

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, May 31, 1990 2:30 p.m.**  
Date: 1990/05/31

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

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

### Prayers

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Let us pray.

In our mind's eye let us see the awesome grandeur of the Rockies, the denseness of our forests, the fertility of our farmland, the splendour of our rivers, the richness of our resources.

Then, O Lord, let us rededicate ourselves as wise stewards of such bounty on behalf of all Albertans.

Amen.

### head: **Introduction of Bills**

#### **Bill 37** **Alberta Government Telephones** **Reorganization Act**

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 37, the Alberta Government Telephones Reorganization Act. This is a money Bill. Her Honour the Honourable Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this Bill, recommends the same to this Assembly.

[Leave granted; Bill 37 read a first time]

#### **Bill 51** **Gas Utilities Statutes Amendment Act, 1990**

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 51, the Gas Utilities Statutes Amendment Act, 1990.

This Bill addresses three issues. One, it makes explicit the right of consumers to purchase gas directly; two, it establishes the power to make regulations dealing with security of supply both of direct sales arrangements and distributor supplies; and three, it provides for the Public Utilities Board to establish an alternative method of settling franchise taxes that will enable municipalities to close the tax loophole favouring direct purchasers.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill contains amendments to four Acts: the Gas Utilities Act, the Municipal Government Act, the Rural Gas Act, and the Municipal Taxation Act. Bill 51 is a significant step in addressing both intra Alberta and ex-Alberta core market policy. Passage of this Bill will enhance our ability to finalize Alberta's proposal to allow direct sales to core market customers in other provinces.

Thank you.

[Leave granted; Bill 51 read a first time]

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

#### **Bill 246** **An Act to Include Midwifery as a** **Profession under the Health Disciplines Act**

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce Bill 246, entitled An Act to Include Midwifery as a Profession under the Health Disciplines Act.

The purpose of this Bill is to include the profession and practice of midwifery as a member of a designated health discipline, thereby ensuring Alberta women have a wider range of safe, secure alternatives for all obstetrical needs.

[Leave granted; Bill 246 read a first time]

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

#### **Bill 238** **Environmental Ombudsman Act**

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 238, being the Environmental Ombudsman Act.

This Act would establish an independent Ombudsman's office which would provide citizens of Alberta with a recourse to right a perceived environmental wrong when they feel that government action or inaction has been inappropriate and when they feel that the courts are too costly or too cumbersome a way to deal with that inappropriate action.

[Leave granted; Bill. 238 read a first time]

### head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to table the 1989 annual report for Alberta Government Telephones.

### head: **Introduction of Special Guests**

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure on behalf of the Hon. Ken Kowalski, minister responsible for the Public Affairs Bureau, to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly members of the visitor services management staff from Legislatures across Canada, who are holding their first national meeting in Edmonton. From Prince Edward Island, there's Philip Michael and Jim Strew. From Quebec, there's Gilles Angers; Saskatchewan, Lorraine deMontigny; from Toronto, Karyn Leonard; from Ottawa, Brenda Laporte, Susan Wright, and Dianne Brydon; from Nova Scotia, Michael Laffin; from the Northwest Territories, Sharon Buness; and from Alberta, the manager of visitor services Maryanne Gibson, program co-ordinator Anne Hayward, and administrative co-ordinator Jackie Edwards. Mr. Speaker, they're seated in your gallery, and I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Members of this Legislative Assembly 34 students, parents, and teachers from the Manning elementary school in the town of Manning, referred to, if you're locally

there, as the Shangri-la of the north and the moose capital of the Peace. The students are accompanied by teachers Mrs. Leslie Snyder and John Elliot, and by parents Rev. George Belcher, Cathy Lawrence, Julie Ann Simpson, Sue Johnson, Sandy Kulyna, and Marlene Finnebraaten. They're in both galleries, and I would ask that they stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications.

MR. STEWART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have pleasure today in introducing to the Assembly two gentlemen who are providing strong leadership for Alberta Government Telephones. They're here today to witness a very significant event in the life of this great company. I refer to a former member of this Assembly and colleague, Dr. Neil Webber, the chairman of the commission; and Mr. Hal Neldner, the president and CEO of Alberta Government Telephones. I would ask them to rise and acknowledge the welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to take the opportunity to introduce a former colleague and member of this Assembly, the former Member for Calgary-North Hill, Mr. Ed Oman and his wife Elissa, who are in your gallery. I'm sure that all members here welcome Mr. Oman to the Assembly today. I would ask the members to give a warm welcome to them.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to my colleagues a very special guest from Chicago, Illinois, this afternoon: Miss Trinda Gray-O'Connor. Trinda is a representative of the International Association of Assessing Officers. The purpose of Trinda's visit here today is to view the facilities within the city of Edmonton and, as well, the province of Alberta as a possible host site for the IAAO convention for 1995 of some 1,600 delegates. Accompanying her this afternoon is René Gagné, assistant deputy minister from my Department of Municipal Affairs, and also Bob Dunham, the sales manager for the Edmonton Convention Centre. I'd like those persons to stand and be recognized by this Legislature.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Kingsway, followed by Edmonton-Centre.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 12 students from the English as a Second Language class at the Alberta Vocational Centre in my riding. They are in the public gallery, and they are accompanied by Shel Montgomery. I would request that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

REV. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to be able to introduce to members of the Assembly a native-born Albertan who is currently the director of orthopedic surgery at a hospital in Sherbrooke, Quebec. He's on his way to a national conference of orthopedic specialists in Vancouver. He also happens to be my brother-in-law. Derek Younge, together with his little sister Shelley Younge, is in the public gallery, and I would ask that they please stand – Shelley, by the way, is my wife – and receive the welcome of the members of the Assembly.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to my colleagues in the House two very special visitors from Marburg, Germany. Mr. Arthur Hannich is a businessman from Germany, and he's accompanied by his wife, Maria. I would ask the two of them to stand in the public gallery as we give them the traditional warm welcome of the House.

## head: Ministerial Statements

### Alberta Government Telephones

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, Alberta is a wonderful part of Canada. It has tremendous wealth and strength. It is financially the strongest province in our country. Much of Alberta's wealth is held in trust for Albertans by their government. This wealth is in places like our forests, our public lands, our coal reserves, our Heritage Savings Trust Fund, our Crown corporations, our conventional oil and natural gas, our huge oil sands, our water, buildings, bridges, roads, and parks.

Now and then it is possible for the government to place part of this wealth in the hands of individual Albertans so that they can more directly enjoy the benefits of investment, of receiving the profits directly in the hands of individuals and families: to participate in the future growth of Alberta through capital appreciation and dividends. Albertans can remember similar opportunities such as Alberta Gas Trunk Line, now Nova, and the Alberta Energy Company. You'll recall, Mr. Speaker, that Albertans strongly oversubscribed to those opportunities.

We have now identified another opportunity for individual Albertans to invest in, and that is a great global telecommunications company: Alberta Government Telephones. Alberta Government Telephones' future no longer lies in being a small provincial telephone company operating within the boundaries of our province. We're in the midst of an exploding, exciting new world of global communications and technology, and Alberta Government Telephones will be a major leader in the tremendous potential of this industry on a worldwide basis.

I want every man, woman, and child in this province to have the opportunity to participate in the profits and growth of this great company, and the government will help with this opportunity. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to announce that Albertans will have a period of time when only they can buy these shares, and I hope that they buy the entire offering. Also, Albertans will be able to purchase the shares from every possible financial institution in the province. For additional help, Albertans and only Albertans will be able to buy their shares on an installment basis over 12 months at no interest cost. We will make it possible for average Albertans – families and individuals – to participate.

This proposal represents the logical next step in AGT's evolution from a regional utility into a worldwide competitor. It will also be a cornerstone in our drive for new technologies and new opportunities for Alberta. Simply put, Mr. Speaker, the Bill introduced by my colleague today is a Bill of confidence in Alberta, a Bill of confidence for Alberta's potential in the vast world of telecommunications.

As all members of the Assembly know, Mr. Speaker, the sale of shares in AGT has been under consideration for some time, so this is far from a proposal of impulse. But I know we can expect reaction from those who will, by impulse or ideology, oppose the sale of shares of AGT. More importantly, Mr.

Speaker, though, I expect that Albertans will have questions about our proposal, because AGT has been a well-managed Crown corporation and AGT has deservedly earned the respect of hundreds of thousands of Albertans.

These are some of the questions we know Albertans will raise. They will ask, "How will this share offering affect our phone bills and services?" The answer, Mr. Speaker, is that there are many protections built into our proposals. There are assurances for Albertans, and they are in the legislation tabled today. Second, we know that many rural Albertans will ask how this legislation might affect their services in rural Alberta. I'm pleased to confirm to the Assembly that there will be no impact on the finalization of individual line service for rural Albertans. This is a commitment we made, and it will be honoured. The same is true of extended flat rates. There will be no negative impact on this program. In fact, it will be enhanced significantly. The details of an improved extended flat rate calling program will be announced by June 15, 1990.

We expect Albertans will ask, "Is there any danger that AGT will become a foreign-owned company or eventually move out of Alberta?" The answer to both of those questions is an absolute no. Legislation will be explicit about keeping AGT's headquarters in Alberta and restricting foreign ownership to 10 percent. Mr. Speaker, all these years AGT has been entrusted by the people of Alberta to their government, and now we want AGT to continue to be entrusted to individual Albertans. As one other indication of the ongoing tie to Alberta, two-thirds of the board of AGT will be required to be Albertans.

People will ask the actual percentage of shares to be offered and the price. Our response must be that this will be dictated by conditions when we go to the market, but we will say with certainty that the first offering will not be 100 percent.

A major question might be the impact on employees. We give employees these assurances: no employees will be laid off; employees' salaries will not be affected; all existing contracts with employees will be honoured; and employees will have opportunities to be owners as well.

For further protection of Albertans, Mr. Speaker, the Crown will supplement its legislation through a special share, sometimes called a golden share, which enables the government to approve any fundamental changes in the corporation. This golden share supplements the legislation tabled today: enables the government to ensure there are no fundamental changes to the company that can be made that are not in the interests of Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, some might wonder about selling shares in AGT while Canada is in the midst of a potential constitutional crisis. Well, whenever you try to bring change, there's always some reason to hesitate. Ultimately, the answer is simple: there is no reason for Alberta to stand still; there is no reason for us to be afraid. This is no longer simply a regional telephone company. This is a complex telecommunications company which can compete worldwide and can market its services in places where we as a government of Alberta have no reason to be involved. And to continue with new innovations, AGT is going to need new investment dollars, which should not come from taxpayers.

Which leads me to my final observations. Our government has made a policy choice. We believe it is the right choice. We'll defend it in this House and to the people of Alberta. How all of us as legislators respond to this proposal will say a great deal about how we feel about today's Alberta. Do we really believe that Albertans are afraid of change? Let me use some words which define our purpose today. These words may not be popular in all places, but they're words which belong in

Alberta. They are words which bring strength to this province: words like enterprise; words like private ownership, shares, investment, risk, and profit; words that lead to the creation of new wealth in our province to benefit all Albertans, to bring jobs, to save small communities, to help our cities grow.

Mr. Speaker, in the days ahead our government will proudly support this legislation allowing Albertans to purchase shares in AGT as part of our resolve to bring change, to keep prosperity in Alberta, and to make an outstanding investment opportunity available to Albertans on a special preferred basis.

I and my government have faith in Albertans, Mr. Speaker. I know they'll respond positively and aggressively to support this great opportunity.

Thank you.

MR. MARTIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, in replying to a ministerial announcement, often I've had to say that I agree with some of the words. In this ministerial statement I agree with absolutely nothing that was said by the Premier – absolutely nothing. I've sat in here since 1982 and I've seen major, major mistakes made by this government, and this will go down as a classic: another major mistake made by this government.

Mr. Speaker, on one hand the Premier says it was a well-managed company. I would think that if it was a well-managed company doing the job for Alberta, we'd want to maintain that company doing the job for Alberta. I don't understand why you sell it. I would remind the Premier, when he says that some Albertans want to own it, that all Albertans own this telephone system right now.

Mr. Speaker, the point I would also make to the Premier is that AGT – I agree with him – has been a well-managed company. It has usually made small profits over the years but provided a tremendous service. If he wants to compare the services to a private telephone, just look to B.C.: they can't compare.

