefits, and they have roughly the same caseload as we do in Alberta. If that isn't a measure of fairness, Mr. Speaker, I do not know what is.

MR. MARTIN: As usual the minister misses the point totally, and if her figures are as good as the other minister's, Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't even trust them, to tell you the truth.

Mr. Speaker, Chief Justice Brian Dickson of the Supreme Court of Canada has come out against this particular Act. He said, and I quote:

The prohibition of the right to strike of all hospital workers and public service employees was too drastic a measure for achieving the object of protecting essential services.

He also said:

The arbitration system provided by the Acts was not an adequate replacement for the employees' freedom to strike.

My question to this minister: why isn't the condemnation of the ILO, the Chief Justice of Canada, Alberta nurses, and now Alberta social workers enough to convince this minister that these unfair labour laws have to go?

MS McCOY: Let's look at the nurses' situation. Is the question that collective bargaining does not work or does work? The nurses, all . . . How many thousands of them are there? Thousands and thousands of nurses in this province just successfully concluded with the Alberta Hospital Association a collective agreement under the existing legislation. Now, does that or does that not prove that the law works? I would say, Mr. Speaker, that collective bargaining works, if they give it a chance. They've walked away from the table. We had a proposal. They put a counterproposal. We said: "Good. Now's the time to talk details." They opened the door and walked out. We offered mediation. They walked away. Now, is there or is there not a will to come and negotiate the terms of this agreement? We are saying now, "We're ready."

As soon as they're back to work – if they can be back to work tomorrow morning, we'll be at the table tomorrow morning, and we are willing and eager and ready. We've put out an official call to the union. We've said to the president of that union, "Please help get those social workers back, because the only place this will be resolved is at the table." We're prepared to put all the time aside that is necessary. We will do the deal at the table where it belongs.

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition. Second.

MR. MARTIN: The point is that there isn't free collective bargaining, Ms Minister.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to designate my second question to the Member for Edmonton-Calder.

MS MJOLSNESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Throughout the course of the strike by the province's social workers the Minister of Family and Social Services has done his best to deny that there's a problem with caseloads. Yesterday he insisted that the average income security caseload in Alberta was 90 cases per worker. This is vastly different from what social workers are saying. As a matter of fact, yesterday a social worker called me after hearing the minister throwing around numbers in question period. She said that in her office there are six workers responsible for more than 1,900 income security clients. Now, let me spell it out to the minister: that's more than 300 cases each. To the Minister of Family and Social Services: does this minister stand by his numbers which he quoted yesterday, or will he admit that he knows that his numbers are totally inaccurate?

MR. OLDRING: Wrong, wrong, wrong again, Mr. Speaker. The minister stands by his numbers, and I would want to even point out to the member that the deputy minister of this department has sworn out an affidavit that has been filed with the courthouse to attest to those particular numbers. Again I'd want to correct the member on her preamble. She began by pointing out that this minister has not acknowledged that there's a caseload problem. We all along have said that in some offices yes, caseloads are unbalanced and are higher than we'd like to see. We have all along said that we are going to continue to take corrective action, to continue to build upon the initiatives and the steps that we have already taken this past year. Again I would want to point out the numbers I stated yesterday in the House, because you misquoted me on those as well: in income security I said a provincewide average of 187. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order.

MR. OLDRING: I compare that to other provinces. I look at British Columbia where it's 210; I look at Ontario where it's 285.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that we recognize that there are inequities across the province. We recognize that there are some regional discrepancies. We've addressed them in some areas. We're going to continue to address them, and we want to do it in a spirit of co-operation. We want to involve social workers. We want them to be a part of the solution. We're prepared to work with them, and I'm confident that once they return to work tomorrow, they'll be prepared to work with us as well.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Edmonton-Calder.

MS MJOLSNESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I know what the minister said because it was in *Hansard*, and there are other things that the minister said yesterday that had social workers shaking their heads. The minister stated yesterday "that the Child Welfare League of America . . . recommends a caseload of between 25 to 35." But in fact they do not. Given that the league actually recommends between 12 and 17 cases per worker, can the minister explain why the numbers that he gave in the House yesterday and the actual league standards are so totally different? [interjections]

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, the . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Let the minister . . . [interjections] Thank you. Let him at least get started.

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, they ask questions, but they don't listen to answers.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. I think the point is made. Please continue, Mr. Minister.

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Edmonton-Calder is going to be pre-empting the Liberal leader, I'm sure, with her question, and perhaps she's spending too much time reading their news clippings.

The member is selecting specific types of child welfare cases, and we're not talking about just specific types. We're talking about a blend of all the types of cases that individuals have to respond to. [interjections] Again, Mr. Speaker, consultation with the Child Welfare League suggests that those numbers are not out of line.

MS BARRETT: The Dick Johnston school of counting.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Calder, please.

MS MJOLSNESS: Final supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Well, as a minister I think we could at least expect him to get his facts straight. I'll ask this minister: how can he expect to have any credibility with social workers, or with any Albertans for that matter, when he deliberately distorts his numbers to make himself look good?

MR. OLDRING: Well, Mr. Speaker, I realize that the member is dealing with prewritten questions and she had her response written out before I gave my answer, but again I can only say that those statistics are quoted from a sworn affidavit by a very senior member of this department. He's obviously gone through the department very, very thoroughly to make sure that those numbers are appropriate and that those numbers do reflect true situations. But again I can only reiterate that obviously you can't take those numbers and those statistics and apply them to each and every office. We've said all along that there are some extraordinary situations. There are caseloads that are higher than we'd like them to be in some specific offices, and we have addressed it in a very substantive way. We've made considerable progress. We want to continue to be able to make progress. We want to continue to be able to implement changes, and we want to do it in co-operation with social workers and Albertans. We've done it in the past, and we'll do it again in the future.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the hon. minister implied that social workers and their caseloads were not unduly severe insofar as Alberta was concerned compared with other jurisdictions. To add credibility to his argument, he quoted from the Child Welfare League of America saying that in the area of child welfare Alberta was within those league standards. I've tabled today the league's most recent and updated standards. They set out standards that are substantially lower than the minister quoted yesterday. I have also tabled a report dated August 1989 which is an internal report of the ministry of social services wherein recommendations as to caseload are set out. That report falls clearly on the side of the social workers. My first question to the minister is this: given that the league statistics, the league standards, the document that I've tabled today, show and suggest caseload standards substantially less than the minister quoted yesterday in the area of child welfare, how can the minister make those improper and inaccurate statements and then hide behind some deputy minister's affidavit? Read the document, Mr. Minister. Explain it to us.

MR. SPEAKER: The minister will be allowed to proceed, but my goodness gracious — goodness gracious a few dozen times — it's the same question; it's repetitious. There has to be some creativity in this place.

Minister, very briefly.

MR. OLDRING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I realize what a difficult time the Liberal leader is having in adjusting to the Legislative Assembly, and I know that his questions are prewritten and he can't make those adjustments. I have answered that question, but I want to reiterate again that the reference point that the leader is referring to is in response to specific types of cases as opposed to an average amount of all types of cases that child care workers are required to deal with. There's clearly a difference between the two. He's having a difficult time understanding it. Perhaps I can spend a little more time with him and coach him and help him along.

MR. SPEAKER: Let's go on with the supplementary, somehow more creative.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I have also tabled today an internal report dated August 1989. That report examines the standards in British Columbia and in Saskatchewan, and it looks at the Child Welfare League standards. It says that all of that considered, Alberta has standards that are too difficult for social workers to meet. I'd like to know, Mr. Minister, why no action has been taken by the minister on this internal report that suggests capping on caseloads? Why no action since August?

MR. OLDRING: Again the member is ill informed. I had to muse, in fact, when I looked at their news release when they referred to a buried government caseload study. Well, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't buried. We're talking about a study that was commissioned by this government. We're talking about a study that involved 111 front-line caseworkers. We're talking a study the results of which were provided to in excess of 100 front-line caseworkers because we wanted their input. We wanted their feedback on the direction in there, and we wanted to get on with the implementation. I said last week in this Assembly that we were very close to establishing a caseload model as it relates to child welfare.

I want to refer to the report the member has been so kind as to table. If you look at page 1 under the second paragraph in the introduction, it points out:

Since the consultees will be directly affected by whatever standards are eventually determined, a degree of bias must be acknowledged. Despite this, the literature indicates that line staff estimates of workload demands are fairly accurate. Field testing is required prior to the integration of these measures as standards, with a departmental workload management system.

I indicated a week ago that we were looking at piloting caseload models in a number of our offices in this province: exactly what the report is calling upon us to do. Again, Mr. Speaker, this report is part of our action; it's part of our commitment to reducing caseload standards. We are committed to reducing the caseload size. I refer to a document brought forward by the Member for Edmonton-Avonmore . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. minister. Perhaps you might wait for a question from Edmonton-Avonmore.

Final, Edmonton-Glengarry.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I think I can now see why we have a strike. The minister is getting bum information, bad information from his own departmental officials, and he can't even quote statistics that are correct. Now, a report has been tabled. There are recommendations in that report. It's been sitting with the minister since August of 1989. Will the minister agree and commit to putting those recommendations into effect insofar as child welfare is concerned so that we can end this strike now?

MR. OLDRING: It seems, Mr. Speaker, that the Liberal leader doesn't have a grasp of the situation. Obviously, I would assume that he hasn't taken the time to read the full report yet or he'd recognize just exactly how complex it is and how many issues still aren't identified and resolved within this report. This report is a major initiative of this government. This report is taking us towards a course of appropriate action. Again, I've talked about the implementation of these recommendations. I've talked about the piloting that we're going to do., I've talked about the social reform that I'm bringing forward in this province, and this will be a part of it.

This one big step in the right direction is a very unique step. There's only one other province that's really trying to grasp and take hold of some meaningful resolutions to this situation, only one other province that's even doing it, and that's Manitoba. We are leaders, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to child welfare. We're going to continue to lead the way. We're going to continue to work as we have in this report with front-line caseworkers to make sure that the initiatives and the steps that we are taking are appropriate. We are going to solve these challenges working in co-operation with Albertans and social workers.

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, yesterday Court of Queen's Bench Justice Alan Cooke ordered illegally striking social workers back to work because it was clear to him, and I suspect to others, that the safety of Albertans who rely on our services was indeed at serious risk. But while getting social workers back on the job will end the threat to public safety, it obviously doesn't resolve the outstanding concerns that social workers have, and reference has been frequently made to those concerns by others. Obviously, it's important that negotiators for government on the one

hand and social workers on the other get back to the bargaining table as soon as possible. Will the minister responsible for the public service elaborate on her earlier response today and tell us what specific steps are being taken to ensure that bargaining does indeed get under way again?

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, the member is quite correct. The injunction order was signed this morning by the Queen's Bench judge, and it was filed and served on the Alberta Union of Public Employees and on its lawyers and is now in effect. That means, of course, that social workers must go back to work, and we hope and expect that they will, knowing full well that they are caring and responsible professionals, and we know that they do legitimately care about their clients who are, of course, at risk. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

MS McCOY: That takes care of the safety issue. There is no question that where the dispute will be settled is at the table with two parties sitting down and taking as long as is necessary to come to a negotiated settlement. We are ready. We are saying that as soon as they are back to work, then we're back at the table, and we are urging the union to have their negotiating team back at the table at the same time. We have officially contacted the union and asked them to come back just as soon as they're back to work, because we want to start the next round of negotiations as quickly as possible and we want to keep them going just as long as it is necessary to come to a negotiated settlement.

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, the social workers aren't the only government workers seeking a new contract. There are, of course, 12 AUPE subsidiaries, and until yesterday, at least, bargaining in these subsidiaries had been unilaterally suspended by AUPE. Could the minister tell us what bargaining activity, if any, is taking place with our other government employees?

