

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Friday, June 1, 1990 10:00 a.m.**

Date: 1990/06/01

[The House met at 10 a.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 251

Forest Industry Development Administration Act

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 251, being the Forestry Industry Development Administration Act.

This Bill addresses the problem of a conflict of interest which currently exists in the Department of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife since that department has the responsibility both for protecting features of the environment and, on the other hand, for promoting forest industry development. This Bill would see that latter responsibility shifted to the Department of Economic Development and Trade.

[Leave granted; Bill 251 read a first time]

Bill 223

Alberta Economic Diversification Board Act

MR. BRUSEKER: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 223, the Alberta Economic Diversification Board Act.

The purpose of this Act, Mr. Speaker, would be to create an economic diversification board which would investigate all loans and loan guarantees granted by the government and to advise the government on its role in economic diversification.

[Leave granted; Bill 223 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

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

MRS. BETKOWSKI: I'm sorry; I have nothing, Mr. Speaker.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly 13 enthusiastic students from the Calvin Christian school of Monarch, Alberta, on behalf of my seatmate and colleague the Hon. LeRoy Fjordbotten, the MLA for Macleod. They are accompanied by teachers W. deVos and H. Den Hollander, and earlier today they did meet with their MLA. They are in the members'

gallery, and if they would stand, please, I would ask all members to give them the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Cardston, followed by Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and to the Assembly this morning 18 students from the Glenwood junior high school who are visiting Edmonton for a few days. They're accompanied by their teacher Doug Smith, who is principal of the school, and Boyd Sommerfeldt; also parents Vicki Smith and Carol Sommerfeldt. They're seated in the public gallery, and I'd like to have them stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly this morning.

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

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased this morning to introduce to you and other Members of the Legislative Assembly 19 students from Bonnie Doon high school in beautiful Gold Bar. They're accompanied by their teachers Deborah Crawford-Young and Elaine Langston, and they're seated in the public gallery. I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Clover Bar.

MR. GESELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure this morning to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly 45 grade 10 students from the Fort Saskatchewan high school in the Clover Bar constituency. I wanted to make a particular welcome to one of the students that's with them: an exchange student from Sweden, Stefan Appelblad. The students are accompanied by their teacher Judith Axelson, parent John Luchkow, and bus driver Darren Schepp. They are seated in the members' gallery. I would ask them to rise, and ask the members of the Assembly to extend their cordial warm welcome.

MR. TANNAS: Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure today to introduce to you 37 musically talented students from the J.T. Foster junior band in Nanton. They are accompanied today by Mrs. Pauline Green, Mr. Martin Tetachak, Mrs. Karen Gould, Mrs. Gailan Schmitcke, Mrs. Sande Smith, and their bandmaster Mr. Darrell Croft. They're located in the public gallery. They will be giving a concert this afternoon at 12 o'clock in the amphitheatre. I'd ask them to stand and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

head: **Ministerial Statements**

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

Environment Week

MR. KLEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. June 3 marks the beginning of Environment Week 1990. Our environment is something to appreciate and celebrate every day of the year, but once a year through Environment Week we pay special tribute to the beauty and richness of our unique Alberta landscapes and resources that are so important to us and our children. Our Environment Needs You has been chosen as the theme of

Environment Week 1990. It is appropriate because every Albertan must share the responsibility for protecting the environment for future generations. This is our challenge as we enter a new decade of increased environmental awareness. I am confident that together we will meet the challenge, because Albertans have a tradition of success based on resourcefulness and independence.

Environment Week will be celebrated across Canada during the week June 3 to 10, 1990. The Alberta program has been growing steadily, and this year it is hoped that more Albertans than ever will participate. Alberta Environment has been actively celebrating Environment Week since 1982. It is committed to achieving the protection, improvement, and wise use of our environment now and into the 21st century.

So, Mr. Speaker, I urge every Albertan to get involved with the Environment Week activities in their community and to join us in celebrating our environment from June 3 through 10. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, it's always nice to hear lots of rhetoric from the Minister of the Environment on Environment Week. I notice he says Our Environment Needs You has been chosen as the theme of Environment Week. Well, Mr. Speaker, our environment needs a minister that's prepared to stand up against this government. That's what it needs, rather than rhetoric. If you really cared about the environment, what we would be doing is having proper EIA hearings on Daishowa, and we'd be guaranteeing promises for EIA hearings with the Al-Pac proposal. We'd be promising that, and we'd be putting our money where our mouth is. The other thing we could be doing is setting up a recycling industry with a deinking plant. I say to the minister: talk is cheap. He says that he wants every Albertan to get involved with Alberta Environment Week. Well, start talking to your backbenchers. They're the ones that should be getting involved in Environment Week; that's what you're talking about.

So, Mr. Speaker, again it's hard to disagree with the words in this, but it's hollow, very hollow. People know the stand that this government has on the environment.

head: Oral Question Period

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Alberta Government Telephones

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier. Now that we've had a chance to review the entire legislation that the government introduced yesterday in regards to AGT, it's clear – clear – that this government has sold Albertans right down the river with the privatization of AGT along with loss of provincial control in this matter. The Premier made a big deal in his speech yesterday about the government's so-called golden share. What a nice name, golden share. Mr. Speaker, we've said before that this government can't be trusted, and this special share is a perfect example of why this government shouldn't be trusted. If you've got the stomach to read all the way through to the end of this thing, you'll see the last page of the Bill says that this special share will be automatically repealed in five years – automatically repealed in five years. So much for protecting Albertans from rate increases and service cuts, a phony promise. My question to the Premier: how can you say that you're keeping any control at all for the few rights the

government has? Those few rights will be gone in five years unless you decide to give them away sooner.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition knows the correct way to deal with legislation is to go through second reading, committee study . . . [interjections]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. GETTY: You know, you give them the courtesy of listening to them; you'd think they'd return the courtesy of listening.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications is responsible for the Bill in the House. He may want to augment my reply.

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the debate on this Bill as it will proceed in logical fashion through this Assembly. But I must point out to the hon. Leader of the Opposition that there are a number of fundamental protections in this Bill that are there and there forever. What the golden share or special share does is add an extra protection there for a period of time, at least during the period in which the company turns over to private ownership. But the fundamental changes that are reflected through the special share are there and will remain there in the legislation.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, that's a bunch of nonsense. First of all, any Bill can be changed by a stroke of the pen, as you did with AEC. To say it'll be there forever – the minister knows that's not the truth. He says we can proceed logically. This is not a logical Bill. We want to stop it before it comes to second reading.

Mr. Speaker, for the first time ever, you're forcing AGT to pay income taxes to the feds. Also, AGT is going to be subject to the GST, of all things. Everyone knows that AGT's costs will rise. So will the consumers' rates. My question, then, to either of the gentlemen – I thought he brought in the ministerial statement, but to either of them: does the minister or the Premier really believe that anyone will follow these hollow promises that rates and services will not suffer? Does anybody really believe that's the case?

MR. STEWART: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's very unfortunate that already in about 24 hours we've seen a tactic of scare tactics coming from the Official Opposition. We've seen it before, and we'll see it again. [interjections] And if it isn't scare tactics, it's straight ideology. If we could get rid of the ideology and get on to the reality, we will see exactly what this will do for all Alberta and for AGT in particular.

But, Mr. Speaker, I must say that with respect to the tax situation, it's misleading in the extreme to say that taxes will lead to skyrocketing rates.

MR. McINNIS: Who's going to pay the taxes? Are you?

MR. STEWART: The current tax laws provide very clearly – and I invite the hon. member to check this out, as indeed we have and received these assurances – that the taxes to this company will be minimal for several years. For several years, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MARTIN: You're right it's scare tactics. People should be scared of this government, Mr. Speaker. We know what their

promises were in the past, and we want to fight this government back in every possible way because this is a bad deal for Albertans. I give no apologies for that.

It's obvious. Prices go up, the GST goes up, we pay taxes: rates are going to go up, Mr. Speaker. Even Adam Smith would understand that, Mr. Minister. Now, my question to the minister: will the minister admit that there is nothing this government can do if the new, private AGT says it has to raise its rates to cover federal and provincial taxes, including the GST?

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, 70 percent of all Canadians are regulated in a just and reasonable way by the CRTC. That will continue. The types of companies that are regulated there are private companies. I don't see their rates as being excessive or gouging or anything like that. They pay tax, and indeed there will be fair and reasonable regulations with a public process which will ensure that rates will be fair and reasonable for the subscribers of Alberta.

AN HON. MEMBER: Put your faith in Ottawa.

MR. MARTIN: Yeah, trusting. He loves Brian Mulroney; he trusts him, Mr. Speaker. He's probably the last person in Canada that trusts Brian Mulroney.

Mr. Speaker, my second question again has to do with the Premier's speech yesterday, where he said he wanted "every man, woman, and child . . . to participate in the profits and growth" of AGT. Well, I might remind the Premier that dividends exist now for all those people that he's talking about, because we have good rates in the province. Now, it's pretty crazy logic, even coming from the Premier, as I said, considering that every man, woman, and child already owns AGT, but let's look at a part of that. The fact is that only those Albertans who can afford to buy shares will own the company in the future. Your interest-free loans and installment plans will only benefit a few Albertans, Mr. Speaker, not every man, woman, and child. So what you'll have is the taxpayers subsidizing the wealthier people in the society. That's what it's all about. I would remind him that if he lived in the real world, the majority of people cannot afford investments. Maybe they can with the crowd he runs with. My question to the Premier is this: how is it that the Premier can afford to help wealthier Albertans take over ownership of the AGT when it can't even afford to give poor Albertans a renter's tax credit and thousands of Alberta children are going to school hungry?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, that was one of the worst-framed questions I've ever heard in my life. It has absolutely nothing to do with the opportunity that is being given to Albertans. Every man, woman, and child – I hope they do; I hope they make a lot of money on it. [interjections] And let's remember something. The socialists are having a bad year these days. The old state control gang doesn't like it. They don't like competition. They don't like investment. They don't like profits. They don't like payrolls which give people jobs. [interjections]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. Order.

MR. GETTY: They don't like seeing an Alberta company able to go out and compete all over the world: one of the great global telecommunications companies in the world.

MS BARRETT: It does right now.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Edmonton-Highlands, order please.

MR. GETTY: Poor Pammy.

So, Mr. Speaker, Albertans know about the opportunity they're being offered. You will see that while this gang have no confidence in Albertans, no confidence in Albertans being able to invest and make money and know when they have a good opportunity – the old blues group over there who want to control everything, want the state controlling, dictating. That isn't happening. This is an opportunity for individual Albertans believing in enterprise, investment, and believing in taking risks and gaining the benefits.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. MARTIN: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Real risk taking, isn't it? Give government money to the wealthy: some risk, eh? Some risk. Tory free enterprise. That's the way. I'd remind this Premier that wants to sell off everything – he'd probably sell off his mother if there was a profit there – that 50 years ago AGT was set up to provide a service for the people of Alberta. [interjections]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Chair was wondering whether the hon. Leader of the Opposition might like to reconsider his characterization of the Premier's outlook on life.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, that's not unparliamentary at all. The rhetoric that he used – I can use the same sort of rhetoric back. If he can't take it, too bad.

Mr. Speaker, to come back to the Premier. Rather than using your right-wing rhetoric here – over 50 years ago AGT was set up for a reason, and it served the people of this province well. The question I want to ask the Premier is a very serious one. Just how much is this interest-free loan scheme to help out his friends going to cost the taxpayers of Alberta?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, it's with some disappointment that I recognize that the Leader of the Opposition is so devoid of arguments on policy matters that he feels he now wants to somehow attack my family and my belief in my family. I'm very disappointed in him. I've actually, over a period of time, felt that he had some higher feeling of his responsibility in this Legislature, and I hope that he'll learn from that that it brings absolutely no credit on him or on his party.

Mr. Speaker, in the coming weeks the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications will obviously be able to get into more details with the hon. members. Obviously, you'd have to know the size of the offering, the price; you'd have to know the number of shares that are taken up by Albertans. In a way it's so disappointing that they have such a lack of grasp of the opportunity that's being given to people in this province.

MR. MARTIN: I am so disappointed that the Premier's disappointed in me.

MS BARRETT: "Thin so skin," isn't it?

MR. MARTIN: "Thin so skin."

Mr. Speaker, following up from the Premier's answer, then, is he telling this Assembly that they have absolutely no idea how much this is going to cost to pay their wealthier friends to take over our own telephone system? That's what he is saying to us?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member surely is smarter than that. Now, obviously – are his researchers giving him a question which he reads blindly and doesn't listen? Now, come on. I've just told them that it obviously depends on the size of the offering; it depends on the price of the shares; it depends on the amount that Albertans take, obviously. Now surely he . . . No, I'm not going to get into that kind of stuff with him. I'm going to go back to what I thought before this morning, that he is a man of some credit and ability, and forget what he's been saying this morning.

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

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today the government falls.