Rural Albertans had better be very worried about this, because once you bring the profit motive into this, there will go cross-subsidization. Maybe they can say, "Well, we're not going to do this right away," but you watch; in the long run that's what's going to happen. It's inevitable, Mr. Speaker.

Every report that I've seen – the Sherman report, the Olley report – is predicting increases, and these are reports that the backbenchers in this government had better take a look at. The only report done for the Saskatchewan government said there would be an increase of 167 percent in rural areas and 147 percent in urban areas. And that's what's going to happen. It's inevitable. It's happened in the United States with private telephones, and it's going to happen here, Mr. Speaker.

There are many unanswered questions that we'll get to in question period and during the Bill, Mr. Speaker, but I want to just say the old saying. The Premier stands up and says that it's a well-managed company. The question Albertans are going to be asking him: if it ain't broke, why try to fix it?

Why are we selling it? For two reasons. We've mismanaged the finances of this government, of this province, with an 11 and a half billion dollar debt, and we're looking for a quick fix. And talk about ideology, Mr. Speaker. The Premier stands up and says we're not going to be ideological about that. On one hand he says it's a well-managed company, and on the next hand he says, "I'm going to sell it because the private sector works better there." That's ideology; that's right-wing ideology.

I would say this to the Premier: I'm quite prepared to fight this Bill all the way in the Legislature.

## head: Oral Question Period

### Alberta Government Telephones

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, in my first set of questions I'll come back to a certain aspect of this that perhaps the Premier didn't talk about in his area and I suspect he might not know about, so I'll send it over to the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications. In addition to this Bill that was introduced today moving towards privatization of Alberta Government Telephones, we now have published reports that indicate that Alberta has completely caved in – I say completely caved in – to the federal government and agreed to hand over control of the telecommunications industry in Alberta to the CRTC. Mr. Speaker, that's incredible. It seems that privatizing the ownership of AGT wasn't enough for this government; it's also decided to give away the control to Ottawa. Previous Alberta governments must be totally dismayed with what's happening in this province today, Mr. Speaker, and I say to you: privatization and loss of control are going to hurt Alberta consumers badly over the next number of years. My question for the minister is this: how does he justify this total sellout of Albertans' rights not only to own but to control their own telecommunications system?

MR. STEWART: Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess the questions and the reaction from the opposition and the Leader of the Opposition are very, very predictable. Indeed, I would hope that during the course of this debate he certainly gets his head out of the sand and sees what's really going on in the telecommunications industry and in this country.

Mr. Speaker, some time ago – I believe it was in August, 1989 – the Supreme Court of Canada, in a decision between AGT and CNCP, ruled that the jurisdiction in respect to telecommunications lies in the hands of the federal government. Shortly thereafter Bill C-41, which would remove the Crown immunity aspect, was introduced in the House of Commons. That Bill still sits on the House of Commons' agenda. The telecommunications minister, the Hon. Marcel Masse, has indicated time and time again that he will be proceeding with removing this company from immunity and putting it into the hands of the CRTC.

Now, we can sit around with our heads in the sand, or we can be active and do those things that are going to protect Alberta.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, an absolute cave-in. Instead of fighting for the people of Alberta you're going to cave in to the government of Ottawa. Just like interest rates, just like the GST: it's the same old story, Mr. Speaker.

I want to ask the minister this question. This has been so important for the people of Alberta, the ordinary people of Alberta. I want to say: why has he caved in so easily and just given up on this very important matter for the people of Alberta?

MR. STEWART: Well, Mr. Speaker, the situation really is this: we have a whole change in the area of telecommunications. AGT is a strong company, a respected company, and there's no doubt about that, but we want to preserve that opportunity for the future subscribers in Alberta. But it grew under a monopoly situation. That was the situation in the past. We are now moving to competition. In fact, I've even had visits from Unitel already. Competition is coming and it's coming fast. Technol-

ogy is increasing at a dynamic rate and with that the costs of capital investment. Now, either private sector can put up that capital – for the company to have access to equity markets is going to be indeed the answer for them to keep up with technology in the future.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt about it that the whole scene in telecommunications has changed. It's one where we have to position AGT to meet those changes in order to be responsible to the subscribers and taxpayers of this province.

MR. MARTIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the minister, you're evading the question. If it's going to be such an important industry and it's going to be a profitable one in the future, first of all why have we privatized it, and then why have we caved in to the federal government? Why haven't we fought to have that here in Alberta?

MR. STEWART: Well, Mr. Speaker, there's no caving in when you lose a decision in the Supreme Court, and the Supreme Court has ruled that this is a matter of federal jurisdiction. They've already brought forward a Bill, as I indicated; it's on the Order Paper.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The second main question, hon. Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, it's a sad day, but to come back to the Premier, then, on this sad performance today in terms of ministerial announcements, we'll try to fill in the lines. Oh, he likes to talk about free enterprise and free this and free that, and the only ones that usually have it free are the Premier and his cohorts over there and their friends, Mr. Speaker. The rest of us end up paying the price, as we did with Mr. Pocklington.

But I want to say to the Premier. He talks about all the connections, all the questions here, you know, that are to be answered: how people are going to be protected, and all the rest of it. He used Alberta Energy Company, Mr. Speaker, as an example. I would just remind you what governments can do. In 1974 they said:

No person shall purchase or hold voting shares of the Company in the right of or for the use or benefit of a non-resident, unless such non-resident is a Canadian citizen.

Well, last year we changed that, so now 10 percent can be foreign owned. The point that I make: we can't trust this government's promises; they promised no taxes in the election, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: isn't it the truth that this could be changed by this government a year from now, two years from now, three years from now, or four years from now?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the only people who are sad today may be ideological socialists. Now, they may be sad. But if they're thinking of the people of Alberta and the tremendous opportunity they have, they should be happy – and damn happy – because this government is providing an opportunity for the people of this province to invest in a tremendous opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. Leader of the Opposition and his party do not like change. Change is part of our world today, and we are going to make sure that Alberta is in the forefront of change in this world.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, there's nothing we like better than change, and we'll all be cheering when we change this government.

Mr. Speaker, any move to privatize AGT could jeopardize the tax exempt status of AGT as a Crown corporation. This means this company could pay up to anywhere from \$120 million to \$180 million a year in provincial taxes. These costs would be passed on to the consumers in the form of higher rates. My question to the Premier is this: isn't it true that Alberta consumers are going to face massive increases in basic monthly telephone rates to pay for this sellout by the people of Alberta?

MR. GETTY: No, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, will this Premier then stand in his place in this Assembly and say that there will be absolutely no future increases for the consumers, either urban or rural, in the next five years? Tell us the truth.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, that's hardly the kind of speculation we should engage in.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplemental.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question to the Premier is simply this: one of the things that he says, that he's very vague about, in the ministerial statement is that a hundred percent of it won't be shared. Could he be a little more specific? Is it 99, or is it 1 percent?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, it must be the fact that I had the Leader of the Opposition in my prayers this morning that you've given him an extra supplementary today, after him promising no more.

Well, obviously the decision on both the size of the offering and the price will be determined by the market at the time that the shares are placed before the market. We are saying that it's not a hundred percent. You could take as a rough estimate that we'd be aiming at around 50 percent. That could change depending on the market, but aiming for 50 percent as an initial offer.

AN HON. MEMBER: Take one away from the Liberals.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I thought I heard a Liberal chirping there. Occasionally he shows his colours.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the AGT privatization I must first call into question the timing of this announcement. I really think that Albertans along with other Canadians are facing the most crucial constitutional crisis that has faced Canada, and to put this on the platter for Canadians, for Albertans to deal with when it's so easy to be diverted on other matters of concern, I think is unfortunate. Mr. Speaker, I have no ideological hang-up on privatization, but when you have a government that has allowed for some \$100 million to be paid out because of the goofs on Principal Group and you have \$100 million or so paid out because of the goofs of this government on Pocklington, you have to ask whether or not the proper analysis has been done. The onus is on this government to prove this beyond any shadow of a doubt as to the benefit to Albertans.

My first question to the Premier is this: given the fact that this is a matter of extreme complexity, dealing with CRTC and PUB, the fact that 70 percent of toll revenues that now accrue to AGT is allowed to cross-subsidize rural Alberta, will the Premier commit now to release all of the studies that show the benefits to rural and urban Alberta on this scheme?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, having heard and watched the hon. member jump around on every issue in the House, I assume he has no ideology at all. In the normal course of events in the Legislature when people ask for documents or various studies and so on, all they have to do is place it on the Order Paper and the House decides.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, when you ask for Pocklington documents, you don't get them. When you ask for documents on forestry, you don't get them. Give us the facts, Mr. Premier.

Mr. Premier, my second question is this: given the fact that this is likely to have an extreme negative effect on rural Alberta, would you agree to allow for public debate before a decision is made on this Bill so that rural Albertans and urban Albertans can be convinced that there's no danger to them whatsoever on this scheme?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member can try and draw up some spectre of big terrible things to happen to rural Albertans; we're making sure that doesn't happen. For someone to say when a Bill is introduced in this House "allow for public debate," now let me follow that reasoning. We have a first reading; we have a second reading debate; we have committee study of every clause; and then we have third reading before Royal Assent. Now, if that isn't public debate, what is public debate?

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, given the fact that the Premier is afraid or won't agree to produce studies to prove the point, given the fact that the Premier will not allow for public debate – I mean public debate where we go into all of Alberta: rural Alberta and urban Alberta – will the Premier at least allow one little thing, and that is for a special select committee of this Legislature to closely examine this matter before any decision is made, allowing that committee to call experts and to call witnesses, so that this can be proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that this is good for urban and rural Alberta?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the leader of the Liberal Party did not hear what I said when I said the "government has made a policy choice." The government is going to support that policy choice outlined in the legislation in this Assembly, which is where public debate is conducted by the representatives of the people of Alberta. I can't think of a better place. That's where we will debate it.

Now, I can tell by the activity by the opposition that they don't like this. They know Albertans like this, and they know Albertans are going to support it strongly. I'm sure of that, because I know the people of Alberta. They believe in the future and strength of this province.

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

### Telephone Service in Rural Areas

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications. In his ministerial statement today the Premier mentioned a highly valued program that exists in rural Alberta known as the extended flat rate calling. This program allows communities to call neighbouring exchanges within 65 kilometres at a predetermined monthly rate. In 1986 this government initiated a major program in conjunction with AGT to give this service to a

number of communities. But there remain several anomalies within this program in rural Alberta that need to be dealt with. In view of the announcement today can the minister assure us that these anomalies will be dealt with under the 1986 guidelines?

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt that when the government of 1986, this government, announced certain programs for rural Alberta, it did so with a commitment to the people of rural Alberta, and that's a commitment that we will maintain. As the Premier indicated, the individual line service, for example, will continue and be completed. It will be the only fully digital electronic system in all of North America. The extended flat rate calling program that the hon. member mentions is there. We have some 400 routes now established in Alberta; that is a commitment to rural Alberta. Those sorts of assurances that the hon. member requested will be honoured.

We have had a number of discussions with the CRTC. In my meetings with the CRTC, with the Minister of Communications federally, we are assured that those programs for rural Albertans will be part and parcel of the CRTC regulations in the future. It's interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, that when I talked with the commissioner of the CRTC, when I expressed concern, made sure that the rural interests would be taken care of, he said, "Why would we ever touch the type of programs that you have in Alberta?" He said, "They set a standard for the rest of Canada."

MR. ADY: Supplementary to the minister. Perhaps he could give us some idea of the timing as to when the EFRC program will move forward and also the program for the isolated areas program that's in existence. Will that one be carried on?

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, the extended flat rate calling program will continue on as it has in the past with more and more routes coming on stream, but in the course of representations that have been made by the hon. member and other colleagues, it has been evident that indeed the program has caused certain anomalies throughout the province. We are examining those with AGT at the present time, and on June 15 of this year we will be making an announcement with respect to improvements in the extended flat rate calling program.

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

### **Abortion**

MS M. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Minister of Health. Women in major cities such as Red Deer, Fort McMurray, and Lethbridge have no access to the medical procedure of abortion. South of Calgary rural women have no access to the procedure. Even in cities where abortions are performed in hospitals, access is not guaranteed, as in Edmonton where eight to 16 women per day are turned away from the Royal Alex reproductive care clinic, and Planned Parenthood has to refer out women who are more than seven and a half weeks pregnant. Will the minister now admit that there is a serious problem in access to this medical procedure?