MS McCOY: Well, Mr. Speaker, yesterday Pat Wocknitz, the president of AUPE, sent us a letter saying that she had lifted the unilateral suspension that she had put on all the other negotiations and suggesting that we recommence negotiations in subsidiary 3 and subsidiary 10. We wrote back immediately, within hours, before lunchtime as I recall, and said that, yes, we welcomed her offer to recommence bargaining on those two subsidiaries. In fact, we suggested that there were two other subsidiaries who could immediately go back to bargaining, and those were 1 and 4. I'm pleased to report that subsidiaries 3 and 8 were bargaining this morning, and 4 and 1 were to commence bargaining at 2 o'clock this afternoon. To my knowledge standing here, they are in fact continuing those negotiations. In addition, we suggested to the union that our negotiating team and their negotiating team get together and schedule bargaining sessions for the other seven subsidiaries that are still outstanding, and that was accepted by Mrs. Wocknitz. We would expect to have dates and places set for those any day now.

I should mention also that the master agreement, which applies to all of the civil servants right across the board on the general terms and conditions of their employment, was settled a couple of weeks ago, so that large general matter has reached a conclusion. So overall, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to report that the negotiations are ongoing, and certainly, from our point of

view, the faster we can get to the table on all 12 subsidiaries, the faster we can come to an agreement that is fair to everybody, and that *is* the result we are eagerly anticipating.

### Train Tours

MR. DOYLE: Mr. Speaker, the Department of Tourism has put out a tender for the lease of a steam engine by the Rocky Mountain Rail Society. Engine 6060 has been a labour of love for volunteers for many years. They put in hard work and some \$600,000. While a tender has not yet been let, I can surely bet that Vista Railtour Services of B.C. will get the award because they are represented by a former minister of this government Mr. John Zaozirny. To the Minister of Tourism: when it comes to deciding which group will lease this engine, will the minister accommodate and recognize the volunteer efforts of Albertans or will the friends of the government have the inside track?

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, we commend the volunteers in this province for all the work they have done in the past. Undoubtedly steam train tourism is growing with excitement across the province. There are several groups that are quite interested in putting in a steam train facility, and there's quite a bit of work being done trying to get those groups together to set up an economically viable operation that can run on its own merits without us as government facilitating it on an ad hoc basis. The department has sent out letters to different groups that are showing some idea that they want to participate, and I'm sure that the volunteer services that have been put in in the past by groups will be recognized. It's not going to be easy. It's a big operation, and unless they set up a corporation, prove their management ability, and it is acceptable to CN and CP, they will have a problem getting running rights on any track unless it's their own track.

MR. DOYLE: Mr. Speaker, I believe the minister is fudging just a little bit. This government has tourist dollars to spend on chess tournaments that never see the light of day. It has money for water slides at West Edmonton Mall and the Stetson land company. Is this why the department doesn't have any money to assist volunteer groups in running trains throughout the province of Alberta?

MR. SPARROW: Very, very interesting rundown. I know the government of Alberta has quite an investment in 6060. The ownership of the engine basically is with the province of Alberta. I don't know of the projects you're talking about or the proponents behind them, but I know the department has put out a request to seek proposals from various groups to see what interest they have, with a good, viable plan to operate. There have been requests coming in to us to designate the engine to their train, and it'll be interesting to see those proposals as they come forward.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Whitemud, followed by Smoky River.

### Lottery Funds

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I raised questions regarding the allocation of community facility enhancement program funding in Tory ridings. At that time, I filed a reference to the member representing lesser Smoky Lake, and

the Premier indicated that the minister responsible would respond. I have additional information. I'll file copies of this particular clipping, but just let me quote:

Fort Macleod has been allocated a \$220,000 share of the program which council feels is administered on a first come-first serve basis until the funds are expended.

In reference to the CFEP, the minister representing the riding "reviews applications from his constituency prior to forwarding them for final approval" to the hon. minister responsible. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, "roughly \$62,000 remains and must be used, or lost, by year's end according to council." That's the information that was provided to them directly by the member of the riding.

MR. SPEAKER: Now the question please, hon. member.

MR. WICKMAN: The question, Mr. Speaker, to the minister responsible for lotteries: why does he allocate specific dollars to Tory ridings when in the past he has claimed that the program is based on need? Why is he doing this?

MR. KOWALSKI: Well, at the outset, Mr. Speaker, I'm unaware of any Member of this Legislative Assembly that represents the constituency of lesser Smoky Lake. The second point: if the hon. member would like to see the latest update with respect to community facility enhancement program applications and approvals, a news release was issued May 7, 1990; that's yesterday. It lists some 58 new community facility enhancement program grants announced in the month of April of 1990. The hon. member can, as can anyone else, go through the list and verify.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, in the pamphlet that was issued when the Premier of the province of Alberta announced the community facility enhancement program on October 17, 1988, the application process contains the following: application forms are available through the office of the minister responsible for lotteries or your MLA. It only strikes me, Mr. Speaker, that MLAs on the government side and I know MLAs on the Official Opposition have obviously taken the time to read the pamphlet because a fair number of MLAs representing the government side and certainly representing the Official Opposition side have consulted with me and discussed community facility enhancement applications. It's remarkable to me on this particular day in May of 1990 that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud still has not taken the time to read this document, which is nearly two years old.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, my question was unanswered. The area of the minister responsible for lotteries is probably the most difficult area to get information from, including the agencies he represents, as simple a thing as getting the bylaws of the Wild Rose Foundation.

In any case, Mr. Speaker, to the Member for Lesser Slave Lake, my apologies.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister responsible for lotteries: will the minister file with this House a listing of the allocations for all ridings, including opposition ridings?

MR. KOWALSKI: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know where the hon. gentleman is, but on the one year anniversary of the community facility enhancement program I made public – in fact, we held a press conference here in the press room of the

Legislative Assembly and issued a document which contained a specific listing of every, every, every expenditure under the community facility enhancement program. Not just a couple of minutes ago I pointed out to the hon. member that on a monthly basis we issue a news release, and there's one dated May 7, 1990, which covers all of the approvals of the community facility enhancement program. Each time a community facility enhancement program application is approved, it is made public. There is a news release that's provided. In addition to that, there is a presentation plaque that is provided to the local beneficiary group. There is a letter that is provided to the local beneficiary group, signed by myself. We even put up a sign displaying on it the involvement of volunteers throughout Alberta, and there are now some 1,400 such groups and such announcements and such bits of information available. Mr. Speaker, it's remarkable to me that . . . There is more than we can do. Surely, there's a responsibility on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud to take a few minutes off periodically and start doing some reading.

MR. SPEAKER: Smoky River, followed by Edmonton-Kingsway.

#### Canola Plant in Sexsmith

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week allegations were made in the House that a company called MacKay Seeds, which is supposedly partly owned by a relation of a relation of a previous sitting member, had been given exclusive rights to the seed program at Alberta Terminal Canola Crushers Ltd. and that there was some wrongdoing in the process. Would the minister indeed enlighten this House as to what the wrongdoing was and just what the process was that actually took place?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the hon./Member for Westlock-Sturgeon pay attention because I think this was the question he was really getting at when he was confusing Alberta Terminal Canola Crushers Ltd. with Alberta Terminals Ltd. In checking with the board of directors of Alberta Terminal Canola Crushers Ltd., the fact remains that they conducted a public tender process to determine the firm that would source seed for the current crop year, and MacKay Seeds won the public tender process.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been alleged that MacKay Seeds is being subsidized by the government with this program for interest-free money to purchase this seed and that indeed MacKay Seeds is the one that is being subsidized. I just wonder if the minister could clarify for this House and for the person who brought forward these allegations, the basic spokesman for the Liberal funny farm.

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, it's normal practice in the industry to provide interest-free funding for the provision of the seed. If there is any subsidy involved here, it certainly is not to the seed company. The benefit would be received by the farmer.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Kingsway.

### **Cormie Ranch Sale**

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first question is to the Treasurer. Last week Albertans witnessed the spectacle of the provincial cabinet openly split over the sale of the Cormie ranch to a Japanese consortium to build a \$1 billion recreation complex. The Minister of Economic Development and Trade even had a draft release made up to announce the \$6 million sale. Now, given that this government has too often been caught making economic decisions based on political expediency and personal friendships, will this Treasurer tell us what criteria and what process this cabinet will put in place to determine the economic, social, and environmental viability of this project?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, the member will know that we dealt with this question last Tuesday, when I was asked what the government's position was with respect to this piece of property. We said then that no decision had been made and that we had to balance the concerns of both the development side and the environmental side with the whole question as to whether or not dollars would flow to the contract holders. Of course, there are several competing priorities here.

I remind the member and I remind the other people who are prattling in the opposition across the way that they should not depend upon press releases to reflect government decisions. In fact, we have a way in which these announcements are made. The announcements are made, Mr. Speaker, through the normal process. When cabinet comes to a decision, that amount of information will be provided. In this case, when that decision is made, it will be made by the order in council route. Nothing really has changed since that point, Mr. Speaker. I remind the members across the way that they should, in fact, pay attention to what we say here, not what they report to have seen somewhere else.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps the Treasurer would admit that the only reason the Cormie ranch sale is even before the provincial cabinet is because it involves the sale of agricultural land to foreign investors. Given that the Cormies could turn around tomorrow, if they wanted to, and sell this land to some Canadian without even asking cabinet approval, how can the Treasurer justify his statement of last week that "there will be no sale of that property which puts one nickel in the hands of the Cormie family?" How can he live up to that brag?

MR. JOHNSTON: Well, Mr. Speaker, sometimes we have to take the time to explain the process to this member. We have seen that what is obvious to most Albertans, what is obvious to most members of the Assembly is painfully not obvious to this member. I'm afraid we have the case here again where he doesn't understand the way in which the process operates. If he took the time to read the legislation under which foreign land ownership operates, he would in fact see that it requires approval of the government before land is transferred to foreign owners. He doesn't have to read into the question, Mr. Speaker, any kind of slur or slant or any kind of pejorative statement which reflects on this government. In fact, we are careful to ensure that agricultural land is preserved, because for us the

agricultural heritage, the agricultural future is a strong part of our economic future.

I can point out, Mr. Speaker, that we do have other ways in which we can protect the contract holders. I don't want to give a legal opinion, but I can assure you that we have good legal advice which will guide us as to how to protect those contract holders. We intend to do just that. We want to be assured that the contract holders' interests are protected if this transaction does, in fact, take place. That's our objective, Mr. Speaker. There's a very clear reason for that to happen. I know Albertans understand it. I know it just takes a little longer for this Member for Edmonton-Kingsway to get it through his head.

### **Multicultural Commission**

MR. GIBEAULT: Mr. Speaker, the only way that government agencies can function effectively is when the leaders of those agencies enjoy public confidence and trust, and it's now clear that the scandal and controversy surrounding the chairman of the Alberta Multicultural Commission has totally compromised his ability to lead that agency. So I'd like to ask the chairman of the commission: would he now be prepared to do the honourable thing, no longer tarnish the reputation of the commission along with his own, and resign his position as chairman?

MR. ZARUSKY: No, Mr. Speaker.

MR. GIBEAULT: Well, it's really regrettable that this government has no meaningful conflict-of-interest legislation. Before he totally compromises the reputation of the commission, will he reflect one more time about this, stop doing further damage to the commission's and the government's relations with the multicultural community, and step down?

MR. ZARUSKY: Mr. Speaker, the business of the commission is going on as usual, and everything is running smoothly in the commission office. There's no further comment.

MR. MAIN: Mr. Speaker, if I could supplement the answer of the chairman of the Multicultural Commission, which of course is a responsibility of the Department of Culture and Multiculturalism, I can tell the Assembly that I have not had one phone call, one representation, one letter, one comment, one hint that in any way anyone has any difficulty with the excellent job the Member for Redwater-Andrew has been doing as chairman of the Multicultural Commission.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-North West.