Mr. Speaker, regarding AGT, there's no doubt that AGT is a very advanced technological company, and it does provide a valuable service for Albertans. But unfortunately, the bottom line is that AGT is a badly managed and inefficient company. It cannot stand on its own and compete in a global market, which is what this province and this government want it to do. Since its inception AGT has served a valuable role in delivering social policy and government policy, and it's delivered that very well. But now what must happen, Mr. Speaker, is that the corporate leanness that is necessary in order to sell this company has not been achieved, and I believe that this government owes it to Albertans and to the employees of AGT to hold on to AGT and not sell it until AGT can stand on its own two feet. My question to the Premier is this. According to 1988 statistics AGT has one employee for every 88 access lines; Bell Canada has one employee for every 147 access lines. How does the Premier expect AGT to compete, considering the current level of inefficiency that these statistics show? [interjections]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order in the Assembly, please.

MR. STEWART: Well, Mr. Speaker: statistics brought out of whatever and for whatever purpose. I can't make any head or tail of that, but I know what the people of Alberta are saying about AGT. They think AGT is well run, well managed, and well respected. The point is that we want to keep an AGT here in Alberta that is able to capitalize on the worldwide opportunities that exist in telecommunications and in that way bring further jobs, further skills, further technology to this province. And they can do it. They're not afraid of competition, as long as it's on a fair playing field. You just watch; you'll see it.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's a crying shame that the minister of this government doesn't know what the statistics are for the company he's supposed to be overseeing. Find out what's happening, Mr. Minister.

AGT currently receives 69 percent of its total revenue from long-distance lines; Bell Canada gets 50 percent. My question to whoever decides to answer it over there, presumably the minister for the company: how does this government expect AGT to be able to compete against companies like Unitel that have put in an application to compete on long-distance rates, unless they either raise their local rates, which the Bill says they can't do, or you're going to drive them into receivership?

MR. STEWART: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know where that hon. member is coming from, or his party. Yesterday we heard

about them being in favour of privatization in principle, and I just don't know what they're talking about today.

The fact of the matter is that if Unitel comes in, as indeed it will, as indeed will other competitors, AGT is going to have to compete, and the very reason why we have this reorganization Bill before this Assembly is to position AGT for competition. If you leave AGT the way it is now, it's got two sources of revenue, basically. It's got long-distance revenues and local revenues, and long-distance revenues are coming down by virtue of rate rebalancing everywhere, not just here: everywhere. If you want to leave it only with local rates to come up to replace that revenue in order that there be moneys for providing for new technologies and competing, then so be it. But we think that the best way to go, and indeed Albertans feel that the best way to go, is to make sure that AGT has those opportunities to compete in a world-class telecommunications industry.

MR. BRUSEKER: Mr. Speaker, what we said yesterday and what we're saying today is that we're not opposed to privatization, but prove to us that it's a good deal. So far we haven't seen that.

My final question to the minister, then, Mr. Speaker. AGT employees generate about \$92,000 per employee; each Bell Canada employee generates about \$120,000 per employee, again showing the inefficiency. Does the government expect AGT to raise those local rates by 33 percent to make up that shortfall and then pass on those rates to the ratepayers?

MR. STEWART: I think the hon. member, Mr. Speaker, is only pointing out the type of productivity that can come through private ownership. At the same time, as far as rates are concerned, they will be regulated in the public interest and through a public process in order to ensure that they are just and reasonable.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Meech Lake Accord

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Notwithstanding the questions that have been asked by the opposition this morning, I firmly believe that the most important issue facing this House, this province, and this country today in Canada is the Meech Lake impasse. My question, therefore, is to the hon. Premier. In light of the fact that it appears that the two main issues yet to be decided in the Meech Lake issue – namely, Senate reform and the issue of Quebec's distinct society clause – and in light of the fact that there is a meeting set for this Sunday with the first ministers, would the Premier please indicate to us what initiatives Alberta will be bringing to that discussion on Sunday?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I should confirm that I've now received a letter from the Prime Minister setting the time of 6:30 on Sunday at the Canadian Museum of Civilization for a private meeting of 11 first ministers.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the initiative that the Alberta government can continue to provide here is one of pressing all first ministers to make sure their number one principle is a united Canada. We have a responsibility as leaders to build a great nation. We know that it will not be a great nation unless it is united, and therefore the number one issue we'll be pressing will be a united Canada.

But in order to try and work through the constitutional impasse that we face, Alberta feels that it may be possible through a political accord, a declaration of commitment for the second round of discussions, that we can get enough commitment from all of the first ministers that it will provide satisfaction to those who have concerns and that we can then deal with Meech Lake as a constitutional accord and quickly get on to the next round, of which I know the number one issue for our government and for me as Premier, being Senate reform, is now the number one issue for Canada, and I'm extremely pleased about that. So I hope we can develop a commitment of principles, a declaration of honour amongst the first ministers that would lead us into the second round. There still is a very small potential that there could be a constitutional accord parallel to Meech Lake, but in my assessment of talking to the first ministers, it would be very difficult to do that, to have it proceed through 10 Legislatures, the House of Commons, and the Senate by June 23.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier. In the event – and certainly it's my hope – that the meeting on Sunday will result in either a First Ministers' Conference or additional meetings on Monday, does it remain the Premier's position that in order to have uniformity of approach in this House, he would invite the leaders of the opposition to participate in those further meetings?

MR. GETTY: Well, you know, we might have some second guesses after this morning, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, obviously the dinner for 11 first ministers is not an opportunity for leaders of the opposition or the leader of the Liberal Party to participate, but if, as the Member for Banff-Cochrane speculates, we are able to go into a public first ministers' meeting the next day or at any time in the future to try and solve the Meech Lake problem, it is still my position that the Leader of the Official Opposition and the leader of the Liberal Party join us as observers and as people whom we might consult with and discuss this very, very important issue. I have asked the Department of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs and my own office to put in place the arrangements for them. I understand it's difficult for them because they would have to travel on the Sunday not knowing if there's a meeting or not at 9 a.m. on Monday. But I ask them to make the judgment as to whether they want to take that opportunity.

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

Telephone Service in Rural Areas

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two programs that AGT has that help rural Albertans enjoy the benefits of a modern telecommunications system at a reasonable price – the individual line service program and the extended flat rate program – were made possible because AGT is a company that has as its mandate providing service to all Albertans, not a company whose mandate is to provide a profit for a few shareholders. I'd like to ask the hon. Premier, as one rural Albertan to another, how he can justify supporting this massive sellout of an important resource of this province when he knows darned well that it's going to mean rural Albertans have to pay through the nose for basic telephone service in the years ahead.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's question is just full of false assumptions. This is not a massive sellout. This is an opportunity for a great company to be able to grow, expand throughout the world, places where the Alberta government has no place to be, and at the same time provide a superb service here in urban and rural Alberta. And it will. Why he has such a lack of confidence in Albertans to keep coming up with his gloom and doom scenario, I don't know.

MR. FOX: Mr. Speaker, it's a lack of confidence in the Premier and his word, assurances not worth enough to buy one of the shares that he plans on offering.

I'd like to ask the Premier: given the fact that once this sellout is complete, the government will no longer have ownership control of AGT and they'll no longer have regulatory control over AGT, how can he stand there and pretend that rural Albertans won't experience a compromise in service and an increase in rates in the years ahead?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, it's a good debate. The hon. member doesn't believe in competition. The hon. member doesn't believe in ownership by individuals. The hon. member believes in state control, socialism, and we don't and Albertans don't.

MR. STEWART: And not only that, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member doesn't listen. We've indicated time and time again that rates and services for rural and urban are regulated by a public regulator and a public process. All of the programs for rural Alberta, extended flat rate calling and ILS will be folded in and honoured. EFRC will continue. It will continue to be expanded and indeed will be enhanced, and we had indicated we would have an announcement on June 15 in that regard.

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

Telephone Rates

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Back again to the Premier. I guess he can guess what: AGT. According to the prairie provincial study done by Saskatchewan Telecommunications – last time I looked, it was run by a bunch of Tories – it says:

Basic telephone service rates would have to rise substantially in the event of competition in long-distance service, and its associated impact on toll service rates. Rural subscribers would suffer the greatest disadvantage under competition . . . Rural rates could rise by as much 168% . . . even if there were no tendency to recover all local/access costs from these subscribers. That's from the Conservative research into what'll happen to local calls down the road. My first question to the Premier, then, is: knowing that competition is coming and knowing that the rural users will be hardest hit, what is the Premier prepared to do ensure that rural ratepayers will not be hurt?

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the study that the hon. member refers to, if he will look at that study, he will see that the assumptions made in that model relate back to 1985. Certain percentages were pulled out of the air with respect to that assumption, for the purposes of establishing the model, that are totally unrelated, for example, to the application now being brought forward by Unitel. The study indicated that there would be an assumption of a 25 percent reduction in the long-

distance rate and that the competitor would automatically achieve a 20 percent share of the market. What it didn't say was that there would be the basis upon which the competition would be established. In Unitel's application that they have brought forward, they say, "We are willing to pay in order to establish a fair playing field for competition." It does not relate in any way to the types of statistics that were forthcoming in that report.

AGT is not afraid of competition, Mr. Speaker, so long as that competition is on a fair playing field.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, it sounds like the government is trying to unload a dog instead of trying to improve the management itself so it could be at least a leaner and a better package.

Now, I'd like to go a bit further then. If indeed, as the ministers keep saying, the rural people have nothing to worry about, is the Premier prepared to sign a pact, in blood if necessary, that there'll be no increases other than inflation rates for rural subscribers over the next 10 years?

MR. STEWART: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, I don't agree with the hon. member in saying that AGT is a dog. It is not. It's a very well-respected and well-managed company, and it has an opportunity in order to fulfill its real mandate in worldwide telecommunications.

Mr. Speaker, the rural rates, as urban rates, are regulated in the public interest through a public process. That is there. It's fair; it's reasonable; it covers 70 percent of all Canadians now. There is no difference from the standpoint of rural and urban insofar as the regulator favouring one or the other. Rates will change over the years – there's no doubt about that – not by virtue of privatization, but by virtue of rate rebalancing, which is going on worldwide.

MR. TAYLOR: That's a cop-out.

MR. STEWART: It's not a cop-out, hon. member. It's happening in areas where there are private companies already as well as Crown-owned corporations.

So it's happening out there, but it will happen in a regulated, fair, and just way that allows a full public process. Rural residents and subscribers are safeguarded by that process.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater-Andrew.

Agricultural Assistance

MR. ZARUSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Minister of Agriculture. On Monday the Minister of Agriculture and the Associate Minister of Agriculture and also the federal Minister of Agriculture announced a hundred million dollar farm income assistance program, and that's to offset low commodity prices, particularly in grains and oilseeds. Since we all know that agriculture is a very vital industry in this province, the question to the minister is: could the minister inform the House when farmers will know the terms and conditions of this program?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, we've been working this week in order to try to develop a program under the following principles. We wish to come up with a program that would flow some of this money through to all farmers in recognition of low com-

modity prices, high interest rates. We wanted a program that was production neutral, that in no way sends signals on what to grow, and we wanted to address any weather-related areas of hurt in the province which had not been addressed already through existing programs.

We've come up with a program consisting of two components which is being announced publicly today. First, all the farmers in the province will be eligible for a payment of \$4.10 per acre on all improved seeded acres, including forage, based on 1989 acres. Payments will not be made on acres that were in summer fallow. Also excluded will be the forage acres in the northwest area disaster assistance program region, which were already paid under the disaster program. Second, farmers in the multiyear disaster benefit area of southeastern Alberta which have suffered consecutive – and I stress consecutive – years of drought have been targeted for an additional payment of \$3 per acre, with the exception of summer fallow and irrigated land.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. ZARUSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the farmers will be pleased with the outline of the program, and since the majority of spring seeding is done, there is a need for cash in rural Alberta. Could the minister inform the House on how soon farmers will be able to apply and where the application forms will be?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, the application forms will be available at all district agricultural offices. In communities where there is not a DA's office but a grain company is prepared to participate, they'll be available at the participating elevators. It's our intent that application forms and program detail will be in all of those locations prior to the middle of June and that we will start processing applications immediately upon receipt.

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

Alberta Government Telephones (continued)

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications. The provincial government has lost control of the regulation of the telephone industry in this province to the feds under the CRTC. Now they're voluntarily giving up the rights of ownership of AGT. Can the minister tell me how he's going to deliver on his promise that he made before the Chamber of Commerce in Edmonton that there is no way that company will fall into the hands of CNCP or Rogers Communications or any other foreign company?

MR. STEWART: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the answer is very, very obvious. What we're doing is we're allowing every Albertan the opportunity of acquiring this company. We're not putting it out for sale to CNCP or Rogers or Bell or anyone else.

MR. McEACHERN: My second question is to the Premier. In case this government forgot, it signed a free trade deal that limits the right of Canada to restrict foreign ownership of

companies. How long is the 10 percent limit on foreign ownership of AGT going to last under the free trade deal?