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, the question of reasonable access to medical services is something for which I as the Minister of Health am responsible, and that is reasonable access

to every medical procedure in this province. That doesn't mean that every procedure is going to be available in every centre of the province. Rather, it means that on a provincial basis we have that reasonable access. It is certainly my view – and it's one that I've expressed publicly – that the issue of access to this particular procedure is of concern to me in northern Alberta. Southern Alberta in fact appears to be handling the procedure quite well. But the question of how we monitor that procedure, how we ensure that access to the procedure is reasonable is one that I am reviewing constantly and will continue to do so.

MS M. LAING: Mr. Speaker, when half of the women are turned away from a reproductive health care centre in Edmonton, that hardly seems that there is reasonable access.

I would ask the minister to look at the statistics that are available to monitor what is happening in southern Alberta – not Calgary where there are no waiting lists. Calgary hospitals will not do the procedure for women outside of the city, because their facilities are full to capacity. Will the minister look at this access problem and act immediately to ensure that women in this province have what is reasonable access?

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, I'll repeat my first answer, and that is that I am responsible for reasonable access to medical service, and I will constantly continue to monitor and ensure that that's available.

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

### **Alberta Government Telephones (continued)**

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've listened today to the Premier's statement and his answers on the proposed AGT sale. Albertans hear this kind of thing with anxiety, and certainly Albertans have expressed to me and to others their lack of confidence in the government's judgment in business dealings. Mr. Speaker, I must say I'm very disappointed in the Premier's response that there's no intention to make public the documents that back up this proposal and that there is no intention for public study of the proposal before it is brought to the Legislature for determination. Mr. Speaker, my questions to the Premier are: will the Premier answer to the House how the agreement between AGT and Edmonton Telephones is going to be secured and protected? Does the government continue to guarantee the toll to Edmonton? My constituents are concerned about this very question.

MR. GETTY: First of all, Mr. Speaker – and I'm going to ask the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications to respond on the details – I did not say to the hon. member that nothing would be provided. All I said was: make your requests in the normal manner, and the House will decide. That's completely different from her standing there, my hon. friend, and saying that I refused. So I just ask her to be accurate with her comments, and we can keep our warm friendship.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications to deal with the details.

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, during the last several months I've had an opportunity to meet with Mayor Reimer and other

officials of the city of Edmonton as well as the chairman and president of Ed Tel. We've had a number of discussions that would lead us to conclude that we will have the opportunity to ensure that all of the obligations that relate to ET and AGT will be transferred to the new AGT and that those sorts of obligations will continue as part and parcel of the liability and obligations of the new AGT. I'm pleased that in a number of areas, Mr. Speaker, AGT and ET have been able to establish co-operative measures in various areas of their service. They are currently discussing a way of establishing a memorandum of understanding between them, and the co-operation between ET and AGT has been very, very successful.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, thank you; I'm appreciative of that commitment. I'd hoped that the Premier would want to publicize his background in order to show the benefits, if any, of this proposal. My next question to the Premier is: it's anticipated that some \$70 million at least in new federal taxes will have to be paid. Where, except from higher rates, is it proposed that this money will come from?

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, one of the advantages of the proposal that's being put forward is the opportunity for this new AGT to unleash itself and to become a full-fledged telecommunications company. Had we tried to adopt the type of posture that the Official Opposition is putting forward – namely, virtually a status quo – we'd have found ourselves in a situation where there's a fence around the company, where with long-distance rates going down, the only avenue for new revenues would be local rates. The experience of any telecommunications company virtually in the world will in fact bear that out. I would suggest that those who think differently should just look around and look indeed even at New Zealand; the socialist government there is moving towards a similar sort of conclusion. The opportunities for the new AGT in new revenues, in new opportunities for their employees should be of real benefit to all Albertans.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

#### **Advanced Education Enrollment Limits**

DR. ELLIOTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Advanced Education. I'm concerned about the University of Alberta and their restriction on enrollments in certain faculties such as Agriculture and Forestry, Education, Arts, and so on, because this could have a very negative impact on students from northern Alberta. My question to the minister is: could he report to us if there's any progress being made with colleges such as the Grande Prairie Regional College brokering the courses from these universities to help our northern students?

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, the Grande Prairie Regional College is a very important integral part of our 29 institutions, which are receiving over \$1 billion from the taxpayers of Alberta. I've not formally received a proposal from Grande Prairie Regional College, but it's interesting to note that in this year's budget they've received an additional \$1.7 million in program funds. We presently have a very successful program between the U of A and Red Deer College, for example, in brokering a baccalaureate nurses program. I'm quite prepared to look at

that if and when it arrives, but of course I could not make any commitment at all in terms of any budgetary funds.

DR. ELLIOTT: Supplemental, Mr. Speaker. Where would the other foreign universities such as those in the United States or as far away as Hawaii – would they be more accessible to colleges such as Grande Prairie?

MR. GOGO: I'm not sure I understand the question, Mr. Speaker. At the moment we have other institutions which are nonresident: Gonzaga University, for example, offering programs through Keyano College in the north.

I would look forward, Mr. Speaker, following the passage of Bill 27, which may indeed . . . [interjection] . . . which may indeed, hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, point out the real world to many of our postsecondary institutions in serving the needs of Albertans.

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

#### **Social Services Staffing Levels**

MS MJOLSNESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Minister of Family and Social Services. The chronic shortage of treatment beds for children with mental health problems and children who are in need of protection by social services has been a problem in the province for some time now. It is very hard to make sense of the recent closing of 15 receiving beds at the Yellowhead treatment centre because of cuts to staffing. Mr. Speaker, this means – and these are real examples – that children on serious medication are not being monitored properly, and children are being placed in situations that are completely inappropriate to their needs. To the minister: why has he allowed these beds to close when these children very clearly need appropriate treatment in the Yellowhead treatment centre?

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of any children that haven't received appropriate placements. In reference to the Yellowhead Youth Centre, as the member opposite knows, that particular facility holds up to 73 children at any one given time. As a result of an unfortunate strike, the facility was downsized to 18 residents. We're very pleased, of course, to see the strike come to an end, and since that has occurred, we have seen, again, appropriate placements and children returning to that particular facility. We are now up to just over 40 children in the placement at the Yellowhead Youth Centre.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplemental.

MS MJOLSNESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, 15 beds have been closed, and there's a waiting list of over 30 kids to get into that unit.

I'm also aware that the department's response in investigating sexual assaults on minors is much too long due to, again, a shortage of staff. I've just been advised of one case that was reported almost a week ago, where in fact this particular case has still not been investigated, and the possibilities of that child being hurt or having a sexually transmitted disease remain unchecked. To the minister: why will the minister not staff his department adequately so that children in need of services can get them immediately?

MR. OLDRING: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting, you know, when I listen to those members opposite beginning to share the concern that we've had for children in this province for an awful long time. One of the reasons that we have essential legislation for these workers is that we know how important these workers are; we know how important it is for them to be able to respond to these children as quickly as they can. That's why I say it's somewhat ironic for those members – and I know that they don't have any strike lines to get their exercises on these days, and that disappoints them.

Mr. Speaker, we are concerned about getting children appropriate care as quickly as we can. I can only say that we do have a group of very dedicated workers that responds as quickly, as timely, and as appropriately as they can and that we're working with those workers at this time to make sure that our caseloads are appropriate. The member knows that last year we added some 59 additional workers to deal with child welfare.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to work in a very progressive way. We have amongst the most progressive legislation, I might add, in Canada, and it's interesting for me to see the number of other jurisdictions that are turning to Alberta to follow up on some of the progressive things we're doing as it relates to child welfare. Our Children's Advocate is there as well to make sure that situations like that aren't occurring. Again, I want to say that this government is committed to making sure that we're providing appropriate care for those children that need it.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Calgary-Buffalo.

### Telephone Rates

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This whole matter requires the soundest of business judgments, particularly when we have the Premier promising to accomplish social goals of protecting rural Albertans and promising no loss of jobs and at the same time setting up a system in which they will have to satisfy public shareholders that they will be getting a fair return on their investment. Albertans are increasingly asking why we should have confidence in the same government which gave all that money to Peter Pocklington and bungled the Cormie affair. Now, it's quite clear that we can't pay at least \$70 million in federal income tax and not *increase* rates, and I'd like the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications to tell us how that is going to happen. How are we going to get \$70 million of income tax and no increased rates?

MR. STEWART: Well, Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt that as a private-sector corporation it will become subject to tax. We as a province obviously will share in the tax revenues, and it will be a new cash flow tax for Alberta. But at the same time, if the hon. member will check his own corporate income tax knowledge, he will know that minimal taxes will be payable for a number of years.

MR. CHUMIR: Let me get this clarified, Mr. Speaker. Is the minister saying that not only will Albertans have to pay what we estimate to be \$70 million in federal taxes, but this province is also going to add its own tax which Albertans are going to have to pay in increased rates as well?

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, I'm talking about the inclusion of the corporate tax to the province that is part and parcel of

the tax paid by corporations to the federal government on behalf of itself and the province.

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

### Nursing PhD Program

MRS. MIROSH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. More than 50 percent of the health care dollars in Alberta are allocated to providing nursing care, and nurses represent half of the health care professionals. Continuing education and research in nursing care is essential for the development and improvement of the delivery of nursing care in this province. A Canadian wishing to study at a university offering a PhD in nursing must currently go to another country; nowhere in Canada can a nurse advance to a PhD level. In Alberta we have to depend on other countries to educate our educators in order to educate our nurses. The government has had the foresight to earmark funds for nursing research in 1981, creating the Alberta Foundation for Nursing Research. I'd like to ask the Minister of Advanced Education if he would do the same for a PhD program in the province of Alberta.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, certainly it's true that the government of Alberta in the last decade alone has committed in excess of \$23 million to the research, training, and facilities in nursing alone in this province, a very major commitment. I understand the U of A at the moment has some three nurses in PhD training through graduate courses. I don't believe the government or indeed the department would object to the U of A, for example, establishing a PhD program in nursing if they can come up with those funds from within their own resources.

MRS. MIROSH: Well, Mr. Speaker, a PhD program in nursing has been approved, apparently, at the University of Alberta, and they are having trouble allocating those funds or receiving those funds. Would the minister review this program and the funding for this program?

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, one has to be very frank about this matter dealing with health. [interjection] As the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre would know, the Hyndman commission did not identify, for example, the PhD program as being a requirement. They did point out that anything in prevention would certainly be appropriate.

I must share with this House, Mr. Speaker, that as minister I have great concern for the lack of speech therapists and dental hygienists, which frankly would rate a priority over a PhD in nursing. But I'm easy to get along with, and if people can show me how it can be done, I would do what I can to see it's implemented.

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

### Free Trade

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Premier. The promise that the free trade agreement would give Canadian exporters better access to the American market has dissolved into countervail and unfair-subsidy actions



by the Americans that the Deputy Prime Minister of this country has called harassment and a trade war that is intensifying. Now the United States and Mexico are starting talks on June 10 for a free trade deal that will have even more harsh economic implications for Canada, including things like Americans muscling in on our telephone system, for example. Does this Premier concur with the idea of an economic union in which American capital will use cheap Mexican labour to exploit Canada's cheap raw materials? That's where we're going.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, the extremely confused question from the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway is difficult to answer, but it seems to me that it's quite clear that the free trade agreement between Canada and the United States should be examined in light of its own experience. There are a number of issues which are now before panels for review and consideration, and we're going to have to expect that to happen. But for the first time in the history of dealing with disputes between Canada and United States there is an opportunity for Canadian representation on the panels and . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh.

MR. HORSMAN: The NDP seem to think it's funny that for the very first time, instead of being subjected solely to the laws of the United States with regard to countervail issues and solely subjected to the judgment of representatives only of the United States, now Canada is equally represented on those panels. I think it's a major step forward in the history of international trade jurisprudence. And it will prove in the long run to be the most effective method of settling trade disputes between our countries that has ever been devised. Now, that aspect of the question I am pleased to answer. They may not like it in the NDP, but the fact of the matter is that it's going to work to the advantage of both countries and eventually will eliminate many of the trade disputes that we've experienced in the past.

Now, with regard to Mexico. That is a very confused and, I suggest, very poorly understood aspect of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Kingsway's understanding of the free trade agreement. There's nothing in the free trade agreement which would permit cheap Mexican labour to access Alberta or Canadian natural resources to undermine Canadian jobs.

MR. McEACHERN: Well, Mr. Speaker, we were better off before the free trade deal in terms of settling disputes; we didn't have as many.

