

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: Thursday, May 17, 1990 8:00 p.m.

Date: 90/05/17

[The House resumed at 8 p.m.]

CLERK: Committee of Supply.

MS BARRETT: Point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: Point of order before Committee of Supply?

MS BARRETT: Yes. Sorry about being slow on the draw there. I didn't realize what the Clerk was going to say.

Mr. Speaker, I bring to the attention of the Assembly at the first possible opportunity what I believe to be an instance this afternoon in the Assembly of imputing motives false and unavowed, under both Standing Order 23 and *Beauchesne* citation 484(3), wherein the Premier said in response to questions that I posed to him this afternoon – I am quoting from the Blues now – as follows:

Now, if I understand the Member for Edmonton-Highlands' position it is this that if you break the law in Alberta, you will gain some benefit.

The Premier went on to say – I'll read the full sentence, although it's the latter part that is relevant in this instance:

I've given orders to our negotiators to immediately negotiate the matters which they care about, the courts have given orders to them to go back to work, a judge of our Alberta court has made a ruling, which I gather the NDP have said "defy and break", which is a terrible thing for lawmakers to countenance law breaking.

That's the end of the quote that I believe is relevant.

Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that this is a most unfair allegation and in fact does impute motives on behalf of the New Democrats not just as a political party but as members sitting, 16 in total, as the Official Opposition of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, would you be good enough to quote again the Standing Order and *Beauchesne* references, please.

MS BARRETT: Yes, the citation in Standing Orders would be 23(i) and in *Beauchesne* it would be 484(3).

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair will take it as notice and review the Blues and hopefully be able to report to the Assembly tomorrow.

MS BARRETT: Thank you. Further point of order, Mr. Speaker. On a different subject, that which arose later in the afternoon, the Blues indicate that when I asked for the citation with respect to your decision to ask the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods to withdraw comments that he made on May 8, when you had not ruled them out of order at that time, you cited *Beauchesne* reference 462, which reads that

While the Speaker is the final authority on the order of speaking in the House, and on occasion has used independent [judges] . . .

It goes on to cite the role of Whips. I ask under the authority of, I think it's Standing Order 13, my right to have an explanation of the ruling. My reading of this citation does not answer the question for the change of ruling; in fact, the change from no ruling one week ago to a ruling today.

MR. SPEAKER: Your point of order is not in order. The references were made this afternoon. That case rests. Thank you.

MS BARRETT: Subsequent point of order, Mr. Speaker. In response to a request from the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, I will quote as follows your words from the Blues:

The Chair has previously explained that this afternoon, hon. member. Perhaps you'd also look to *Beauchesne* 192.

Well, *Beauchesne* 192 didn't answer the question that was put with respect to a request for a citation to explain a ruling. *Beauchesne* 192 describes the circumstances that would lead up to, for instance, the suspension of a member and the steps that a Speaker may wish to take before them. It's the last sentence which in this case may be relevant but was not explained.

On several occasions Speakers have refused to hear Members who have, in the opinion of the Chair, exceeded the bounds of orderly conduct.

Mr. Speaker, the member was never informed on May 8 or on May 9 that he in fact had conducted himself in a fashion that was not orderly, and therefore it seems to me that the citation doesn't hold. Under Standing Order 13 I ask for a citation with respect to the ruling, or the change of ruling from a nonruling to a ruling, in one week, that the member was out of order and on what basis that was made.

MR. SPEAKER: The explanation was given previously to the House, hon. member. Whether you choose to agree with what the explanation was is indeed your own personal matter to deal with.

The Chair will indeed comment, however, with respect to May 9, that on that occasion the Chair made it abundantly clear by the action of the Chair sitting and waiting a space of time, that the whole intention was for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods to indeed do what was honourable in terms of the parliamentary tradition. It was at that time that the Chair also did the very unusual action of noting for the record, "The Chair notes that the member did not rise." In terms of parliamentary tradition, that is indeed a signal to the member and a signal to the House that the matter is not closed. The Chair had waited with a fair amount of patience over a period of days, waiting for the member to do what was indeed an appropriate action in the parliamentary system. That matter still rests and . . . [interjections] Forgive me, hon. member. You were speaking to another member or to the Chair?

MR. GIBEAULT: To the member over here.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The matter is closed.

CLERK: Committee of Supply.

MS BARRETT: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Hon. member, the whole evening will not be spent in dealing with points of order.

MS BARRETT: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

AN HON. MEMBER: The cameras are off.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
What issue is this?

MS BARRETT: Well, now there are two points of order, Mr. Speaker, but I will proceed to the next point of order. I still would argue that our Standing Order 13(2) . . .

MRS. OSTERMAN: Citation?

MS BARRETT: Thirteen (2), Mrs. Osterman, if you care to read them.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, we have no Mrs. Osterman in this Chamber.

MS BARRETT: I do beg your pardon. Hon. member.

MR. SPEAKER: Take your seat, hon. member. [interjection] Hon. Member for Edmonton-Belmont, if you have something to chime in about, I am quite certain I can sit here a long time and listen to points of order till the cows come home.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, I do withdraw. I meant, of course, the Member for Three Hills.

AN HON. MEMBER: Who thinks she's the Speaker.

MS BARRETT: Or would like to be the Speaker perhaps.

Mr. Speaker, under 13(2) it says, "Mr. Speaker shall explain the reasons for his decision upon the request of a member." I have now cited two citations that you referred to this afternoon which do not constitute an explanation. I will now go to the third one, which . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. That's inappropriate comment. The Chair made its explanation. Whether you like that explanation or not, I'm sorry, is beside the point. So now to make further comment on it only muddies the water further.

If you'd now like to proceed to the next point of order.

MS BARRETT: Fine, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if you would like to explain how it is that the citation *Beauchesne* 71, which deals with Reflections on the Speaker, exclusively deals with reflections on the Speaker made outside the House and, in fact, cites references related to comments in newspapers, has anything to do with the fact that your ruling last week was not a ruling, and yet today the Speaker required that the member either withdraw his comments, which were not ruled out of order last week, or be not heard from now on for a period not cited by the Speaker but indicated to be indefinite.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. It's my pleasure to respond. Those citations were invoked against yourself, hon. member. They were not directed at the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods. In the late part of the afternoon the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands was engaged in becoming rather excited in terms of comments back and forth across the House and in particular directed at the Chair, and the hon. member was verging on being ruled out of order.

That's the end of that point of order. Do we now move on to the next? Thank you.

head: Committee of Supply

[Mr. Schumacher in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Members of the committee, before commencing with the business of the evening, the Chair would like to recognize the hon. Member for Three Hills.

head: Introduction of Special Guests

MRS. OSTERMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This afternoon in a formal way a group was introduced into this House, and this evening I'd like to just add some additional comment. Indeed, we're going into committee, and I know that the Chairman will be giving a further explanation, but for the benefit of members, just to elaborate a little bit on a group of people, especially four young people who are leading the Forum for Young Albertans – many of us had the opportunity to dine with them tonight and have a visit about our very historic buildings and grounds.

First of all, two young ladies who have been with the forum as chaperones. The first, Annette Klassen. I'm not sure whether Annette is in the members' gallery or in the public gallery, but I'd ask her to rise again. Annette is from my home community of Acme. This fair young lady attended the forum first in 1988, and I think it begins to tell us about the continuity of the young people who have been excited by their first look at public office and, indeed, continue to further assist. She's been serving as a chaperon since that time and is presently attending university and completing an arts degree and, I believe, majoring in languages at the U of A.

The other young lady, Mr. Chairman, is Holly Strach. She attended the forum as a student in 1987 and has served as a forum chaperon every year since. In 1988 Holly attended the Presidential Classroom for Young Americans in Washington, D.C., as a representative of the forum, and is presently completing her commerce degree. Holly is up in the members' gallery. Thank you, Holly.

Our assistant executive director is becoming a very well-known face to us, Mr. Chairman, Bryan Tittmore. Bryan participated in the Forum for Young Albertans as a student in 1984. Thank you, Brian. He became assistant executive director in 1986 and has held that position since then. He's now a trustee for the forum, as of 1989, and we welcome that, and for the last six years has been attending the University of Saskatchewan and this year completed his commerce and law degrees, after which he will be working for the federal Department of Justice. We acknowledge his participation and his personal accomplishments.

Last but not least, Mr. Chairman, is our executive director, Blair Stolz. Nobody can miss Blair. There he is. He's the short fellow in the group. Blair attended the Forum for Young Albertans in 1982 as a participant. In 1983 he was the first person, as I understand it, outside of Edmonton to become a page in this Legislative Assembly, and I think that made the hon. Member for Medicine Hat very proud. Blair served here as a page and served his members very well. He also has another accomplishment; that is, the youngest elected official in Canada when he was elected as alderman, or as some people say, "alderboy," for the city of Medicine Hat. Blair, we certainly welcome you again.

To all the other forum members: it's wonderful to see you here tonight. Those of us who had the opportunity to dine with you certainly enjoyed ourselves. I know that our hon. chairman will be talking about tonight's business.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

head: Committee of Supply
(continued)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. For the benefit of our guests this evening, the Committee of Supply is dealing with the estimates provided for under the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund capital projects division. Our estimates are really in three main groups. The main estimates, what people generally refer to as the main budget, and then there's a couple of supplemental budget items, of which this is one. This is the distribution of money coming from the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund. Then the third group is the capital fund. We finished the main estimates last Friday, I believe, and this week has been devoted to the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund.

Tonight's business: it's proposed by the Chair to complete vote 2, Land Reclamation, under the Department of the Environment; then we'll move on to Forestry, Lands and Wildlife.

MR. McEACHERN: Mr. Chairman, that's vote 2 of the Environment that passed in committee?

MR. CHAIRMAN: If the hon. member would just wait, I'll point out that vote 2 did not quite finish. It almost finished, but we ran out of time yesterday, and it's proposed that this matter be concluded so that we can move on to Forestry, Lands and Wildlife.

As far as our guests are concerned, that's what the business of the evening will be. The general principle is that when we start a new vote, the minister responsible for that vote will explain the nature of the vote, and then he is open for comments and questions from other members of the Assembly.

head: Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund
Estimates 1990-91

Environment
2 – Land Reclamation

MR. CHAIRMAN: With that in mind, I would ask the committee if it's ready for the question on vote 2 under the Department of the Environment. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Yes, Mr. Chairman. On behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place, I would like to ask a particular question which I'm not sure he got to ask. I know he wanted to make sure it was on the record again. The question he had for the Minister of the Environment, which he did not get an answer back to is: just how much money did the Environment department pay for preparation of the site for the supposed development of a meat packing plant in Picture Butte by Peter Pocklington? I believe the minister indicated that he would try to get that number for the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place. So we wonder if somebody on the other side has the answer to that now since it's 24 hours since the minister said he would get it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Solicitor General.