MR. HORSMAN: The hon. member is so badly misinformed about the free trade deal that the question hardly merits an answer. [interjections]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order in the Assembly, please.
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Despite AGT's good service and advances in technology, I think there are some serious questions that can and should be raised about the efficiency of the company. We understand that they have a heavy reliance on long-distance revenues. We have some serious questions about AGT's capacity to withstand the pressures of a very competitive new market, particularly with the kinds of restraints that the government is imposing on them, and I think there's going to be immense pressure to place social goals in a secondary position. Within this uncertain context we see the government's desperate need for cash. Mr. Premier, you're asking Albertans to trust you . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Through the Chair, please, hon. member.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you. Sorry, Mr. Speaker; I apologize.
Mr. Speaker, the government is asking Albertans to trust the government by buying a company that we already own. I believe Albertans need far more information about this company and its future. Now, unquestionably the government has done a great deal of research before this proposal was reached. My question is to the Premier. Will the government commit to releasing the studies that have been done that will give Albertans a true idea of the investment that you're asking us to make? The questions are going to be on the Order Paper, but I believe that Albertans are sophisticated folk, and I think they deserve more than just "trust me" on this one.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, my hon. good friend is now not only asking the questions but answering them as well. The reason is because she asked it yesterday and got an answer, and that is that for anything that a member of the House here would like to have tabled in the Legislature, there's a process. You put it on the Order Paper, and the House deals with it. That's the way we'll continue to do it.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, I want the Premier to commit to providing this information to Albertans, not just, "Put them on the Order Paper."

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier then agree to suspend this Bill for the summer months to allow for public meetings across Alberta and consultation with the people of Alberta and with the particular community groups such as the AAMDC, AUMA, and others that are mightily interested in the outcome of this Bill?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, as I also said yesterday, this is a policy decision by the government. We've made the choice. We are here to govern; we are here to provide leadership; that's what we're going to do. We've made the decision. We've told the people of Alberta about this tremendous opportunity which they'll be able to participate in, and we're going to make sure it happens.

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

Environmental Policies

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've heard a lot of new promises today from your Conservative government. I'd like to deal with some of the old promises, like Alberta Environment's commitment to Albertans promising them the opportunity to understand and provide input to decisions affecting our environment in everything from legislation to land-use planning. Or the Mission Statement – 25,000 copies mailed out – promising:

Albertans will have every opportunity to understand and provide advice on decisions affecting our environment: . . . public participation through information sharing, education and consultation.

Those were the promises, and there were further specific undertakings by the minister and by his officials for a public review of operating licences for pulp mills. Well, since that time every one of those commitments has been overruled by the balance of this government. We've had pollution permits issued without consultation. We've had game ranching brought in without any consultation, letters of permission, overriding permits. [interjections] I know it's a lengthy list. I wish with all my heart it were a much shorter list.

My question is a simple one to the Premier. Why should Albertans now trust this government to make decisions on a broad range of complex environmental issues when every substantial commitment, every one, made by this Environment minister has been overridden and violated by this government?

MR. GETTY: It is a simple question that takes a simple answer, Mr. Speaker. He doesn't know what he's talking about.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, the Premier dangerously underestimates the hurt feeling of Albertans by the actions of this government. He and his cabinet colleagues were hung in effigy in Calgary the other day. There's a group going up to Daishowa this weekend. I think he should start to take responsibility for some of his actions instead of silly rhetoric like that one.

When a government repeatedly violates its most basic commitments to involve people in making decisions, that government has lost the trust of Albertans. Has the Premier considered the consequences to his government of destroying the trust of Albertans and violating and renegeing on these commitments, and in particular the refusal to agree to a public review of the Al-Pac two process?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, you'll have to decide whether that was a question in there with all that rhetoric based on a bunch of baloney. I would say this though: the people of Alberta have got an outstanding, respected Minister of the Environment who's doing a superb job and will continue to do so, and when that happens, as it is happening, it really irritates the opposition, and isn't that too bad.

MR. KLEIN: Just to augment the hon. Premier's answer, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has expressed an opinion, and he has as much right to his opinion as those who are knowledgeable.

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

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A UN study which called upon the expertise of upwards of 1,000 international scientists recently confirmed that there is global warming caused by greenhouse gases and that action must be taken immediately to begin to address this problem. This effective action will not occur unless we are prepared to set objectives towards which we can strive. The Parliament of Canada in May of this year confirmed its commitment at least to the objective of stabilizing CO₂ emissions in this country to 1988 levels by the year 2000. To the Minister of the Environment: will the minister please tell us whether on behalf of Alberta he is going to establish that objective for this province, and if not, why not?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, in conjunction with the energy sector and the public at large we are now developing a clean air strategy for the province of Alberta. What we would like to do is get a consensus as to what is achievable and how we can achieve those emission reductions by the year 2000. But I would like to inform the hon. member and members of this Assembly that indeed we have agreed to protocols that call for a 50 percent reduction in SO₂. We have agreed to protocols that call for significant reductions of automobile emissions by the year 1994. We have agreed to a protocol that calls for a reduction in volatile organic compound emissions. We've agreed to a protocol that calls for a reduction in surface ozone particles. So I think we have gone a long way, Mr. Speaker, in reaching goals that are not only Alberta goals but national and world objectives.

MR. MITCHELL: The minister wants to be rewarded for running half the race. If you've agreed to all these other protocols, it seems quite simple for you to agree to a protocol on CO₂.

To the Minister of Agriculture. The National Farmers Union at its recent convention in April in this province passed a resolution calling for the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions in that industry or in activities related to that industry. Could the minister please tell us whether he is aware of that resolution, what his thoughts are on that resolution, and whether he has taken it up with the Minister of the Environment?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, I cannot say that I'm aware of the resolution, but I will check it out.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. The time for question period has expired. Might we revert briefly to returns and tablings with unanimous consent? Agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed?
The hon. Minister of Health.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports** (*reversion*)

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, I thank you, and I apologize to the House for my oversight earlier today.

I'm pleased to table the annual report of the College of Physical Therapists for the year ended February 28, 1989, and as well I'm tabling the response to Question 235.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.
The hon. Minister of Health.

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

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted to introduce a group of 25 students from the St. Rose school who are visiting our Legislature today. I know all members will want to welcome them when they rise in the gallery. They are accompanied by Mr. Bill Kobluk, their teacher, and I would ask them to rise now and receive a warm welcome from the Assembly.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, followed by the hon. Minister of Tourism.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the Legislature 50 students from the Landing Trail public school. I must apologize to them first for not appearing to take a picture with them during question period, but I'm sure all members of the House will assure them that they're probably better off for that. They are accompanied by their teachers Mrs. Cragg, Mrs. Hughes, and Maureen Smith, and also parents Fran Allan, Mrs. Buzak, and Mrs. Larsen. They're in the public gallery, and I'd ask them to stand and be recognized and get the usual warm welcome from the Legislature.

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Members of the Legislative Assembly a group of 32 students from my constituency. They are a grade 6 class from Norwood elementary school in Wetaskiwin, and they're accompanied by their teacher Mr. Murphy and several parents. They are seated in the members' gallery. I would ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce to you and to the Members of the Legislative Assembly 25 grade 6 students from Sedgewick public school. They're here to look at parliamentary democracy, and I would ask that they perhaps not take the conduct of this question period as something that they could do in their own classroom. Some days, especially on Friday, we get a little vociferous. They are in the members' gallery, and they're accompanied by their teacher Mr. Richard Payne and parents Mrs. Jeanette Patten and Mrs. Gwenda Poyser. I would ask them to rise and receive the cordial welcome of this House.

Orders of the Day

head: **Government Bills and Orders** **Second Reading**

Bill 31 **Livestock Industry Diversification Act**

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased today to initiate the

debate in second reading on Bill 31, the Livestock Industry Diversification Act.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

I think it's fair to say at the onset that this Act triggers a certain degree of sensitivity and a fair bit of misunderstanding in some quarters. I'd like to make some rather, at least for me, extensive comments at this stage of the Bill because I think it's the responsibility of every member of this Legislature, when they're debating this Bill, to at least know the facts about the Bill. Then if they don't like it, fine. But I think we've all got a responsibility to know exactly what this Bill will do and how it will mitigate some of the concerns we've heard expressed.

First of all, a little background on the industry. The raising of elk, moose, and deer for sale as breeding stock and for the sale of antler velvet has been allowed in the province for more than 30 years. Changes in legislation are now being proposed which will encourage the development of a more viable game animal production industry in Alberta. Under the proposed Livestock Industry Diversification Act and regulations, the responsibility for overseeing game animal production will be transferred from Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife to Alberta Agriculture. The sale of elk meat will be allowed within the province under rather stringent conditions that I'll come to later on.

Two other conditions have been imposed in this Bill, and that is that all game animal production, including production for the purpose of selling meat, will be prohibited on Alberta Crown lands. In other words, game animal production farms must be on deeded, patented land. Also, there will be no hunting – I stress, no hunting – paid or otherwise, of game production animals in Alberta.

What is our current situation? Currently we have 3,300 elk, approximately, plus a small number of other native game species being raised on 120 licensed game farms in Alberta. Farmers are permitted to raise only big game species native to Alberta. They may sell antlers in the velvet stage, known as velvet antlers, and breeding stock from these herds. Every animal must be registered, and all transactions must be reported to the Fish and Wildlife division of Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife. Sale of meat is not permitted in Alberta at this point in time.

Game animal production herds will continue to be built through the breeding of existing stocks and through carefully controlled imports. The capturing of wild animals to stock game operations will continue to be tightly controlled by Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife and will be permitted only as a means of controlling overpopulation in local wild herds, and that is a means of supply for game production farms.

I think it's fair to point out to the Assembly that all provinces have already adopted legislation to allow game farming or are considering it. Saskatchewan permits the raising and sale of meat from native and nonnative species, including elk. British Columbia allows the farming and sale of meat from fallow deer, red deer, bison, and reindeer. Yukon and Northwest Territories allow the raising of bison, reindeer, and elk and permit sales for bison and reindeer. Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island are all at various stages of considering or drafting legislation which will allow the sale of elk meat. Newfoundland is receiving a request to allow game farming, and they are considering legislation to facilitate this. Ten of 16 of the western states in the United States allow the farming of native big game species; eight of these 10 states allow the sale of meat.

What are the benefits of game animal production? The production of game species, particularly elk, provides an excellent opportunity for diversification of livestock production in Alberta. Productivity is excellent in most of the elk herds on existing game farms. Elk readily adjust to fences, handling, and human interaction. On most farms the animals become as tame as cattle.

I would invite any member in this Assembly that has not visited a game farm who is interested in doing so to let me know, because I have a number of game farmers that will show you their total operation very, very willingly. Also, the communications branch of my department has prepared an 11-minute video on the actual game farming operations. If there's anyone in the Assembly that would like to receive a copy of that video for viewing, just . . . I see one gentleman waved his hand. I'll see that you get a copy, sir.

Elk are also naturally adapted to the Alberta climate. With routine parasite control and vaccinations, diseases have not been a problem. Elk production is desirable from the farmer's perspective because three salable commodities are produced, meat, velvet antlers, and breeding stock, each of which is in demand. Several strong markets have been developed for elk velvet antlers that recognize Canadian elk velvet as a premium product. Breeding stock continues to be in high demand. Elk meat is somewhat similar to beef in flavour but is sufficiently different to offer variety to the consumer. Its taste, texture, and low fat characteristics make it a desirable meat for modern consumers.

With the public becoming increasingly concerned about the environment, it's important to note that game animal production has a role to play in sustainable agriculture. Farmed elk, for example, are maintained almost entirely on pasture and hay and are much more efficient grazers than cattle. This means less need for cultivation, which is an important consideration from the point of view of reducing the use of fossil fuels and conserving the soil.

In summary, game animal production has many positive features which suggest that it would be both an environmentally and economically sound farming venture.

Effects on wildlife. The proposed Livestock Industry Diversification Act and regulations, in conjunction with the Alberta Wildlife Act and regulations, will ensure that game animal production will not – and I underline "will not," and I'll go on to explain why I say that – have an adverse effect on native wildlife.

Poaching. To deter illegal trade in wild animals, all privately owned game animals will be required to be registered and tagged with government issued tamperproof ear tags, and the only source of these ear tags is the government. Periodic herd inspections to compare actual herd inventories with registration lists will quickly bring any discrepancies to light. Regulations governing the sale of velvet antlers are very strict. All velvet antlers sold in Alberta will be required to bear a special tag issued by the government only to licensed game animal producers. Antlers grow through the acceptable velvet phase in a matter of a few days, so the window of opportunity for harvesting wild elk with acceptable antlers would be prohibitively short, even if there were a legal market for it. I think the other thing I should stress at this point in time is that the antler that is being removed from the elk is something that naturally falls off every year.

MR. TAYLOR: Like our hair.

MR. ISLEY: Your hair took a number of years, hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

I could go on to say that the regulated slaughter of elk from game animal production farms will be a further deterrent to poaching.

Diseases. Game animals confined to farms are susceptible to the same diseases as wild, free-roaming wildlife. However, since game production animals are accessible and manageable, diseases are relatively easy to prevent or control through good husbandry, vaccinations, and treatment for any problems that may arise. It is clearly not in the best interest of the game animal producers to allow the productivity of their animals to suffer through the presence of diseases. Wild animals in Alberta are not free of diseases and parasites; for example, many elk and deer are infected with liver flukes, some bighorn sheep are infected with lungworm, and moose are generally subject to heavy infestation of ticks. Import controls are already in place to prevent the introduction of harmful diseases and maintain the genetic integrity of Alberta's native wildlife. Alberta has an obligation to prevent the introduction of diseases which do not exist here and which could pose a threat to our wildlife. Meningeal brainworm of deer, elk, and moose is an example of such a disease. Precautionary methods are necessary to deal with this parasitic disease and any others that pose similar threats. In recognition of this need, Fish and Wildlife have imposed a moratorium on the importation of elk into Alberta pending an assessment of the meningeal brainworm threat.