### **Cochrane Ranche Society**

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was pleased today to hear a couple of ministers comment on volunteerism, because my question today is to the Minister of Culture and Multiculturalism and deals with that very topic. I'd like to read a quote from a letter the minister wrote to the Friends of the Cochrane Ranche Historical Society, dated April 9, 1990. The sentence reads as follows:

Should your Society continue to find itself unable to accept the Western Heritage Centre project, and further to campaign against the location of the Centre on the Ranche, as is suggested in the

March 13, 1990 correspondence, I would reluctantly find it necessary to terminate our Master Co-operating Agreement.

In light of this government sending the Member for Red Deer-North to Japan to talk about volunteerism and how this government values volunteers in this province, my question to the minister is this: is the minister now declaring to volunteer groups that government policy is that government holds the big club and you do it my way or it's the highway?

MR. MAIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad of the opportunity to stand and again express on behalf of the government, the people of Alberta our deep appreciation for all the work that volunteers do right across the province. There are many volunteer groups, some of which have the support of government. For example, there'd be a volunteer group operating in Calgary-North West working to get that member elected that I don't expect would find great favour over here. That's not to say volunteerism is not a good thing.

With respect to the volunteers at the Cochrane Ranche and the Friends of the Cochrane Ranche Historical Society there is an agreement under which the friends society operates in conjunction with the Department of Culture and Multiculturalism, and the objectives of the friends are to support and enhance the, activities of the department on that historic site. My correspondence with Mr. John Gray spells out that that in fact is the case, and I have not had any further correspondence from them. If he and his organization, which is designed and set up to do that particular job, don't want to do that particular job, then I can see no reason why they would want to stay in that same organization.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, Mr. Speaker, the members certainly do want to continue with their job, so my question to the minister is: does this minister believe it's appropriate for a minister of this government to force compliance upon volunteer groups by threats and intimidation, as I just indicated?

MR. MAIN: Mr. Speaker, there are master co-operating agreements that this department has with many friends organizations, all of whom are volunteers. The agreements that we have with the various friends – friends of the Cochrane Ranche, Friends of the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village, friends of Dunvegan, friends of Victoria Settlement, and on and on and on – provide a framework within which these organizations accept donations, manage the donated funds to enhance the operations of these various facilities. If the members of the organization are not interested in complying with those objectives of the organization, then there's no sense in continuing to work for that organization as a volunteer. Perhaps those who are interested in doing something other than that would want to set up a different volunteer organization and offer their volunteer services to that organization, but there is no sense, Mr. Speaker, in working in a co-operative arrangement with an organization designed to help and co-operate with you, when they don't want to co-operate with you.

MR. SPEAKER: Point of order. The Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order with respect to the comments made by the hon. Member for Edmon-

ton-Mill Woods in respect to the Member for Redwater-Andrew. I would cite Standing Order 23(i) and *Beauchesne* 409(7) and 411(5) and would just indicate that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods is clearly out of order with respect to his comments.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

MR. GIBEAULT: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to refer the hon. Deputy Government House Leader to *Beauchesne*, section 69. It may be an awkward question for this government. The Member for Redwater-Andrew and other members might not like to hear these kinds of comments, but I can tell you that people are talking to me: how can we have a person as chairman of the Multicultural Commission who doesn't have public confidence when all the time the headlines are about the controversy surrounding their lands deals? So, Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate their touchiness on the issue, but it's their own problem of their own making.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. members, even before the point of order was raised, the Chair asked for delivery of the Blues. The matter will be dealt with later in the afternoon taking into account the references, whether they were relevant or irrelevant.

The Chair also needs to bring to the attention of the House the fact that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder was in breach of parliamentary language earlier in question period. The Blues are here, the quote was made: "when he" – the Minister of Family and Social Services – "deliberately distorts his numbers to make himself look good." That's clearly unparliamentary language with respect to sections . . . [interjections] Order please. Order, hon. members. [interjection] Excuse me, hon. member. If the Leader of the Opposition is finished, perhaps I'll continue.

*Beauchesne* 489: it's indeed listed there; check through that. It's also there with regard to 492. I wonder if the Member for Edmonton-Calder would be prepared to withdraw.

MS MJOLSNES: Okay, Mr. Speaker. I would withdraw that comment if it's unparliamentary.

#### head: Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Might we have unanimous consent to revert to Introduction of Special Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

Somewhere down here I've got someone who wants in. Thank you. Calgary-Bow.

#### head: Introduction of Special Guests (reversion)

MRS. B. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce Neil Webber, who's sitting in the members' gallery. He's my predecessor, former MLA for Calgary-Bow, and during the 13 years of his time in this Chamber, Mr. Webber was Associate Minister of Telephones, minister of social services, Minister of Education, Minister of Energy. May we ask him to rise now, please, and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.



### head: **Written Questions**

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I move that all written questions appearing on the Order Paper except 218, 219, and 257 stand and retain their places on the Order Paper.

[Motion carried]

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

- (1) How many suicides were attempted or committed by children with child welfare status in the fiscal years ended:
  - (a) March 31, 1987,
  - (b) March 31, 1988, and
  - (c) March 31, 1989?
- (2) How many children with child welfare status were considered to be at risk of suicide during the fiscal year ended March 31, 1989?

MR. SPEAKER: We have a procedural difficulty with respect to reporting in *Hansard*. I know that it's a very brief answer, but I wonder if perhaps, Deputy Government House Leader, when you make your response you would be kind enough to rise, make your comment, and then we can proceed. Thank you very much.

MR. GOGO: The response to Written Question 218, Mr. Speaker, is: rejected.

219. Mrs. Hewes asked the government the following question:  
How many of the child welfare workers employed by the Department of Family and Social Services are registered social workers?

MR. GOGO: Rejected, Mr. Speaker.

257. Mrs. Hewes asked the government the following question:  
Has the government prepared any estimates of the annual cost that would be incurred by extending pension benefits equivalent to the widows' pension to single Albertans of both sexes who are in the same age range and the same economic circumstances as a person qualifying for a pension under the Widows' Pension Act? What is the government's estimate of undertaking such changes?

MR. GOGO: That written question, Mr. Speaker, is accepted by the government.

### **Motions for Returns**

MR. SPEAKER: Deputy Government House Leader, the procedural motion with respect to Motions for Returns.

MR. GOGO: I move, Mr. Speaker, that all motions for returns appearing on the Order Paper except the following: 184, 194, 237, 238, 263, 273, 282, 284, and 293, stand and retain their places on the Order Paper.

MR. McINNIS: What about 250?

MR. GOGO: Motion for Return 250 will be accepted by the minister, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Perhaps hon. members will allow the Table and the Chair to be dealing with the procedural issues rather than shouting across the House in future.

[Motion carried]

184. Mrs. Hewes moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a detailed account of the complete expenditures for the Premier's Commission on Future Health Care for Albertans.

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, the government accepts Motion for Return 184.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. A call for the question then.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

[Motion carried]

194. Mrs. Hewes moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing every study made by or for the government since April 1, 1988, on salary levels of employees working in any of the voluntary human service sectors.

MR. BRASSARD: Mr. Speaker, I reject that question. There's only been one such study made by this government, and that has already been dealt with in this Assembly.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, I regret that the government doesn't want to accept this motion. This is a study that is of considerable interest and importance to voluntary groups throughout the province. The study was done in order to confirm whether or not there is great disparity in the wage and salary levels between people working in the public service and in a variety of voluntary agencies in the human service sector. It would be very helpful not only to the agencies themselves but to municipalities who must deal with these agencies through FCSS and other granting systems to have the kind of information, the kind of guidelines that this study would provide. I see no reason whatsoever why the government would decline to table the study and make it public so that this publicly paid for study could be used by all citizens and organizations in Alberta.

[Motion lost]

237. Rev. Roberts moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing documents prepared by the government presenting a detailed breakdown of the government's response to the recommendations in both the Watanabe and Hyndman reports and an indication of which recommendations will be acted upon in 1990, 1991, 1992, and after.

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, the government rejects this motion for a return mainly because the information doesn't exist. We have the two reports, both the Watanabe and the Premier's commission report, which I have addressed certainly during my estimates in the last number of weeks, and the recommendations are being reviewed by government. There's no way that I can provide to the hon. member that which he's demanding in his question, and therefore I reject the motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Other members? Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I don't know whether I heard the minister correctly that the information doesn't exist. I would have thought that by asking for what government response has been prepared to the recommendations in the Watanabe report and indicating which recommendations would be acted upon, that would be a relatively straightforward request. For the minister to indicate that such information doesn't exist seems to be saying to me and to other members of the Assembly that the government hasn't even evaluated these reports, which I find more astounding than simply denying it because they don't want to share it. [interjections]

AN HON. MEMBER: Read the motion, Bob.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: That's what it indicates to me, Mr. Speaker, unless, as I said in my opening comment, I misunderstood the minister to say that the information doesn't exist. It seems to me to be a fairly straightforward request, and I find that very, very hard to believe: that such information hasn't yet even been prepared by the government.

MR. SPEAKER: Additional? Edmonton-Centre.

REV. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, want to echo the comments of my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View. I know I've asked for a detailed response, but I would think that given the amount of money we've allocated to the department for its policy and planning division that . . . I guess the word "detailed" might have been a bit too strong, but at least some evaluation, some response to the recommendations of these two reports upon which so much money has already been expended. I thought it was around \$4.2 million for the Hyndman report at least. Two years in the gathering of information from Albertans throughout the province and having submissions from hundreds and hundreds of groups – and I think the politics here of raising expectations. The government went out and said, "Okay, we want to hear from Albertans." Albertans have spoken, and the Hyndman report commissioners have spoken, way back in January. In fact, I'm sure it was even – well, I'd speculate some of it might have been available to the minister even before that. We've had five months now, and I would think that they would have some clear idea about which ones they were wanting to act on sooner than later.

Now, if there's some document which says, "No; we just haven't made up our mind on this or that or the other thing," then that might be fine, but at least some initial breakdown in terms of the response to these two detailed reports which are seminal to the department. I think that kind of obligation on the part of the minister and the department is something that shows to Albertans . . . I mean, it's not possible to us that these kinds of documents don't exist. It sounds like the reports instead are being put on the shelf and not being acted upon, and if we don't get some response soon, then that can be the only conclusion that we and many Albertans can draw.

The other point about it is that, as the minister knows, both reports, the Hyndman report in particular, also put some specific dates for action in, as it says, 1991, or that by 1992 this should be done or by 1995 these things should be done. We know in this Legislature and in the health care system that if we're going to accept one of these recommendations and have it come to pass by the time frame in which the report is suggesting, we

need to know sooner than later if, in fact, we're even going to begin to go down that road. The report talks about the health authorities; that the province be divided into 11 health authorities throughout the province and that this should coincide with municipal elections and the municipal boundaries and that this should take place, I believe they said, at least by 1994-1995. Now, we saw what it took to get the Senatorial Selection Act up and operative. If we're going to go down the same road for the health authorities as the Hyndman commission recommends, then we need to get working on it sooner than later. I want to know if this minister is committed to that recommendation and if she's going to act on it, because it'll take at least that amount of time to implement.

The same with the health advocate. The Hyndman report calls for the health advocate to be in place in the next couple of years and that the mandate of the medical research foundation be expanded by April 1, 1991; that health promotion activities in the province get to that 1 percent solution – 1 percent of health care spending be devoted to new and innovative health promotion and illness prevention projects – and that this should get operative by 1994-95. Some are already saying it's going to be too late; we should do that by this fiscal year.