But the Maquiladoras strip in northern Mexico shows the dangers of this right-wing agenda. The wages are low, there's minimal regulation and no conformity to normal tax laws or labour laws or, for that matter, environmental laws. Now that this free trade deal that we've already signed has brought with it the GST, high interest rates and a high Canadian dollar, countervail harassment, job losses, movement of our businesses south, and Americans muscling in our telephone systems, to add another one, how can this government possibly trust the Mulroney government to negotiate on behalf of Albertan workers and businesses in the trade arena?

MR. HORSMAN: Well, I'm surprised the hon. Member for Edmonton-Kingsway didn't add lame back and rheumatic fever to the list of things. You know, everything that's wrong with the country is because of the free trade deal. It's amazing. How about the common cold?

The fact of the matter is, and I repeat: the dispute resolution process in place in the free trade agreement is that absolutely remarkable step forward in terms of settling international trade disputes between Canada and the United States, and it is the first time that the United States has ever agreed to have its trade laws subjected to a binational panel for dispute resolution. It is a major step forward, and they don't like it over there because they're so afraid of the world. That's tough.

But the fact of the matter is we are prepared to take our place alongside the federal government and the private industries in this country to go before those panels and argue the case. In fact, that is being done now in a major way in the pork countervail case, and Alberta is co-operating with the federal government and with the private sector in order to see that the proper ruling is achieved. I am confident that the process will work. I know the NDP doesn't want it to work because they're so afraid of the world, but it will.

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

### Alberta Government Telephones (continued)

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the recent Western Premiers' Conference, the Premiers noted that a good, efficient telecommunications network was critical for western Canada in particular and especially, as they noted in communiqué 13, for rural communities. Now, rural phones generally don't make a lot of money for the company; in fact, they're probably the least profitable where they're the most needed, where the farms are most spread out. So my question to the Minister for Technology, Research and Telecommunications is this: how can the minister on one hand guarantee that AGT will continue to be able to offer the extended flat rate calling and also be able to provide profitability for the shareholders that buy into the company?

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, the extended flat rate calling and ILS programs are an integral part of the telecommunications services for rural Albertans, and that will remain. At the same time, a corporation will be established that will have the opportunity to pursue a wide variety of telecommunications in a global sense, and the revenues from that and the opportunities that will flow to Alberta will indeed help all Albertans.

MR. BRUSEKER: I love to dance a little side step is the theme song of this government and this minister.

My question, then, to the minister, following up, is simply this: has the government got any studies at all – I doubt it – looking at the possible privatization of AGT, which is now a realization of course, and the effect that it will have on those rural communities? If you have some studies, will you table them in this House?

MR. STEWART: Well, Mr. Speaker, as the Premier has indicated, the study of this matter has been going on for some time. It is not a decision that we entered into lightly or without full examination of all the ramifications. Just as the Premier likewise suggested to the hon. Leader of the Liberal Party, if there are reports or other matters that they wish, there is a proper procedure for that to take place.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The time for question period has expired.

### Orders of the Day

#### head: Written Questions

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

[Motion carried]

#### head: Motions for Returns

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I move that all motions for returns standing on the Order Paper, except 317, 318, 320, and 329, stand and retain their places on the Order Paper.

MR. GIBEAULT: Mr. Speaker, speaking to the motion.

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

MR. GIBEAULT: Mr. Speaker, I rise to encourage members to defeat this motion. This is once again, day after day, the same kind of example of a government that holds this Assembly in contempt. They're going to give us an answer today to a lousy four motions for returns out of 28. And who knows; they may not even approve four of them. They may just say, "No, we're not going to give you the information."

Now, I just put it to the government: what is the problem over there with giving us an answer? We're asking for information; have the decency to say yes or no. I mean, why delay this? I've had motions on this Order Paper for a month relating to some very important occupational health and safety issues, and this government has not got the integrity to just come out and say, "Yes, we're going to answer this question; we share your concern," or else "No." I just don't accept that, Mr. Speaker.

I had, for example, Motion for a Return 308, asking for information from Occupational Health and Safety regarding the accidents at the Daishowa plant in Peace River. Two people have been killed there. We've got a very serious health and safety problem, and we want to know whether or not this government has done its job. Now, motions for returns are exactly for that purpose, to try and get information from this government, and if they don't want to give it to us and to the people of Alberta, they ought to have the guts to just come out and say so. Now, what does this mean that they're on the Order Paper day after day, week after week? Are they eventually going to give this information to us? Even when they accept it, we might not see the answer for a year. It's been that long on some of these motions for returns. This is just unacceptable. This government is holding this Assembly, I would suggest, in contempt by this kind of action, Mr. Speaker.

Motion for a Return 309 is asking about the occupational health and safety problems at the Weldwood plant. I had another constituent call me again today, Mr. Speaker – and I don't know how many I've dealt with in this regard – but another constituent, who's a medical professional who is dealing with the workers who have been gassed in chlorine incidents at this plant, and it is continuing. It is an appalling situation, and we want some answers from this government. Are they enforcing occupational health and safety regulations at that plant, or

aren't they? And if so, they ought to be proud to put the information on the record. I just don't believe it's there. Maybe they're hiding. But let's have some integrity, some guts here to come out and say they are going to give us this information or not.

We've got Motion for a Return 310, Mr. Speaker, which deals with that disaster at Alberta Recoveries & Rentals, where they had the lead poisoning incident, where this government claimed that they were doing everything they could and should in that incident. The evidence that we have so far publicly suggests just the opposite, but we're giving the government an opportunity to put the record straight, to show the people of Alberta exactly what they did in this case, if anything. And they're refusing and they're stalling.

Then again we have Motion for a Return 311, and here's something that we want to know and the people of Alberta want to know: whether or not this government is, in fact, enforcing their own Occupational Health and Safety Act that provides for fines and jail terms even for people who are in violation of the occupational health and safety legislation and regulations of this province, and we're asking in Motion for a Return 311 to have the government name the employers, "the nature of the infraction, and the amount of the fine" and/or prison term, if any, in the period from January '86 to April 1990.

I submit, Mr. Speaker, that this is legitimate public information, and I am just getting a little fed up with this government's stalling tactics. So I encourage members to defeat this motion.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. Just before . . . Oh, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore wishes to address this motion?

MS M. LAING: I sure do, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. Before doing that, I'd just like to make a suggestion to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods. He used the word "guts" a couple of times. Now, that word has been ruled unparliamentary in other contexts. The Chair is not suggesting that it is unparliamentary; the Chair is suggesting, though, that it doesn't do much for the general decorum of the Assembly to use words like that with abandon.

MR. GIBEAULT: I withdraw that word, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore, followed by Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MS M. LAING: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I wish also to speak against this motion. These motions for returns reflect the serious concerns of members of this Legislature as they speak for their constituents and the people of Alberta at large. We are concerned about how this government spends its money, how it protects the well-being of Albertans, how it protects our environment, how it demonstrates or fails to demonstrate fiscal responsibility in its contracts, and we put these questions on the Order Paper not because we have nothing else to do but because we have legitimate concerns that we bring to this Legislature, as another way of accessing information that this government so often wishes to deny us and the people of Alberta.

I would refer to Motion 334, on the Order Paper in my name. I have asked a number of questions that reflect serious concerns raised to me by parents, by mental health workers in regard to

the well-being of children in a certain treatment program. Civil rights people have raised issues about it. The person responsible, the chairman, has said, "We have an agreement in place that will answer your concerns." Well, then, let us see this agreement. Similarly, other people are saying in this Assembly, "We have concerns about what this government is doing," and they say, "Trust us," and we say, "That's not good enough." We want evidence that you are doing what you say you are doing in a responsible way, not only fiscally but responsible in terms of caring for the well-being of Albertans.

I would therefore suggest that we need these motions for returns to be addressed and accepted.

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

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to emphasize the points that have been made by my colleagues from Edmonton-Mill Woods and Edmonton-Avonmore. I believe they have made very clear the reasons for asking for this kind of information – the legitimacy of this process, that answers should be provided for this kind of information – and I believe that in fact those points need not be elaborated upon greatly.

I would, however, like to make one very pertinent point to this process today. Just minutes ago the Premier of this province and the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications – in answer to a question by colleagues from my caucus about AGT, about having studies that indicate whether or not Alberta Government Telephones, this new initiative, will in fact be to the benefit of Alberta – said, "Well, no problem; ask for it on the Order Paper." Well, minutes later this government demonstrates its fundamental hypocrisy. It says when the TV camera is on, "Ask for it in the Legislature." It's very magnanimous about that. "We'll give you whatever information you need; use the proper process." And as soon as that TV camera is switched off, the smart aleck Deputy Premier says: "Ha. We're not going to acknowledge 24 of 28 motions for returns on the Order Paper. We haven't acknowledged those for weeks, for months, and it's very unlikely that they will be acknowledged, let alone answered, in the dying days of this Legislature session."

The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that what is going on today, right now, in this session at this time demonstrates the fundamental hypocrisy of what we heard from the Premier of this province and from the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications.

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

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope that government members are perhaps a little surprised by opposition members speaking on this debatable motion that all motions for returns except the four mentioned by the Government House Leader stand and retain their places. I hope they're a little surprised by that, and I want to explain why we're doing it: because we're genuinely offended and concerned about this closed-door policy of government. We don't use these motions for returns, as the Member for Edmonton-Avonmore said, just because we have nothing better to do. We put these motions for returns on here because we think it's important that as elected representatives of the people of the province of Alberta we have information so that we can best serve them, so that we can participate in the decision-making process in a way that helps better decisions be made.

And this government had better learn. I know that these habits were developed in a time when there was no such thing as opposition in the province of Alberta in any significant way. There was one lone member challenging – and doing a darn good job of it, I should say – all of the government and the then opposition – what were they called? – Social Credit, the right-wing opposition. These closed-door habits, restricted information, "Don't tell anybody anything": those habits were developed then, and I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that they need to change. The government, though they have a majority of seats in the House, needs to be aware of the fact that they represent the opinion of only 44 percent of the people in the province of Alberta who voted in the last election, and if polls are to be believed, that's dropped by more than half in that time. We on this side of the House, though representing only 22 seats, were sent here by a considerable number of Albertans whose opinions are legitimate and whose concerns need to be addressed.

That's what we're trying to do. This isn't a frivolous attempt to seek information. I've stood in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, Tuesday, Thursday, Tuesday, Thursday, Tuesday, Thursday, since the beginning of March, making requests in the most reasoned, thorough, thoughtful way possible of the Provincial Treasurer to provide answers to motions for returns. Every one of them, without fail, turned down, turned down, turned down. It's habit-forming. They don't know how to say anything but no.

The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark referred to the comment made in question period today by the hon. Premier, saying that if you ask in the proper way, use the proper vehicles available to you as legislators to ask for information, you could get it. Well, the Official Opposition has put motions for returns on the Order Paper year after year demanding that copies of these reports prepared by Keith Alexander for Dominion Securities be tabled, be made public, so that we can assess the same misinformation that the government's basing their decision to privatize one of our most cherished assets, Mr. Speaker. This portion of the agenda is an important one, and I think the government has got to wake up.

There are currently dozens of motions for returns left on the Order Paper. It's no secret that we're getting down to the final days or weeks of this session of the Legislature, and we want answers to these questions. I don't know; I've probably had 15 or 20 of them rejected out of hand, no reasoning other than the fact that the Provincial Treasurer thinks I'm a Marxist socialist. That's the only reason – no arguments, no intelligent arguments. He just name-calls and says, "We're not going to give the information." Important information, Mr. Speaker.

I would refer hon. members to a motion for a return, a very simple, straightforward request for information, Motion for a Return 300, that I have standing in my name on the Order Paper. I can understand if the appropriate minister isn't here to deal with that motion for a return on a particular day. I can live with that. But it's day after day after day that it doesn't get dealt with. Maybe if we had a nod of approval from a member opposite, an indication that when it is dealt with, it will be dealt with in a positive way, we wouldn't have to stand up here and harangue the government about their failure to provide information, legitimate public information, to the opposition and to the people of Alberta.

Motion for a Return 300 is seeking important information with respect to the kind of prioritizing process that this government has in place, or the lack of prioritizing process they have in place, when making decisions about which health care facilities in the province shall go ahead in any given year. I'm referring specifically to projects mentioned by the Minister of Health in

question period, Mr. Speaker. It's important information. It's at the government's fingertips. It's easy for them to provide. I hope we'll get a positive response to this one. I haven't had any indication of that, but my concern is that it sits on the Order Paper day after day after day after day, doesn't get dealt with, and based on experience, I'm worried that it's going to be turned down like every other motion for a return that I've put on the Order Paper, Mr. Speaker.