Identification and inventory control. At such time as the administration of game animal production is transferred to Agriculture, the identification process introduced by Fish and Wildlife requiring the use of a double set of tamperproof ear tags will be continued. This type of tag is only available through a government agency. An inventory control system will be maintained for each game animal production farm, with records of all births, purchases, sales, and deaths to be available to inspection staff responsible for inventory control.

Control of the transportation of game production animals will become the responsibility of Alberta Agriculture's livestock brand inspection staff in conjunction with those department staff responsible for inventory control and farm inspections. This inspection system has been in place for more than 35 years and has proven very effective in preventing theft and illegal movement of Alberta's 4.5 million cattle and horses. All game production animals being transferred anywhere in Alberta will need to be accompanied by a livestock manifest. These conditions are similar to the present requirements for cattle and horses under the Livestock Identification and Brand Inspection Act. The livestock manifest will be used also in inventory control and for identification purposes at sale or slaughter. Game production animals destined for shipment out of the province will require an export permit, which will be issued under the Wildlife Act by Forestry, Lands and Wildlife.

Meat sales. This is basically the new activity that's being introduced with this Act. When the Livestock Industry Diversification Act is enacted, game production animals will be slaughtered only under the system of controls and in the slaughter facilities that already exist in Alberta. The Alberta Meat Inspection Act requires that all meat sold in Alberta must be inspected. At the present time all cattle presented for slaughter are inspected for proof of ownership, under the Livestock Identification and Brand Inspection Act, by provincial brand or meat inspection staff. The same inspectors will ensure that only those elk which can be identified as having originated from a licensed game animal production farm will be permitted

to be slaughtered. Only designated plants will be permitted to slaughter elk that were produced on game production farms. In addition, there will be a requirement that these elk carcasses be ribbon branded in a manner which will identify them with their place of origin.

Basically, then, the controls on meat to ensure that no illegally poached meat comes in could be simply summarized as follows. The elk must show up at a designated plant alive. It's double eartagged with tamperproof tags to prove ownership. That ownership will be checked and proven. The animal is then slaughtered, and it's inspected before slaughter, after slaughter. The meat is ribbon branded, which means a brand down the total side of the carcass. It will identify the piece of meat to as small a level as a steak or a chop or a roast that you will pick up in the store.

The only way you could poach from the wild and get that animal into that system would be if you could go out there and trap a wild elk, load it on a truck or put it in a trailer, and then tag it with these tamperproof tags. If any of you have ever dealt with wild elk, the chances of that occurring are very, very remote.

Along with the responsibility for regulating game animal production, Alberta Agriculture will assume an expanded role in providing extension services to game animal producers. The information and technical assistance available to producers in areas such as management, nutrition, health, husbandry, economics, and marketing will be significantly enhanced.

Under the revised administration of game animal production, the Fish and Wildlife division of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife will continue to be responsible for the following activities. They will continue to prescribe the species that can be gamefarmed. They'll be responsible for the collection and transfer of right of property of animals from the wild, and I stressed earlier on that it's their policy only to trap wild animals if it's necessary to control population. They're responsible for export and import requirements, including health and genetic standards. They'll continue to be responsible for the enforcement of the Wildlife Act and regulations that will apply to illegally obtained animals on game animal production farms. They'll continue to be responsible for prohibiting hunting, paid or otherwise, on game animal production farms.

Mr. Speaker, with those introductory remarks, it's my pleasure to move second reading of Bill 31.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, I'm rising to oppose Bill 31 in second reading. This is a Bill which attempts to legitimize the privatization and exploitation of vulnerable wildlife and its parts, especially for profit, in the province of Alberta.

AN HON. MEMBER: Profit; that's bad.

MR. McINNIS: Well, the members opposite feel that if you use the word "profit" in connection with an item, therefore it must be supported. It's a sort of Pavlovian response by the Deputy Premier there, the hon. Member for Medicine Hat. You mention the word "profit" and they start to salute it right away, as if everything that had a profit connected with it was therefore by definition in the public interest.

Now, I want to say that the privatization of wildlife in Alberta is not a brand-new phenomenon. I'm not saying that this breaks entirely new ground. I believe this Bill is something that the government has been working toward for a very long time, although they did not until a very few days ago take the rest of the population into their confidence in this respect.

I think the time has come to really question what you can believe out of the mouths of the members of this government. I mean, could you believe the Premier during the Stettler by-election campaign when he said that we don't allow game ranching in the province of Alberta and we will never allow game ranching in the province of Alberta? Could you believe that? Well, no, the minister comes along and says, "Well, this isn't game ranching." Well, why isn't it game ranching? "It's not game ranching," he says, "because you don't have paid hunting." Well, you tell that to all the cattle ranchers in the province. I mean, they don't allow paid hunting of cows, do they? But they call themselves ranchers. In fact, they're proud to be called ranchers. This is game ranching. I mean, for you guys to go around saying it's not game ranching, you must think the people in Alberta are very, very stupid. Either that or you've been in office so long that you think whatever you say turns out to be the truth.

This is game ranching. It's the game ranching that the Premier said would never happen *in* the province of Alberta. Or should they believe the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife, who said that he would never, never allow the sale of meat from elk in the province of Alberta? Should they believe that? Well, of course, they . . . [interjection] The member here says that it isn't going to. This is a case where a member of the government – the government gets to speak out of both sides of its mouth; the government of white hats and black hats, you know. He's the good cop, and the Minister of Agriculture is the bad cop, or maybe tomorrow it'll be the other way around. So he gets to hang on to the integrity of his position while the government takes the opposite position. That's baloney. You know, you guys are collectively a government, and you're responsible for what you say as well as what you do.

It appears likely to me that they could not, should not believe any minister when any promise or commitment is made on any subject. Because I have here signed letters. Here's one signed by John Gogo, MLA, Lethbridge-West. At that time he had the post of Deputy Speaker. Now, Mr. Speaker, I want you to know this is no reflection on the post of Deputy Speaker. The letter says:

Thank you for your letter of June 15 advising me that the Alberta Fish & Game Association is opposed to Game Ranching even though the Alberta Fish & Wildlife Advisory Council holds the opposite opinion.

As you said in your letter, Mr. Sparrow has stated the government will not proceed with the concept of Game Ranching in Alberta.

Signed by John Gogo.

We have another here by Eric Musgreave, MLA, Calgary-McKnight, June 23, 1987.

MRS. GAGNON: Former. Former.

MR. McINNIS: The former MLA. I appreciate the sensitivity of the currently sitting Member for Calgary-McKnight.

It says:

Thank you for your letter of June 15 advising me that the Alberta Fish & Game Association is opposed to Game Ranching even though the Alberta Fish & Wildlife Advisory Council holds the opposite opinion.

As you said in your letter, Mr. Sparrow has stated the government will not proceed with the concept of Game Ranching in Alberta.

Well, gee whiz, it seems to me like those letters are the same word for word. Who's writing all these letters that are signed by Tory backbenchers and wallpapering the walls of Albertans all

over the province? I mean, when does it come to the point where some of you guys take responsibility for what you say or what you sign your names to? When does that point come?

AN HON. MEMBER: Same time you do.

MR. McINNIS: Same time I do, says the creep opposite. I don't have a record of doing this kind of flip-flopping, and I don't intend to get one.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. Just an inquiry. Is the hon. member prepared to file the letters that were introduced?

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, regrettably, I do have to file these broken promises with the Legislative Assembly.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: I only asked for a direct answer.

MR. McINNIS: The direct answer is yes.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR. McINNIS: Well, there is some sensitivity here.

MR. DAY: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: On a point of order, Red Deer-North.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, citing *Beauchesne* 459, in the area of relevance, the member across the way, because he cannot dispute the soundness of this particular initiative, has switched topics totally and continues to talk about game ranching, not game farming. That is a very clear-cut and totally different situation altogether. He is not at all addressing game farming. He is trying to twist things around by talking about responses to a totally different issue, and he is right off topic and therefore not relevant on this or any other issues which he opens his mouth on. But I would like a ruling on this. He's got to get on the topic of game farming, of the livestock diversification that's being discussed, which is game farming, not game ranching.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: On the point of order, Vegreville.

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't think this is a point of order. I think it's just a chintzy attempt by the Member for Red Deer-North to try and involve himself in debate without having to address the issues himself with some little semantic argument about what's ranching and what's farming. If he'd listen to the arguments advanced by the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place, he might not have those opinions. But we do have a lot of time left in second reading. I'd suggest that if he'd like to stand up and venture some informed opinion, he'd have lots of opportunity to do that, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Chair does not recognize this as exactly a point of order and therefore will not make a ruling at this time but would make the observation that a debate over definitions can become much too lengthy and does not really have anything to do with the principles of the Bill as

such. Therefore, I would hope that attention to that particular matter of definitions of two different terms might cease and we could get on with the principle of the Bill.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, in reality, the subject of my point is broken promises by this government. But I do believe that the abusive language by this government is a very important part of this debate, because what they're attempting to do, what that sleazy Minister of Agriculture is attempting to do through this Bill is to confuse people.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Order. Order.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order, Red Deer-North. I believe the term recently used by the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place has been ruled unparliamentary. I have the dates if required here. I would ask that he withdraw that remark.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to withdraw the remark. I don't want my language to get in the way of what is a very important issue that the people of Alberta have a right to have an opportunity to deal with.

Now, this government is introducing game ranching through this Bill, and they're doing it under the guise of game farming for a very specific reason. Game farming is an activity which has been allowed in Alberta since 1959 at least. As a child, many times I had the extreme pleasure and joy of attending Al Oeming's game farm, where I went and saw various types of wildlife that I never would have had a chance to see otherwise. Millions of Albertans and people all around the world had the pleasure of viewing wildlife in a very attractive and humane display atmosphere, and that was what was called game farming. This government is attempting to bring in game ranching using the name game farming, because they don't have the guts to stand up and admit to what they're doing. That's evident. The only way they can justify the misinformation which has been given to Albertans over the years on this issue is if they can continue to call it game farming. How can you say to the beef ranching industry that they're not ranchers . . .

MR. ISLEY: On a point of order.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Point of order, Minister of Agriculture.

MR. ISLEY: If the hon. member would check the Act, I see no definition of either game farming or game ranching in the Act. Let's address the Act.

MR. McINNIS: That's my point precisely, that this Bill is entirely misleading in the way it's drafted.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. No citations have been mentioned by either party, so I will just make a comment. I must say that the point raised by the hon. Minister of Agriculture was in keeping with the observation of the Speaker, and I would hope that we could get more to the principle of this particular Bill.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, this harassment is not entirely unexpected, I assure you. The game ranching industry now has arrived full bore, and I think it's a poor day when a government doesn't have the guts to admit to what it's doing, when it

attempts to confuse people by baiting and switching terms. You want to talk about misleading information; let's talk about the misleading information in the second reading of debate of the Minister of Agriculture right here in this House . . .

MR. GESELL: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Point of order, Clover Bar.

MR. GESELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under *Beauchesne* 489 I think the term "have not got the guts" is unparliamentary. I would ask that you might advise the member to withdraw.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, I regret having used a guttural reference. I prefer to say that they lack the integrity and the intestinal fortitude, the courage of their convictions, that they are unable and unwilling to speak truthfully to Albertans on this subject.

I want to refer to a second category of misleading information. I appreciate that the government benches very much love the lie that this is not game ranching, and they're doing what they can to defend it.

DR. WEST: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Point of order, Minister of Recreation and Parks.

DR. WEST: It just continues and continues, but you know, we have to go back to the original point of order. I don't think it was dealt with. "Misleading the public" was brought up in a statement here, and "does not have spine or intestinal fortitude." It's in 489 in the rules of debate, and it also goes back to Standing Orders, that you're using language that disrupts the Assembly, that begs us to enter into your debate.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are there any other comments on the point of order? The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, citation *Beauchesne* 233. The hon. member's talking about the truth. May I ask him if he would be honest and tell the truth as to what he has said to the game farmers that have called him, because it is contrary to what he's saying in this House today.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, I would like to know . . .

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. McINNIS: . . . what communication of mine he has intercepted that he wants clarification on. What citation in *Beauchesne* gives him the right to stand up . . .

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. I'm going to make a few remarks, hon. member, on the various points of order that currently have been made by various parts of the House. The number of questionable terms being used seem to be coming rather quickly. Some are clearly unparliamentary. Others have been referred to, and members have been cautioned on the use of them before in this House. I can only observe at this point in time, given the variety of specific issues being brought up under the topic of points of order, that we are

debating on Friday morning the agriculture diversification Act. I would hope we could proceed in an orderly fashion and not have the debate interrupted by a whole series of points of order or have points of order caused to be raised by the use of inappropriate language.

Also, the Chair would appreciate, although it does bring a smile to the lips of the Speaker, that fortuitous references to *Beauchesne* not be made.

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do note that the member referred to *Beauchesne* 233, which refers to the continuation of parliament in the event of "real or apprehended war . . ."