MR. FOWLER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In the absence of the Minister of the Environment and as Acting Minister of the Environment, before moving to report vote 2 – in respect to the last specific question, which was in fact asked last night and asked tonight and was also asked last year, the response to that question will be found on page 30 of the heritage trust fund *Hansard* record, dated October 24, 1989. If that is not available to the hon. member, I will be pleased to supply it tomorrow, but that citation can be taken out of today's *Hansard*.

With that, Mr. Chairman, and on behalf of the Minister of the Environment, I wish to move that vote 2 be reported.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister, I think before we can ask for that, we have to get the committee to agree to the vote, and before we can do that, the Chair has to recognize other members who wish to ask further questions.

The hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, I believe.

MR. TAYLOR: I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman; I'm having a little difficulty trying to find out where we were at on Wednesday. What I wanted to pass on, and I find it now, looking through *Hansard* . . . The minister did agree to go out and look into it, but basically what it was – if I could repeat it, it'll only take a second. I wanted to know if any of that half a million dollars being spent on land reclamation research was devoted to reclamation of land that has not been destroyed yet but has lost a great deal of its productivity – particularly in the hon. minister's area and in our truck garden area just north of Edmonton – due to sulphur and other chemical fallout from the air, both industrial and from the city. I wanted to know whether any money is being spent to see what our productivity is doing.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Vegreville.

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In terms of the response to the question raised by the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway given by the hon. Solicitor General, the issue deals with site reclamation through moneys provided by this vote, Department of the Environment, Land Reclamation program, with respect to a site in the town of Picture Butte.

Picture Butte, to refresh the memories of hon. members, was the eventual site chosen for the location of a hoped for hog slaughter facility in the southern part of the province of Alberta, a hog slaughter facility that, I might add, was supposed to have been built with a \$12 million loan that was given by this government at 9.6 percent interest to one Peter Pocklington. Now, the question dealt with how much money was spent in the past through the land reclamation program, and I think that's an interesting question. I want to make it clear on the record that communities in the province of Alberta have the right to apply for assistance through this program to reclaim land within their jurisdiction so that it can be put back into productive use.

I think we can all agree that the moneys advanced through this program are moneys well spent. Mr. Chairman, it's used in the case of Picture Butte to reclaim a parcel of land that was used for some other purpose, that was not suited for general use. They had an opportunity, they believed, to become the site of a future hog slaughter facility, and they applied to the program to get money to reclaim the site and make it suitable for same, and I think that's wholly appropriate.

The question I want to ask relates to the expenses incurred by the town of Picture Butte. I met with some people in Picture Butte some time ago and discovered that the town had gone out

on a limb, so to speak, ponying up their share of the costs, their share of the money towards this land reclamation project in hopes that they would get some economic development in exchange, that there would be a \$20 million hog slaughter facility built in Picture Butte, that that would provide jobs for people in the community, that that would attract additional ancillary investment to the community, and that it would be a great boon not only to the town of Picture Butte but to the overall economy of southern Alberta. So the good fathers and mothers of the town of Picture Butte decided that it would be worth while spending that money to pay their share of land reclamation costs.

I'd like to suggest, because the government knew full well that Peter Pocklington was not going to build a hog slaughter plant, that they had no intention for him to use the \$12 million loan to build a hog slaughter plant, that they admitted in this House some time later that that money was going, as far as they knew, just to help Peter Pocklington cover his day-to-day operating expenses. I'd like to suggest that the provincial government, this Conservative government . . . [interjections]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please.

MR. FOX: The backbenchers would be well advised to listen to this. There's some words of advice in my comments. [interjections]

MR. GESELL: Yes, it would be nice if some of your backbenchers would be here to listen, sir.

MR. FOX: Order. The Member for Clover Bar thinks it's nonsense when I suggest that the people of Picture Butte were let down by a government that promised them a development, were let down by a government that said: there is going to be a hog slaughter plant built here, and it's going to be worth your while to spend money on this land reclamation program to reclaim a site. That put an incredible burden on those people, hon. member, an incredible burden on the tax base of that small community, because they spent money hoping that there would be a hog plant built there: a plant that was promised by this government, a plant that was to be built with public money advanced by this government in the most casual and, indeed, foolish of ways to Mr. Peter Pocklington. [interjection]

You'll have your chance to debate, hon. Member for Clover Bar. If you'd like to participate and defend the government's record in this regard, you're more than welcome to, but I suggest that in terms of the people of Picture Butte, it's not a very defensible record, hon. member.

I'd just like to know if there were any representations made by the government to the people of Picture Butte in terms of offering them additional assistance through the land reclamation program, recognizing that they were, in fact, let down the garden path in terms of this supposed development. They dug deep into their nearly empty pockets to pony up some cash to reclaim this land so that a plant that the government knew wasn't going to be built could be built. I'm wondering if someone over there will take responsibility for this, or if they have agreed to provide some additional assistance to the people of Picture Butte.

Now the Member for Clover Bar, who thinks this is ridiculous, is welcome to stand in his place and carry on the debate.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is the committee ready for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

Agreed to:

2.1 – Land Reclamation	\$2,000,000
2.2 – Reclamation Research	\$500,000
Total Vote 2 – Land Reclamation	\$2,500,000

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Solicitor General.

MR. FOWLER: Thank you. Again, Mr. Chairman, I do want to respond to some . . .

MRS. OSTERMAN: You can't.

MR. FOWLER: Now I can't do it, I'm advised?

On behalf of the Environment minister, I move that vote 2 be reported.

[Motion carried]

Forestry, Lands and Wildlife **1 – Grazing Reserves Enhancement**

MR. CHAIRMAN: Vote 1 appears on page 18 of the book.
The hon. Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife.

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll speak about vote 2 first, and then I'll speak about vote 1. We could cover it that way, I believe. Would you rather I covered vote 1 first?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll complete vote 1 in its entirety and then move on to vote 2.

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The provincial grazing reserve program provides grazing opportunities across the province for livestock producers, but what most people don't seem to appreciate or understand is it provides a number of recreational opportunities, such as hunting and fishing, for the general public, and it provides good wildlife habitat as well. These are operated by a program that has a recovery of costs level of 973 percent. Nineteen eighty-nine revenues were \$3,037,529, with costs of \$3,123,235, leaving a deficit of some \$85,000.

The grazing reserve program began in the early 1930s in southern Alberta at the request of local farmers' to create community pastures. The program has now grown to some 32 reserves located throughout the province. In 1989 there were 1,725 livestock producers grazing 101,000 head on the reserves across the province. But there was response to urgent requests by a number in the farming and ranching community, and the department embarked on a 10-year, \$40 million grazing reserve development program back in 1978. That was funded at that time by the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. The program provided assistance in enhancing the grazing capacity of public lands, and it was extremely well received. It resulted in a significant increase in the capacity of the public lands, raising the total number of grazing reserves at that time from 22 to 32.

The department now is proposing to redevelop several of the grazing reserves, particularly in central and northern Alberta. A total amount of \$19.2 million is required to redevelop 136,000 acres of low-yielding fields on 21 reserves. Approximately 1,000 livestock producers would benefit from that work.

New techniques have been developed by the department to enhance regrowth on large-scale grazing developments. Part of the problem we've had with them is that they could have been done better before. We had regrowth of brush on a number of the reserves. Unfortunately, the techniques we have available now weren't available then when those older reserves were developed.

The redevelopment will be spread over a period of seven years. The reason for the seven years is to allow existing stocking levels to remain and be maintained throughout that period of change. If we did it all at once or too quickly, we would have a great impact on the ranching and farming communities. Also, the grass/legume mixtures we're going to be using in intensive grazing practices are going to allow, I believe, even a greater use of those reserves after the redevelopment is completed.

The current average allotment on these grazing reserves is 37 head per producer. If redevelopment does not occur, those fields are going to continue to be overgrown by brush and it will decrease the forage production. That would mean the existing grazing lease allotments would have to be reduced to approximately 29 head from the present 37. That would happen over the period of the next seven years, and that decrease would continue with time. But once the redevelopment occurs and is completed, the average allotment would increase to 49 head and that 37 head that we're maintaining while we're redeveloping. Then once we're completed and go to 49 head, it will allow livestock producers to increase to some 1,300 producers that can utilize those reserves. So we'll be able to have more people in. The difference there is that between the projected optimum level of livestock production on these redeveloped grazing reserves as compared to the production from the old overgrown fields is a potential of grazing 20,000 more livestock. That's all going to take place in central and northern Alberta with the redevelopment in this program.

This additional grazing will mean that the fees to the government will increase. The only option we have if it decreases: the grazing fees are going to go up until it gets uncompetitive for any of the farmers to use those grazing reserves to try and maintain a balance. Now, since I've been minister, I've been trying to increase the grazing fees so they're more competitive with the private-sector ones. There's been some criticism that they weren't competitive. We've been increasing those over this period. But when all these grazing fees are collected by the government when the redevelopment occurs, we'll have nearly a million dollars, \$900,000 and some change, that we'll take in increased revenues. We'll have a program total of 101,000 head of livestock yielding \$3.7 million in grazing revenues. The value of the additional grazing I think will contribute significantly to the local economy and allow the grazing reserve program to operate on a cost-recovery basis.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I'm happy to hear the comments of the members and try and answer any questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On behalf of my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place, I would like to ask a few questions of the minister. In the estimates it says there are 21 grazing reserves in central and northern Alberta. He mentioned there are 32. Perhaps he meant there are 32 in the province.

Also, Mr. Chairman, the amount put into these grazing reserves thus far is somewhere in excess of \$40 million. Taking back \$3.7 million per year: although it is a large number, it seems like it's a long-term payback; it takes a long time to get that money back.

I would suggest the minister of forestry sounds more like the Minister of Agriculture in looking after these types of things. But perhaps it's because of his position as the minister responsible for public lands.

Also, Mr. Chairman, the existing allotments approximately the size of a thousand family farm units will occur. Will this land be divided up, sold to families for family farms, or will it go on, as the minister said, just for leases for pasture?