MR. OLDRING: Two more minutes.

MR. FOX: I beg your pardon? The hon. Minister of Family and Social Services is learning how to tell time, Mr. Speaker. Isn't that cute? It's almost 4 o'clock, for *Hansard*. Nothing happens at 4 o'clock, for your information; it's 10 after 4, hon. minister.

But I'll conclude my comments there.

MR. HORSMAN: I'm not surprised at all with the tactics that the hon. Member for Vegreville is pursuing today. He obviously doesn't want the matter of Motion 211 to come on before 4:10. He just indicated that quite clearly, and that's what all this blather is about.

The fact of the matter is that when ministers are available to deal with motions for returns, they will be dealt with. It's quite simple. We've had many, many more than is normal in the course of a session. We're prepared to deal with them. Hopefully, we'll be able to deal with them all in the next four or five weeks or whatever is left in the sitting.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Having heard the call for the question . . .

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Yes. I hadn't really intended to get into this, but the answer that the . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. Is the member rising on a point of order?

MR. McEACHERN: No.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Well, on this motion the hon. Government House Leader has spoken, which has the effect of winding up the debate, hon. member.

MR. McEACHERN: Why is that?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is just the rules of the House. There's a mover, then there's an opportunity for debate, and then when the mover takes the floor to wind up debate, the debate is ended, hon. member.

[Motion carried]

317. Mrs. Hewes moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing what are the employment qualifications for each of the following job classifications for the Department of Family and Social Services: native liaison officer I and II; hostel manager I and II; welfare program supervisor I and II; Metis colony manager II; child care counselor I, II, III, and IV; social service technician; social worker

I, II, III, IV, and V; regional welfare administrator I and II; caseworker supervisor; psychological assistant I and II; and psychologist I and II.

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, I'd be happy to support Motion 317.

MRS. HEWES: I'm sorry, I can't hear him, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is it accepted?

MR. OLDRING: Yes.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Oh. The hon. minister has accepted Motion 317.

[Motion carried]

318. Mr. Pashak moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of the joint venture agreement and the memorandum of understanding signed on or about February 3, 1990, between the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology or its representatives and P.T. Pasir Mas Raya or its representatives with respect to the Batam International Training Centre.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, the government has great difficulty in accepting this motion for a return for several reasons. First of all, when any government agency or agency funded by government enters into a contract, in this case a joint venture, with a commercial institution, to divulge those details, particularly without the consent of that organization, is contrary to the policy of government in that it would lead to information being divulged that frankly would be contrary to not only precedent, what's happened before, but I think would lead to difficulties in the future of organizations such as the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, which carries out many projects, the Batam Island International Training Centre being simply one of them. I think it would be contrary to the policy that has been established previously. Therefore, the government will not accept that motion for a return, simply because to disclose that information would be in our view unfair competition in divulging what we construe to be confidential information. So the government refuses that.

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

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish the Minister of Advanced Education would follow the good example of the Minister of Family and Social Services, who did agree to provide – it almost knocked me out of my chair – a positive response to the previous motion for a return. I would like to point out to the Minister of Advanced Education that what we're dealing with here is a motion for a return requesting information that would indicate to us and to the people of Alberta what's happened to public money, in an effort to determine whether or not public funds have been properly spent, whether or not we need to delve a little deeper into the situations that surround the Batam project.

I'm sure that things were kicked off there with the best of intentions, but things haven't worked out, and we need to find out why. If the hon. Minister of Advanced Education has some concerns with specific wording in the motion for a return or some details of the motion for a return or would like to provide

information other than what's specified, he has the option to propose amendments. That's been done in this Chamber before, and we've accepted amendments and looked forward to the information provided.

So I'd like to suggest to the minister that it needn't be just a sort of conditioned response that no, we can't we provide it; it's confidential. He may have the opportunity to be a little more creative in his response to that motion for a return.

So that being said, I look forward to perhaps a change of heart before the vote occurs.

MS M. LAING: Mr. Speaker, I would speak in favour of the minister accepting this motion for a return. As the Member for Vegreville has said, it deals with public money. When the hon. minister said that precedent was one of the reasons, I would suggest that not two hours ago we heard the Premier talking about who was afraid of change, and it seemed it certainly wasn't his side of the House at that time. So I would challenge the minister to think more carefully about relying on unchanging precedents when refusing to give us this information. It is, as we said, public money, and it would seem to me that inasmuch as it is public money, there should be public accountability.

MR. TAYLOR: Just a moment before the debate closes out. I want to ask the minister to rethink his position, because I believe this may be available by writing the Indonesian government. Wouldn't he be a very embarrassed-looking man in charge of our 29 institutions if we could write for and get it? As it is, with some of our institutions now you can write to Washington, for instance, and find out what the salary of the president of the Alberta Energy Company is, but you can't find it out in this Legislature.

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

MR. PASHAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is an unprecedented situation, in my judgment. The information we're requesting here in motions for returns 318 and 319 is to shed some light on this unprecedented situation. The reason the situation, in my judgment at least, is unprecedented is that it's not quite clear yet whether the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology had legislative authority to enter into this particular venture or not. They could be completely breaking the law or at least breaking the intent of the Technical Institutes Act. I say that because this particular venture has characteristics that aren't the same as other joint ventures that colleges and technical institutes and universities have entered into.

This particular venture was calculated from the outset to be a money-making venture. The Southern Alberta Institute of Technology during the relatively good years was able to sock a lot of money away. Their incoming revenues exceeded their expenses, and they put this into what might be called a rainy day fund. As I understand it, because of the way the legislation works, they can't take money out of that fund or at least they're not supposed to take money out of that fund to use for the purpose of augmenting any losses they might anticipate experiencing in other years, but they can use that money for creative purposes of one kind or another. But in this particular case, they decided that they were getting into budgetary situations that were difficult for them and they wanted to try to raise some money to meet their operating deficits. So they thought they could take the money out of that fund and use it to

promote what was essentially seen as a money-making venture in the South Pacific.

At some stage they did enter into an agreement with P.T. Pasir Mas Raya or its representatives to establish a training program in Indonesia for people that essentially would be working on oil drilling platforms in that part of the world. Part of this, as the Speaker may be interested to know, involved building an oil drilling platform for instructional purposes. This was part of the deal. The province of Alberta entered into an extremely dubious loan guarantee to build this drilling platform that likely won't see any use, and if it doesn't see any use, then the province of Alberta will become the owner of this drilling program once they seize its assets. I assume that the Minister of Advanced Education from Lethbridge may have an interest in this, because perhaps they can put it on display down in Henderson Lake and use it as a tourist attraction or whatever. The Treasurer made an even more interesting suggestion the other day during the debate on public accounts. He suggested that maybe he could send all of the opposition over to that part of the world. He'd give them all a one-way ticket to visit this particular platform. Anyway it's going to be an interesting asset that I'm quite sure the province of Alberta will acquire in the not too distant future, and it'll be interesting to see how they dispose of it. Of course, the taxpayers are probably going to be aggrieved if they experience a loss on the government's acquisition of this particular drilling platform.

In addition to the almost \$5 million involved in this loan guarantee that's at risk, the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology spent almost another 4 and a half million dollars of its own money trying to get this program off the ground. I know from talking to people who have connections with SAIT that that was seen as a kind of plum if you were working at SAIT: "Oh, maybe you can become part of the Batam project and have this interesting holiday down in the South Pacific."

SAIT spent an awful lot of its money sending people down there to try to establish and mount programs, and they weren't very successful in this. They ran a couple of very short courses. They certainly never got a return for the money they'd invested. I just note that recently they were still continuing to try to salvage something from the program, because they were continuing to pay the costs of one administrator to go down to that part of the world to try to see if he could find any clients that might take advantage of what it is they've built down there.

I should just point out that some of the other moneys that were spent on that project involve some buildings the province of Alberta paid for through its funding at SAIT. There's a powerhouse built on this land. I think there's provision for restaurants, provision for classrooms and this kind of thing or land that doesn't even belong to SAIT. It's land that's been leased. Again, this constitutes in my judgment almost . . . Maybe I should also mention that there's even a pizza hut built on this particular site. There's a lot of educational value in having a pizza hut on this site. There's a paramedic building, there's a scaffolding training module, plus some classrooms, a fire pad, a workshop. But all these buildings are sitting there idle, Mr. Speaker. So I think a great deal of public money has been wasted in this unfortunate venture.

The only way we can find out what really happened is to have the government accept these two motions for returns on the Order Paper. I don't see anything really contentious. Why shouldn't the public know exactly what kinds of documents were signed between the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology and its representatives and this Pasir Mas Raya that's part of this Batam International Training Centre? If we don't get that kind

of information, how can we prevent these situations from occurring in the future. We're not out to punish the officials of SAIT or whatever, where their board members allowed their administrators to get involved in these decisions. We're critical of them. We certainly would like to know whether they stepped outside the intent if not the actual legality of the powers assigned to them under the Technical Institutes Act.

So in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I think these are not difficult motions for the government to accept. It would clearly be in the public interest for the government to accept these motions and provide the information requested.

[Motion lost]

320. Mr. Pashak moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all agreements or contracts between the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology or its agents and Alert Disaster Control Inc. or Alert Disaster Control International Inc.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

MR. GOGO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Motion for a Return 320 is in many ways similar to Motion for a Return 318 in that it involves the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology and involves an organization, a company, known as Alert Disaster Control Inc. or Alert, as it's known. This relates to Motion for a Return 318 in that it's asking for similar information. It's no secret that Alert Disaster Services was involved with SAIT in the Batam Island training project, the principle being that this is a matter between the institution and a commercial organization. I think the terms of that contract and agreements are of a confidential nature.

The member made a comment a moment ago, almost an inference, about public funds being used. I would simply point out that under the Technical Institutes Act – and the hon. member will have opportunities for debating that because that's before the House later this week as part of the omnibus Bill, Bill 27 – to my knowledge, Mr. Speaker, nothing wrong has been done. I've made inquiries as to whether or not operational funds have been used and so on, and we'll get to that, I'm sure.

The point being that the Auditor General of this province does the audit on all the institutions, including SAIT. [interjection] If the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View for some reason – I didn't quite hear his comment – is casting aspersions at the Auditor General, that's something I guess we can deal with as well.

The principle is that this is a document of a confidential nature because of commercial implications. We have a commercial firm dealing with one of our institutions. I wouldn't feel at all comfortable in releasing that information even if I had it. So on the matter of principle that confidentiality should prevail on matters such as this, I recommend that the Assembly turn it down.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to just alert the Minister of Advanced Education – and I've been thumbing through my Auditor General's report to find the exact quote – that I wouldn't want him to quote the Auditor General as in any way supporting his case. The Auditor General, if the

minister is not aware of it, had this to say about the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology for the year ended June 30, 1989, and I'll just quote it for the minister if he's not aware of it.

The annual financial audit was not complete as at the date of this report.

That is the annual financial audit for the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology.

The Institute was not as well prepared for the audit as in previous years with the result that the audit work was ongoing until late December.

Now, if the minister is defending his position this afternoon by referring to the position or the statement of the audit that was done by the provincial Auditor General, I would say his defence is extremely weak. What the Auditor General has observed here is that the institute was not ready for whatever reasons there might be. How a publicly funded advanced education institution in this province couldn't be ready for the auditors in the appointed time is of serious concern to me, and it ought to be of serious concern to him and to all members of the House. We still have not had in my view any significant or full explanation as to why they weren't ready. Whether it had anything to do and might have had a great deal to do with this particular matter is the subject of the motion for a return on the floor this afternoon.

So I just want to make sure the record will show that in his comments the minister made reference to an intervention I made while he was speaking. I want it to be amply clear that I was alluding to the report of the Auditor General, which is not very complimentary to the financial affairs of the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology. I know it to be a fine institute, and I'm proud to be the representative of Calgary-Mountain View, in which this institute is located, but I have to say that in order to re-establish public confidence in the highest standards this technology institute has enjoyed in the past, a lot of effort has to be done to clear the air and provide information to ensure that the public is aware of what's gone on here. If there is nothing, then the information being made public would not harm the institute but would only serve to clear the air and re-establish its fine reputation, particularly in regards to the helpfulness of its financial reporting.