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. Order please. The Chair has handled that particular matter. Please proceed with your speech.

MR. McINNIS: I simply hope that nothing I say causes any war or insurrection in this Legislative Assembly. Mr. Speaker, may I request that the 10 minutes of harassment be added on to my time at the end?

In the beef cattle industry – and this is an extension, allegedly, of the livestock industry – you have beef cattle which are raised domestically and slaughtered for the sale of meat. They call that activity "ranching." This government calls the same activity with elk "farming," and for some reason it really, really matters to them whether you call it ranching or farming. Well, we'll leave it to Albertans to decide whether they're good to their word and whether this distinction without a difference really does matter in the debate or not.

It doesn't matter as much to me as the rest of the misinformation and disinformation being put out by the government, repeated again today by the Minister of Agriculture: this business that everybody is doing it, everybody across the country is doing it, so we have to do it too. He went through this little spiel in the pamphlet they put out, which says on game production animals:

With the exception of Newfoundland, all provinces have already enacted or are considering legislation to allow game farming. Saskatchewan permits the raising and sale of meat from both native and non-native species, including elk. British Columbia allows the farming and sale of meat from fallow deer, red deer, bison and reindeer. The Yukon and North West Territories allow the raising of bison, reindeer and elk, and permit meat sales for bison and reindeer. Ten of sixteen of the western states in the United States allow the farming of native big game species . . . et cetera, et cetera. If you read that casually, you would think that everybody is involved in this kind of activity, so why shouldn't we too?

You know, I think that's probably about the most misleading thing I've ever read or heard from the lips of the minister, because I've checked into the matter. In fact, most Canadian provinces are smart enough to draw a line. The line they draw with this industry is with native species. They don't allow raising and sale of meat for their own native species. Some of them will allow it to be done for imported exotics but not for their own native species. You know, if you read this, you wouldn't understand that British Columbia does not allow the sale of elk meat, Manitoba does not allow the sale of elk meat. Ontario doesn't. What about Quebec? Do you think they do? Nope. What about Nova Scotia? No. Prince Edward Island? No again. How about Newfoundland? Well, guess what? No, they don't either. The only provinces that do are Saskatchewan, which is mentioned by the minister, and New Brunswick. That's

it, aside from Alberta. Alberta's the third one to jump on this bandwagon. But if you listen to the hon. minister and read the pamphlets he puts out, you would believe that everybody's doing it. It's because of the way this thing is worded. It refers to the sale of meat in a context where it suggests elk is being sold . . .

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pardon me, hon. member. I would like to refer to *Beauchesne* 489, page 146, and note that despite the admonition of the Chair to all members of the House, the hon. member again used the term "mislead." I would ask him to withdraw that term – at the introduction to your section of examples.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, I think we should check the Blues, because I didn't say that anybody misled anybody. I said the information was misleading. I said that the information appeared to my ear to come from the minister's mouth, but I read from the pamphlet.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, the Chair took a few seconds, or perhaps a minute, to look the reference up, but the Chair is sure of the use of the term, so please . . .

MR. FOX: Well, did the Speaker check 490, page 148?

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Chair has checked to his satisfaction.

MR. McINNIS: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, I do apologize to the Chair. I'm attempting to debate Bill 31 and not to debate the unfortunate disinformation provided by the government, but it is a part of the background to some of the central points I hope to make in this debate. I do hope I have the opportunity to get that far. Clearly the background of having promised that there would never be game ranching in Alberta – in particular, reference to meat sales, which is how you define ranching in any normal and sane, sensible discourse – and then to go on to suggest that somehow this is part of a pattern across Canada that we as province should become involved in: this is a part of a very unfortunate history leading up to the introduction of this Bill and, in particular, to the commitments that are now being made about this industry. If we couldn't believe the commitments that were made before, when do we start believing them? When is it possible for Albertans to start believing this government?

I could go outside the scope of this Bill and talk about other occasions, especially in the environmental area, where commitments have been made and did not materialize, but I don't think it's necessary for me to do that. I think it is quite necessary, though, to deal with the principle of Bill 31, because that's what's before us today.

Now, it's interesting to me that the minister of economic development should get up on a point of order and talk to me about private conversations which I may have had with people in the industry and how his understanding of what was in those conversations is different from his understanding of what I'm saying today. It's interesting that it comes from him, because my understanding is that he has a first cousin who's been involved in this industry from day one – well, 1986 in any case – who was one of the first people to import elk in the province of Alberta. Perhaps he's been speaking with his cousin. I don't know; I've never met with his cousin. But I do believe that quite a number of people are in on the ground floor of what is more than any other thing a pyramid sales scheme endorsed by this provincial

government. In fact, I think Bill 31 is misnamed in several respects. I think it should be called an Act to allow a pyramid sales scheme for the introduction of game ranching of elk, which is pretty much the picture here.

If you want to look at who are the lucky 120, the ones in on the ground floor who are going to reap the profits of this pyramid sales scheme, we could talk about the minister's cousin. We could talk about Bob Plumb of Smoky Lake, who sits on the PC executive for the Beaver River federal riding, very active in the game ranching industry and no doubt a personal friend of the member from that riding. When the chicken ranching business didn't work, I guess they decided the elk ranching industry might be the best one. Paul Rebkowich of Wandering River is another individual very active in the game ranching industry. A former ID councillor, he joined the Conservative Party about five or six years ago. Actually, I understand he was defeated himself in 1986. Well, we could talk about Norman Moore of Alder Flats, who just happens to be a director of the Drayton Valley PC Association, undoubtedly quite well known to the currently sitting member.

MR. THURBER: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Point of order, the Member for Drayton Valley.

MR. THURBER: Mr. Speaker, I don't have a quotation to put it under, but some of the facts he is so-called presenting here are absolutely not true. [interjections]

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, that's obviously not a point of order. In fact, my understanding is that . . .

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. Is there any further comment on the point of order?

MR. FOX: There's no citation.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is correct. Just a moment, please. The Chair is waiting for some information.

The Chair would just like to caution the hon. member with respect to overall references to individuals who are not able to speak in this Assembly and therefore not able to defend themselves against possible imputations or accusations, the references being *Beauchesne* 409(7) and 493(4).

Please proceed, Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, I take it from the interjection of the hon. . . .

MR. ELZINGA: Point of order.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

MR. ELZINGA: I'm sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but on a point of order, I couldn't understand the chuckling as . . . [interjections] Right. It's a clarification of a former citation I gave. I couldn't understand why the hon. members were chuckling as it related to the citation I shared with them when I rose to . . . The reason, sir, is because I was going from the fifth edition of *Beauchesne* rather than what you are working from, the sixth edition. Recognizing that it is the sixth edition, I will use citation 317 and ask the hon. member if he did have

conversations with those involved in game farming, because I just want to have the hon. member put on the record a clarification of what was conveyed to me by individuals who had talked to him.

I should indicate . . . [interjections]

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. ELZINGA: . . . to the hon. member too – and I'm glad, sir, that you had reference to it as it related to individuals he was naming – does that exclude the hon. Member for Vegreville from participating in the debate as it relates to the substance in support for the beef farmers? Does it exclude the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona from participating in legal discussions? The hon. member's accusation that I have a cousin involved – he shouldn't judge me by his own moral standards. [interjections]

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. FOX: Mr. Speaker, they can't keep interrupting on specious points of order.

AN HON. MEMBER: You bring it on yourselves. [interjections]

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. On a Friday morning the Speaker endeavours to keep order in the House. I can only make the point that I believe the point of order made by the Minister of Economic Development and Trade is relevant, but I will just try a comment and caution to the Assembly. That is that the numerous points of order that have been raised have, as I've ruled on a number of occasions this morning, a relationship to the inappropriate use of terminology and the overall nature of the debate this morning. The last point of order that has been raised the Chair had commented upon just previously. The references to *Beauchesne* were clearly made and the Chair rules that they were relevant to the remarks that have just been made by the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place. But the Chair would request of the Assembly that we proceed on the principle of the Bill before the House without undue incitement of inappropriate debate on both sides of the House.

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I take it from the interjection of the Member for Drayton Valley that Norm Moore is no longer a director of the PC Association, and I don't wish to leave that imputation. I know that he was at the time the member was elected.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, proceed with the debate on the principles of this Bill or I will go to the next speaker.

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The point I am making is that a remarkable number of individuals in this industry have very close connections with the Conservative Party members of this government. If I made that point without citing specifics, they would say I had no evidence to back up the information. If I give them the information, they say I'm naming individuals needlessly. It doesn't matter which way I go; I know they're going to stand up and harass me on points of order. And I demand that the time be added, because I can't control these guys getting up and taking up time in debate.

The member talks about poaching as if poaching were the only issue that's involved here. It's not, but it's an important issue. He says there's no problem because we've regulated poaching. It's an offence to poach, and we have careful regulation for people in the industry. They have to write down every month the animals they have, and they have single tags and double tags and brands and all these safeguards for people who are in the industry. But I've got news for you, Mr. Minister. Poachers don't go through the system. They don't fill out forms in triplicate; they don't send them in to you every month. They just don't operate that way. You know, you're going to tightly control the people who are in the industry.

Now, he wants us to believe that you create an additional legal market for wildlife parts, and he says that will have no influence on illegal markets. I think you have to be naive in the extreme to believe that. If there's an incentive to poach elk when it's 90 bucks a pound for legal sale of antlers, how much more incentive is there if there are meat sales as well, if there's a potential for the sale of meat? People in the industry suggest that this meat is much more highly valuable than beef because it's lower in cholesterol. Well, that's an interesting argument, but the minister also said that they're going to domesticate these animals. They can be domesticated easily. The beautiful, wild, native Alberta elk will become a penned domesticated creature. Its diet habits will change; all kinds of habits will change. Well, maybe the meat will change as well. It might just so happen that if you domesticate these animals and feed them grain and hormones and all the things that are fed to the cattle industry, maybe over a period of time their meat will seem a little bit more like beef. I mean, he's asking this Assembly to believe that somehow creating an additional legal market for wildlife parts is not going to provide further incentive for poachers. Well, how wrong can he be? How can he expect us to swallow that as an argument? I think you have to be subject to party discipline to believe that, Mr. Speaker. Poachers do not register with Alberta Agriculture or any other such person.

The elk themselves have . . . The market that's suggested by people who are in the industry – again, I'm going to go back to this disinformation in the form of *Livestock Industry Diversification in Alberta*, this pamphlet which no doubt has been widely circulated by the minister and by various people in the government. It asks a rhetorical question: "Is it economically feasible to raise game animals domestically?" That's a pretty good question. The answer is "Yes." Since when does the government go around telling people it's economically feasible to invest in something? [interjection] The last time I recall that happening was under the Investment Contracts Act, Member for Three Hills, where the government warranted that there were assets on deposit somewhere that were going to be enough to make sure you'd get your money back when you invested in this thing.

Now, here you have a government and a minister saying yes, it's "economically feasible to raise game animals domestically." Well, how do you know that, and what is this government doing telling prospective investors that their investment is economically feasible? What business is that of yours to tell them? It's only your business if you're promoting a pyramid sales scheme. Because it just so happens that the lucky 120, who cannot be named due to the sensitivity of the people they're associated with politically, are going to be selling breeding stock to people who are receiving this pamphlet from the government saying this is economically feasible. It says, and I quote:

Elk production is desirable from the farmer's perspective because three saleable commodities are produced – meat, velvet antlers and breeding stock – each of which is in demand. Several strong

markets have been developed for elk velvet antlers that recognize Canadian elk velvet as a premium product. Breeding stock continues in strong demand.

There you are: telling people to get in, invest, buy now. Well, it's going to be windfall profits for the lucky 120 who are in there, but who's going to buy the meat? You say there are markets; you say in here that there are "strong markets." Well, I think that's unproven at the very least. In fact, I think it's up to people who are in this industry to take a look for themselves and try to determine where the demand comes for this meat, because the claims that are made about low cholesterol – that happens every day of the week.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

I read the other day that somebody in Alberta is crossing beef cattle with yak. They say, "Well, this is low cholesterol meat; buy this." Somebody else is going to come along with some other kind of meat and say, "This is low cholesterol; you buy that." People are worried about cholesterol, and therefore low cholesterol is a marketing tool. But that's all these elk ranchers have, the marketing tool and the supposition that somebody's going to want to buy this elk meat at a premium. In fact, people in the industry say, "Hey, they're going to pay three times as much for this elk meat because it's got so little cholesterol in it."