But what's the response? Well, maybe government is just saying: "Yes, this is a very nice study, and we congratulate the people for doing it. We don't know what we're going to do with it. We're studying it. We've got a four- or five-department review going on. We'll take our sweet time, and who knows if we get around to implementing a little bit of this, a little bit of that, sometime this decade, sometime next decade . . ." I've heard the minister say it's a vision of what things should be like in the year 2000, 2005. But that's not what the report comes down in many responses. It's saying that by 1995 this should be in place: the health ethics centre. I've already got a private member's Bill on the Order Paper calling for the establishment of such an ethics centre for the province, to help providers and consumers of health care really think through very thorny ethical problems which are developing and continue to challenge the health care system. Is the minister saying we haven't looked at that; we don't know if we're going to go in that direction or not? There's no study, there's no document which says that yes, we're going to go with it; or no, we're not; or we still need some time.

All I want is some clue, some idea, some evaluation, as detailed as might be possible, about these things, and I don't think it's too much to ask, as responsible legislators, by people in this Legislative Assembly who want to call the government to account, particularly when it's gone into such a major endeavour.

I think New Brunswick had a similar report last fall, which came out in October or November. It was already in the throne speech of the government of New Brunswick earlier this spring. A number of initiatives which the report on health care recommended in November were acted upon by a throne speech just four or five months later. So it is possible; it can be done, whether it's by statute or by a throne speech or even by a response as detailed as government might have at this point, in terms of where we're going with the Hyndman report, not to mention the Watanabe report.

Now, we tabled in the Assembly ourselves our response. It certainly wasn't as full as I'd like it to be. I want to go back to it and add to it in terms of the utilization of medical services; a number of things continue to develop in that very important area of health care policy and spending. But I haven't heard anything from the government in terms of whether they . . . Well, all right, I'm sorry. We've got a monitoring committee, and I'm

glad to see that that's up and running and that there'll be some other things coming up. But it talks about dialogue and biennial conferences and conventions involving people in health care discussion and debate in the province; that these things should get operative sooner than later. I don't know. I mean, is this a part of a nice group under Dr. Watanabe who have put together some nice ideas? What's the response to that and a number of other initiatives that are recommended by the Watanabe report?

So, Mr. Speaker, we're serving the minister notice that these reports are important to the life of this province and the health care of this province. We don't agree with all of the recommendations ourselves. A number of initiatives and recommendations we do agree with; others we want some further clarification on. We're still debating. But at least as a responsible caucus we're dealing with them, and we're trying to present them and respond to them because they're important issues. I think the least we can ask is that the government, given its mighty resources, the personnel, and the policy and planning people over there, could by this point have come up with some reflection, some analysis, some evaluation of both of these very important reports.

I'm afraid the conclusion of many I've spoken to is: "Well, we just don't know if the government is taking it seriously or not. It's just going to be put on the shelf." I said, "Well, let's hope not, because there are some things that need to be acted upon." But at this point the limbo is just unacceptable, and I think that if we don't have action on this at least by the fall session, other measures will have to be taken to really get to the heart of the matter of what government is going to do to evaluate and respond to these two very, very important reports that have cost so much money and have raised the expectation of so many Albertans.

Thank you.

[Motion lost]

238. Rev. Roberts moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all evaluation reports prepared by the Department of Health on the six-month pilot project called Medilink, begun in the fall of 1989, including the evaluation of three types of health care cards.

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, I'm prepared to accept this motion for a return with one amendment, which I have here and which was earlier provided to your office. The amendment is that the word "three" in the last line of the motion be changed to "two." Then it would be acceptable.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Does the Member for Edmonton-Centre as well as other people have copies of that amendment? The question asked by the Chair: is that regarded as a friendly amendment?

REV. ROBERTS: Yes, indeed.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

[Motion as amended carried]

250. Mr. McInnis moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of the two reports of a Task Force on Environmental Law Enforcement in Alberta

referred to on page 23 in the 1987-88 report of Alberta Environment.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, as hon. members know, certainly the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place, the Minister of the Environment has always been extremely co-operative when it comes to sharing with hon. members of the House all matters which are of an environmental nature, particularly those that protect the public of Alberta. Having discussed Motion for a Return 250 with the hon. Minister of the Environment, he would accept supplying that information to the hon. member.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, he almost said that with a straight face too.

[Motion carried]

263. Mr. Bruseker moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a detailed breakdown of all grants under the Team Tourism program indicating the names of the recipients, total value of each grant, purpose of each grant, and total amount of funds delivered under the program.

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, Motion for a Return 263 is rejected, as this information is already public information. Team Tourism is a lottery funded program, and the detailed reports of all the funds delivered under the program are received by Alberta lotteries and made public periodically from time to time. In fact, the Tourism Industry Association of Alberta is the purveyor of funds as per agreement with lotteries, and TIAAL-TA welcomes enquiries re the program. The names of applicants funded and the amounts of the approved funding are regularly released to the media through news releases by Alberta Tourism to make sure the information is public.

MR. MITCHELL: Does that mean yes or no, Mr. Speaker? It seems . . .

MR. SPEAKER: The minister said no at the beginning of his comments.

MR. MITCHELL: Well, I'd like to talk about that, Mr. Speaker. It's such a basic request that one would consider it could be so easily and readily answered. It seems to me that the minister's rejection of this request underlines a much deeper problem with the expenditure of these kinds of funds. This government does not want to bring before this Legislature any kind of information, any suggestion or possibility of debate on lottery funds, and this is merely consistent with that predisposition on the part of this government to cover up and to exclude from proper parliamentary democratic debate and discussion information of this nature and the decisions that go into creating information of this nature. Mr. Speaker, it is just more of the same, and it is something about which this minister and this government should be fundamentally ashamed.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I wish to add a few comments. The amounts that are transferred or that have been allocated from the Lottery Fund to this particular program, my recollection from the budget discussion would indicate to me, run into millions of dollars: \$5 million, \$4 million, somewhere in that neighbourhood. We have an ongoing problem here that we

continue to point out. The minister responsible for lotteries doesn't provide us the information. Now we're getting that same type of stonewalling from another representative of the Crown. Mr. Speaker, we're not talking nickels and dimes here. We're talking in terms of a Lottery Fund that is going to various departments – \$100 million in a program here, \$4 million there – and it is not being properly accounted for.

Despite what is said, the Auditor General repeatedly states, year after year after year, that the Lottery Fund should go into general revenue so it is properly accounted for. I don't believe that any government has the right to treat public money – and this is public money – with such contempt, with such scorn, with such lack of accountability. It illustrates the government's callous attitude towards that financial accountability. When you lack financial accountability, you lack financial management, and I believe that's one of the reasons the government is in the problems it is as far as deficits and everything else is concerned. They try to manage in a secret fashion, and it just simply isn't working.

I think the other point, Mr. Speaker, that it illustrates very, very clearly: it is time that this government seriously entertained, like most provinces have done or are doing, the need for a freedom-of-information Act. Every municipality has it. I can recall, going back years ago on city council, when one of our aldermen was having difficulties getting information. He came to the Minister of Municipal Affairs – and it wasn't this gentleman; it was a previous member that was the minister at that time – and that minister told the alderman, "You have a right to get any information that you're entitled to from within that administration because you need that to fulfill your duties as an elected representative." A member of this particular government telling us on city council, yet this government refuses to give out the information. Obviously, there's a reason, and I'm ashamed for this government that they continue to do this.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-North West, summation.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to express my disappointment in this. The minister made reference to the fact that periodically we do get the names of the recipients and the dollar values. But the part I'm concerned about also is the purpose for the grant, and the minister did not address that. The reason I put the question on the Order Paper was to find out who, what, when, where, why, the basic questions we ask so many times in the opposition, and why is this government doing the things that they're doing?

Last night we had the debates on the Department of Tourism. Again questions were sometimes difficult even to pose because the information is not being put forward because this Team Tourism is under the Lottery Fund. When we look in the public accounts, there's no public accounts for it later on in terms of where the dollars are being spent because public accounts don't cover the Lottery Fund. So again it becomes extremely difficult for opposition members to really question what is happening with the government when we get stonewalled, as is happening in this particular instance, when we ask for information and we're told point-blank it's none of our business. Well, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I think that's wrong. It is our business; we have a right to know, and this government should be required to release all the information. I don't see anything difficult with the question that's put forward. I'm very disappointed that the government isn't willing to tell us everything that's really

involved here, unless there's some secret agenda that we don't know about. That may or may not be the case, but I think it's a reasonable request to ask for the purpose of the grant in addition to who the money is going to, and how much.

So I would urge all members to support Motion for a Return 263.

[Motion lost]

273. Mr. Wickman moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of every study or report prepared for or by the government since January 1, 1987, on the feasibility of implementing a new rent relief program or the costs involved in implementing such a program.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, in speaking to this motion I want to say, first of all, to the hon. member that I certainly can understand the need for this kind of data and information at this time in terms of the interest rates that are rising and the effect they're having on rental accommodation, the effect they're having on mortgages at the present time, the effect they're certainly going to have on some of the purchases in terms of real estate in this province. I can understand that totally.

I did a review within the department and asked what studies or reports had been done in a formal way and presented to the government so that they could be made public for the information of the hon. member or other members in this Assembly. In the preparation of the current mortgage interest programs and some of our other housing programs, the main working documents are just that: working papers. There are some memos there that are based on certain assumptions relative to rent relief as such, but nothing in a formal report or study sense. What they are is really internal documents, Mr. Speaker, and to present them without fully fleshing them out or interpreting them or providing all the details, the pros and the cons of the program itself, I think would be inadequate as such.

As has been historically noted in this Assembly, when they are internal documents we treat them as working auditors' papers, just as the Auditor does. I know in this Assembly I have worked many hours attempting to get the working documents of an auditor to be presented in this Assembly, and under their terms of reference and their professional code they don't present those working documents; they're for internal use only. I was told that many times by the profession itself, by legal interpretations, and we carry this item and make a decision on it on the very same basis.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to indicate at this time that I'm not able to provide any type of study or report as is, I think, being requested by the member, and I think it would be at fault if I provided some kind of working documents or incomplete papers that may not give the information in an accurate sense, as the hon. member would like it.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.  
Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to indicate my support for this motion for a return. I was particularly interested by one of the minister's defences of his rejection of this motion, which was that he felt that the documentation was in an inadequate state. That struck me as quite ironic, given that much of what this government presents to this

House one way or another is in an inadequate state, and it doesn't seem to stop them most times.

I believe that this information requested should be in an adequate state. The fact is that the government has made decisions on this issue, and I would hope they would be making decisions on something more definite than rough drafts or working papers. I would expect that surely there is a document that's come to this minister backed by appendices upon appendices of analytical work, statistical work, and covered by a short one- or two-page document indicating recommendations of what should be done.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

What I'm certain of is that this minister, for whom I have a great deal of respect for the manner in which he handles himself, the manner in which he seems to make decisions, would not be making decisions on the basis of some rough-hewn documents, some handwritten working papers. Surely there is something more definite and sufficiently adequate to be presented to this Legislature. That's all we're asking for, and I believe it to be a reasonable request.

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

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps just a word or two on the motion. I find the wording a little bit ambiguous. Rent relief program could mean any one of a number of things. It could mean the reintroduction of the renters tax credit, which is really an element of fairness as between renters and people who own their own homes. Historically the provincial government has paid a large portion of the property taxes of people who own their principal residence by way of tax relief, taking the school foundation program off the property taxes. There was a compensatory benefit which was available for renters, the renters tax credit, to provide that equity, because you pay that school foundation grant on property you rent out, and of course the tenant in turn pays that. That's a form of rent relief. Certainly I think the government should implement that, or it should be reimplemented; they should be studying it. It might mean rent relief in the form of a way that tenants could appeal unjustified rent increases. That would be a form of rent relief, and certainly one that would be supported by the New Democrat Official Opposition. On the other hand, it could mean the idea put forward by the Liberal Party that the taxpayers generally would pay the rents of people who can't meet the demands of landlords in today's marketplace.