Mr. Chairman, when they're killing this brush that seems to be growing on these reserves, does the department do away with the brush by means of spraying or tordon pellets, or do they do it by mowing or cultivation?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order in the committee, please.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'll be very brief in my submissions, Mr. Chairman. I do believe these lands are looked after properly, but would there be more money made if these trees were allowed to grow to a full size and follow through on the development the minister has been promoting in the past few years in the forest industry?

AN HON. MEMBER: Are you talking about willows?

MR. DOYLE: Mr. Chairman, I'm not too sure what kinds of trees are growing on that property, whether they be willows or white poplar or black poplar or maybe some of those nice birch that we don't seem to care too much for in this province and ruin every time the forester goes in and cuts some trees.

Mr. Chairman, I will end my submission, and I'll be waiting for the response from the minister.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Chairman, I'd just like to make a couple of comments. The grazing reserves enhancement program is in and of itself, we believe, a valuable program and provides an important service to the farmers in this province. However, it's difficult for me and for us to put this expenditure in perspective, because the grazing reserves enhancement program – that is, grazing reserves specifically are not the only public lands to which farmers are afforded access for grazing. Of course, I'm talking about the grazing lease component of our grazing reserve/grazing lease program.

The concern I have about allocating to grazing reserves funds of over a million dollars – \$1.4 million – in this case relates to the fact that we don't know how much money is being lost through windfall profits that accrue to the private holders, as it were, of grazing leases. I'm not saying whether it's right or it's wrong that private leaseholders should have access to oil development related funds, compensation, and so on. There is a point to be made, and a strong point, that they are entitled to some compensation. What really concerns me is that judging by comments made in answers to questions I asked last fall, the minister simply doesn't have a handle on how much money is accruing to independent individual grazing leaseholders that might more equitably be split between grazing leaseholders and perhaps the people of Alberta, the government of Alberta, to be utilized in enhancing this program, the grazing reserve program,

which I believe has a broader public application and is less restrictive than the grazing lease program to that extent.

I'm not passing judgment to say that one is better than the other. It is likely that they both have a role. I am saying that the grazing reserve enhancement program costs us \$1.4 million and we don't know whether it's \$5 million or \$21 million – that's one figure – or \$100 million that goes to independent grazing leaseholders through their relationship with oil and gas and seismic companies that utilize their leasehold land. So we would like to see some figures on that side before we could more adequately judge the investment represented by this vote.

The second issue I would like to raise is that it may be there are complementary uses for grazing reserves. As they seem to be reverting to brush at a rapid rate, it may be that we can begin to see them being utilized in other ways, such as game preserves where perhaps there can be a provision of hunting access. What we would ask is that there be some cost/benefit analysis to assess the benefits versus the cost of using these in a traditional way, versus the use of grazing reserves in other ways such as hunting or game preserves; what their application to game farming and game ranching might be – those kinds of issues. I would just raise those matters for comment by the minister.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. minister.

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll try and answer the member for Yellowhead first. Really what these reserves set up . . .

MR. DOYLE: The riding is West Yellowhead, not Yellowhead.

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: My fault, Mr. Chairman. He's absolutely right. I should know better. It's the Member for West Yellowhead.

I think I would like to begin my response in saying that the reason they were set up initially was to try and increase the grazing capacity in northern Alberta. There was difficulty having enough grazing capacity to try and diversify the agriculture there is in northern Alberta, and the cost of trying to clear this land and provide that opportunity in the north – and I think there is far more opportunity in the north for more livestock production. But one of the handicaps they had was that most of it is covered with brush and the grazing carrying capacity per acre just wasn't viable unless we stepped in and did something. There was some urgency at that time to do it. So they moved in quickly to try and clear that land and try and get cattle on it as soon as possible. The trees on it are a variety, because you go all the way from central to northern Alberta. There's aspen, brush, willow, a little of everything in there. They didn't get the roots out and let the roots die, so they sucker back up again. And that's why we need a longer term in order to do it this time, because it will have to be cleared and then left blackened and put into some cereal crop or something like that for a year or so so it can be worked again to make sure it doesn't sucker. It'll take that kind of work to make sure the grazing capacity we now spend the money on is going to be there not only for the near term but for the longer term.

He raised whether they will stay as they are or be sold. There was an option by the former minister when he was there to say – because there was some interest in making them private. There was an A option and a B option offered to them. I'd have to look it up to find out how the formula worked, how they could make application and be considered and how it would be

looked at. There haven't been any applications for it. I believe part of the reason is that agriculture's gone through some pretty tough times, but also grazing rates were reasonable. In fact, we were losing money; we were spending more money than we were taking in. So we've been increasing the grazing rates to try and get up to a break-even position. If you went above that, I don't think they'd use them, because it has to be cost competitive as well. In some ways it costs more to graze cattle in the north, because you have to feed them longer in the spring and sometimes start to feed them earlier in the fall than you do in southern Alberta. So there had to be some benefit there for them. I suppose we could consider the option of sale, but no one's really interested right now. I think that would be quite a policy decision to take if we decided to go that way, and I'm sure we'd create some debate.

I think I answered do we cultivate and then reseed. Yes, we do. It has to be blackened. Also, it's not a cheap process either when you start doing that. It gets fairly expensive.

Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, I hope my answer to West Yellowhead answered some of the question you had initially about: are there excessive profits being made in some way to the grazer? Well, I think maybe what's important for me to highlight to you is that we have a number of different ways we approach it. We have public land in this province that is grazing leases. We also have community pastures, and then we have grazing reserves. The grazing reserves are provincially owned and provincially run, so with any oil and gas activity on the provincial grazing reserves the money comes to us. None of that oil and gas revenue goes to the patrons.

The concern also about whether or not wildlife is being adequately considered in what we're doing in brush clearing I think is a very good point to raise. These grazing reserves have access for hunting and all kinds of other recreational opportunities. Like I'm talking about the return from the grazing reserve patrons not quite breaking even. But if you consider that they're open to the public, they have hunting on them, they have other recreational things that take place on them as well, there is a lot of public benefit over and above just the grazing reserve fees.

I didn't answer the question properly about . . . I think you asked: are we better to leave it in trees and brush rather than to re-clear? That's a good point as well. But I have to say in this that wildlife is given very paramount consideration because wildlife habitat is also a multiple-use aspect of those grazing reserves, and we are not going to clear the whole thing. There have to be corridors left for wildlife. All that has to be taken into account depending on what kind of wildlife is in the area; it varies from central to northern Alberta. But wildlife certainly is a very strong consideration, because there is hunting activity that takes place on those grazing reserves. Others use it for nonconsumptive use; they like to view wildlife.

Mr. Chairman, I think that answers the questions I was asked to this point.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, I guess, wants to ask something to follow.

MR. TAYLOR: Mine is just very short to carry on from it. I was a little concerned at the \$1 million put aside for grazing reserve redevelopment. I wanted to fire a warning shot across the minister's bow, and I think the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark has already opened it up. Are we really sure we want to do this? The use you can get out of not redeveloping

it, for wildlife cover, maybe even game farming – I don't know. But I'm just wondering if we are not responding today with a 1940s solution: going down there and getting rid of all the bloody trees, making sure there's lots of grass, causing problems for our wildlife, water retention to the muskegs, and all that type of thing. I think the green revolution has hit everywhere, and I would like to advise that it should also hit on grazing reserve redevelopment.

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Chairman, I'll just quickly respond to a very quick question. The demand is there, and the grazing reserve patrons in the areas are saying, "Listen, we're going to have to do something with them." Because we did use 1940 technologies in 1978 to clear them, and that's why we have to redevelop and clear them again. But it's part of the green revolution that you're not only looking after wildlife; when you redevelop the grazing land, that grass is also going to be used by the wildlife as well. It's a good multiple-use aspect, and they're interdispersed all across the province. And when you consider the magnitude of the public land in this province against 32 grazing reserves, it's pretty minimal.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A couple of things that have been said here just have me wondering a bit where we're going and particularly, I guess, where the Liberal Party is coming from. They seem to be suggesting that maybe some of these reserves would be well used for game farming or game ranching. I hope I didn't hear them right. I hope I didn't hear them suggesting that. It seems to me if you want to destroy the hunting and the elk and the deer and the moose and the various game animals in this province, then just get game ranching and game farming off the ground in a hurry. I heard the minister say that not too many people were interested in taking up these lands in the sense of buying them, and I would certainly hope he doesn't put them up for sale as game ranch lands and help develop them for that purpose. I guess I'm just a little alarmed that the Liberals seem to be suggesting that game ranching or game farming might be an appropriate use and something we should develop. I would be interested in the minister's response.

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: I don't believe the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon was suggesting that at all. There is no game farming on public land right now, and as long as I'm minister there won't be.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Chairman, thank you. I have two further questions that I'd like to pursue just briefly. I wonder whether the minister could indicate to us . . . I don't know whether this is a relevant question or not. If it isn't, it would be one of the few irrelevant questions I've ever asked in this House, as you know. I would like to know whether there is any implication for the use of all-terrain vehicles in grazing reserves, whether whatever policy your department has with respect to that kind of vehicular use applies at all to grazing reserves, applies generally to public lands. If you could just discuss that in general terms, I would appreciate it.

Secondly, a specific question again about the trade-off between grazing reserves and grazing leases and the possible incomes. I know we dance around this, and I know they are some really difficult political questions. I know that I've had calls from farmers saying, "Well, wait a minute; we do need compensation on grazing leases." I understand that entirely. But I also know that you can't really make decisions about these things unless you have full information. I appreciate that the way the leases are structured now, the government has no right of access to information about a third-party agreement that is involved in the farmer or the leaseholder structuring the relationship with the oil and gas or seismic company. But is it not possible, other than perhaps the political difficulties, to restructure those leases to require that a report is given to the government of income that is received by the leaseholder on that particular lease?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Chairman, I think that's a good suggestion, and it certainly is relevant. I'm reviewing the whole area of that compensation. I'm working with the Minister of Energy at the moment to see what can be done. I don't think any policy any government makes should be written in stone. I think that as times change and circumstances change, you should be open to review it and look at it. It'll take a consultative process to make it work, but I'm open to that. I am working on it. It'll take some time to get through the maze of it, but I have a couple of members of my caucus helping me to focus on that very issue.