MR. HORSMAN: I know the Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn considers himself to be intellectually superior to most of us in the Assembly . . .

MR. PASHAK: That's not true. That's not what I said. I'm part of that same world.

MR. HORSMAN: . . . as he said on May 1 in this Assembly, as is in *Hansard*. I hope he will then address his keen intellect to what he's saying to the Assembly today. It is that it's autonomy for institutions in this province if necessary but not necessarily autonomy. We've heard a great deal of argument from the Official Opposition that postsecondary institutions and their boards of governors should be able to make decisions on matters affecting the operations of their institutions, but when it comes to issues like this, all of a sudden they're supposed to make all their information available despite the fact that they've entered into confidential commercial agreements with outside third parties. So the intellectual honesty of this particular motion is somewhat called into question, it would seem to me. They can't have it both ways, surely, can they? This opposition of pious NDPers, intellectually superior, as the hon. member has indi-

cated he is – I'm just intrigued by his quotation when he says, "We happen to live in a particularly intellectually backward part of the western world." Well, I'm sorry that it grieves his mind so much to have to live amongst such intellectually inferior folk, but perhaps it comes from having been seated next to the man from Harvard, the Member for Edmonton-Centre, for these past several months. The fact of the matter is that you can't have it both ways. It's been made very clear. I'd be interested in hearing his arguments in closing debate.

MR. PASHAK: There's really a danger in taking remarks out of context. That remark was made during the course of a debate on labour laws. When I referred to the western world, I was talking about all of us who happen to live in Canada, because anyone who knows anything about labour laws knows that in general Canadian labour laws are somewhat regressive compared to the kind of labour laws, for example, that exist in western Europe.

AN HON. MEMBER: The United States?

MR. PASHAK: Well, we're somewhat ahead of most parts of the United States. But that's what I was referring to, and it's seen in those contexts, and I'll stand and defend those remarks, because I happen to be a person who's lived in this province all his life. I was born in the city of Calgary, and I consider myself to be part of that western world. If I'm saying that the western world is intellectually backward, I'm part of that group that's intellectually backward too, and I'm not setting myself apart from anyone else.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, back to Motion for a Return 320. Again, this is a unique situation. I would argue that universities, technical institutes, should have the kind of autonomy the hon. deputy leader has suggested they should have. But there are some questions there too. We'll get into those when we debate Bill 27.

With respect to the motion for a return itself, there is an outstanding question that has to do with whether or not SAIT used its operating funds to pay for the interest on the loan that Alert Disaster Control services took out, and if it did use its operating funds for that purpose, then they could be in violation of what it is they're permitted to do under government regulations and under the Technical Institutes Act. That has to be investigated. The only way we can find out whether or not that situation exists is by looking at the contracts, if any, that were entered into between the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology and Alert Disaster Control Inc.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to echo the comments that my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View made. Again, I've lived in Calgary all my life. I'm proud of the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology as an institution of higher learning. For a long time that institute was just known as the technology institute of Alberta. There was no Northern Alberta Institute of Technology at that time. In those days SAIT had only one other counterpart in Canada, which was the Ryerson institute of technology in Toronto. They were the two leading institutes of technology in this whole country. I don't like to see what's happening at SAIT at the moment because – and I think it in some part has to do with the financial mismanagement associated with the Batam project – they've got a serious budgetary problem on their hands. They've got an anticipated deficit in terms of the kinds of programs they'd like to run. They've been trying to deal with that problem within the institution. It's creating serious morale problems among the

faculty and among students. I've had both faculty and students come to me with grievances and concerns about what's happening within the institution. Some of the students feel that their programs are really suffering. I think in part it can be traced to this particular financial venture the SAIT administration got itself into, and the only way we can unravel it or find out what is happening there is to have access to these documents.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'll conclude debate.

[Motion lost]

329. Mrs. Hewes moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of every report or study on the issue of caseloads for all services offered by the Department of Social Services and the Department of Family and Social Services since April 1, 1985.

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, as reasonable as we like to be on this side of the House and recognizing that I've made every effort to accept questions and motions for returns, I find myself this afternoon being in a position for the first time of recommending that we reject this particular motion.

I appreciate that the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar is looking for additional information, but as I read through the motion for a return itself, one of the first requests is a copy of every report on the issue of caseloads. As you can appreciate, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of internal reports that go back and forth. I get reports on caseloads on an ongoing basis, and it's very important for us to be kept updated. But I couldn't imagine what it would be like to try to wade through all our offices and all our branches and all our departments to try to track down all the reports on caseloads that might be out there.

As it relates to studies, Mr. Speaker, I'd only point out that the member already has one of the most current studies that was done on caseloads, and that's the Jones report. It's a very comprehensive document, and I know the member has had an opportunity to go through it, as I have. I don't know what would be better or more current than that. So I really can't support this particular motion at this time.

MRS. HEWES: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry. The minister had a great average there for a few minutes and he's blown it.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is an entirely reasonable request. We've just come through a very difficult set of circumstances in this province with the job action of social workers and child care counselors, psychologists. Caseloads and the discussion around caseloads was a primary reason for that job action, and it now appears that even though the workers have gone back to work, there are further problems in resolving it.

Mr. Speaker, yes, we know that there has been a caseload study done on child welfare workers. I'd like to know and I'd like to have possession of any caseload studies that have been done on income security workers, on mental health workers, on the particular needs of workers who are endeavouring to work with high-risk children. The minister has stated in this House and elsewhere that yes, some caseloads are too high, and that's no secret. He has also stated, I believe, that something is going to be done about them. Well, we need to know on what basis he is making his decisions and on what basis he is going to change them.

Mr. Speaker, we've also had reports done at the request of the department by Dr. Thomlison, Judge Porter, the Ombudsman, and others, who have made extensive comments about caseloads and the need for change. To our knowledge, only some of these

have been acted on; others have remained gathering dust. We've been complaining for years and the workers have been complaining for years about these circumstances.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. Pursuant to Standing Order 8(3), the Chair is required to interrupt the hon. member to move on to the next order of business.

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

**Bill 210  
Ecological Reserves and Heritage Rivers Act**

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with a great deal of anticipation and pleasure that I present this Bill. It is with anticipation and pleasure because I believe that this Bill is extremely important to an enlightened environmental policy on behalf of the government of Alberta. Certainly there are, in one sense, what appear to be issues of a higher public profile than ecological reserves and heritage rivers. There are issues of a more pressing and focused nature perhaps. But there is no issue more important than the issue which Bill 210, the Ecological Reserves and Heritage Rivers Act, addresses in the broad spectrum of environmental issues.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill will serve to amend the current Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves and Natural Areas Act in three ways: first, to require that at least 12 percent of the province be designated by the year 2000 to be protected in its natural state; second, to designate at least one ecological reserve of adequate size in each of the 17 natural regions of the province by no later than the year 2000; and third, to require that Alberta join the Canadian Heritage Rivers System program and designate heritage river areas along rivers of special ecological and/or historic and/or cultural importance.

I was impressed vividly several weeks ago, Mr. Speaker, when speaking to a friend of mine about the significance of ecological reserves and heritage rivers. This friend said, "You know, Grant, we're not talking about ecological reserves; in fact, what we are talking about are ecological museums." If one considers the concept of museum, you begin to get a sense of how important this Bill and the program that it represents are. Museums are a place where we put things that we want to preserve because they have disappeared: artifacts of previous ways of living, artifacts of previous ways of life. Well, Mr. Speaker, it is becoming painfully apparent, not only in the world at large and in general but also in this province, that there are kinds of biological ecosystem spaces in this province which are disappearing, which in fact have disappeared, and there are more that will disappear or will be endangered if we do not move in a responsible and reasonable fashion to set them aside and to protect them in their pristine, unencumbered, untouched, natural condition.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

I'll give you an example of several such areas. The Rumsey area. Less than 5 percent of the original aspen parkland in the world remains. The small block of original aspen parkland found in the Rumsey area, about a 180 square kilometre area, is the largest remnant of this kind of ecosystem, this kind of ecological area, in the world.

Milk River, Lost River. This is, Mr. Speaker, a biologically diverse area which includes several plants and animals found nowhere else in Canada. A tiny ecological reserve has been set aside, 11 square kilometres, but this particular area, the Lost River area, has not been set aside in any kind of reserve area.

Mr. Speaker, what we are talking about is a program, if we are not careful in other ways in how we encroach upon wildland areas, that ultimately and to some extent today in fact is an ecological museum program. When I think about the risk of this government not proceeding quickly enough – in fact, reacting very cynically through the statements of their minister – to the ecological reserve program, to the endangered spaces program, I can draw a very vivid analogy. For the Minister of Recreation and Parks to say that ecological reserves are a huge land grab, for this minister to watch while certain ecological areas of this province literally become extinct to this province, extinct in some cases to the world, would be tantamount to this government finding those dinosaur bones in the Tyrrell area and throwing them away.

Isn't it ironic, Mr. Speaker, that something that is millions of years dead we place an intrinsic value on? Fortunately, we do, and this government is to be congratulated for having done that. We would not contemplate for a minute throwing those natural resources, those profound historic resources away. At the same time, this minister will sit paralysed while very, very sensitive, very rare ecological areas are being frittered away because we continue, in our development initiatives, to encroach upon them and to kill them. Mr. Speaker, we are talking about ecological museums. We are talking about a travesty and a tragedy if this government continues the practice of the delays that we have seen.

It's very interesting to note that the Minister of Recreation and Parks wrote an open letter to the Alberta chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, tabled in May of 1990 in the Legislature. He responds to their article, and it says in here:

Your article states that it is incorrect to assume that "there's no rush to ensure protection for Alberta's wildlands."

The minister goes on to say:

Well, there is a need for ongoing work on this kind of protection, but rushing in without good data, good plans and good choices of sites, can be equally dangerous, particularly for the sites involved and for our long-range objectives.

This, Mr. Speaker, from a minister of a government which in 18 months set aside 200,000 square kilometres of northern Alberta in forestry management agreements. If that isn't rushing, I don't know what rushing is. They have had no qualms about rushing in to set aside huge tracts of northern Alberta at the disposal of companies to move in and make land use choices without adequate study, saying, "We'll do ongoing study." And then this minister has the gall to turn around and say, "Well, we can't rush in and set aside 17 ecological reserves right away," when they are in the order of maybe 28 square kilometres – in fact, some of them are less than 28 square kilometres – where they in no way approach the massive size of the forestry management areas that have been set aside in 18 months. Why is it not the case that we could go in and set aside all the ecological reserves right now, set aside more than what might ultimately become the prescribed and proper size, and do ongoing studies to ensure that ultimately we do make the right decision? Why is it that he doesn't set them aside now and then worry about making sure that his concerns are met, if that's absolutely necessary, later? Certainly the precedent has been set.

Mr. Speaker, we need ecological museums, and we need action. We do not need a minister who stands up and calls



ecological reserves a massive land grab. We do not need a government who is perfectly prepared to set aside 200,000 square kilometres for development and can't see their way clear to setting aside 200 or 300 or 400 square kilometres for future generations not only to appreciate but literally for the survival and success of our species and of all species on the face of this earth.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill is in support of, among other things, the endangered spaces program today being promoted on an international level by the World Wildlife Fund and by the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society. I know that Albertans, and this government in particular, look out and say that Alberta has miles and miles of untracked lands. Well, Mr. Speaker, those lands have been encroached upon in many different ways. Even ecological reserves that have been set aside to this point have been encroached upon, have not been managed properly by this government, and very, very quickly there will be very few wildlands left even in a province like Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, the advantages of an aggressive ecological areas and heritage rivers program are many, and I would like to list several. First of all, it is critical to gene pool conservation. If we are to avoid the extinction of rare species of animals and plants, then we must set aside areas, ecosystems, which sustain the lives of those animals and plants. There is a very critical relationship between endangered spaces and endangered species. For the longest time we talked about the extinction of species and tried to focus on the animal itself with our concern. It has now come to scientific conclusion that of course animal species are endangered because their spaces are endangered. We require ecological areas, wilderness areas, and heritage rivers to be set aside to preserve a gene pool; to allow over-harvested species to return to normal levels; to avoid the extinction of certain rare species; to maintain the diversity of species necessary for the health of animals, for the health of our crops, and for the health of humans. This program is essential for the preservation of habitat, to preserve ecological diversity, and to protect ecosystems. It also underlines the recognition of the need for plant and animal species to survive, regardless of what value or lack of value we may place on any given animal or species.