Well, in the first place, as I said, the domestication of elk makes a lot of people uncomfortable strictly from the point of view of values. I think second reading debate is a time when we should talk about values embodied in a Bill versus values that Albertans have. Albertans put a high degree of value on wildlife in the wild, and they're more than a little bit leery about the agricultural industry invading the domestic wildlife sector in a big way. You know, you don't have this problem with beef because you don't have beef in the wild. Sure, you might have had a problem at one time with people rustling from each other's herds, but you never had a problem with people rustling cows in the wild because you can't find them. They're not out there in the wild. [interjection] Your wild beef, member for Taber? [interjections]

Well, okay, perhaps the other members would like to get up and describe their concerns about the wild beef in the province of Alberta. I'll listen to that with great interest. But right now we're dealing with a Bill which brings in commercialized ranching of elk for meat sales. There is a very great concern about the fact that somebody may want to rustle some of that stock from the wild at some point in time and do it. So I really think I have to question in this pyramid sales scheme why the Minister of Agriculture is promoting, why he's saying to farmers, "Yes, it's economically feasible; yes, it's viable from the point of view of the farmer; yes, you should get in and buy." Because right now we have a moratorium on imports of elk, referred to by the minister. It was brought in back in 1988 because of a concern over possible diseases, including meningeal brainworm, which was mentioned by the minister in his opening remarks. Well, the effect, of course, of closing the border has been to drive up the price of breeding stock, because you can't obtain breeding stock anywhere but from a domestic supplier. Again those lucky few who cannot be named in this Legislative Assembly for fear of offending their political colleagues have been able to make substantial profit over the fact that it's not possible to bring in elk from the outside. But this Bill makes absolutely no reference to the fate of the moratorium on the import of elk. In fact, it doesn't refer to it at all other than by way of the kind of permissive clause that may allow a minister

to impose such a moratorium or lift such a moratorium as the dictates of the moment require. So the concern over meningeal brainworm, which brought this moratorium in in the first place, is still a concern.

I understood from the announcement of the hon. Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife, who at that time had responsibility in this area, that some research was going to be done in order to determine the extent of the problem and the seriousness of the problem. But what I know about meningeal brainworm is that quarantine doesn't offer a solution because meningeal brainworm has a very long life span in carrier ruminant hosts. The feces examination is not exact enough and blood tests have not been developed, so certificates of freedom from the disease cannot be issued in terms of currently known and currently understood technology. So the fate of the moratorium is a very important part of this issue, and it's not addressed in the Bill. It was not addressed adequately, in my opinion . . .

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Point of order.

MR. ISLEY: . . . whatever the number is dealing with relevancy. The hon. member would know if he did a little research that what he's debating now is the Wildlife Act. The import and export of game production animals are strictly under the control of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife. I'd ask that he get back and debate the principles of Bill 31.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. minister has made his comment. For the information of the Assembly, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place was given some consideration, because of points of order that were made, by way of extra time. But I think everybody should understand that the clock is stopped during points of order and the points of order are not charged against the hon. member's time. The hon. member really should not abuse the courtesy of the House too much longer in carrying on at this time.

MR. McINNIS: I take it the Chair has not ruled that it's irrelevant to debate the import of elk under this Bill, because that's exactly what this industry is all about. Where does this breeding stock come from? It is not clear in the Bill that the border remains sealed, so the possibility of additional elk imports is clearly allowed for under the Bill. The concern which was . . .

[The member's speaking time ran out]

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

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. [interjections] There's a lot of chattering over there. I think this is probably the original game farm in the province anyhow, this Legislature, with rather some noisy, furry people over there.

I want to take a little different line. I must confess that personally I've become convinced through the years that the diversification and raising of game on farms is okay, so I will be supporting the general thrust of the Bill. But I feel that because of the polarizing that's taken place in the public's mind by extremes on both sides, it would be better for the government in the long run if they suspended the Bill after second reading and let the summer go by with some public hearings. Because

a great mass of the people out there are not represented. What we have is huge, well-financed lobbies out of the big cities that feel that somehow or another it's wrong to butcher an elk in an abattoir but it's all right to gut-shoot him and then chase him for five miles through the heavy snow until he drops, that that type of killing is okay. That's sporting; it's macho. I'm not criticizing hunters. It's a blood sport. I don't hunt myself, but there are always some people that feel that putting a .30-30 or a .303 hole through something isn't wrong.

Then there are, of course, a great number of people who when you talk game farming, immediately start worrying about little fuzzy things like Bambi and all of Walt Disney's critters being carved up and eaten on a plate, and that bothers them too. But also from the ranchers' or farmers' point of view, I think they have to understand that a lot of city people are worried that if elk and other animals are put on game farms and ranches, the government may become a little sloppy about seeing that the wildlife quotient is looked after. I don't think they will, because the hunting of wildlife and all this adds nearly a billion dollars a year to our income through tourism and hunting, and it's a very valuable thing. I only have to ask the Member for Rocky Mountain House how valuable wildlife is to his area; I think he'd confirm it. So there is a very valid concern in the public's mind that you may be escaping out the back door in your rightful responsibility of looking after wildlife, and I think there again public hearings would do a great deal to help that out.

Then we go on as to what game farming is now. I think we're splitting hairs in game farming, game ranching. I'm not particularly concerned whether you call – I was raised on a spread down near Manyberries, and when I wanted to impress my people in Calgary, I told them I was on a ranch.

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. The hon. minister is rising on a point of order.

MR. ISLEY: Under *Beauchesne*, sixth edition, 484, I'm just wondering if the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon would permit me asking him a question.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: That's up to the hon. member.

MR. TAYLOR: Certainly. I put him on a pin for two years now, so it'd be unjust if I refused a question.

MR. ISLEY: Thank you, hon. member. After listening to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place, in your judgment, no matter how many public hearings we provided and how much information we provided, do you think he would ever understand what we're doing with Bill 22?

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to seek the same refuge that the hon. minister often does, and a question like that about the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper should properly be referred to the minister in charge of mental health. But that's the last question I'll answer. I'm in enough trouble here anyhow.

But to go on a bit further, I wanted to go on to legitimate concerns, because there is literature circulating around saying that the government would be including allowed for farming: grizzly and black bears, cougars, woodland caribou, lynx – those aren't bad. But we've got falcons, merlins – I'm not sure what

merlins are; King Arthur used to have one – hawks, elk, white-tailed deer, mule deer, moose, bighorn sheep, Rocky Mountain goats, and antelope. In other words, I think a little better definition of what can be raised for breeding purposes might be something that the public would be concerned with.

But I do believe there's a great deal of misunderstanding on both sides, because I think if they got down and started talking – this is what I found when I talked to the wildlife people and also the game ranching people, that they weren't that far apart. You have issues, of course, that are made worse. The Premier in his Stettler election, I think, said quite clearly just a few months ago – I'm not so sure I can find the darn thing now – that no way would there be game farming allowed in Alberta. So there is a feeling that a trust has been broken, but I cannot see for the life of me why wildlife can't be enhanced and game farming also take place.

I think the public would feel better, also, if they saw that there was an increase in the budget of the wildlife department to see that poaching was looked after. Now, the hon. members next to me on the right are going to be worried, and they'll mention poaching a lot. But they should know that poaching has to do with a market. Nobody goes out and steals an animal that they can't sell or they can't eat, so therefore there has to be a market for it. Also, they will go out and steal the easiest animal they can get, and the nice black Aberdeen Angus along the side of the road is going to be a lot more easier to steal and eat than an elk that you have to go thrashing through the brush and up and down hills and take a chance that you might get bitten by a rattlesnake or run over by a city slicker out there testing his four-wheel drive or whatever it is: all those dangers.

So obviously the Department of Agriculture has had a great deal of experience in stopping rustling. Now, I know the minister has said there are not many rustlers around, but rustlers are people that go out and poach other people's animals to sell. Consequently, the idea that poaching is going to be increased with game farming doesn't wash. If anything, if the game farmers supply more of the market, it would probably help decrease poaching, because if a guy was going to go out and steal an elk, he would probably steal it from a game farm rather than from out through the hills. So I think that *is* a false worry. Nevertheless, wildlife policing should be increased.

I think an element that's overlooked, and I think the game farmers . . . I would suggest this to those in government that are in favour of getting the whole idea of game farming across: nobody's covered the idea that in this day and age, Mr. Speaker, of trying to stop soil erosion, trying to preserve nature, trying to reverse the natural and inexorable march that we've done for the last hundred years in developing our ground out here, or our numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 5, and 6 soils, this has resulted in killing a lot of trees, plowing a lot of ground – what? – to raise hay and grass in order to feed domestic cattle. This is one of the beauties about game farming. They will survive on that part of Mother Earth that we're going to try to return to its original state to try to preserve our ecology, to try to preserve Mother Nature. So in effect game farming could be argued as a way to help and preserve nature, not take it apart. Many of these nature people would like to look at it the wrong way, because . . . [interjections]

Mr. Speaker, I am trembling in my shoes. When that side starts cheering, I must have done something wrong. For the life of me, I can't figure out what it is, but anyhow I will march forward or press on regardless.

The fact is that game farming could work in to preserve nature much more that it'd be against it. I point this out – I

stumbled by accident the other day, Mr. Speaker, in researching an entirely different subject, which was native rights and the questions of how they handle the courts. I looked up and got a lot of stuff on Laplanders, because at one time I used to work in northern Norway and Finland. I was interested to find that in written records dating back to 400 years after Christ, the year 400, they had already domesticated reindeer, which is a type of elk, which is an animal that adapts to the northern climes that they have up there. So game farming has been done by our ancestors for many, many years back. As a matter of fact, if you go back a bit, I suppose nearly all domestic cattle and many of the animals we have on the farm were domesticated or at one time were part of wildlife.

There is a big worry, I know, that they're going to cross-contaminate. There again the logic escapes me. Knowing farmers and knowing cattle breeders because I've been associated with that for some years, give them a little time and you will have an elk that looks like a freight train with a spread of horns about eight feet apart there. They'll be the biggest, meanest looking critters you ever saw in your life, because they produce lots of meat and lots of horns. People don't go out and crossbreed their cattle or their dogs or anything with wildlife. As a general rule wildlife is captured and then through genetic methods brought up. If there is a disease transfer, it's usually from the wild to the tame. Ask what people do with their little poodles when they hear there's rabies in the neighbourhood. They're never worried about the poodle going out and biting some of the local rats or the local coyotes and giving them disease; they're worried about the coyotes coming over and biting their own pets. The transfer of disease is nearly always the same way with mink. I used to be associated at one time with relatives out at a mink farm. That was before they decided fur wasn't any good. Even a rodent like the beaver is not allowed to donate its fur to people anymore.

The point I'm getting at is that the transfer of disease is the opposite way of what they're worrying about. There's nobody that nurses a cow or a horse more than a farmer. I used to raise quarter horses. My bloody medical bill for the quarter horses was 10 times what it cost me to raise nine kids. The veterinarians grab everything. The most spoiled warm-blooded mammal in society today is the animal a farmer has out on his farm. They have no resistance to anything, so he sits there and protects them. The idea that they're getting to go out and get diseased is something I find very hard and difficult. If anybody knows the agricultural Act and how hard it is to bring in a bull or bring in any type of cattle or any type of stock, knows the quarantine laws – and this is the whole reason why semen got to be shipped all over the world, because it was about the only thing that could get through the custom's regulations.

I think there's a great deal of knowledge that could be passed back and forth here, and it bothers me to see my city cousins – and I have a lot of them – get so upset about this and go tearing off in all directions. I think this is a classic case. Although the Minister of Agriculture says that you will never convince some people, I agree, but we're not out to convince the lunatics on either side. We're out there to convince the vast mass of people in the middle that want to do what's best for Alberta.

My last argument is: farmers need to diversify. They need to get into other areas, and they need to get back to zero till, if you want to call it that, closer to nature, raising crops that are maybe less exotic. Here's one wonderful chance to do it, because there's a great market. Bull elk can produce about a thousand dollars worth of antlers and velvet each year, and they can do it for about 10 years: \$10,000. Well, that's a lot of money you can

get out of it. Personally, I think they should take advantage of it before all those Orientals that are now buying it find that it doesn't increase their sexual prowess – not that I've tried it nor would I want to, Mr. Speaker. I won't say what I took, but if any of the members want to do a little consulting and pay a proper fee, I might tell them a little later on.

The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that there is a market for it; it's a market in an expanding area of the world. We're used to growing a little cattle and beef and sending it to Europe. We know what it is to market to Europe. But when somebody starts saying, "Market to the Orient," and that's the type of things they eat there, we suddenly start getting frightened.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I support the Bill, but I would love it if they suspended hearings or suspended further work after the second hearings to let the public have its input, because I am a great believer in the public, even though they voted Tory this many years. They will open their eyes one of these days. The fact is: I'm a great believer in the public seeing through things, and give them the chance to have hearings, have debate on this, and I think ultimately it would be the right thing to do.

Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley, followed by Calgary-Fish Creek.

MR. THURBER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've listened to the debate here so far this morning with a great deal of interest, and until the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon stood up, we had debated many, many things, but very few of them really pertained to the Act which is under consideration. It seems to me a long-drawn-out procedure to allow our people in agriculture to go ahead and diversify into something that's maybe economically viable. As the minister has stated, yes, it is economically viable at today's information that we have from these people. The Department of Agriculture has done that for years. I can remember programs coming out years ago that said raising cow/calves in the cow/calf business was economically viable. In fact, there were grants and all kinds of initiatives to go into it. I don't think that's anything new; I don't see anything wrong with that. I think we should inform the agriculture area as to whether we as elected leaders and people in departments feel that it is an economically viable thing.