I don't know how to answer fully on the grazing reserves and all-terrain vehicles, because that is the most sensitive doggone issue I think there is. We work with the integrated resource plans all across this province, and one of the things we always get bogged down on is all-terrain vehicles. To some people an all-terrain vehicle means a dirt bike. To somebody else it means a trike. To others it means a quad. Then you get the older ones that say, "Listen, I got my quad with those big tires; it doesn't damage anything." Then you get one: "If you're going to let that guy in, mine is just as good as that one, and I always stay on the trail." You're into that whole thing all the time. Even on grazing leases, ranchers don't have any difficulty with foot access, but they like to know who's wandering around. But there are some bad dudes out there with those four-wheel drives that chew everything up, or they're in there with bikes running all over where they shouldn't be and causing all kinds of problems. We say we care about the environment yet we should let these people in. Well, they run all over in sensitive areas. If you do that in Bow Valley – and the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, being raised in that area, knows very well – you drive across that and that grass is so sensitive that just those wheel tracks will kill it.

So I can't answer it on grazing reserves. But in northern Alberta, in most of them, I don't believe that's overly sensitive. But I can't say it's okay or not okay. It's a very sensitive one, and I think each grazing reserve would have to look at it – how they manage their grass and how they do it – on an individual basis.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is the committee ready for the question on vote 1?

Vegreville.

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a couple of comments. I'd like to express appreciation on behalf of the

people who benefit from the grazing opportunity provided by the Rannach community pasture partly in the Vegreville and partly in the Lloydminster constituencies. In reference to concerns brought to the minister's attention during the summer of 1988, I believe, which was one of the many very dry summers we've had on record, the minister in his wisdom saw fit to institute a program that assisted with provision of water on these grazing reserves. I think it was a very necessary program and one that was well used. I want to pass thanks on. I've not heard any complaints since, so that's always a good indication. If the wheel's not squeaking, it must be well oiled and working appropriately.

I wonder if the minister – you know, his projection here is that there'd be an increase in patron numbers through improving the pasture and making more space available within these community pastures, increasing existing allotments to approximately 1,000 family farmer ranch units. I'm wondering if there's any direction from the minister or his department in terms of how those additional allocations ought to occur. I have concern expressed by some people on occasion that it's very difficult to get into a grazing reserve. It's very difficult to have your animals accepted into the allotment. You know, those who are members aren't always able to graze as many animal units or livestock units as they would like to or as they need to, so any opportunities for increase in basic numbers often goes to the existing members. My perception of the process is that it's usually been very fair and there are boards in place that monitor that sort of thing, but I do get complaints on occasion from people who feel they're not being given enough access to the available pasture there in terms of the numbers of animals or livestock units they're allowed to graze in the pasture, and concern that when increases are allowed, they might not benefit from that. I just wonder if the minister might have any comment on that.

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Frankly, I haven't thought about it. I've got the concerns raised with me. The concerns are even broader in that it's a little different than it was even 15 years ago. A lot of the cattle now are crossbred; they eat a little more grass and take a little more room, so you've got to be very careful with the allotments. The allotments now are 37. We're looking at increasing that up to about 49. But there's also going to be new patrons that will be allowed in because of the improvement in the pasture. I will endeavour, Mr. Chairman, to find out exactly how that's going to proceed, and I will certainly advise all members.

One of the things when a grazing reserve . . . It's actually operated very well and in a very fair way in how they've done it. There are always complaints, but most times we're able to deal with them. In this one here, the hon. member raises a very good caution to make absolutely sure that not only the ones that are in there are, but there's also an opportunity for others who've been waiting in line to get in.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is the committee ready for the question on vote 1?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

Agreed to:

1.1 – Support Services	\$300,000
1.2 – Grazing Reserve Redevelopment	\$1,092,000
Total Vote 1 – Grazing Reserves Enhancement	\$1,392,000

2 – Pine Ridge Reforestation Nursery Enhancement

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Chairman, there are some very positive things that I can say about reforestation, not the least of which is the Pine Ridge nursery at Smoky Lake. It's a fine facility that I'm sure is familiar to many members in the Chamber, because they toured there with the heritage fund and had an opportunity to have a look at it.

Based on the increase in harvest levels from the new facility developments, we have to pay even greater attention not only to quantity but to quality of our regeneration efforts. There's an increased demand for seedlings, and that increase is pretty dramatic. To meet the demand for 1991, we project our production and supply of seedlings will be approximately 43 million trees, and this includes Pine Ridge operating at full capacity and obtaining 19 million seedlings from the private-sector growers.

We haven't been operating Pine Ridge at full capacity of what it was really designed to do. That might shock some members. We were not able to get the quality seedlings that we needed for running it, so we cut back on the number of seedlings to get the better quality. With the upgrading now at Pine Ridge, we're going to be able to bring it to that capacity. I'm pleased that expansion is under way, and it's been included in the estimates for your consideration. The investment of \$3.1 million will increase our production capacity by 9 million seedlings a year. We'll now be able to provide some 33.5 million seedlings from that facility itself, and they'll be very good quality trees. Those people in the forests who are responsible for planting the harvested areas have been asking for larger, more vigorous trees to ensure they can obtain the best results. What happens is that if you get a small tree, it doesn't take much grass before you smother it out, but if you get a little taller, more vigorous growing seedling, you end up with a far better tree. We recognize the change in the industry's needs, and we want to make sure that we provide the best seedling.

Even with that upgrading, we're not going to have enough to go around. It's our intention to continue growing some seedlings under contract, and we're still reviewing the development of a second facility somewhere in northwestern Alberta. There are some 22 communities – I think nearly everyone's been in to see me at least once – looking for that second facility. It wouldn't be a duplicate of Pine Ridge. We don't need to duplicate that facility. It would be a container facility that we would provide somewhere in northwestern Alberta, and it would supply an additional 26 million trees. A separate facility, in my view, would work well to supply the increasing demand in that region up there. Contrary to what the Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche would like, to have the whole facility upgraded at Pine Ridge, I don't think that would be wise, because I don't like to have all our eggs in one basket frankly. If something were to happen at one spot, then you've run too big a risk. I think that Pine Ridge is big enough. I think we need something else to make sure that we're doing the right thing.

Our forecasted seedling requirements in provincial reforestation by the mid 1990s are projected to be about 103 million trees a year, and we intend to be ready to ensure that we have the quality seedlings at that time. I should also mention that I don't think there's any magic. People have said: "Why would you build another facility? Why don't you just privatize it and have the private sector grow them under contract?" I think that's a very good point. It's worked fairly well in British Columbia in some cases, but our intention is to look at about a 50-50 split

between private sector and buying the seedlings under contract and then our public facilities. I don't think there's any magic to that. It could be 42 percent private or 42 percent public or whatever the number might be. I think we keep everybody honest that way too. By knowing what we can grow our seedlings for and everything, we establish a price and we establish a quality control and everything that I think gives us a lever. I'm not all bent out of shape one way or the other on what the numbers should be.

I think by having Pine Ridge upgraded and a container facility somewhere in northwestern Alberta, whether that facility is – it could be a private facility too if someone were to come forward, but we just can't accept somebody that doesn't know what they're doing. You can't run the risk of saying, "Oh, yeah, we'll build it, and we'll develop the seedlings" when they don't have the expertise to do it. Then they say that they had a crop failure, and we lose a year. We can't run those kinds of risks. I've been looking at other options: whether or not we have to build it or whether we could do it some other way.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

You could ask the question: it's costing a lot of money; how come you don't make the industry pay for it instead of us having to provide it from the heritage fund? The smallest cost of reforestation is the seedlings. About 15 percent of the total cost of reforestation presently is the seedling itself. That's the contract that we have with the companies on reforestation costs. The company has to collect the seeds. If you haven't been there, you maybe won't know that when we harvest a certain area, the cones are collected by the company from that area. Then they're tagged, and they go to Pine Ridge. They're cleaned and the seedlings are grown, and it goes back, maybe not to the exact same spot, but it has to be the same altitude, the same area, so that we have trees that are acclimatized to where they're going. They have to collect the seedlings and prepare the site and plant the trees and monitor and survey and all of that. When they document all that, we, of course, double-check on them and make sure we have access to their records on it.

One of the areas right now that has been fairly controversial, and it's been a difficult pull even though the industry did recognize that it had to do better, is the new reforestation standards. The large companies were able to handle that to some degree, but small companies are having difficulty in being able to cope. The costs are pretty dramatic on the small operations and being able to cope with it. We've implemented what are the new free-to-grow standards, so we supply good seedlings, and now we force them to manage it better. We don't want tree farms; I mean, that isn't what we're after. What we need to make sure of is that that tree that's planted is free to grow, and that means they have to monitor the competing vegetation around it and make sure that tree has the opportunity to grow into a healthy tree. So not only for our children and grandchildren will we have good trees, but frankly they should be better trees than what we have now, because when they collect the cones in the forest, they collect the cones from the good trees, the seed from the good strong trees. So we hopefully will end up with better genetic trees, not a different species but the very best trees that we can in that area.

So, Mr. Chairman, with that I'll be happy to try and answer any questions.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for West Yellowhead.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I listened with intent to the minister. Indeed, it must be a fine facility at Smoky Lake with some \$14,700,000 spent already on that facility. It must be a fine facility, Mr. Chairman, but I can't understand why they would build a facility so far away from where the forests are being taken away from us. All a person has to do is come to the riding of West Yellowhead and you'll see where the forest has been completely decimated. It looks like you're above the tree line if you drive from Robb to Grande Cache or from Grande Cache to Grande Prairie.

I had supper tonight with a young Albertan from the Forum for Young Albertans: Winston Delorme, a young Metis from Grande Cache. He claims that their main concern in Grande Cache now is that where forestry is letting off, the mines have taken over. There are hardly any trees left there. He was also quite surprised and quite displeased knowing that we have to reforest and that an MLA stated last night that the Metis in northern Alberta need pulp mill development because there are no more animals left for furs. He says that it is a disgrace that there are no animals left for furs. Yet that same MLA is saying, "Let's build that pulp mill in Athabasca." That happens to be the MLA for Athabasca-Lac La Biche. Mr. Chairman, I find this surprising when he understands how these dioxins and furans that come from these pulp mills in the riding of West Yellowhead kill the vegetation along the rivers and creeks where the animals feed and where they grow their fur, and then he turns around and tells young Albertans this. Then he tells us the opposite thing when he comes into the Legislature.