Mr. Speaker, it is also the case that contrary to the conventional wisdom held by this government, these are not non-economic programs. These, in fact, are programs which have an essential economic value and which may contribute very significantly in the short run and in the long run to the strength of Alberta's economy. There is a scientific research value. Mr. Speaker, it is a service that we can provide the world if we can set aside areas that attract scientists intent upon research into species of plants and animals.

[Mr. Moore in the Chair]

It is also true that ecological reserves and heritage rivers are critical and very important to the future of tourism in Alberta. I think we cannot emphasize enough the significance of our wildlands and our wildland tourist opportunities not only today but especially as they will grow in the future in a world that is increasingly seeing wildland spaces disappear. Imagine people living in the crowded European context wanting to come to a place like Alberta where there are still untapped, pristine, unfettered natural areas.

It is also very important, Mr. Speaker, that ecological areas and heritage rivers be set aside for their contribution to resource protection and their contribution to resource management.

And a final point, a final value to this kind of program, Mr. Speaker, is one that I believe is underestimated and hasn't been addressed very broadly, and that is the cultural heritage significance of ecological reserves, of certain ecosystems, to Albertans' way of life. We have a certain character, have a certain strength, have a certain value in our lives because of the physical surroundings within which we live. We view the world differently than somebody who lives elsewhere in the world without mountains. We view the world differently than somebody who lives elsewhere in the world without certain kinds of prairie grasslands. We view the world differently than people who live in different physical surroundings. I believe that our roots, our traditions, our sense of purpose and place in our physical surroundings and in our society and, therefore, our culture are inextricably tied to the preservation of the natural surroundings within which we find ourselves.

Mr. Speaker, we are not asking for very much in this program. We are not asking to set aside huge portions of this province. We are not asking to set aside portions of this province that in any way, shape, or form even approach the size of areas that have been set aside, for example, for forestry management areas. What we are asking in this Bill is for a very reasonable amount of this province to be set aside, not to be put out of commission – not put out of reach of Albertans, not put out of commission for economic reasons, which are so important for this government – but, in fact, to be set aside for all kinds of valuable reasons for Albertans now and in the future.

The circumstances in Alberta currently with respect to ecological reserves and the setting aside of natural areas, Mr. Speaker, are these. Approximately 9.4 percent of our province is protected in some way, although I use that term "protected" very loosely, because the consistency of management of "protected areas" is very questionable in this province. Of that, only 8.5 percent is reserved with no logging, mining, or sport hunting, and almost 90 percent of what is set aside is set aside not in provincial reserves but in fact in national parks. The provincial commitment to reserve lands of one form or another, Mr. Speaker, is 1.2 percent of the area of this province, and of that, only .03 percent is set aside in any kind of ecological reserve at all. In fact today, Mr. Speaker, of the 17 distinct ecological regions in this province, only 11 have had designated ecological reserves set aside by this government, and any kind of analysis tells us that only three of those are large enough to sustain the species, both plant and animal species, within the areas that have been set aside.

Mr. Speaker, that is a dismal track record for this government, which commenced this program in the early 1980s. It is such a simple thing to do: to set aside 17 ecological reserves, to set aside 17 that are of sufficient size to provide for the sustainability of those kinds of ecosystems, the ecosystems that are reflected in each one of those reserves. This will not encroach upon economic development. It will not diminish the value of that land to Albertans. It will enhance and protect the value of that land and those areas and those rivers to Albertans. It is so obvious, it is so logical that this should be done, Mr. Speaker, that it is simply difficult to understand, no matter how hard one tries to analyze it, why this government seems unable and unwilling to do it.

We have no heritage rivers designated despite the fact that the Minister of the Environment, the predecessor to this current Minister of the Environment, signed a document, signed a national accord saying that we are going to be a member of the Canadian Heritage Rivers System program. We have not designated one such river. And this isn't even a complete set-

aside program. This is a program that designates rivers of recreational consequence, so we can set aside some areas for recreation.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I can remember an interesting – certainly to me it was very interesting – occurrence. I was driving to the Legislature along River Road some time ago, and for some reason I remembered a day that I spent with my father 31 years ago swimming in the Ottawa River. That was a wonderful day; it was a wonderful time. I will remember it always. It was warm, the water was clear and clean, and the bottom of that river was so sandy. It was a wonderful experience for me to have, and it struck me: I would no sooner take my sons into that river today than become a Conservative. The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that you couldn't go into that river at Ottawa any longer. That was a beautiful river that has been ruined by industrial development, by unfettered and inappropriate industrial development techniques. I thought: isn't that sad? And then it dawned on me, as I drove by the North Saskatchewan River, that I wouldn't take my kids to swim in this river either. It was so far out of the realm of my consciousness that I hadn't even ever thought of the possibility of taking my kids to swim in that river.

Well, Mr. Speaker, before we know it, there won't be a river in this province that we can take our children to swim in, not one river. If we would set our minds to it in this government, in this Legislature, if we would set an objective that said, "That is a travesty; we have the resources and we have the capability to set aside rivers and keep them clean, and this Bill embraces that ability and those resources," it would be an easy thing, easily done. It would be a gift that we could give to our children, a gift that I think would lend unparalleled value and richness to their lives.

The great irony in all of this, Mr. Speaker, is that there is profound public support for the setting aside of natural areas. If ever you needed to have a vivid example of that support, you just had to go to the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society rally at the Jubilee Auditorium a number of weeks ago in Edmonton. There were upwards of 2,000 people in the Jubilee Auditorium who came to a rally that kicked off or at least elevated people's awareness of the endangered spaces program, the program which is supported by this Bill. People have a profound desire to preserve our natural heritage in this province, a profound visceral desire to do that, and it is evidenced in polls.

A poll taken in 1987 for Environment Canada prepared by the federal/provincial task force for the 1987 national survey on the importance of wildlife to Canadians says this: 87 percent of Albertans are in favour of maintaining abundant wildlife, saying that that is important or very important; 89 percent of Albertans said that preserving endangered species is important or very important; 86 percent expressed great or some interest in participating in one or more nonconsumptive wildlife related activities – observing, photographing, feeding wildlife; 28 percent expressed some or great interest in participating in a consumptive but renewable wildlife related activity, such as hunting and fishing; 31 percent indicated that they fish for recreation, on average, 13 and one-half days per year.

A recent study by the Angus Reid polling organization found that, of Albertans in the study, 66 percent wanted protected wilderness at least doubled. Sixty-one percent was the national average; 66 percent was the case in Alberta. One in five Albertans wanted to increase protected area by four times, and 95 percent of Albertans would pay \$2 at a park entrance if the money were used for more wilderness parks and the conservation of land. Albertans are aware, and this government should

be aware, of the economic significance of preserving these kinds of lands. I'll just state one important statistic out of this study: 1.7 million people, accounting for some duplication or people using wildlife resources more than once in a year, participated in wildlife related activities on an annual basis, collectively spending 102 million days of their time in wildlife areas in Alberta and spending \$661 million on wildlife related activities.

Mr. Speaker, it is not the case that Albertans do not want to have a program of this nature. They desperately want to have a program of this nature, and they're not just saying it; they are showing it. To use the Conservative axiom "use it or lose it" and turn it on them, well, Albertans are using it, and this government's inactivity is going to ensure that they're going to lose it. So in this case it's use it and lose it. Well, Mr. Speaker, sometimes it is difficult to comprehend that when there could be so much public support for doing this program properly, this government simply can't tap into this kind of support. I should point out that the previous Minister of Recreation and Parks had a much greater and demonstrated commitment to this kind of program. In fact, he produced a state of the art report, and I only lament that he was unable to prevail upon his seatmate the current Minister of Recreation and Parks and his government to pursue that foundation and that framework document that he produced.

Mr. Speaker, I should point out that there are two particular technical features of this Bill that I would like to emphasize, because I think they underline how effective this Bill can be. First of all, we would like to see the guidelines and the decisions about ecological reserves – their size, the technical merits of buffer zones, and so on – established by a committee: not the committee that is currently defined under the Act but a committee that would be chaired by a member of the Environment Council of Alberta, thereby having objectivity, thereby utilizing the strength, the resourcefulness, the insight of that very, very worthwhile organization. In the Bill we outlined what kind of representation. There should be government representation, yes, from the relevant departments, and also there should be public representation, but it should be quasi-autonomous to the extent that the chairperson and the overseeing, the supervision of the setting up of this program, would be done by the Environment Council of Alberta.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, we acknowledge that this kind of program, the Heritage Rivers System and the ecological reserves program, does directly confront land use controversies, does raise questions of competing interests over the use of certain pieces of land. So we have proposed a local round table system where ranchers and farmers, oil people, seismic companies, individual members of the public, hunters and so on can sit down and air their differences and come to conclusions. In fact, there is precedent even within this government's policy, where in one case such a round table was utilized to resolve a local land use planning issue with great success. People are reasonable in Alberta about the use of our land, and people are reasonable about the need to preserve for future generations the cultural and ecological heritage that is found in the 17 distinct ecological regions of this province and in the various rivers of this province.

You know, Mr. Speaker, yes, many environmental issues are extremely difficult because they confront competing interests so, so aggressively and with so much difficulty. But in this case there is a commonality of interest over setting aside adequate-sized reserves and setting aside rivers and parts of rivers within the Heritage Rivers System. It is not a contentious political issue; it is an issue that this government could embrace and

could provide leadership in not only for Albertans, not only for Canadians but, literally, for the world. Mr. Speaker, I ask this government to undertake now to embrace the opportunity to provide that kind of leadership by supporting this Bill.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Hon. Member for Dunvegan.

MR. CLEGG: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. After all the commotion and after all the stories we heard from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, I didn't really know whether I should start here. But certainly it's my intention today to speak against the Bill.

The intent, I believe, of the Bill is to ensure the protection and conservation of our rivers in Alberta. The member introducing this Bill has been around a long time, and he must know that Alberta has a model system of protecting our reserves, our integrated resources, and good planning and good management. He said that the minister of lands and forests gave away 200,000 acres without blinking an eyelid or something like that. Well, let me assure the hon. member that I don't think the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife ever gave away anything. Because if he happened to live up in my area, the industry up there is a protection to that land in a lot of cases. It protects our forestry. It also protects our wildlife. So many people believe that because we cut down a part of the forest, then we in fact are destroying the whole world. Well, when you cut well-planned areas out of our forestry, then you in fact enhance that wildlife program. I can prove it, having lived there for close to 40 years or 50 or 60.

He also mentioned historic sites. As far as I can believe, we always do a good archeological study, and there are places that are looked after, historic sites that we don't do any development on until, in fact, we do an ecological study.

Now I would like to go through some of the amendments to the Act as proposed in Bill 210. The first one would be on the 12 percent that was recommended by the hon. member. That shouldn't be hard to do, because if my figures are right in the research I've done and that my researcher has done, I might add, we already exceed that 12 percent. I also might add that Alberta ranks first among provinces in the category of area protected in which hunting, mining, and logging – which the hon. member said was 8.5. He was exactly correct. Second place is Nova Scotia, which protects 2.5 percent. Ontario protects 2.2, and Quebec, only .4 percent. In 1981 Alberta didn't even have an ecological reserve program. We now have 11, with a total land area of 52,000 acres. In the Recreation and Parks estimates this year the minister said that the three new reserves that are being considered are Rumsey, Plateau Mountain, and Ross Lake. If this is complete, it will add another 27,000 acres to the ecological reserve in this province.

We protect our land base through a variety of legislative and policy initiatives.

MR. FOX: You missed a page in your speech there.

MR. CLEGG: That's okay, Mr. Vegreville.

The government's recent Speech from the Throne also said that we would establish a new park in the Lakeland area which will become Alberta's second largest provincial park. And 10.52 percent of the provincial land base is protected under legislation, .23 percent is under protective reservations, 1.29 percent is under military reservations, and 3.7 percent is under protective zoning. I think it is quite clear, Mr. Speaker, that the significant

ecological areas of the province are being well protected under the present legislation.