I think I might feel better about the rejection of the motion if there was some commitment to come forward with some finished work in this area, because there is a lot of pressure, as I'm finding among my constituents, on people who honestly can't afford the rents that are demanded of them. In fact, I don't think the rents can be justified by costs or any other such thing. It would be, I think, a wonderful thing if the minister would undertake perhaps to get the notes in order and to examine the options and to get a study before the House so we could debate it.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. GOGO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm reflecting on Motion for a Return 273 in addition to what the hon. minister has responded. I can well understand why, as a matter of policy, a minister of the Crown is reluctant to release various reports. However, I do think there is a lot of information out there that hon. members – certainly the hon. member who has sponsored this motion – are well aware of.

We have some 200,000 senior citizens in Alberta, many of those in their own homes, for which they receive a \$1,200 rent assistance at the present time and have for several years. Those seniors who live in mobile homes, other than on land which they own themselves, receive \$1,000. Of course, those many seniors, Mr. Speaker, who are in self-contained suites maintained by the foundation programs in Alberta, which have been extremely successful, have been receiving \$600 a year, or \$50 a month. I think in the aggregate – I can't say offhand what the aggregate cost is in millions, but surely that's not only a very ambitious program by government, which is experiencing some difficulties with regard to the fiscal situation, but a major commitment.

The inference made by the hon. member, asking in the motion for a return regarding words like "feasibility" and "implementing" and "a new" relief program, totally ignores the fact that the government now provides very substantial benefits to the roughly 200,000 senior citizens in Alberta. So I thought, Mr. Speaker, it was appropriate and important to put those facts out for the hon. members who may, for whatever reason, not believe the government, this government, is strongly committed to renter assistance for certain groups of our people now in the province. Having said that, I would certainly oppose the motion for a return for additional information.

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

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to make it quite clear, I think the intent of the motion is very, very straightforward, and that is: what initiatives, what steps, what studies has the government done to curb or to bring forward something that would curb the dramatic problem out there of the spiraling rent increases? To make reference to other programs that have been in place really isn't addressing the intent of the motion at all. That would have made specific reference to these other programs. It's been raised in this Legislative Assembly a number of times. I think members on that side are well aware of our concern with the impact on renters who are not entitled to any relief at the present time. It does spell out "new" rent relief programs, so I think it's very, very clear.

Mr. Speaker, I am, let's say, somewhat disappointed in the minister's response. Just a few minutes ago I praised that particular department for giving the direction to municipal councillors that they're entitled to whatever information is available, which also included, incidentally, internal documents. But again we see an example – and coming from a minister who should appreciate the difficulty those of us on this side of the House have in obtaining information, I would have felt that he would have been just a tad more sympathetic towards the request. But the major concern on this particular point relates to statements that have been made in the House by the minister and also by the Premier, and that is: we're aware that there is a problem out there; we're reviewing the situation; we continue to monitor it. Well, if there isn't any evidence of that happen-

ing, if the government isn't prepared or if the minister isn't prepared to table such documentation in the House, obviously they're ashamed of what's been done. Maybe nothing has been done. Maybe the government is taking a wait-and-see position: "Let's ride this one out. If we stall long enough, eventually the rents are going to peak, and we get over the problem that way." But that's not fair. That's not a fair way to address the concerns being expressed by those who are affected. That's not fair in addressing the questions that are raised by members of the opposition asking for this information.

I would ask the other members of the government to certainly support this, and I would at the same time request that the minister reconsider his position and make available that documentation that is in place so we all have an opportunity to examine it.

Mr. Speaker, thank you.

[Motion lost]

282. Mr. Chumir moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing the terms and conditions, including terms of repayment, of an \$85 million loan to Syncrude Canada Ltd. to help fund an engineering feasibility study conducted between 1986-88 as part of a proposed \$4 billion expansion project.

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise to urge hon. members to not support this particular motion, and I'd like to make a few remarks for my reasoning.

As a little bit of background, Mr. Speaker, this government embarked on a relationship with the private sector, essentially the partners of Syncrude, during their discussions with regard to the expansion of the Syncrude project. So there was an agreement that was put in place with the partners, much like the OSLO project, in two phases. One is the engineering phase, and then at a certain point in time the decision is made amongst the partners as to whether or not we proceed beyond the engineering phase into construction. During the engineering and the feasibility study that was conducted, the partners then began looking at the possibility of developing the OSLO site, the other six leases. As the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo knows, these projects are extremely capital intensive, and with the Syncrude expansion together with the \$4.1 billion engineering and construction of the OSLO project, the partners had to make a decision as to which project they would proceed with.

Well, the engineering was completed and was put on the shelf. We had made an agreement with the partners that in the event they decided not to proceed with the actual expansion construction, we would put on the shelf the engineering study. We made an agreement with the partners that in the event that expansion went ahead, the partners would reimburse the government for that portion of the dollars that the provincial government put up for the engineering phase. So until the partners go ahead, we will not receive our dollars back that we put in for the support of the Syncrude expansion. The hon. member knows, as do the members of this Assembly, the decision by the partners was to proceed with the engineering on the OSLO project.

Mr. Speaker, the reason that governments get involved – as we know, from time to time governments get involved with the private sector, and there's a variety of reasons. One could be to match a long-term economic strategy, the political objective of the government of the day. There may be joint holding of assets that requires government to participate in putting up their equity

share of that asset. There may be a desire for governments to participate based on jurisdictional issues. There's a variety of them. In this case, oil sands development, the issue obviously is the magnitude of the dollars and the patience which capital must have to participate in these large projects for oil sands expansion. As I indicated, \$4.1 billion is a lot of money, and the rate of return, the return on the investment, does not occur until well into the project, so the money has to be extremely patient. Now, in the private sector, of course, most companies put into place economic strategies of their own. They may vary from one year to two years to five years to 10 years. Very rarely are they 10 years, but in some cases they are, Mr. Speaker, but nowhere near the 15- to 20-year patience that's required and the thinking down the road that's required for oil sands development.

So therein lie the reasons why government must get in and participate in the development of this project: firstly, because of the enormous requirement for capital; secondly, the enormous requirement for patience once there's been an investment.

In the construction of the Syncrude project itself in 1974-75, this really is what happened. Patience was required. Long-term thinking was required. I daresay the companies that participated in that did the right thing. It has been a reasonable return on their investment. The province of Alberta has received over \$1 billion in royalty from the Syncrude project. So it made sense to do an expansion, and it made sense for the province to support on an equity basis, a loan basis, an incentive basis, the expansion of the Syncrude project.

When the consideration, as I've indicated, was given for OSLO, the partners had to make a decision between the Syncrude expansion and constructing a new OSLO project, for the reasons I've indicated earlier. The decision was to shelve the engineering study for Syncrude and to proceed with the OSLO project.

Well, back to my issue, the issue of why I'm rejecting this motion, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member knows – he's a private businessman – when he enters into a relationship with partners, whether it's to drill some of the dry holes he's drilled in the province of Alberta or whether it's in the entertainment business or in the real estate development business, you enter into an agreement, and that agreement is confidential for a variety of reasons. A lot of them have to do with competitive reasons, with other companies that may be competing with you. Our arrangement with the Syncrude partners is a private-sector arrangement with government involvement. Now, it is incumbent upon the government to respect the fact that there must be confidentiality amongst the partners. In this particular motion, if we were to provide the hon. member with the details of that agreement, in my view we would be breaching the confidential relationship with the corporation, and it would jeopardize future relationships. It would create uncertainty with regard to corporations who may want to joint-venture with governments in the future in terms of an ability to keep their business relationships confidential. Now, I know that in the case of the Syncrude expansion the partners in this project and in the Syncrude project are public companies. However, there is a concern about the precedent, and I do not want to participate in a precedent that would breach that confidentiality that exists in the private sector.

Now, I'm not a big advocate of government participating in the private sector, Mr. Speaker. Quite frankly, I am somewhat adverse to it, but since I've been in government, I quickly recognized that there are occasions when government participation is required. I think I've made that case, maybe not to the

satisfaction of the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, but I'm certainly convinced that there comes a time when government must participate in the development of projects. I hope that it is not on a regular basis nor do I hope that it is taken lightly. Certainly we do not take our participation lightly in oil sands development. But it does match a very important long-range economic objective for this province, and quite frankly I am astounded by the lack of vision by the federal government in this connection. They do not see the wisdom of being able to develop our oil sands in a forthright manner and to match an objective that we see, Mr. Speaker, and that is: reliance on crude oil indigenous to the country of Canada rather than relying on the Persian Gulf.

So with regard to Motion 282 I must say that we cannot support the request for information for that very reason: it is to respect and maintain the business relationship that we have with the partners in the OSLO project.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Does the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo wish to conclude debate?

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We see in the minister's comments a reflection of that principle that the longer the speech in justification of the refusal to answer, the less validity there is behind those reasons. Quite frankly, I couldn't believe that we'd be refused access to this kind of information if I weren't seeing it on a daily basis from the government generally. Here we have the government lending \$85 million of our money, not Progressive Conservative Party money – and I say "our" collectively as that of Albertans – and it won't tell us the terms and the conditions, including the terms of repayment.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm in business myself. I've practised law. I know a bit about the business community, and I say nonsense, rhetorical nonsense – nonsense upon stilts, to quote Jeremy Bentham – that this type of information needs to be kept confidential in order to protect any interest of the business community. Give me \$85 million and I'll not only consent to telling the whole world, I'll tell them myself; I'll broadcast it aloud. The real reason is to protect the government so that they can go give money to guys like Peter Pocklington without accounting to Albertans in the short term. Of course, in the medium and long term we see that we end up losing millions of dollars and have to go to court, and ultimately we'll see it in any event. But that doesn't serve the public interest well, and this is a very poor show on behalf of the government, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion lost]

284. Mr. Mitchell moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing all the documents related to studies and tests done by or on behalf of the Ministry of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife or by any other department or agency of the government on the Tigney Technology Incorporated steam explosion pulping process indicating, in particular, conclusions concerning the purity of wood components produced.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is there anybody . . . Hon. Deputy Government House Leader, Motion 284 has been called.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, it's going to be dealt with by the hon. minister.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife with regard to Motion for a Return 284, which has been moved by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, I'm prepared to work with this motion for a return. It really needs an amendment to clarify the intent and to ensure that the word "documents" is not misrepresented to mean correspondence or other unpublished file materials. It also clarifies that the department responsible for responding is the Department of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife.

The exclusion of reports, Mr. Speaker, that may be confidential owing to the inclusion of proprietary information is a safeguard, but the material that is going to be provided suggests that this does not appear to be a problem and that, most of all, the reports that the hon. member I'm sure is asking for can be provided.

So I'm moving

that Motion for a Return 284 be amended . . .

Mr. Speaker, since I gave all the copies to the page, I'll have to wait for my copy.

. . . by deleting the words "the documents related to studies and tests done by or on behalf of the Ministry of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife or by any other department or agency of the government," and substituting therefor the words "reports contracted for by the Department of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife, excluding those reports which contain proprietary information."

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, on the amendment.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak in favour of the amendment. I'm moved that they would go as far as they have in responding to this. If it isn't what I want, then I will represent the motion for a return, but as it stands now, I will accept the amendment.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place, on the amendment.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to speak against the amendment. It appears we have a conspiracy here to withhold information from the public. As I understand the amendment, it would result in the tabling of reports that are already public information which I have copies of and have read cover to cover several times.

Tigney Technology is an Alberta-based firm which entered into a research contract not with Forestry, Lands and Wildlife but with the Alberta Research Council. There are those who believe that that contract resulted from some pressure from the office of the Premier. There are those who believe that it resulted from some other avenue. I don't know the truth of that matter, but partway through the research project the Alberta Research Council suddenly evicted officials of Tigney Technology from the Research Council facility at Clover Bar, where the tests were being conducted. The Research Council officials seized some equipment. Subsequent to that, officials of the Research Council attempted on their own to replicate the research that was being done by officials from Tigney Technology. They independently hired some of the staff who had been employed on the research project to replicate some of the computer software. There would be information, very clearly, within the purview of the Alberta Research Council – which, so

far as I know, has never been under the Ministry of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife – which is germane to the request.