Mr. Chairman, \$3 million indeed would go towards a nice greenhouse in the riding of West Yellowhead, where most of these trees are being taken today. The Grande Cache area is about central to the Grande Prairie forest and to the Whitecourt forest and to the Edson forest. The town of Edson, I know, Mr. Chairman, for some time has been promoting a greenhouse in that area, where the employment could be used and where there would be very little transportation costs.

The minister did say that these seeds are collected by the company, and they are placed by the company. My question is: why does the company not have to grow these trees? They are the ones that get our stumps for next to nothing and rape our forests and leave everything under four inches standing on the ground just to rot and break up, and then some four years later they go back with heavy equipment, scarify it and break it up, burn certain areas. We had the opportunity to tour with Weldwood some short time ago in one area that had been cut 10 years ago. We were down on the ground looking for trees that he said were there someplace. We scratched some leaves back, and lo and behold we found a couple that were about an inch high. That's 10 years after they were cut. Mr. Chairman, if those trees were planted shortly after that wood was taken and this wood was utilized to a much larger extent, we wouldn't have to make these large investments in transplanting. In fact the company should bear the cost of this transplanting.

AN HON. MEMBER: Shut that pulp mill down.

MR. DOYLE: No way should they shut that pulp mill down at Hinton.

Mr. Chairman, 26 million trees, I believe the minister said, would be needed in a new greenhouse, and I wanted to make sure that was the correct figure. Also, if that greenhouse were located in an area close to where the forest has been taken out drastically in the past, the resource of geothermal energy could be used for good greenhousing, good aquaculture after you grow the trees. The resources there are something that could be tapped and must be tapped. You wouldn't have to use oil and gas or whatever is heating facilities at Smoky Lake presently.

Mr. Chairman, I am looking forward to sitting on the heritage trust fund committee, and hopefully sometime this summer I'll be able to tour the Pine Ridge forestry centre at Smoky Lake. Perhaps I'll have a better understanding of the facility.

Thank you.

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

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to ask several questions on this program. I would begin, however, by saying that I had the pleasure of going on a tour with the Heritage Savings Trust Fund committee to the Pine Ridge reforestation nursery. It was truly an excellent tour, very, very interesting, very enjoyable.

MR. TAYLOR: The trees were taller than he was.

MR. MITCHELL: And the older trees were taller than I was. I was very impressed, as were, I understand, most of the members of our committee.

I would have several questions about the process of reforestation and about the work of this nursery. First of all, I am interested in your policy about dividing the nursery function between the private sector and the public sector. I think there's a role for both, and offhand I see no reason why the 50-50 split isn't a reasonable split. I'm wondering whether the minister could indicate this evening what *is* the current split, what *is* the current level of activity that is in the private sector versus the public sector?

Secondly, the minister mentioned something about quality control, and I couldn't quite hear it or didn't follow it properly. How is quality control ensured in the private-sector operation? Is it simply market forces? If it is, that concerns me a little bit, because if you've got seven or eight years and then these things don't work in the reforestation process, at the very least you've got to be able to factor in that lower quality into your no-net-loss program. On the other hand, I thought I caught the idea, although this doesn't seem to be right, that Pine Ridge would grow seedlings and sell them to other nurseries to develop further? No. Okay.

A further question is the free-to-grow issue, and of course a component of that issue is herbicides. I know that this time last year the minister or the department had mentioned that they were going to be experimenting with some herbicides, but there was no decision made to use herbicides on a widespread basis. I wonder whether the minister could update us on his herbicide policy or his view of what's going to be done there and the results of whatever testing was done last year, if results are available or if it's appropriate that they would be available this early.

I'm very interested in the minister's claims over time – and I am not doubting the claim – and certainly the commitment to the idea that if we cut down this much forest, we will ensure that

there are these many trees replanted and growing this much so there is no net loss. I wonder whether the minister can discuss how the success versus failure rate of reforestation is, one, measured and, two, factored into that no-net-loss assessment each year.

A corollary of that question would be the question: what *is* the success rate of reforestation, and how is that measured? Is it measured after one year, two years, three years, 12 years, or up to 15 or 20 years? However it is measured, could the minister indicate, one, the methodology of that measure and, two, the current results of that measure? I hear this figure of 38 or 40 percent failure, therefore 60 or 62 percent success rate of the reforestation program, but I would be very interested to know from the minister what the empirical facts are in that regard. I would like to, if possible, know whether the minister has some written studies from the department that he could release – I would hope that he would release – that address this issue, that assess the success versus failure rate of reforestation. I wonder whether the minister could give us an update on the Naylor Hills-Keg River area reclamation project, which will, of course, address the issue of reforestation.

Finally, we notice that the United States is debating now a program of planting 10 billion trees and Australia *is* launching a program of planting 1 billion trees over a certain period of time. I know that in the past there's been a bring home your school seedling tree program. I know that my son just brought one home last week, and we dutifully went out and planted that seedling. I wonder whether the minister could indicate, one, how widespread that program is and, two, whether that program couldn't be extended to householders who are interested somehow in just beginning to plant more trees – I know there's a problem with competing with nurseries and so on – whether the minister has thought about that and ruled it out or considered it possible just so that we can encourage people to begin to plant more trees. I heard a statistic that it costs \$1,500 to plant a tree in downtown Toronto, where trees are needed. Of course, *it* doesn't cost that here. What can this minister do, what does he consider might be appropriate to begin to encourage tree planting throughout our urban centres as well as in towns and villages and so on around the province?

Finally, could the minister confirm and provide detailed analysis of how his department is factoring in the increasing demand for seedlings that will result from the work of Daishowa; Weldwood, expanded as it is; Procter & Gamble, expanded as it probably will be; Alberta Energy, and so on. What are the projections in five-year periods for the next 20 years, and what are the parallel expansion plans for nursery development in the province?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Redwater-Andrew.

MR. ZARUSKY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to get up and speak and, I guess, thank the minister for the wise decision and the heritage trust fund committee for the expansion to Pine Ridge Forest Nursery, in the Redwater-Andrew constituency, located near Smoky Lake. It was this government's decision years ago to start this fine project in the area and benefit forestry, as it was needed. This government had the foresight to see the need for replanting forests, and I guess the reason this area was chosen is because of the right soil conditions, the Crown land in the area, and being near a river also where the water is needed for irrigating the fields, and also the

peat moss near the area to mix in to make the right conditions for these seedlings to grow. I'm sure a lot of members have visited the facility, and I would invite those who haven't to come down and see this fine facility and what actually takes place there. It's a world-class nursery with the best genetics that can be done. We've got some very skilled technical people there that know what they're doing at this point and have indeed increased the growth rate of these seedlings by about five, six years maybe in one to two years. So you can see what is happening there.

The greenhouses have served their purposes well. Some have to be renovated and updated, and I know that others will be built to facilitate this to over 40 million seedlings a year, which the capacity will be. I know that the minister has mentioned that there needs to be another facility, but myself I think it would be wise to increase this one maybe to about 60 million seedlings a year. Then, myself being a strong promoter of the private sector and privatization, I think the other 40 million-plus seedlings could be produced by the private sector. Indeed, there is more land available in that area that suits that sort of growth for reforestation, and we could accommodate a lot of the private sector there and have the whole reforestation area in the Redwater-Andrew constituency. I think that would be wise because of the road network and transportation; these seedlings could be transported wherever they're needed.

So I would just ask the minister to consider some of the points I have made. I think, as I've said, that it's a good area because of the right conditions and, indeed, the technology being there. The people that are trained for it are there already and new ones are training. I know there have been many delegations from all over the world visiting this facility. In fact, Smoky Lake was the forestry capital of Canada back a few years, and I think that was well noted and indeed well done.

I just once again want to thank the minister and commend this government that I know is going the right way and taking the right steps for reforestation. I think Pine Ridge should be the area where it should all be done.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A couple of questions and observations. The program to reproduce seedlings, of course, for reforestation is something that's vitally important if we're going to have a forestry industry in this province. I guess one might wish that it would be done on a little less major scale and that we hadn't jumped in quite so fast as we seem to be doing. Nonetheless, at whatever rate you have a forestry industry in this province and however much you might decide to use the forestry resources in a multiple-use sense rather than just in straight lumbering and, you know, clear-cutting and then reseeded – there's much more than that, of course, to a multiple-use forestry development. We hope that the minister, of course, takes that into consideration and doesn't just pulp everything in sight and then have to scramble like crazy to try to regrow trees on the clear-cut land.

On that particular point, it would seem to me that while reseeded and reforesting is very important, nonetheless we should also think in terms of conserving and getting the most use out of what we have. I was up to Valleyview not too long ago talking to an old-timer who was a lumberman in his day. He told me that there was a particular bit of land near

Whitecourt that he had cut the timber off. In those days I believe the standard was that the tree had to be something like 10 inches across at the height of five feet. In any case, he said that in 1942 he timbered that whole region and took all the big timber out of it for lumber, but he said that they did it in such a way as to leave the other trees standing. It was done with horses in those days, right? He then went back in 1957 and took large poles out of it, I believe for electric light poles or some such thing, or telephone poles – that sort of thing. So it was timbered again within 15 years. Then he said that he was really amazed that sometime in the '80s – and I've forgotten the last date he gave me. But in any case, at one point in the '80s he was down into that territory, driving through, and he saw some activity going on in that same stand of timber. So he went in to see what was going on, and somebody was cutting rails out of it. He was amazed actually. But what he was really basically saying was that that same piece of land, that same piece of forest, had been timbered three times in 40 years. The reason I tell this story is because compared to some of the modern methods of moving in and clear-cutting everything, we then have to assume that it takes 70 or 80 years to regrow that forest. I think maybe we need to consider seriously whether or not that's a really productive way to do it in the long run.

So some of the techniques of modern pulping the forests of this province may not be the way to go. I guess I'd like the minister to respond and talk a little bit about that. While we do need seedlings, maybe preventative medicine is better at eking out the resources we have, rather than sort of mowing them down and then reseeded, which can be very costly, very expensive. That was one of the things I wanted to get on the record and ask the minister to comment on.