As the title of the Bill suggests, one of the other proposed amendments to the Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves and Natural Areas Act is to add "heritage rivers" to the name. Mr. Speaker, it is not because the general goals and objectives of the organization are incompatible with our own policies. Now, I know that I spent a lot of time in northern Alberta. We worked on what we call the subbasin management, that we were looking at as a government, I hope. We had a consultant up there. Both the subbasin programs that we looked into run into the mighty Peace. We have worked with farmers, local governments, individuals; we've had public hearings. It's our belief that we can, by working with all these people, reserve more land in the drainage and subbasin management in northwestern Alberta. It's so important that we've talked to many farmers and they, in some cases I know of, are willing to sell land to the province at a fair and reasonable price in order that they will enhance the wildlife of that area.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, we would be maybe making 10- or 15-acre lakes and supplying water for towns and villages in that area. I happen to be from the town of Fairview. We had to go to the river for water. Well, if we'd had in place this program that we are looking at now, then we wouldn't have had to go 15 miles down to the river to get water: considerable savings to the Fairview residents and certainly to the taxpayers of Alberta because, as you all know, we as a good government always help towns and villages with their water supply. I'm excited about the program, and we can enhance wildlife at the same time.

MR. ZARUSKY: Fishing?

MR. CLEGG: Well, the fishing isn't too good around Fairview. We'd have to make a big lake.

MS CALAHASEN: Lesser Slave Lake.

MR. CLEGG: That's right.

Mr. Speaker, it's obvious to me that Alberta's water management schemes already fall within the overall intent of the Canadian Heritage Rivers System, and I really don't believe that by joining that group – and I can't remember the name of it now. But really I think we are far ahead as an Alberta government. I don't think we have to join that group in order to stay number one in Canada.

The third amendment to the Act, if I read it right, was to have this advisory committee. Well, Mr. Speaker, we have an advisory committee now made up of people from, I believe, forestry and six members at large and people from the environment. I really believe, and strongly believe, that every committee we've ever appointed in this province, whether they be elected or whether they be members at large or whoever they are, they've done a great job. I absolutely don't believe that we can improve it by going through the Environment Council of Alberta. I mean, I don't know what the real reason for it would be, because I feel we've got a great group of people advising the minister. Certainly any advisory committee that I was ever involved in, being in local government and certainly being in the provincial government, has never let it down as far as I'm concerned. I believe that this committee in place now is certainly doing its job, and I just don't see the reason for any change or amendment to this Bill.

MR. FOX: Don't be afraid of change. Be progressive.

MR. CLEGG: No, we on this side obviously aren't afraid of changes, and that's why we're bringing in these incentives to enhance wildlife. The opposition on that side are really scared of changes, as we found out, I guess, about 2:30 or 3 o'clock today. So I don't think they should be hollering across about us being worried about changes. We make changes that are good, and I'm excited about the program that this government's done: enhancing wildlife, looking after our forestry, and in general . . .

MR. ZARUSKY: Tell them about Pine Ridge.

MR. CLEGG: I'm not going to mention Pine Ridge.

. . . keeping the whole economy of Alberta good and still having proper water management and having reserves which we were talking about earlier. I think we've done a great job, and I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for West Yellowhead.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a nonprovincial program the heritage rivers program is badly needed. I believe this legislation could easily create this type of a program, but perhaps a better solution and one which would speed up Alberta joining this program is to allow this legislation to serve as protective legislation once a river is designated.

The Dinosaur Provincial Park became a world heritage site. This legislation could also be used for this purpose, to protect this park. The Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves and Natural Areas Act; the Historical Resources Act; and the environment Act: these present Acts may also need to be amended to include a waterway protection Act. Although legislation is the strongest form of protection, I doubt whether the province, once joining the program and the board, would agree to establish any heritage rivers, but if they did, I believe that Alberta would not choose to disestablish these heritage rivers.

Given the current state of the Department of Recreation and Parks, Mr. Speaker, it may be best for this program to be transferred in whole to the Department of the Environment. This would necessitate redefining the minister's responsibility for this program and make the involvement of the Environment Council of Alberta more logical, as indicated in part 4 of Bill 210. The Minister of the Environment has made reference to his interest in ecological reserves and other protection mechanisms. It is also an excellent suggestion to have the Environment Council of Alberta nominate six persons to sit on the advisory committee. This could take a lot of political implications out of the process. Nominations still would have to be approved by the minister, and we'd have to watch those very closely, Mr. Speaker.

Point 4(a), while applauded for its stated goal, is rather an unusual amendment to the Act. The problem lies in its attempt to legislate commitment for the program. Commitment, like morality, cannot be legislated but must stem from the consciousness of government leaders and the public.

Point 8, regarding the 12 percent guideline, should not be included in the Provincial Parks Act, Mr. Speaker. The Provincial Parks Act is too weak as legislation to ensure sufficient long-term protection for sites. While the 12 percent figure serves only as a guideline, it would serve to show the government's commitment to the program and to protecting Alberta's natural heritage.

Although it's a good idea to require public hearings, particularly whenever a reserve is considered for establishment, this is not currently the case. The review panel mentioned in point 9(3) is not necessary. The advisory committee should continue to be responsible for these kinds of public input activities. Not mentioned in Bill 10 is the need to amend the Act so that the private lands are eligible for reserve status. This would increase the lands available for reserve designation, particularly in the southern part of the province. It would also get more Albertans involved in native conservation.

Mr. Speaker, the part of the Act which allows for any activity to occur if it is required for management purposes should be amended. This is being used to allow hunting and grazing activities on reserves when there is little or no justification for them as management tools. It must be explicitly stated in law that activities not normally allowed in a reserve must only be allowed to occur if it can be demonstrated by scientific data that they are required for management purposes.

Some programs have been attempted to reclaim the environments, degraded for generations, to their original condition, Mr. Speaker, but the success of conservation efforts can be measured by how systematically, comprehensively, and expeditiously these programs can be implemented. The ecological reserves program in Alberta is supposed to be such a program. As speakers before me mentioned, it was established in 1981. It is intended to serve as the primary provincial mechanism to identify and protect areas which are the most representative examples of 17 ecological regions found in the province. Ecological reserves are set aside to protect the diversity of habitat and the communities found in each region and, in so doing, protecting the diversity of life found in each region. It is this diversity which has sustained us for thousands of years, and the loss of this diversity now threatens our survival. Ecological reserves are also set aside for scientific research and to serve as undisturbed parcels of land by which we can compare similar areas which have been altered or disturbed by man.

Provincial parks, recreation areas, and similar designations do not protect environments. These are established primarily for recreational pursuit, and their ability to protect the environment is limited to policies found in management plans. To save environments in Alberta today, we require the establishment of ecological reserves, for they are based not in policy but in strong legislation.

How many reserves are enough for Alberta? A definite number is not known at this time, but we do know that a single reserve cannot contain all of the features, plants, animals, land forms, communities of any one ecoregion. Therefore, if we truly understand the value of preserving Alberta's natural diversity, we should be establishing a number of reserves in each of the 17 ecoregions. One or two large representative reserves would be required as would several smaller special reserves which would protect rare or special features not found in the representative reserves. Clearly, to systematically and comprehensively protect Alberta's natural heritage, it is necessary to establish several dozen ecological reserves throughout the province in the next 10 years.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker, to what extent has this critical program been implemented in Alberta? Unfortunately, in the nine years that this program has been in place, only 11 representative reserves have been established, totaling just 210 square kilometres. No special reserves have been established to date. When we

compare this with British Columbia, which has 120 reserves totaling 1,558 square kilometres, the record of the Alberta government is a sad testimonial to their level of commitment regarding the environment. The Minister of Recreation and Parks and responsible for ecological reserves has demonstrated his lack of commitment to it. He has held his position for 14 months and has established exactly zero ecological reserves. Mr. Speaker, his lack of progress is intentional since he has recently proclaimed the ecological reserves program as nothing but a big land grab, and the Middle Sand Hills, the candidate for a reserve, has been put on hold because it takes up such a large area. The minister has become one of the fiercest opponents to this indispensable program and acts more like the minister of a rural economy. Mr. Speaker, it's surprising to me that the minister cannot even be here to respond to such an important Bill as this Bill put forth.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. Hon. member, I should point out that it's unparliamentary to comment on the presence or absence of other members.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Not only is the program far behind in its mandate, but the very minister responsible for its success is actively lobbying for its stagnation. He is doing this at a time when society is concerned and activists regarding the environment are at an all-time high. It is time for this program to be put back on track and the Minister of Recreation and Parks to either get committed to this program or get out of it.

Am I still in order, Mr. Speaker?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, it's in order.

MR. DOYLE: Mr. Speaker, we in the Official Opposition will be supporting Bill 210, and we ask the government to wake up and do the same thing.

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

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak about Bill 210. My colleague from Dunvegan has done a good job of pointing out some of the problems with Bill 210.

On the surface this is a most worthwhile Bill. Indeed, it is so worth while that much of it is in current legislation, so in a word, Mr. Speaker, much of it is in fact redundant. I could quite easily support some of its intentions if we lacked conservation strategies in Alberta; we do not. However, the very fact that Bill 210 is amending an existing piece of legislation that ensures the protection of our wilderness areas and ecological reserves and natural areas speaks of that Bill's own redundancy.

We have in place in this province a wide variety of laws, programs, and policies to protect and conserve and ensure the wise use of all our land, water, and other resources both now and for the future. This province, as you know, has more national park land than all the other provinces put together. The province, depending on which way you calculate land bases, has well over 10 percent of the provincial land base under protected legislation.

MR. DOYLE: That's the army bases.

MR. TANNAS: Not including the military reservations.

Views on land and resource use vary because people have different values and they place different values on activities such

as camping, cattle grazing, fishing, logging, canoeing and kayaking down the streams, or using those waters for other purposes. With these differences in values, then, come differences in opinions as to what areas should and should not be protected from what kinds of use. Most land resource use activities can be accommodated; however, when activities are not compatible and are in competition, then conflict occurs. Difficult land and resource use decisions must be made, have been made in this province, and will continue to be made under the departments and the ministers of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife; Recreation and Parks; and the Environment. The integrated resource planning management system of our government provides social, economic, and environmental benefits; recreational opportunities; jobs; conservation of areas of natural beauty. This system of integrated resource planning involves gathering information on resources and activities and considering the views of government departments, municipal authorities, interest groups, and the public in making decisions for public land management. I know this very well because I've been involved for the past year in the Eden Valley Integrated Resource Plan going on in my area.

As a government it is our responsibility to make the decisions on managing and protecting our natural resources for the present and for the future, and we are achieving this through high conservation standards and a resource management plan which effectively balances the use and development of our resources with protection and conservation. This balance between development and conservation is of the utmost importance, and it is a principle which sometimes escapes my colleagues in the opposition in their sometimes zealous demands to turn all conservation and environment policy-making decisions over to single-issue interest groups. We need to have a balanced approach.

Achieving a balance is a very complex matter, not a simplistic one, and one which is better left to the government in co-operation with all of the interested parties, not just a few. The Department of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife and the Department of Energy enforce strict controls and regulations on industrial and commercial use of our natural resources. In this way, resource industries can contribute to Alberta's economic diversification without sacrificing our natural heritage. Alberta Fish and Wildlife manages and protects our fish and wildlife resources. Their Buck for Wildlife program creates and improves habitats for fish and wildlife throughout hundreds of projects across this province, a great area of contribution and co-operation.

The public lands division of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife operates a number of land use programs. In my area it's important that the grazing reserve program provides pastures for farmers and ranchers and thus preserves the natural grasses of that area from events like prairie fires, forest fires. The natural areas program protects sensitive areas of scenic land from disturbance and sets aside public lands to ensure they remain in a natural state for recreation and use by the public. The ecological reserves program designates areas where commercial and industrial activity is completely prohibited to protect representative samples of our province's rare and unique species of fauna and flora. Under this program, areas are set aside as examples of naturally functioning ecosystems representative of the six natural regions of Alberta. These natural regions are: grassland, parkland, foothills, boreal forest, Rocky Mountain, and Canadian Shield areas. The program was also established to protect biological, geographical, and geological features which are rare or have special or unusual characteristics.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak a little bit about not government action but private action, and I want to speak about private action in our area. Private stewardship is an important thing in Alberta, and I'd like to share with you, then, some of the examples of private stewardship in the beautiful constituency of Highwood. We have several examples, which I'll go through quickly: the Nature Conservancy . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: You're out of time.

MR. TANNAS: Oh, it's over? Okay.

I'd like to adjourn the debate, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Highwood has moved that this debate be adjourned. All those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, this evening it's proposed to deal in Committee of the Whole with certain Bills on the Order Paper. I would therefore move that when the members assemble this evening, they do so in Committee of the Whole, and the Assembly stands adjourned until such time as the Committee of the Whole rises and reports.

[Motion carried]

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