I saw Motion 284 as being an opportunity to try to find out why the very promising work conducted by Tigney Technology and Mr. Ted DeLong is now no longer being done in the province of Alberta as a result of the actions of the Alberta Research Council and is now being conducted through a scientific research institute and two commercial banks in the Soviet Union at a time when Alberta is contemplating and, in fact, implementing a major expansion of the pulp industry. The idea of a steam explosion pulping process which doesn't use a lot of toxic chemistry in order to separate the cellulose fibre from the wood seems to have a lot of appeal. I feel that the amendment unnecessarily restricts the scope of the motion, and therefore I'm against it.

[Motion on amendment carried]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, to conclude debate on the motion as amended.

MR. MITCHELL: I would just like to state, Mr. Speaker, that in seeking the reports I'm requesting here as amended in this request, the minister keep in mind that what I am looking for is information which indicates a logical, perhaps scientific reason for rejecting Tigney. I have had raised with me concerns that the decision to not assist Tigney Technology may have been capricious, may have been based on things other than logical decisions or scientific decisions, economic or otherwise. I'm trying to get to the root of that, so I'd like to see the appropriate studies that indicate upon what basis this government made its decision.

[Motion as amended carried]

293. On behalf of Rev. Roberts, Mr. Fox moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all contracts and agreements between the Royal Alexandra General hospital and the K-Bro group of companies covering the contracting out of the hospital's laundry and linen services.

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, while I appreciate the efforts of the hon. member to get copies of all contracts and agreements between the Royal Alex hospital and K-Bro group of companies, I am unable to provide such contracts and agreements because I don't have them. As the hon. member knows, this is not a provincial general hospital, in which case I might have them; rather, it is one that operates under the Hospitals Act generally. If he wishes to have the copies of said contracts and agreements, the hon. member should direct his question directly to the hospital and the hospital board itself.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are you ready for the question?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

[Motion lost]

#### head: **Motions Other than Government Motions**

208. Moved by Mr. Chumir:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly is of the

opinion that initiatives to make the Alberta government more open and accountable to Alberta citizens and to the Legislative Assembly are badly needed, including freedom of information and conflict of interest legislation, Assembly approval of lottery expenditures, reduction of patronage, improvements to the Assembly committee process, and provision of more meaningful information on government legislation.

MR. CHUMIR: I'm on? Finally? I can't believe it. I'm finally on.

I'm pleased to stand and move Motion 208, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader on a point of order.

MR. GOGO: I thought, Mr. Speaker, that we would be dealing with Motion for a Return 285 by the hon. Minister of Tourism. Am I confused?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Motion 285 was not on the list; 285 was not included in the motion of the Deputy Government House Leader at the beginning of the . . .

MR. GOGO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. CHUMIR: You had me worried there.

Winston Churchill once referred to democracy as the worst form of government except for all those which have ever been tried. It is indeed a privilege to live in a democratic society, and that privilege leads to concomitant duties. Now, those of us in this House are exemplary of those who at least in theory recognize this duty. We have answered one of the highest callings in a democratic society, that of service as elected representatives.

Now, all of us have issues. We have areas of interest, things we want to accomplish, things we want to look back upon with satisfaction when we have finished our legislative careers. I would like to suggest to this House that one of the most important goals we should all aspire to accomplish, to be able to look back upon with pride, is to leave the democratic process itself stronger and in higher repute than when we commenced our careers. When the process itself is weakened, it leads the system into disrepute, fewer good people are attracted to service, the best decisions are then not made, and ultimately, even in times of turmoil and trouble, we may open up the possibility of demagogues gaining a foothold within our system and weakening and destroying that system. Now, this may seem somewhat farfetched, but those who follow history realize how fragile the democratic system of government can be. Accordingly, it is our challenge and duty to improve and strengthen our democracy.

I am very unhappy to have to note, with great honesty – no partisanship in this regard – that I believe there are very few things being done in this House and by the government to strengthen or enhance the democratic process and the respect of citizens for legislators or the Legislature. On the contrary, since I was elected four years ago, day after day and year after year the government has conducted itself in a cynical and jaded manner, which has only enhanced a widespread disrespect and



contempt for politicians and the political process by decent and thoughtful citizens. This is wrong, it's harmful, and I think we have to take serious notice of it.

Now, six areas have caused me particular concern. Firstly, the government has a policy, a clear policy, of hiding from Albertans information that should be made available to them as citizens. Second concern: the government has been cavalier about the need for legislators to avoid conflicts of interest which erode public confidence in elected officials and smear us all. Third, the government uses its control over public positions for patronage purposes in a rather spectacular manner rather than for public benefit. Fourth, the government has eroded the very important principle of legislative control of spending by allowing hundreds of millions of dollars of lottery funds to be spent without prior legislative approval. Fifthly, the government manipulates the legislative committee system so as to make it an ineffective sham. Sixth, the government proposes complex legislative initiatives without the courtesy or decency of providing to MLAs, certainly opposition MLAs, any meaningful explanation about the purpose and scope of the legislation.

Now, these aren't exhaustive of my concerns. I might mention the failure of the government to hold public hearings on a matter as important as the Meech Lake accord, probably explained by the government's awareness that Albertans oppose the accord. But the six I have mentioned have struck me most forcefully, and I propose to comment in more detail on my concerns with respect to these areas.

First, freedom of information. The essence of democracy is obviously openness in debate, and this is only possible when the government makes information available. Well, it doesn't do that. In fact, the government is the most secretive in the nation and probably on the continent. It regularly hides from Albertans information they should have as a matter of its own cynical policy and self-interest. Anyone wishing examples need only look at Votes and Proceedings for most Tuesdays and Thursdays and see the questions and motions for returns the government refuses to answer.

One of the more spectacular days was April 3, on which the government refused to answer seven questions posed by myself at that time with respect to multimillion dollar investments of public money in loans, guarantees, and securities. It even refused to reveal the price of natural gas on which it based its budgetary estimates for the 1990-91 year. Last week the government refused to provide me with information relating to the magnitude of legal fees paid to the lawyers for the Cormie family. Today I'm refused information with respect to the terms and conditions upon which \$85 million of public money was advanced to the Syncrude project. We can't even find when it's to be repaid.

Public money, billions of it, is dealt with as though it were the private business of the Progressive Conservative Party – billions in loans and guarantees of our money and not a single document revealing the terms and conditions being made available to the public. The classic case, of course, is the hiding of the documentation relating to the \$55 million loan guarantee and the \$12 million loan to Peter Pocklington. Now, let me ask the rhetorical question: how can citizens possibly respect a process which hides basic information of this nature from them?

Now, let me make it clear that I'm not suggesting all information in the possession of government has to be made public willy-nilly. Sensible people realize there are matters that have to be kept confidential. There are many categories. By way of example, much of the information with respect to law enforce-

ment merits confidentiality – not all of it, but much of it where there would be harm. There are areas of privacy. There are areas of cabinet confidentiality. These should be exempted, but the exemptions should be narrow and defined in freedom-of-information legislation which provides for a statutory right of citizens to have access to this information. Six provinces in this country have such legislation. The federal government has it. The United States federal government and all states in America have it. This shows that the provincial government *is* badly out of touch. It's been in office too long and has lost sight of the big picture, the ball, respect for the democratic process. I urge all those on the order side of this House to bring this matter to the attention of their cabinet colleagues.

I would note that our leader, the Member for Edmonton-Glenarry, has proposed a private member's Bill, Bill 205, with respect to freedom of information and personal privacy. It's based on the Ontario model, and I would recommend close review of that by the members of the government.

Now, of secondary concern is that with respect to ethics, particularly conflicts of interest. Public office should obviously be used for public and not personal benefit. When politicians use or even are perceived to use the system for their self-interest, again respect for our office and for the system by the public is eroded. When the Premier uses the Nova Corporation plane to fly back from Palm Springs without paying for it, it leads to implications of favouritism. There's no cause for that; it's unnecessary. When legislation allows MLAs and cabinet ministers to own shares of Alberta Energy Company and vote on matters affecting the company and their shares, this leads to suspicions, whether they're true or not, of self-interest, particularly when Alberta Energy Company has benefited to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars of public assets by this government. When former cabinet ministers go out into the world and represent business interests in dealing with former departments and their colleagues, questions of favouritism arise. When the government stonewalls legitimate concerns raised with respect to the actions of the current Member for Redwater-Andrew, it besmirches all of us in this House.

Now, all these matters would seem to matter less to the government as matters of principle. As matters of politics, it's a different question. Yes, the government has appointed a commission to review the issue of conflict of interest. But let's be clear that that was only after long, long pressure by the opposition for it to do so. It was actually forced to do so after years of concern being expressed about the state of our rules and the practices. It was obviously without any personal zeal or commitment on the part of the government to deal with these matters. I think that should be of concern to all thoughtful members of this House. But let's hope we get some meaningful legislation at least from the committee report on this issue.

The third area is that of patronage. Public positions should obviously be used to serve the public interest, not simply to help friends of the government. The failure to heed this rule again erodes confidence in the democratic system. Unfortunately, patronage is a way of life of this government. *Spoils of Power*, a recent book by Jeffrey Simpson, pointed out that this government has become one of the most patronage oriented of all governments in this country after a very, very clean record in that regard by its predecessor. This was singled out by Mr. Simpson. We find on our payroll, for example, a small army of cabinet ministers, many of whom left government crowing about how they were off to take advantage of opportunities in the private sector. Hugh Planche, Bob Dowling, Horst Schmid, Neil

Webber: they're all there. We find quasi-judicial positions such as that of the chairman of the Land Compensation Board, which was filled about a year and a half ago by Mr. Lionel Wood, whose main qualification was the fact that he was a friend and neighbour of the Premier and whose sheer incompetence was reflected in difficulties requiring his resignation less than a year after appointment. Now, how does that lead to respect for the process, when people bringing cases before important boards of this nature, which are akin to courts, have to deal with individuals who are appointed on the basis of friendship and are not competent?

Appointments to boards and commissions, while salted with some very qualified, independent people, are all too often filled with individuals whose main qualifications are service to the Progressive Conservative Party. I've seen one good example almost at first hand through dealing with the multicultural community in Calgary. There's one Mr. Delio Iannucci, whose main qualification for his recent appointment to the Human Rights Commission was to get the Calgary Multi-Cultural Centre to name its main room Don Getty hall, even though it would be very hard to pinpoint any positive contribution of our Premier to minority rights or multiculturalism. Heck, you couldn't get the Premier here in the past three or four months to speak out even a peep against the racist pins and calendars which have become currency in our community, and here Mr. Iannucci has managed to massage and manipulate the Calgary Multi-Cultural Centre into honouring Mr. Getty by renaming their hall Don Getty hall. Well, they should be ashamed. Mr. Iannucci should be ashamed, the Premier should be ashamed, the party should be ashamed, and I know the Calgary Multi-Cultural Centre is not very happy about it.

This type of manipulation of nonpolitical organizations – and I emphasize "nonpolitical organizations" – in order to promote the interests of a political party is, I believe, a cynical perversion of the elevated purpose of these groups. It erodes their credibility. It hurts the groups, it hurts their causes, and it has to stop. Now, there's nothing wrong with political parties or politicians courting ethnic communities, but I would ask members to be aware of how wrong it is to pervert nonpolitical organizations by infiltrating them and then turning what should be nonpolitical organizations serving an elevated purpose into partisan vehicles. It hurts the organization and hurts their primary goals. We shouldn't be doing that, and that's what's happening. Court the communities, but don't pervert the groups.