The other one is that I like to bring along with me the estimates for the previous years on the heritage trust fund capital projects division, and I look back to see how much money was put in in previous years. Now, I know it tells us here that by March 31, 1989, there was nearly \$15 million put in, and we're now putting in another \$3 million. But in looking back at the last five years, there is no allocation out of the capital projects division of the heritage trust fund, at least not according to these documents. So I guess I wanted to ask the minister a couple of things. One, why has there been this gap? Is it that now the operation has been carrying on in its own right without money out of here, not needing money out of here? Or perhaps if there was government funding, did it come out of the general budget of the government? I guess it also raises the question because all of a sudden now there's \$3 million allocated this year and there wasn't any allocated over those last several years.

It reminds me that a few years back, the general direction of the heritage trust fund, in terms of the capital projects division expenditures, was to cut back on the committed expenditures, to shrink the amount of money spent out of the capital projects division, and to shift things over. For instance, AOSTRA was shifted over to general revenues. A number of other programs were cut back: the amount of money into environment, irrigation. A number of different programs were being cut back fairly substantially, with the intention to keep on cutting them. Now I see the opposite trend here. In fact, the overall budget here is \$157 million, up again from – at one stage it was down to \$129 million. So I wonder if the minister could answer whether or not this is a trend or whether it just happens to be a unique circumstance in his department and if there's any rationale behind that.

So those would be my questions to the minister.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Just before calling on the minister. It seems that everyone is enjoying each other's company this evening, but if you could just control that a bit so the hon. minister and other members could be heard.

Mr. Minister.

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll maybe start off by responding to West Yellowhead. I hope I heard him wrong. I'd ask him to confirm that he was saying that Weldwood does a poor job of reforestation.

AN HON. MEMBER: That's what he said.

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: If that's true, if that's truly right, then our numbers that we've had showing that the reforested area where they have cut up to 30 years ago and have reforested now has a 30 percent increase in the volume of wood – I've been over most of that area. I've seen what they've done with habitat and with trees, and if it's bad, they should be shut down. They shouldn't get a permit to cut more wood if they're not doing reforestation properly. Everything I've seen there would lead me to believe they are, but if I'm shown that they're not, then frankly they shouldn't get a permit to cut and they should be shut down, because that is one of the things on our standards here for reforestation that are recognized as – I don't know if they're the best – among the best in the world. One of the things we can't do is allow poor reforestation.

Now, there are some things in certain areas that were done initially and areas that were cut that should not have been cut, because we recognize that there were circumstances in that area with the soil conditions or whatever, as was evident in the Naylor Hills, where it was cut and the water table came up and we're having a tough time to get regeneration now. Some of those things were done, but generally the areas of reforestation that I've seen have been excellent. The one spot that I didn't think was so good was driving right into the Jasper-Hinton airport, where they cut that area. The soil conditions don't allow – the trees are not doing all that well in that one spot, but overall I think it's pretty good.

You're right. There are 26 million trees in the new container facility – it's not a duplicate facility but a container facility – that we're looking at somewhere in northwestern Alberta.

Edmonton-Meadowlark, the questions that you asked about the split between the public and the private sector. I don't know what the magic is between – and I agree; I think 50-50. You start from that principle, and if we can get it to where it's more from the private sector, I think that would be fine. The answer is yes, it's quality control from the private sector. When you contract with them you contract so much per seedling for seedlings that meet a certain standard. We are contracting some now, and I think the standard is pretty good. But I don't like trees, frankly, grown in British Columbia. If we're going to grow trees for our industry, I'd like to see them grown in Alberta, and we have to do something with that. I don't believe it fits a cottage industry or a bunch of small operators doing it, because you could never get the volume and the quality control that you need to be able to maintain it.

The free-to-grow and the herbicide question is still a sensitive issue. Herbicides are used all over except here, except in research. The companies are saying to us that we should be allowing some limited herbicide use. And it's not really herbicide use; it's biocide use. Roundup is a biocide not a herbicide. It would be something that we're looking at and

trying to work on with the industry and work with those that are on the other side of the fence, that feel that no herbicides are okay, to see if we could come to some kind of an approach under a very controlled circumstance. One of the things I hope the heritage fund does in their tours – and if they have not, I'll arrange to take you to places where there is some research done in herbicides and how it's done. It's ground application in many cases, and that ground application of a biocide would help the free-to-grow standard. That's what the industry is raising with me, and I've been working with environmental groups in the industry to see if we could come to some consensus.

How is the success rate measured? It's measured very carefully. The studies we've done are public studies, and I'm happy to provide whatever we have. I'm also happy to go even further than that, because right now with a free-to-grow standard, there'll be a closer monitoring to make sure the success rate is there. I don't have the numbers of the year with me. It has to hit a certain standard by a certain year. It has to be 800 coniferous trees in an area. It's a measured quantity on reforestation; it's not a haphazard approach. I'll be happy to provide that to the hon. member, along with that.

He asked what is the current split between the public and private sector on seedlings. Right now, I think it's about 75-25. It's 75 from Pine Ridge, 25 percent from the industry. So if we could bring ourselves down and the industry up, it would suit me just fine. There's 25 percent that are industry grown. There's a number of industry grown trees. I mean, it's not all purchased by us. Some are industry grown. Weldwood is involved in growing seedlings as well as others.

Asking about the young people that put out seedlings. There are a lot of them gone out. Some 40,000 seedlings were planted. In fact, in Fort McMurray there were 1,000 seedlings planted in one day that came from us, working with our forest officers and the people in the community to plant some trees in a reclamation site. We're not alone in this. In my responsibility formerly in Agriculture, we produced a lot of trees just out here for shelterbelts and things all across the province to try and increase habitat. If people want to grow trees, there's certainly the opportunity. Frankly, buying a few trees from a nursery wouldn't hurt anybody in this day and age. That's one less package of cigarettes or one less bottle of whatever, and you could do a lot more for the environment, I think.

The demand for seedlings and why it's up so much now. It's not just from the pulp mills, because the new mills are based on aspen, which is something that we don't have to have seedlings for; it's something that regenerates. Also, the coniferous wood is mostly in chips that come from sawmills, that's now being burned. With the expansion in the sawmill industry, those chips will now be going to the pulp mills, and also some chipping will be done. There's wood that is no good for sawmill logs. You can't just leave it there. It can be chipped. Putting in chippers is something that – they're going to be taking that wood and it'll be utilized for something, rather than just staying there.

The Member for Edmonton-Kingsway. I think really what you're talking about is selective cutting. We used to do selective cutting in Alberta. There was some done historically. There are a number of reasons why we don't do selective cutting. As a general application, there are areas in the province where selective cutting is an option. The major reason is that if you go in and selective cut, you go in and take out the good trees; you leave the poor ones. It's very hard to get them to go in and take poor trees. When they go in there and selective cut, they take the bigger trees. What happens with conifers is that they need

sunlight or else they don't grow well. They're shaded by what's left in there, and the ground doesn't get warm enough for the seedlings to do well.

If you look at the approach that we're now using in clear-cutting – everybody gets bent out of shape about clear-cutting, but we don't clear cut like they do in British Columbia, for example. We don't cut the steepness of the slopes that they do in British Columbia. We don't cut the large cut-block sizes that they do. It's landscape cutting. It's looked at blowdown of wood. It's looked at wildlife corridors when you're opening up an area, and how the wildlife migratory patterns are and making sure they have some shelter to move around, because there are some bad dudes running around in the bush and you've got to leave some corridors for them to move so they've got some protection. Selective cutting in itself doesn't really lend itself to Alberta. Not only that, but most of the wood we have in Alberta is fire burnt, and it's mostly of one age. We have some old-growth wood in pockets. For example, in the negotiation with Alberta-Pacific, there's some old-growth forest there that should be protected and will be. There's some that's in West Yellowhead that we have to protect because there are caribou populations, and they need old-growth forest for that.

So all those things have to be taken into consideration. But going in and selective cutting doesn't lend itself well to Alberta. Plus the costs are significantly higher as well when you go in and do that. But it's something that is brought to my attention on a regular basis, that we should be looking at.

There's another reason for clear-cutting as well. As we do that, it's proven that wildlife populations increase dramatically, because once you remove the trees, the grass grows. That grass for ungulates is really important. It's proven all over the world where they have it that they've got a dramatic increase in wildlife numbers. That's shown not only here but it's a general application around the world.

Why the gap in funding from Pine Ridge to now? I don't know. I think they should have been trying to . . . They got one block of money from the heritage fund to do Pine Ridge, which was the right thing to do, and in fact it's so popular that we've got U.S. governors coming in here to have a look at the facility because they'd like to have something like it. But there wasn't a recognized need for more until now. We recognized the need, and it's much better to grow them here in Alberta than it is somewhere else. So that's why we're now looking at the upgrading which needs to be done because materials have changed on the greenhouse. When you go through Pine Ridge, if you happen to go on a tour, you'll see that certain materials that are used on the greenhouse aren't energy efficient and a number of other things, and it's rebuilding some of these with the different materials and also upgrading it. There has been money spent from the department budget historically over the last number of years for things that have been put in there, but now we need to do the upgrade there. Then hopefully we'll get the container facility somewhere in northwestern Alberta, and that should put us in a good position.

I don't know what more I can answer on the Naylor Hills that Edmonton-Meadowlark asked than I filed, but I don't think I have really anything to add to what I've already said.

Mr. Chairman, with that I think I've answered all the questions.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

Agreed to:

Total Vote 2 – Pine Ridge Reforestation
Nursery Enhancement

\$3,100,000

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Minister, would you like to report?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: I'm sorry. I was thanking my staff and forgot.

I move that votes 1 and 2 be reported.

[Motion carried]

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: That completes issues before the committee. I would like to call on the Government House Leader.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Chairman, I would move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that sums from the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1991, for the purpose of making investments in the following projects to be administered by:

Environment: \$2,500,000 for Land Reclamation.

Forestry, Lands and Wildlife: \$1392,000 for Grazing Reserves Enhancement, \$3,100,000 for the Pine Ridge Reforestation Nursery Enhancement.

MR. SPEAKER: All those in favour of the report, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Motion carried.

head: Government Motions

14. Moved by Mr. Horsman:

Be it resolved that the interim report and recommendations contained therein, presented to the Assembly on March 21, 1990, by the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries, appointed pursuant to Motion 14 passed by this Assembly on August 15, 1989, be now received and concurred in.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, Motion 14 is of course a motion which arises from the fact that the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries, which was appointed in August of last year, has now reported by way of an interim report and made recommendations to the Assembly that the report not come to the first sitting of the Legislature but rather to the second sitting of this session. That, of course, is a recommendation to the Assembly that that report be received and concurred in.