I would like to deal, Mr. Speaker, with some facts pertaining to game farms. There's a lot of innuendo about whether they're game farms or game ranching. The popular concept of the words "game ranching" seems to be that when you have these elk on a particular place, you're going to allow hunting for a fee. Now, that's my concept of the words "game ranching." I don't believe it means that, but that has been the public concept of it. There is never any intent in this Act anywhere to allow that to happen. It is specifically forbidden. It will not happen in Alberta, I do not believe. Game farming or ranching, whichever you want to call it, is environmentally friendly and economically self-reliant. The minister is absolutely right; it is an economic unit that will work. There are going to be some people, as one hon. member mentioned, that will lose some money along the line someplace. The innovators and the pioneers into the exotic cattle business brought these cattle in. Some of them made a lot of money; some of them lost some money, but in the end it evened out. These breeds are now preserved. We have pure breeds of all kinds in this country for the betterment of the industry as a whole.

Game farms do not get any specific government grants. They've created several hundred jobs. They've kept thousands

of acres covered in forage. We talk about retention of good soil in the province. This is one way to do it, particularly in the gray-wooded areas. Almost none of these animals that are in the game farms today came from the wild or were captured in the wild. There were a few that came as orphans from animals that were killed on the road or died in some other manner. They picked those up, and they ended up in the game farm. But almost none of them. They came from the breeding herds, from the stock that's already in this country or was imported into this country.

The controlled sale of game meat is not unique to Alberta. There were some differences pointed out by one hon. member, but in fact the only provinces that do not permit the slaughter of some kind of game animal for meat are Alberta and Manitoba. Game meat, including deer and elk venison, from outside Alberta has been on the menus of many restaurants in Alberta for a long time. What is unique is that the regulations on game farms in Alberta set the highest standards of any place in the world, and our industry has blossomed to this point under that control, and it will continue to blossom.

Mr. Speaker, Agriculture Canada has a staff of veterinarians and food inspectors which monitor the health of all animals within Canada as well as those coming in. They have sweeping powers to test and quarantine herds of any species. Canada's reputation as a source of safe food and healthy animals is respected worldwide. In addition, the Alberta government also places special restrictions on the movement and import of game animals. Game farmers who have large investments in breeding stock strongly support these precautions to keep their valuable herds disease free.

You talk about the regulations in the game farming area. In a recent wildlife prosecution act in Alberta, a long established game farmer refused to provide the paperwork, animal identification, and testing required under the Act. His licence was not renewed. When he continued to do business, he was charged and fined \$25,000, and animals were seized and later sold. The proposed Act has set a maximum fine at \$50,000 for each infraction and also provides for charges to be laid jointly against the owner, the operator, and/or the employees at that farm.

Much has been said about the new legislation allowing the slaughter of elk in Alberta. This issue is covered in less than one page, Mr. Speaker, in the whole Act. The other 20 pages deal with the countless controls and regulations that dictate how the industry will operate and allow the minister to make many more pages of regulations as needed. In short, the Livestock Industry Diversification Act gives strong protection to our environment and yet allows those willing to go into this business to proceed under these regulations. Mr. Speaker, as has been mentioned before, the immense control and identification process that is in place under this Act will certainly take care of most of the poaching that goes on. Now, there's poaching that goes on at the present time in this province. There are probably people making the odd dollar by selling elk meat. It comes out of the wild. It's sold on a black market basis. I cannot see this increasing or decreasing necessarily. Somebody will catch them someday, and they'll be put out of business.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, with this Act in place this may be the only way that we can preserve the integrity of the breed of the elk that is in this country. At present time there are some crossbreds and highbreds in the United States that are crossbred with the red deer. You can pick it out with blood tests. These animals running in the wild have no boundaries; they can come across the border anytime they want. If we're going to preserve

the breed as is done under these regulations and under this Act, I support this game farming Act to the extent that we can.

Thank you.

MR. PAYNE: Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say how struck I was by the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon's interesting reference to the phrase "lunatics on either side." I presume he was referring to extremists in the public debate and not to his colleagues in the Assembly.

Now, Mr. Speaker, unlike the second reading remarks by the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place, my remarks today will be (a) brief, (b) they'll deal solely with the principles of the Bill, and (c) they won't rely on unparliamentary language and personal aspersions for oratorical impact.

Now, Mr. Speaker, over the past two or three years I've had a number of letters and phone calls in Calgary-Fish Creek on the issue of game animal production farms. Now, these concerns have come from Fish & Game Association members, university students, university faculty members, and others in the riding who simply are concerned as individuals and not because of their identification with a particular institution or association. I've reread those letters and my notes to file, and I think for the benefit of the members today I could summarize their concerns in three ways. First, there's the concern that's been raised earlier in the House with respect to disease; secondly, the concern that's also been expressed in the House with respect to the risk of increased poaching; and third, concern that this legislation will open the door to eventual paid hunting.

Now, on the first issue of disease I have read very carefully sections 17, 18, and 34, and on the basis of that reading of the Bill and on the basis of the minister's comments earlier today, I think I can in all conscience reassure my concerned constituents that the disease factor has been recognized sufficiently and adequately in this legislation.

As to the risk of increased poaching, I've listened very carefully to the minister's comments about tagging and other regulated procedures, and in an exchange of notes with the minister, I learned as well of the addition of a brand inspection staff and meat inspection staff to the Fish and Wildlife offices as the so-called antipoaching team. I would like to turn the issue around and ask those who have raised the concern about poaching today: where's the poacher going to sell his or her meat? If he can't get it in the legal stream, who in fact is going to buy it? Now, as I say, I listened carefully to the minister's comments about the regulatory procedures that he envisaged to contain this concern, the concern of increased poaching, and I think he's made a very valid case, and I, for one, am prepared to accept it.

As to the third issue, though, there is little in the Bill that I can use as ammunition or as information to persuade my concerned constituents that in fact this isn't opening the door to eventual paid hunting. So I would like to ask the minister: would he consider, when he concludes debate at second reading, if he might speak to that concern?

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I'd be somewhat supportive of the name of the Bill. Allegations have been made in the House that it's so titled to obfuscate the issue or to somehow secretly cloak what the real intentions are. I think it's a fairly accurate title for a Bill, Livestock Industry Diversification Act. On the fact of diversification, I wonder if the minister in his concluding remarks might also speak to the extent of that diversification. Could he quantify it for us so that we've got something that we can use back at our constituencies? The number 120 has been used on umpty-ump occasions today in the House as to the number of

individuals presently involved in this industry, but I suspect that this may indeed be a legitimate area of diversification. I wonder if the minister would be prepared to predict as to the magnitude of the increased activity in this area that he might visualize.

Thank you for this opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

MR. FOX: Mr. Speaker, in speaking on second reading of Bill 31, the Livestock Industry Diversification Act, in Alberta there are a number of concerns that I wanted to put on the record and a number of comments that I wanted to make with respect to this initiative. I think it's important for me to point out that I have toured a number of game farms in the province of Alberta and I've met with people involved in the industry. I think it fair to say that the people whom I've talked to and the places that I visited – the people are conscientious. The facilities that I've seen are well above anything that one would describe as adequate; they're very good. Their interest in the industry is strong. The concerns that we present in the Assembly in debate on this Bill aren't relative to the people who are in the industry. Currently the concerns are relative to the people who aren't. I think it fair to say that those who are currently involved in the production of elk and the harvesting of antlers for velvet and who, if this Bill passes, will be involved in the sale of elk meat are subjected to a lot of regulations and a lot of restrictions relative to the production of traditional livestock which they may be accustomed to: cattle, hogs, horses, sheep, whatever. There are a number of hurdles that they have to jump through in order to be able to acquire a licence to produce these animals. There are a number of restrictions on their husbandry and a number of restrictions that exist and that are proposed through this Act in terms of the sale, disposition, slaughter, or whatever of the animals. There are a number of restrictions, but again the concerns we're expressing aren't concerns based on the reputations or activities now or in the future of the legitimate people involved in the industry. The concerns are about the people in the province who operate outside the legal system. I want to make that very clear to hon. members.

When I raised this issue in question period, I was pointing out to the Minister of Agriculture and his colleague the hon. Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife that this is a very controversial issue. Yes, there are 120 people involved in the production of elk right now who strongly favour Bill 31, the Livestock Industry Diversification Act. There are some agricultural groups in the province who have passed mildly worded resolutions at conventions indicating support for the industry, but as well there are organizations in the province representing tens if not hundreds of thousands of Albertans who have passed resolutions at conventions opposing game ranching in the province of Alberta, who feel very strongly that the commercialization of wildlife, the privatization of wildlife resource is a bad idea and that it threatens that wildlife resource.

I was urging the minister and this government to show some interest in the opinions of these Albertans, as well, to consider their concerns and demonstrate some respect for the opinions they have. Hon. members opposite, members of the government, may want to characterize the opinions of people with the Fish & Game Association or the environment network of Alberta or the Wilderness Association as being unfounded and unreasonable and emotional arguments, but I suggest to government members that that argument could be made by anyone about the opinions of anyone, any person or group who they disagree with. The fact is that these organizations – the Wilderness Association, the environment network, and the Fish & Game Association in the province of Alberta – have a

number of very well-informed, articulate, experienced people who have a reasonable point of view on this issue, and I think their point of view needs to be looked at. But I'll come back to that, Mr. Speaker, at different points during my comments on second reading of the principle of this Bill.

The minister is calling it the Livestock Industry Diversification Act and has painted it in the brochures that he's issued as the salvation of the family farm in the province of Alberta. This is the answer. This is going to diversify the agriculture industry in the province of Alberta. They're almost prepared to admit that under their stewardship opportunities in agriculture have diminished to a dramatic extent in the traditional sectors of agriculture, be it grain and oilseed production, be it cattle production, hogs. With the advent of the Deputy Premier's favourite free trade agreement there are substantial threats to the incomes and futures of producers in the supply-managed commodities like eggs, poultry, and dairy. So the government's kind of admitting by the title of this Bill that they've failed in terms of providing a solid, dependable, reliable future for the agriculture industry in the province of Alberta. They're admitting that they've done a poor job with shoring up the family farm and providing a confident, vital future for rural Albertans. Now they're coming to us and painting this plan of theirs as the answer to diversification for agriculture in the province of Alberta.

Certainly it can be said that for those who are involved in the industry and who will, if this Bill is passed, have the opportunity to sell elk meat in addition to selling the velvet from the antlers that represents some diversification in their own individual farming operation. But I suggest that the opportunities in this industry are well beyond the means of most people in rural Alberta. It's wrong of the minister to pretend that this is a major new initiative in terms of diversifying the agriculture industry in the province. The costs of getting into the industry are extremely high. I was talking to a friend of mine who's made some plans to get into the industry, and their investment in this project may well reach a quarter of a million dollars over time. That's a substantial amount of money. It's not something that's going to happen in terms of diversifying the agriculture industry in a broadly based way. There are some opportunities for a few people to get in. The numbers will increase over time, but it's not a major new initiative in terms of livestock diversification.

I think I would have to say in terms of the transfer of responsibility for this industry from the Department of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife to the Department of Agriculture that that has caused concern among a number of interest groups in the province because they view it as kind of the sellout or the compromise of commitments made to them by various people in government. Now, my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place filed letters with the Assembly today where some fairly strongly worded statements were made by members of the government two or three years ago saying: we definitely won't allow game ranching in the province; no fear. The Premier stood up in Stettler during his second attempt to gain a seat in the Legislature in 1989 and made some quite strongly worded statements about the fact that game ranching isn't and won't be allowed in the province of Alberta.

Now, that's probably a case again of the Premier putting his foot in his mouth and needing the Minister of Agriculture to come and rescue him. It's happened on more than one occasion where they seem to need a spin doctor to follow the Premier around and qualify his statements, whether it's a commitment that, you know: the only direction taxes will go in the province

is down; there will be no new taxes in the province of Alberta. Well, someone has to come along and say: "Well, what he meant was income taxes. We're not counting all the other taxes that go up year after year; he meant income taxes." Well, he made this commitment to the voters in the Stettler by-election about there not going to be any game ranching in the province of Alberta. The Minister of Agriculture has to come along at a later date and qualify that and say, "Well, what he meant was that there wouldn't be any paid hunting in the province of Alberta," somehow equating ranching with paid hunting: a curious relationship indeed in the minister's mind.

My colleague from Edmonton-Jasper Place went on at some length trying to point out that ranching involves the production of livestock for sale in the province, normally animals with four legs and hooves and, in some cases, an equal number of stomachs. They're raised for profit, and it doesn't involve paid hunting. You don't see people going out to hog farms and getting involved in paid hunting or going out to cattle ranches and getting involved in paid hunting. But certainly cattle ranchers call themselves ranchers, and for them to try and split hairs on definitions of words indicates how desperate they are to cover up the Premier's faux pas last year, his mistakes.

Perhaps the prudent thing for him to say last year would have been: "Well, it's not currently legal in the province of Alberta. We're looking at all the alternatives, and when we make a decision, it'll be the best decision possible." But that's not what he said. He gave a firm assurance.

The Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife has given some firm assurances to people who have concerns about the privatization of the wildlife resource in this province as well. Some assurances have been made, and people are concerned about that because they believe that the assurances have been broken, that the introduction of Bill 31 is a signal of that compromise of commitment on the part of the government. The people who express their concerns are asked by the government not to worry. "We've got lots of firm assurances in this Bill. We've got lots of safeguards in there. You can trust us and believe us." But based on experience, Mr. Speaker, these people feel that they can't trust the government, that the words of assurance offered by government members at various times aren't worth the paper they're printed on, and these people are concerned. They're concerned about things in the Bill, for example, that point out that well, even though we're making a change in direction here and we're going to allow the sale of elk meat in the province of Alberta, we're not going to allow production of game animals on Crown land. That's a firm assurance that's supposed to provide comfort for people who are worried about the future of our wildlife resource.