Now, there is no perfect answer to the patronage issue. It's true that those with any political affiliation should not be disqualified if they can do the job. I'm not saying never appoint somebody who's been a Tory member to a particular position. But we have to do better; that shouldn't be the only qualification. So I would like to see, for example, more . . . [interjections] Let me give by way of example – and this applies to all parties; no party is exempt from this. This is not a partisan tirade. This is intended to speak some common sense on behalf of what reasonable people would have in mind. So one of the things I would like to see is more all-party appointments of key persons like the Auditor General. I say "key persons" because obviously we can't sit as legislative committees appointing all provincial appointments. So the bulk of the appointments, I believe, has to remain the responsibility of the government. I think the consequences have to be political, but I think we can improve the system, for example, by ensuring that in seeking applications, all appointments to boards and commissions are

publicly advertised. I believe we could do better by setting up, for example, an appointments committee of independent citizens to vet the qualifications, not to make the choices but to vet the qualifications so that thereafter a government could make appointments from those who have been approved and do have appropriate qualifications, similar to the manner in which the Judicial Council operates these days.

The fourth concern I have relates to the lottery expenditures. It's a tradition of parliamentary democracies that all spending is to be approved and debated by the elected representatives in the Legislative Assembly. This government has eroded this basic principle by amending the Interprovincial Lottery Act to allow hundreds of millions of dollars to be spent by the minister of lotteries. We're now starting to see some of the consequences of that as information comes out on how these are being spent. But aside from that, the precedent with respect to this process serves to weaken the democratic process. If you spend this kind of money without prior legislative approval, why not spend all the money without legislative approval? What's the point? What's the difference? Of course, it's very convenient for the government to have a slush fund of several hundred millions of dollars that it can trot out at its whim, but what is the cost? Balance that benefit with the cost to the fundamental principle of the legislative process and the way it can be turned by those who may be less noble, who may follow us and may be less nobly inclined with respect to the importance of what democracy is supposed to be all about.

Now, I believe the erosion of this principle means in practice the following. It means that money which can be expended by backroom decisions of the government and of the minister begins to be looked at as money which belongs to the Progressive Conservative Party rather than public money. Once it takes on that character in the minds of the government, it starts to be dealt with like party money. Recently we found Western Canada Lottery Corporation funds being spent on two tickets to the Premier's dinner. Well, the minister says that was an error, it shouldn't happen, and he's reversed it. But why did that happen? I think we should put some thought to it. Why 61 briefcases out of lottery funds to PC MLAs and not the rest of the Legislature? I don't believe they should have been given. But what does it mean? Think. What's going on? What's happening within your process? As you sit there and you're following things that are of immediate interest and concern to yourself – because we're all busy – what's going on in the bigger process about how we're thinking of our duties in use of public moneys? I think it's been very negative in principle to be using those lottery moneys in that manner.

Of course, we see in terms of the community facility enhancement program, as in other money-granting programs, that the government MLAs are trotting off to hand out cheques to each of the recipients as if it were Progressive Conservative Party money rather than public money. That's just another twist on the same theme.

I would like to move on to talk about my fifth concern, that of the committee process, which I believe to be a farce. I sat for three years on the heritage fund committee, which was the next best thing to a waste of time. It's a committee without power. Its recommendations are virtually ignored. It has no research staff, and no meaningful information or reports are given to members before the minister appears, so our efforts are spent more in the nature of acting like bloodhounds or like Sherlock Holmes in order to find information rather than setting policy on the basis of information we should be given.

I joined the Public Accounts Committee last year and found that the majority of the committee, dominated by the government of course, arranged the order of business so that members did not even get to question the Provincial Treasurer with respect to the public accounts, for which he is primarily responsible. So we had one whole year of public accounts and we couldn't ask the main man responsible. I think this year has been set up so there is an excellent chance that that very same thing will happen again. He's a little higher up in the order but still in the middle of the pile.

Why is this happening? Well, the rules are skewed so this will happen. It isn't to serve the democratic process, to recognize that when you're asked questions by . . . I mean, we try and ask embarrassing questions. That makes you work harder. That's the whole purpose of it. You're a free enterprise party; you're supposed to know the value of competition. That's really what it's about. When you're going to get asked questions, you do your homework and you're a lot more careful. You do everything to deny your government and the people of this province the benefit of that, and the ultimate harm is not only the public interest; ultimately it's harm to yourself because you don't do as well.

Why is it, for example, that the committee sits only during session? Why is there no in-depth information provided to MLAs? Well, I don't believe this is good enough, Mr. Speaker, and I think we need a move to reform the committee system. That should be one of our priorities, in order to make MLAs in this Legislature much more effective rather than lapdogs, as many of us too often are.

Finally, the sixth concern, that of the legislative process itself. I'm particularly disgruntled at the way in which the government presents legislation, often complex, in this House with nary an explanation at all of the purpose and background of complex and important provisions affecting the lives of many Albertans. It is a real contrast to look, for example, at many United States jurisdictions – and I believe most of them – where legislation is accompanied by meaningful explanations. I don't know why we don't get these explanations. Actually, I do know why we don't get them. Again, it's a little hiding of information, attempting to make our job more difficult. The ministers have them and the caucus gets a briefing; the information's there. Our lives are made more difficult, but the public process suffers. And the PC Party suffers as well; you don't get as good a product on there. It'd be so easy to remedy, and I wish there were one cabinet minister that would just take the initiative. Why is it that when people come in with good intentions and must see that these things are wrong, there's not a single individual who will step out – and not do anything that's controversial. You don't have to set a precedent like releasing, heaven forbid, a document relating to Peter Pocklington. All you have to do is give a little bit of a summary and an explanation. Surely your colleagues couldn't complain about that. Anyway, I don't believe making life easier for the PC Party is the reason you went and got elected. I hope it isn't why you got elected, and I hope when we take over office, it isn't the way we conduct ourselves. I'll certainly be fighting to avoid that.

In any event, those are not all my concerns, Mr. Speaker, but I think they reflect enough. They're heartfelt. They're of great concern. It's very aggravating for individuals regardless of their capability, but very capable individuals certainly have to look upon the democratic process with great disgust and distaste, and it serves the public interest very, very poorly. I would accordingly, as my time disappears rapidly, ask the Legislature to search

their collective consciences and support the motion. Send a message to this government that there is a need for reform in the way this province is governed, and let's do all Albertans now and in the future a favour.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Smoky River.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I found the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo's presentation very interesting. I was very surprised that you indeed were able to limit yourself to six concerns; most of us have quite a few more than six. The concerns that were brought forward were certainly valid. They encompassed a very broad spectrum of concerns, very serious concerns. Unfortunately, there are such broad concerns and such a multitude of concerns that I'm going to restrict myself to the freedom-of-information aspect of it, and perhaps someone else will be able to address some of the other issues that were brought forward here today.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo is of the opinion that this House should indeed recommend initiatives that will make the Alberta government more open and accountable to Alberta citizens, and that's very noble. But, indeed, we do have a fair amount of accountability *in* our system at the present time. I'm sure most hon. members will agree with me when I say that we are accountable every day to our constituents and to the Assembly and to all those people who populate the province of Alberta. This is one of the facts of political life, and this is what politics is all about. We're judged every day on our abilities, on our honesty, and on our integrity. Hon. member, I think that's important, that each and every action we take is being judged. It's being judged by our constituents and by the people in Alberta, who indeed recognize the accountability of this government. They've recognized the honesty of this government. This government has been here since 1971, and if it was as secretive and as hidden as the suggestion that has been made, I'm rather surprised that the people would be satisfied with that.

I feel fairly strongly that the people of Alberta are intelligent people that can make decisions and make judgments on the honesty and the accountability of their MLAs. I think my constituents are of that ability. Maybe there are problems in other constituencies. Maybe Calgary-Buffalo has some problems; I don't know. But I feel very certain that my constituents are able to recognize honesty and integrity and don't really need legislation that's going to be put in place, that indeed we're going to be legislated on. This isn't a confessional that we're going to have to confess our sins in public. This isn't the idea of government. The idea of government is to represent our people in as fair a way as we possibly can, and it's the ability of government to do that that returns government, brings government back election after election. I think this government, indeed, has produced a very fine and very excellent record in that area.

Although the member is correct in that we have no legislative right of access to information in the province of Alberta, I see no reason to suggest that we are a secretive government. And I see nothing that was brought forward here today, Mr. Speaker, that indeed indicated that we are doing something subversive or something secretive or something that is hidden. I saw nothing that was brought forward here that would change my way of thinking. Any citizen of Alberta can obtain information from a multitude of sources. We have many areas that we can obtain information from: vital statistics; we can search land titles;

public information is available. There are many, many ways of accessing that information.

We also have to be careful that we don't pass legislation that indeed is going to impose on our own personal abilities and our own personal livelihoods. Mr. Speaker, I think we want to be careful that we don't overreact and suddenly every single move we have is exposed. That's a concern. I don't argue that indeed the right of access to information is important and people have to know what's happening, but this happens every day in the House. We have question period, we have motions, we have the ability to ask questions, and this government has answered those questions.

Even Statistics Canada recognizes that there is a need for some protection of private information, especially when a business is a specialized business, and especially in the competitive sector of business. We can't just have everything accessed, or our competitiveness will vanish. It'll disappear, and that's not the way that good competitive spirit operates.

Members of this Assembly know that the government endeavours to answer the questions that are asked of it. Those members who have been part of this Assembly for some time know the efforts that are brought forward to provide this information whenever it's possible. The government seeks permission from the business entities to provide this information where it's possible, but this isn't always the best way to go, because business, indeed, has some right to protection as well. That's the way they maintain their competitive spirit and their competitive attitude. Beyond the normal process of information that we already have in place, any MLA can sponsor a motion for a return or place a question before the Assembly in either a written or oral form. That's in place now. I notice that there have been some very interesting written questions that have come forward. There have been motions for returns on the current Order Paper, and this happens every day. So indeed we do have that opportunity, and that opportunity is in place. Although some documents and information are not released by governments, such as cabinet documents, I think the process to seek information in Alberta is more than adequate.

Although I recognize the fact that the federal government does indeed have an Access to Information Act and a companion Privacy Act, I think it is only fair to comment that the federal level of government is a repository for a far greater amount of information, personal and business, than the province of Alberta could ever be. Although the hon. member would like to know some further details of specific questions and issues in Alberta, I don't think he has produced overwhelming evidence to convince me of the need for further legislation. I may add that what will happen if we do have legislation that's put in place: we'll have to increase our civil service, and indeed it may hinder the access to further information. It may compound the difficulties in accessing. Backlogs, for example, can develop. Indeed, it may hinder the opportunity for a better access to information than we already have in place today.

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms has ensured in law the right of any individual to information concerning the administrative decision that impacts upon that individual. This type of information release is very fair and reasonable and is one which this government already complies with. Major policy decisions in this province are well debated and considered before being implemented, and this province encourages the involvement of ideas in public affairs and in the law-making process as we have it today.

The current situation in Alberta is that there is no legislated right of access to government information. Information not available through the conventional sources, such as department or agency public records, can be obtained through motions for returns and questions, written or oral, in this Legislative Assembly. As a general rule the executive branch of the government is under no legal obligation to disclose information to the public, aside from limited situations provided for by law. These situations include the duty to maintain public registers and with regard to rights and discovery in the course of litigation.

In the federal government we have the Access to Information Act, which provides for greater right of access to records controlled by government institutions. At the same time, Parliament proclaimed the Privacy Act, which protects the privacy of Canadians with respect to personal information held by government. I think this is very important to note, that the two pieces of legislation were brought forward at the same time, an Access to Information Act as well as a Privacy Act. The two work in tandem and the two work hand in hand, and that's the only way we can have a country that is free.