By doing so, Mr. Speaker, it will be possible, then, for the select special committee to continue its hearings, which I understand are required by virtue of additional requests for hearings throughout the province, during the course of the summer and early fall perhaps, and that that report then come forward to the Legislature. It is clear – and I make this firm commitment to the Assembly – that it will be necessary to have a fall sitting of the Legislative Assembly in this session in order to deal with the report of the committee and to deal with their recommendations relative to appropriate legislation to replace the existing electoral boundaries legislation. I know some concerns have been expressed – and I know amendments will be forthcoming on this matter – that it will not be possible to deal with this matter in the fall sitting and that legislation will not be forthcoming. But it's quite clear, Mr. Speaker, that it is absolutely essential for that to happen, because what is being proposed here is not a further amendment to the electoral boundaries legislation – quite the contrary.

I'd just like to repeat remarks that I made in the Assembly on August 16 of last year. I think it's important, too, in anticipation of some amendments to say this: the government is not prejudging the work of the committee. It would be totally improper for the government to do so, because the committee is a select committee, and the traditions of this Assembly have been that such select committees have been conducted in a nonpartisan way. I think, from what I've heard, by and large that has been the situation with regard to the conduct of the current committee. Hopefully, it will be possible in this case to come forward with recommendations which represent all parties. Now, that's not necessarily possible in every case, but in most cases that has been the case. I would hope that that would be the case here.

I want to make it perfectly clear that the government is not prejudging the work of this committee nor is it giving direction to the committee as to the nature of its hearings or what it should be doing. That is really quite improper since it is a committee of the Legislature. If anybody suggests that, if there is anybody out there in Alberta or here in this Assembly thinking that the government is undertaking that type of direction, they're wrong. I just want to quote, then, what I said:

I'm not going to prejudge at this stage the work of that select special committee. It would be, I think, entirely improper for me to do so. I am therefore hopeful – I know this. The time frame that we are establishing is this: the select special committee established as a result of the vote yesterday will be required to report to the First sitting of the next session. And if they do that and bring forward a resolution as to a new type of legislation or amendments to the current legislation which must be then put into place, it will be incumbent upon the government to bring that legislation before a fall sitting, or a spring sitting if the work were done soon enough, but no later than the end of the second session. It must be done or it will be necessary to appoint a commission under the current legislation.

And that, of course, is the situation we find ourselves in this evening. As a result of the recommendation of the committee that they are unable to complete the work which we had hoped would be done by now, we must move with the recommendations that are inherent in the motion which the government brings forward. But I emphasize again that this is an amendment to the previous directions of the Assembly as a result of the inability of the committee to do all its work in the appointed time. There is no question whatsoever that there will be a fall sitting, that it must then deal with appropriate legislation to replace or amend the current legislation, and the purpose of this

whole exercise is to make certain that the electoral laws of this province are in compliance with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We do not want to have a situation whereby we would go through the whole process of appointing an Electoral Boundaries Commission under the existing legislation only to have it subject to a challenge in the courts of this province and then find that it was not in compliance with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Quite frankly, it is my opinion that our current legislation would not withstand such a challenge, and therefore it has been necessary to engage in this process.

I know that the hon. members who have been serving on the committee have done so with a great deal of diligence. They have heard from Albertans, and there are more Albertans who want to make their representations to the committee. But there will be a fall sitting; it will have to deal with legislation. Whatever the committee reports to the Assembly will be brought forward by way of legislation this fall, because it is necessary to make sure that our electoral laws are not suddenly challenged between now and the time of the next general election and put us into a state of chaos. I'm well aware of the decisions – and I say "decisions" – in the Dixon case in British Columbia. There were two, and they were referred to in the debate both in respect to the motion and the Bill last year. The British Columbia government was pressed to make changes, and they did. Of course, those changes are something that our committee will obviously be considering once they've heard from the people they've been discussing the matter with within the province.

The motion appointing the committee, as originally established, gave the committee the widest possible opportunity of reviewing legislation in other provinces and in Canada, historical and other matters related to redistribution, and some of those are very colourful. All members of the Assembly will be aware of some colourful examples in the past of attempts by governments to – gerrymander is the term, of course, which we borrowed from the United States of America. I gather there was, in fact, at one time a Gerry Mander and that he was a manipulator. No members in the Assembly have that last name. But, in any event, the government is serious about listening to the recommendations of the committee, and therefore we are proceeding to accede to their request, thus making it absolutely certain and clear that we have to deal with the matter by way of legislative change before the end of the Second Session of the Legislature. That will be by way of a second sitting, which all of us are looking forward to sometime this autumn before Christmas.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've listened with interest to the Deputy Premier's comments on this matter and on this very important motion, and I thank him for them. It's my objective to have not solely the legislation but a functioning commission this fall.

Mr. Speaker, the electoral boundaries question, of course, is an extraordinarily important matter for every one of us and every elector in Alberta. The issue of equality of voting power is at the heart of any democratic political system. The minister has spoken about the recent challenges in B.C. that have revealed the vulnerability of electoral boundaries on the basis that they were inconsistent with and contravened the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The B.C. Supreme Court decided that gross variances between numbers of voters per constituency were in fact unconstitutional, and the judge concluded "that the notion

of equality is inherent in the Canadian concept of voting rights" and "that the dominant consideration in drawing electoral boundaries must be population."

Mr. Speaker, although the British Columbia situation had significantly larger variances than we have here in Alberta, the judge made some statements that I think we could well take to heart. He indicated that "it is appropriate to set limits beyond which it cannot be eroded by giving preference to other factors and considerations," such as the 25 percent variance in some other provinces and the 10 percent variance in Australia. To this end of dealing with the statutory requirements that the minister has spoken of and the recent developments, the Alberta Legislature put in place the select standing committee last August with specific instructions as to their mandate. We gave them seven matters for consideration and gave them the capacity to hold hearings and to report to us and to make recommendations at this sitting of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, during that time it's been recognized that there are variances in quite a number of constituencies, both rural and urban, in the province of Alberta. The committee conducted hearings and has submitted an interim report instead of a final report, as we had anticipated, and from that, Motion 14 of course flows. The recommendations of that committee have been circulated in their report to all members, and I won't read them. The committee, however, has expressed in its interim report the need to hold more hearings, as requested by certain municipalities. Unquestionably, our caucus is sensitive to the requirement. However, we suggest that this requirement to hold hearings will create some potential problems. We believe the need that exists now can be accommodated – that is, the need to hold extra hearings – and still maintain a reasonable timetable without undue difficulties.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to circulate a document that I think charts very well for members what our concerns are regarding the timing. I'll just walk members through. There's no mystery in it. It simply indicates the . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Four copies to the Table as a filing, and the others will be distributed.

MRS. HEWES: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

It indicates case 1 and case 2, as we have described them, that show the circumstances of timing that exist under the circumstances that the interim report would put us in, as opposed to a suggestion that we have to put before you.

Mr. Speaker, assuming the provisions of the current Act – and as members get it in front of them, they will see that the first item on the report is that the select committee interim report is tabled. We have that right now, and we are now discussing the potential action. It is tabled in the spring of 1990 as we have it right now.

The second item, Mr. Speaker, indicates that the select committee final report would be tabled. We are suggesting that it needs to be tabled in the summer of 1990, as you'll see in case 1. Case 2 would have it, as the interim report suggests, in the fall of 1990. If members will follow through the third item: we consider the report; the government tables new legislation, in case 1 in the fall of 1990, and as the minister has just now explained to us, it could happen as late as the spring of 1991.

The fourth item. The legislation is passed, and the commission is established and begins to hold its hearings. Our recommendation to you, Mr. Speaker, is that this should happen between this fall, 1990, and the fall of 1991. The interim report

would have it from the spring of 1991 to the spring of 1992, the assumption being that the commission has the right to use up to 12 months to hold its hearings.

You will see, then, at the bottom of the very first page that the commission could alter its report as it deems, up to the spring of 1992. If we followed the interim committee's suggestion, it could be as late as the fall of 1992. This gives us, then, the final item: a new Electoral Divisions Act tabled in the spring of 1992, the fall of 1992, or as late as the spring of 1993 if we go with Motion 14, Mr. Speaker.

My contention – and I submit to the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, that case 1 is the best timetable. It could give us a new Act by the spring of 1992, following all the statutory requirements. This would make it three years after the last election. The election schedule, as I've studied it, shows that since 71, elections have taken place on an average of about three years, six point four months. The best case 1 scenario would barely enable the new Act to be put in place if an election took place within this average time span.

Mr. Speaker, we also recognize that even when all other statutory requirements have been completed, there would be certain mechanical provisions that would take time as well. It would have to be ready for another election. Mr. Speaker, we see in the final analysis that, in fact, if there were no fall session, we could be a year out, a year apart from the suggestion of the interim committee. If we postpone now dealing with the legislation and putting the commission in place this fall, we could experience a year's delay, and I believe that leaves us open to some potential difficulties.

The Deputy Premier has talked about his desire to avoid any court challenges, and it's our understanding that there has been some interest expressed in a number of parts of the province about this. I, too, am concerned about the potential of being left in limbo or in chaos if this should happen and catch us without the appropriate legislation in place. Mr. Speaker, I think the objectives are threefold: we must meet our statutory requirements; we must show fairness to the electorate; and we must pre-empt any challenge that could come along.

Mr. Speaker, there's a need now for the government to show some leadership and expedite this whole thing. It seems to me, quite simply, that the committee should get to work now. They do have a timetable that includes sittings in June to have hearings, and these could be carried on as planned. But I believe it would be appropriate for the committee to work in July to complete their work to enable the process to get back onto the original timetable as we have anticipated. Mr. Speaker, to this end the Liberal caucus has prepared an amendment, which is being circulated now. I'll just hesitate a moment while it gets out.

MR. SPEAKER: It's now been distributed.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The amendment, as you'll see, is to motion 14, by striking out "be now received and concurred in" and substituting:

be referred back to the committee with an instruction to amend it with a proposal to complete its public hearings and make a final report by submitting its report to the Speaker, with a copy to all MLAs, by July 31, 1990.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the effect of this amendment would be to put the committee back to work to complete a final report by the end of July, which would then be circulated to all MLAs, giving ample opportunity before the fall session for it to be reviewed, to be discussed with their constituents, for government

members to discuss it and prepare legislation, even to circulate draft legislation in advance, before we assume the fall sitting. Then, it seems to me that having had plenty of time for consideration, there's no reason legislation could not be passed and a commission put in place with the new Act in the fall of 1990, as we had originally anticipated, giving us ample time before an election would be called to complete the work of the commission and to complete any mechanical actions that need to occur before an election would be required to be held.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this leaves us ample time for review. I think it does require that the committee would get back to work in July. I don't think that's too much to expect. I think they've worked hard so far and probably are prepared to put their minds to it and complete their task. I think the committee should reconsider their meeting timetable in order that the government can prepare and introduce the appropriate amendments in the fall of this session.

Mr. Speaker, once again, in my mind it would fulfill the statutory requirements, the fairness to the electorate, and, importantly as well, would pre-empt any potential challenge, which by all means I believe every member wants to avoid in this House, and we have seen the unfortunate circumstances that have occurred in B.C., and we don't want to get into those kinds of situations.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans, I believe, need a commitment from this government that we're going to see the legislation this fall as originally anticipated and that we will see a commission put into place immediately and that the process will proceed as expeditiously as possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Speaking to the amendment? Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising to support the amendment and would note that I would speak in opposition to the main motion. I'm very encouraged by the undertaking of the Government House Leader this evening, if I understand him correctly, to the effect that new legislation will in fact be placed before this Legislature and passed at the fall sitting. I understand that to be his statement. I believe it's right and proper. I also agree with his concerns with respect to the Charter of Rights. However, I must say that I still have some apprehension with respect to the time schedule and the possibility of some problem arising, particularly in light of a very close reading of the transcript of the proceedings of the committee on March 12.

Now, should some delay arise, we want to be on record with respect to what we see as an appropriate time frame for action by this committee in this House. We believe that, unhappily, the committee has not been acting with all deliberate diligence that an issue of this importance merits. Now, we have had presented to this House a motion by the government to adopt the interim report of the committee and its recommendations. The primary recommendation is to delay the report, which was supposed to have been presented to the House during this spring sitting, until the fall sitting. We have a serious concern that because of this delay there may be a great strain put upon the government and this House in order to be able to manage the logistics of bringing forth and passing the needed legislation in the fall. Now, we hope that they will do so. We understand again that that was the House leader's clear commitment to the Legislature this evening, but delaying the committee report until the fall puts us perilously tight in terms of time lines. If something does go

awry for some reason and there is a change of plans resulting in the pushing back of this legislation to the spring session, we may get a delay of up to six months. A delay of this magnitude might, we believe, be the difference between getting in place a new scheme of electoral boundaries by the time of the next election or not getting such a scheme in place.

As the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar just stated, the Alberta Liberal caucus has prepared a schedule setting out alternate time parameters for getting redistribution in place for the next election. Of course, we can't know when that election will take place, but the average time frame between elections since 1971 has been three years and six months. Our schedule shows that if the legislation is delayed until the spring of 1991, let there be no mistake that there will be a great deal of difficulty realized in getting the new scheme in place in time for the next election, should that election take place within that average time frame. That would encompass an election by the fall of 1992, which would be three years and six months or so from the last election in March 1989. Note that in this time frame we are taking into account the requirements in the present electoral boundaries Act for up to a year for a boundaries commission to define the boundaries and a further period up to six months for alterations in those boundary recommendations, on top of which there would be time needed to set up polls and the electoral process.

This difficulty that I have just spoken of will arise even assuming the fastest likely time lines feasible. That assumes no further delays such as we are now facing in getting this committee's final report. So any other delays of three months here, another three months there, would for all intents and purposes kill the possibility of legislation by the next election with, we believe, serious consequences in terms of the potential for a Charter challenge.

We find it extraordinary that this committee, which was established on August 15 of 1989 to bring in a report by this spring, now indicates that it wants to have until next fall, one year and some two or three months after it was established. We consider this to be a sign of a very leisurely attitude towards an issue of this importance on the part of the majority on that committee. We can fully understand the desire to have complete representations from citizens in all of the 10 additional ridings that are to be heard from, but why is it that the committee hasn't been sitting during this session to hear these representations? There's absolutely nothing to prevent a committee from sitting and deliberating while we're in session. Committees of Parliament and other Legislatures across the country sit during session when the subject matter merits. For example, we have seen that recently at the federal level the House of Commons set up a committee to examine the parallel accord within the last month, and very rapidly it held hearings in the Northwest Territories and other parts of Canada, and it's already reported. Parliament's in session; this hasn't stopped that committee from acting.

Instead of acting promptly, the committee now proposes to delay its additional hearings until late June, and then it proposes to take off the whole summer, as if we MLAs were paid to be part-timers and as if we were dealing with endless time rather than something that's as critical as the House leader has said. Then we're looking at another time period from September 6 to October 12 to discuss and write a report.

I'd like to refer the members of this House to the minutes of a very interesting meeting of March 12 of this year, the minutes of a committee meeting which shows our Liberal representative

on that committee, the Member for Calgary-North West, supporting quick hearings, suggesting that two subcommittees get on with the deliberations, suggesting hearings during session, suggesting evening hearings. We had members from the New Democrats, Edmonton-Highlands and Edmonton-Belmont, suggesting that we take out time from the House end and hold hearings by March 21. Well, the government members wouldn't even agree to sit once during the long Easter break, from April 11 to 23, a process suggested by one of the opposition members.

We find the government saying that their duties require them to be in the House. At the same time as the Member for Red Deer-North was saying those things, we find very shortly thereafter that he takes eight days off sittings of this House to go to Japan. I mean, some record a court is going to have to look at in this matter, Mr. Speaker. We look at page 670 of the transcript. The Member for Red Deer-North – in refusing to sit during session and as the Whip refusing to allow other members, saying he was not going to allow his caucus members to sit – states:

We've been elected, all of us, to serve here in this Assembly for a certain period of time in the year, and we have to be there.

He says further:

I, frankly, don't want to be part of any precedent that would say to the public: "There's something more important when the Legislature is on than being in the Legislature."

Nothing more important than Japan for eight days. Who do they think they're fooling with these arguments? They're certainly not going to fool a court. So in our view this committee should be instructed to accelerate the additional hearings and to buckle down and do some hard work and get a report out by the end of July so that there won't be any doubt about getting legislation in place during the fall sitting.

We, like the Government House Leader, have no preconceptions about what such a report will recommend or what the ultimate legislation will be. We want it to be fair to all areas of the province. But we do have some serious concerns about the legal mess this province may be in in light of the impact of the Charter of Rights and the decisions of the B.C. Supreme Court. Now, if there's a legal challenge – and I've heard of a number of challenges contemplated – we could end up in a very chaotic and uncertain position with respect to our electoral laws. The Government House Leader has already said that our laws won't withstand such a challenge. The legal structure – the British Columbia court cases make it clear that the courts are prepared to intervene. Now, ultimate intervention was not necessary in that case. An appeal with respect to requiring some immediate intervention was deferred when the B.C. government agreed to move with dispatch and redistribute and effected a redistribution of seats in time for the next election. But the issue of what remedies the court might impose in the case of a delay when there is an inappropriate distribution of seats in place was not finally determined.

Now, I'm concerned that if this government doesn't move the matter along more promptly, we could be in a position of great uncertainty with respect to the validity of our boundaries and the consequent validity of any election under these boundaries should an election be called before redistribution takes place. That type of uncertainty is unnecessary, and it's unfair to Albertans, particularly since the only thing that would prevent a timely redistribution would be the nonchalant attitude of the government through the realization that due to an attitude that this is an insignificant matter which can be delayed for six months here and there.

Now, note that I want to make it clear that I'm aware that the matter requires in-depth deliberation by the committee. We have to have the hearings. We have to have due deliberation, but there has to be some action. But that isn't the problem. The problem is not that there's too much deliberation required. The problem is that the committee doesn't want to do anything in session and doesn't want to do anything all summer, and we think that this is wrong.

Now, if that's the attitude of the government, Mr. Speaker, we may very well end up with a court order setting time limits, failing which the court will take charge of the process of redistribution. The latter is a very American approach, where the courts have interfered in administrative matters, as I'm sure the Government House Leader is aware, taking over control of prisons and other government functions where government has refused to act. It's not a desirable precedent that we want to see in this province, particularly in the context of redistribution. That's why we have to demonstrate clearly, not just go through the motions, that we're tackling this issue. I can't imagine any clearer sign that the government isn't serious than by having the committee take the whole summer off while the clock ticks. It just doesn't sound to me to be very serious. Now, we have to remember that we're talking here about the constitutional validity of our whole electoral process, not just some fringe matter that we can fob off with a mañana attitude. If this doesn't take priority, what does?

So it is in that context, Mr. Speaker, that I support this amendment. The amendment is to the effect that this committee buckle down to work and get us a report by the end of July so we can have a good look at what's been proposed in time for the fall session, and absolutely, one hundred percent, ensure that we get the legislation before us and passed at that time. Now, I would like to hear more from the Deputy Premier and Government House Leader with respect to his intentions. I'm very encouraged by his undertaking that we will have and pass legislation by this fall, but I'd like to hear a bit more from him with respect to his contemplated time frame, when we're going to have the new boundary commission in place, and just how he sees the whole process emanating. We need a time line, and if he doesn't present one, it will certainly be some cause for concern to this caucus and presumably to any court that might ultimately review this. We're pressing for such a time line. We don't think the government is acting reasonably. The committee delay speaks for itself, and when the courts read the wonderful transcripts of that committee meeting of March 12, 1990, there will be little doubt in the minds of the reasonable person that there has not been good intent in dealing with this matter promptly.

Now, I think there are other changes that can be made. I understand we're going to be seeing a proposal from the New Democrats to the effect that draft legislation be part of the committee report. I think this would have been expected of the committee report, but perhaps it's better to spell it out. But in my view, even if we do have that type of draft legislation – and I'd certainly be supportive of it – we have to get it at an earlier stage. We have to get this committee back to work. There's no explanation, no reason why it should not be doing this job. It's about as important a piece of work as one can imagine in this province, and I hope that this House will support our amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: Cypress-Redcliff, speaking to the amendment.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Speaker, speaking to the amendment. I've tried to listen closely to the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo speak on the amendment, and I heard him say about courts and not courts and that sort of thing. In view of the complexity, I'd like to have the opportunity before I go further to review the Blues and his comments, and I'd then beg leave to adjourn debate.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Motion carries.

[At 10:26 p.m. the House adjourned to Friday at 10 a.m.]