Critics have complained that the Access to Information Act is difficult to use due to the complicated information requirements, due to higher fees, and due to a multitude of problems. So that doesn't totally solve the problem. Just because there's legislation there doesn't totally solve the problem, and I firmly believe that what we have in place in the province of Alberta here today is a much more reliable, a much easier source of information than anything we could legislate and put in place in firm legislation.

Provinces like Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, or Prince Edward Island have no specific freedom of information. Privacy legislation in Saskatchewan is being contemplated, and that may come forward; nevertheless, there is not a formal Act in place today. Quebec is regarded as having the most comprehensive freedom-of-information legislation that is in place in all of Canada, and it is regarded as the most effective. It was enacted in 1982 and amended again in 1985, and it applies to all municipalities, police commissions, hospitals, school boards, universities, colleges, as well as to the provincial government. Every person, including corporations and other artificial people, have a right to access. Fees must be levied. Conditions under which access to information may be denied are extensive and specific. So though there is a very liberal access to information law in Quebec, it is indeed very difficult to access in certain areas. We want to realize that, and I think that's important to recognize. Though you may receive, you may also lose some access, and that's something we want to be careful of.

I think the basic issue of debate is the problem of finding a balance. I think one of the most important issues that really we have to discuss and we have to spend time in discussion with is to get that balance, to get the true balance between what has to be known, what should be known, and what is going to hurt our ability to perform in the world marketplace, in the world as it stands. To get that fine-tuning balance is something that's very, very difficult to achieve and something that is not that easy, because each and every one of us has the right to some degree of personal privacy, and that we have to keep sacred, because when we start imposing upon our own personal privacy and making it completely public – we are humans, and we have to operate as human beings. We can't operate as animals. We have to maintain that dignity that privacy allows us to maintain. I would hate to lose that, and I think each and every one of us in the House today would hate to lose that ability to walk with dignity and pride.

I think I'll just touch on one or two of the arguments I see that would create some problems with firm legislation. I think the first and most important one is that such legislation could indeed have an effect that would be the opposite of what it is we are trying to achieve. Broad interpretations of exemptions could result in legitimately prohibited access, or perhaps the access should rightly not be denied. That's something we have to be careful of, and for that reason I have some degree of hesitancy in bringing forward formal legislation that indeed might actually deny us some of the rights and some of the privileges that we have that operate so well in this House today.

There is no overwhelming evidence to show that there is such a problem, indeed that we require legislation. At least, I haven't heard anything brought forward, and I don't think anyone has shown to me that this House is operating in a highly secretive way. I go to the Public Accounts meeting; I go to other areas. I have yet to be shown where indeed the information, when it is properly asked for, has not been accessed.

Responding to requests for information under such legislation could be very time-consuming, very costly, and indeed could create a little empire of its own. I'm not sure; how do we keep nuisance requests from really creating all kinds of havoc? This can happen, and that's something that we have to caution and indeed not legislate to allow this to happen. I think that with the instruction of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, an individual right of access to information concerning administrative decision affecting that individual is already enshrined and protected. We have that, so why do we need some other form of legislation? Such a Bill could arguably slow down the whole decision-making process that we have functioning so well today.

So for this reason, Mr. Speaker, I have to oppose this motion, and I have to suggest that all the other members in the House consider very, very strongly just what the ramifications of a motion such as this are, a broad motion such as this, that covers a wide spectrum of issues. I would really urge all the members to seriously consider what it is that we are dealing with. I appreciate the time you have given me to discuss this, and I would sincerely urge that you not vote in favour of this motion.

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

MR. PASHAK: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to support the motion as presented by the Member for Calgary-Buffalo. But in doing that, I'd just like to make it very, very clear that we as a party feel we don't have to take the backseat to any Liberal when it comes to advancing these ideas. Historically we've championed virtually every section that's included in the motion that's before us today. Particularly, it was our caucus back years ago that first requested the reinstatement of estimates committees. It was Grant Motley's extraordinary work that caused the Tories to get rid of those committees years ago, and we'd like to see them restored. I'd also like to point out that our conflict of interest Bill that is before this Legislature right now is the best in the country. Grant Motley introduced this Bill, the first conflict of interest Bill, back in 1979, and he and our current leader have introduced that Bill on a number of occasions since that time. We've certainly introduced our own amendments on the lottery Bill many times since. In our view, the Liberals have just copied our amendments, but they were originally our amendments. Finally, when it comes to patronage, I don't think anyone could find a better way to institute a patronage process than to follow what the federal Liberals did

as they were swept out of power during the '84 election. They wrote the book.

Well, Mr. Speaker, back to the motion, with which I agree. I'd like to begin by looking at the section that discusses freedom of information. As we're all aware, there have been many instances during this session when, quite contrary to what the Member for Smoky River had to say, we put many questions on the Order Paper and we've been denied answers to those questions. That seems to be the practice of this government. I mean, one of the more outstanding examples, of course, is the whole Pocklington/Gainers business. We've never been able to get our hands on a copy of that master agreement that covers some \$67 million worth of public dollars. The Olympia & York scandal, where some 400,000 square feet of office space was leased by this government when there's plenty of office space available: we can't get information about that. Even today our Member for Edmonton-Centre asked an important question having to do with getting information back on the health system. It seemed to me like a relatively innocuous question. His order just asked for the government to present "a detailed breakdown of the government's response to the recommendations in both the Watanabe and Hyndman reports and an indication of which . . ."

AN HON. MEMBER: It's not ready yet.

MR. PASHAK: Ah, but I thought the answer was no. That's what I heard.

Further to that, our Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place has been trying to get copies of permits that the Minister of the Environment issued to companies to exceed Clean Air and Clean Water standards which are really in violation of those Acts. We haven't been able to get that information before the Assembly. So I think the government is really quite hypocritical in terms of saying, "Sure we provide information through this process." It's certainly there technically in the books that we should be able to get that information. We can introduce motions for returns, but we never get satisfactory answers.

I have a situation that has come to my attention recently, involving a technical institute in the city of Calgary. It's entered into a joint venture agreement with another company. Because of some problems with the way they entered into that agreement, it looks like there's almost \$10 million of public money now at risk in that process. Part of that agreement involved . . . There must be an agreement in place between SAIT and a company called Alert Disaster Control Inc. There's some commitment on the part of this technical institute, that's funded by the province of Alberta, to provide standby costs to a project that looks like it's going nowhere. Certainly any documents related to that affair should and must be tabled in the House, and in fairness to the Minister of Advanced Education, he hasn't had the opportunity to do that, but as of tomorrow he will have the opportunity to respond. I mean, there really is a critical issue in this whole situation. I just finished reviewing the institutes Act, and I can find no provision in that Act that would permit a postsecondary institution in this province to enter into a joint venture agreement whose main interest is not to provide an educational service but to make a profit through that kind of operation and thereby put public funds at risk. So I look forward to seeing the government's response to the tabling of this request for information that I intend to bring forward tomorrow.

With respect to improvements in the committee approach, Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Member for Calgary-Buffalo talk about his experiences on the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, and I can merely say that I echo those concerns. I feel that, you know, some of the trips we went on were interesting, and I did learn more. I did get some valuable information about how the government operates and how it spends money. But when it comes to accountability questions, the process completely prevents any significant accountability from taking place. Members are limited to only certain kinds of questions. They are never given any background research information; they don't have access to research.

The same thing – as the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee . . . Although I think Public Accounts in some small measure perhaps justifies its existence because it reinforces the recommendations that are made in the Auditor General's report, it's severely limited in what it can and cannot do as a committee. The major shortcomings, of course, are similar to the shortcomings with respect to the Heritage Savings Trust Fund committee. First of all, there's no research provided for that committee. The committee does not have funding to permit it to sit outside of session, therefore not all departments are reviewed. When we do sit in committee, the committee is really excessively large. It has 21 members, and because the time of the meetings are restricted to an hour and a half and because the committee members themselves determine the procedures of the committee and they've decided that members are only entitled to ask three questions, it means that a member is lucky to get a second set of questions in, which means that you can't pursue any investigation in any depth.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

So, Mr. Speaker, I've submitted a Bill before this Legislature that hopefully, if adopted by the Legislature, would make the workings of that particular committee more effective. It would reduce the size of the committee to a more workable number, like 11. Instead of bringing cabinet ministers before the committee so that you get into a repetition of what goes on during the estimates process, you'd be able to call in whoever you wanted to in terms of departments and launch into serious investigations. That committee would be provided with the research resources that would allow it to examine a situation in depth. Members would be allowed to pursue lines of questioning and complete them and find out what is really going on in a situation.

Beyond that, the committee would not only be empowered to look at the public accounts documents themselves, but the committee should have the power to investigate any kind of government expenditure. If you have a situation like the Pocklington business, you'd be able to call in every member of that department that you wanted to, investigate the situation in depth, find out what really went on, and protect the public interest in that way. Because after all, that's really what government is about. We're here to protect the public interest. How can we as Members of a Legislative Assembly do that if our hands are tied behind our backs? Even if we just simply had effective committee procedures in place, that in itself would inhibit the government from taking risky positions with respect to public dollars and public funds.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to another matter, and that is one that I referred to earlier, which is to improve the operation of other parts of the committee system. Our Member for

Vegreville introduced a motion last year that I think would go a long way toward doing that. He suggested that this House should establish a series of all-party committees that would deal with the subjects of agriculture; education and youth; environment; health and social development; industry, technology and labour; resource development and trade; co-operative and community development; finance and economics; and justice. So instead of having the kind of estimates process that we have right now where the minister comes in, talks for half an hour, two opposition members get up and maybe talk for half an hour and make political points, and that's almost the end of it for that presentation of estimates – instead of doing it that way, we'd meet in smaller committees, meet until we'd really scrutinized the estimates in some detail. We spend 50 hours on estimates in this Legislature. In Manitoba they spend over 200 hours looking at estimates. It's really important that we should do a line-by-line scrutiny of the government's proposed and intended expenditures.

Also, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that when it comes to the passage of legislation through this Assembly, why is it that all of a sudden we should be just given a Bill that the government brings in and contains only their ideas? I think it'd be much more effective if we used the committees that the Member for Vegreville has suggested and have all parties scrutinize these Bills before they come before the Assembly. On a few occasions I know that I've suggested items on energy Bills that have been adopted by the minister, but it's really rare and infrequent that that happens.

I also think, Mr. Speaker, that in order to implement the intent of this motion as proposed by the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, the Standing Orders should be amended to empower a committee like the Public Accounts Committee, as I've suggested, to request the Auditor General to conduct value-for-money audits.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to comment on a very significant piece of legislation that our leader introduced in the Legislature yesterday, the Code of Ethics and Conduct Act, and indicate some of the critical and most important sections of that Bill. We certainly don't agree with the Premier that Alberta has some of the strongest conflict-of-interest legislation in Canada. There are no rules, as we saw in a recent affair in this Legislature, that prevent an MLA or a senior public servant from trying to influence decisions which might give him a profit. This Bill that our caucus has presented to the Legislature would provide these rules.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please, in the House. If you want conversation, I'm sure you can find a more pleasant place and have a cup of coffee.

MR. PASHAK: The essence of this Bill is that it would say it's wrong for an official to try to influence a decision in which he might profit, by ensuring that information about what an official owns is public information and by providing a mechanism for any member . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Forgive me, hon. member. In view of the hour and that we need a procedural motion, I wonder if you'd be good enough to make a motion to adjourn the debate.

MR. PASHAK: I beg leave, Mr. Speaker, to adjourn debate.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member.

Those in favour of the motion to adjourn, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Carried. Thank you.  
Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, the business of the House tomorrow will be in accordance with Standing Order 58(4), as moved by the Leader of the Opposition, and that is Treasury.

[At 5:29 p.m. the House adjourned to Wednesday at 2:30 p.m.]