The other assurance upon which the minister's confidence is based is that there will be no paid hunting in the province of Alberta of game farm animals. Now, if the government had some sort of a good batting average that people could look at — and I would suggest that in baseball a good batting average is anything over 300. Like, if your promises are good three out of 10 times, you've got a good batting average in baseball. We might look for that kind of batting in government. We would hope that as elected members we could be counted on to, you know, be straight with Albertans more times than that. But I suggest that this government's batting average doesn't even equal 300 in terms of making commitments to Albertans and following through on them. Whether it's with regards to . . . [interjections]

AN HON. MEMBER: Zero five zero.

MR. FOX: Zero five zero. Oh, there's lots of suggestions from members of all sides of the Assembly what that batting average might be, but the point that needs to be made is that commitments made to people have been broken in the past, and I think it's really important, Mr. Speaker, for the government to think very carefully about that when they offer assurances to people that they're not going to do things like allow paid hunting or allow the production of game farm animals on Crown land, because people don't believe it. They see that this is the thin edge of the wedge, the door is now open . . .

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Agriculture is rising on a point of order.

MR. ISLEY: I realize the hon. Member for Vegreville is trying to walk with a foot on both sides of the fence, but could he please address the principles of the Bill?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Citation, citation.

MR. ISLEY: Twenty-two.

MR. PASHAK: I thought you were going to tell us Elzinga's joke again.

MR. FOX: What did he say, Mr. Speaker?

MR. ELZINGA: He said you had slivers.

MR. FOX: The government's made some assurances in this Bill, Mr. Speaker, to people in the province of Alberta that they need not fear the privatization of an important wildlife resource because there are safeguards in there that indicate there will not be production of game farm animals on Crown land and that there will be no paid hunting, but I don't know who can count on those assurances based on experience with this government. There already is paid hunting in the province. I'm not sure if the minister is aware of it. Not with animals classified under this Act but I believe there are places in the province where you can go paid hunting for wild boar. If he'd like to know where, I'll tell him afterwards. [interjection] Wild boar.

MR. DOYLE: Niton Junction.

MR. FOX: Niton Junction, Mr. Speaker. The minister might want to look into it. Far be it from me to think he might understand things involved related to this, but the fact is that paid hunting is allowed in the province of Alberta – granted for species that aren't indigenous, but some people feel that the door has been opened, and they want to express their concerns about it.

Going through the minister's little pamphlet here where he's trying to convince everybody that this proposal is absolutely free of risk, that there is no problem whatsoever, there are a number of questions. Almost all of the questions are answered with a firm yes or no by the minister. I'd like to suggest that things aren't that simple when it comes to legalizing the sale of elk meat in the province of Alberta. It's not a clear yes and no on all of these questions because there's a substantial amount of controversy among people with legitimate, informed, educated opinion on what the impact of these changes would be on the wild populations. Whether it be disease, whether it be poaching,

there's a diversity of opinion and that opinion needs to be respected.

The minister talks about things that go on in provinces other than Alberta. "What is the status of game farming in other parts of Canada and in the United States?" Well, they offer some assurances here by pointing out that "British Columbia allows the farming and sale of meat from fallow deer, red deer, bison and reindeer." But it doesn't say elk. It doesn't describe any indigenous species in the province of British Columbia that they allow to be ranched and allow the sale of meat from. "The Yukon and Northwest Territories allow the raising of bison, reindeer and elk, and permit meat sales for bison and reindeer." They don't allow the sale of meat from elk. The minister doesn't explain that exclusion. He wants to make reference of that in an effort to convince people that it's somehow a good idea for Albertans, but he doesn't explain that. I can't call the information misleading, but it's certainly incomplete in terms of painting a picture of what's really going on in other jurisdictions.

Ten of sixteen of the western States in the [U.S.] allow the farming of native big game species. Eight of these ten states allow the sale of meat.

This is the minister's own statement in this pamphlet, but it doesn't refer to how many of them have legalized the sale of elk meat. There are just a lot of questions that beg answers based on the minister's information that's included here.

I might remind the hon. minister of what the situation is in other provinces in the country of Canada which allow the sale of elk meat. Well, British Columbia doesn't. Manitoba doesn't: they tried it and went back on it; found that it wasn't workable and that it did jeopardize the wild populations. Ontario doesn't. Quebec doesn't. Nova Scotia doesn't, and neither do Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland. So it's not something that's widespread in Canada, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is proposing to legalize the sale of elk meat; Saskatchewan does and New Brunswick does, according to the information that I have here. So it's not something that's widespread in the country. It's not something that Alberta needs to do in an effort to catch up to the rest of Canada. It is and remains a controversial issue that, I submit, needs to have much more examination and consideration.

Some of the other assurances given by the minister here. "Is it economically feasible to raise game animals domestically?" "Yes," he says. No maybes. No ifs, ands, or buts. "Yes, it is." It's almost like the government issuing a guarantee of return in the industry. From my knowledge of agriculture, and he wants to call this agricultural diversification, there are substantial risks both in terms of production and prices. You don't know from year to year what you're going to have to sell, and you don't know from year to year what you're going to get for the sale of that product unless it happens to be a supply-managed product that the government seems intent on getting rid of. There aren't many assurances in agriculture, but the minister has some here, and that is that yes, elk ranching is going to be economically feasible now and in the future.

The next question that's asked here: "Will wildlife populations in Alberta be depleted to obtain breeding stock for game animal production?" The answer is: "No. Fish and Wildlife officials of Alberta . . . will continue to tightly control and restrict the collection of live wild game." Now, that's a firm assurance given by the minister again, and I'd like to say clearly on the record that I have no concern whatsoever about people currently involved in the production of elk, no concern about their going out and trying to domesticate animals in the wild. I don't believe they're going to do it. They're not the people I am

concerned about here. They've got a substantial investment made in animals that they've brought to their farms. They'd be foolish to go out and try and bring in animals from the wild given the number of regulations in place with respect to keeping track of the stock on the farm and the disposition and additions to that basic herd. Plus they wouldn't be willing, I submit, to risk the introduction of some diseases.

I'm not worried about those people, Mr. Speaker, but it's the people who operate outside the legal system that give me cause for concern. I think there is reason to be concerned that Fish and Wildlife will not be able to properly monitor the potential for poaching in the industry, and that's based on experience. Because the reality is that the Department of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife has reduced the number of inspectors that they have. They don't have enough wildlife officers to do the job for the responsibilities they currently have.

I was talking to someone the other day who pointed out that up in the Fox Creek area they have but one officer working in an area that is home to a substantial percentage of the wild game populations in the province of Alberta. There's just one person trying to cover that incredible area, Mr. Speaker. When he's on holidays, everybody knows it and "Katie, bar the door." The people who seem to want to abuse the laws of the province and ignore the regulations, the people who profit by that, have every opportunity to do it when he's not there. They have ample opportunity when he is because he can't possibly cover that large area, but everybody knows when he's on holidays.

So we don't see any assurance from the government that they're going to put more money into inspection and control, are going to hire more wildlife officers in order to monitor the animals in the wild, and that causes concern for me. Certainly there is going to be pressure on people who do illegal things; there's going to be additional pressure on them to look at poaching elk. They can currently make \$90 a pound for the velvet if they harvest it at the right time, and there are people who are willing to take that risk. I don't know anybody personally who's willing to take that risk. Certainly the people who are involved in the industry in the legitimate way aren't willing to take that risk, but there are poachers in the province of Alberta. The Minister of Agriculture shakes his head, but there is a big market in the province of Alberta for products from wildlife, and it ought to be a concern to him. I know it is to the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife.

I'm saying that concern exists because there is a legal avenue now provided by this Act to not only sell velvet but also sell meat. The temptation for those who like to violate the law, those who see an opportunity to make money by ignoring regulations . . . There's a legal avenue there now for legitimate producers, and I submit that that opens up opportunities for people to operate outside the law but alongside the law in terms of selling.

Now, the minister's confident that he's got regulations in place that will prevent that. The people in the industry are confident that they've got answers to all of those questions. They believe that they've examined it again and again and again. I've talked to people. I've met some of the people, who he can't name, apparently, who are in the industry, who do seem to have answers for these questions. They're confident in the future of the industry. They've addressed these concerns. They're not willing to make an investment in an industry that they don't have confidence in the future of. They think they've got the questions answered. I submit to members of the Assembly that if the game ranching industry – the Alberta Game Growers Association, those people involved in the industry, and those people

who want to get involved in the industry – is confident that all of the questions have been answered, that there is no need for concern, that you can answer a firm yes or no to every question raised, if they're that confident and if the government is that confident that all the bases have been covered, that all of the questions are being answered, then I don't know why they're afraid of public hearings on this issue.

When I raised the concern in the Legislature the other day, suggested the possibility of an environmental impact assessment of the game farming industry, the game ranching industry, whatever you want to call it, to assess in a reasonable, open, public way the potential impact of the legalized sale of meat on the populations of the wild, you would have thought that I'd suggested that we turn Alberta upside down and send it to the moon from the guffaws on the government benches. They'd never heard of such a thing. "How on earth can you suggest that the public has a right to be heard on this issue?" say the government members to me. Well, I think it's important, Mr. Speaker. Clearly, this government has listened to the opinions expressed by the Game Growers Association, they have listened to the concerns expressed by some sectors in the agriculture industry, but I don't think they've listened to the other players, the other Albertans who have as much rights in this province as any other Albertans, who have concerns about the impact of the legalized sale of elk meat on populations in the wild.

It's my contention and the contention of members of the Official Opposition that before proceeding with this dramatic change of direction, before allowing the legalized sale of elk meat in the province of Alberta, we need to have a thorough open public review so that Albertans, wherever they live, whatever their vocation may be, have the opportunity to raise their concerns so that we can make sure that an informed, educated opinion is put on the public record from both sides of the issue. Seek scientific opinion, back up the contentions that you make with evidence, and if you're so confident that you've got the bases covered and the questions answered, then you have nothing to fear from an open public hearing process, an environmental impact assessment process.

That being said, I would like to introduce an amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 31. I have copies for circulation and hope that the Speaker has a copy. I'm proposing an amendment to the motion for second reading

by striking all the words after "That" and substituting:

Bill 31, Livestock Industry Diversification Act, be not now read a second time, but that the subject matter of the Bill be referred to the Select Standing Committee on Public Affairs, to assess the need for an environmental impact assessment on the provisions contained therein.

Now, the impact of that amendment, if passed . . . Again the Conservative members are guffawing. "How can the Member for Vegreville suggest that the public has a right to be heard? How can the Member for Vegreville suggest that Albertans who don't agree with them have opinions that count?" I'm not passing judgment on this, hon. member. All I'm saying is that this Legislature shouldn't pass judgment until it's had a chance to hear what all Albertans have to say on this issue.

There is precedent in this Chamber, I might remind. In 1983, Bill 44 went to the Public Affairs Committee. The Public Affairs Committee heard submissions on the matter from the public here in the Chamber. This is all we're asking for, Mr. Speaker. I think because this government, clearly, has listened to the opinions of a few Albertans on the issue, they feel they've got the bases covered and the questions answered. I'm saying that if that's the case, then you shouldn't be afraid of open

public involvement. There are substantial numbers of Albertans who feel that they have concerns that have not been addressed.

For those people involved in the industry right now – who are going to read my words on paper, because the government's going to send them out to them – I say to them: you better hope, in terms of the future of this industry, that these concerns are addressed before the fact. Because I can assure you that if this Bill is rammed through the Legislature and if tens of thousands of Albertans who have concerns about this industry don't have a chance to raise those concerns or have them addressed, then the industry is going to be called into question and harassed for years to come. There are going to be people in the province of Alberta who feel their legitimate opportunities for expression have been denied them, who feel that their government who made commitments to them a year ago about the future of the legalized sale of meat has broken those commitments, has come forward with an abrupt about-face without any warning for the interest groups involved.

All we're saying in this amendment, Mr. Speaker, is that we want the public to be heard. We want to provide an opportunity. The import of this is that second reading would proceed in the debate in the Legislature after we've had the opportunity to assess the opinions of Albertans on the issue. It's not an unreasonable request. If the amendment is accepted by the Chair, then it's on the floor and open for debate.

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

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to speak in favour of this amendment to the motion for second reading as well. The reason is that I've had the impression that the minister responsible for this Bill in the Assembly has cast into doubt the concerns that certain volunteer organizations within the province have expressed about this Bill. Now, whether or not he's intended to do so is irrelevant at this point because the fact is that the perception is now out there that they are not considered a creditable series of organizations when it comes to this matter. I think it's important that we be able to hear from those associations. Remember, they're volunteer associations. I keep seeing the government spending money advertising their love for volunteers; you know, I even see a television advertisement with the Premier saying how much he loves volunteers.

Well, if the government really loves volunteers, and it apparently does because it has asked the volunteer sector to take on more and more of the responsibilities previously held by government but nowadays shirked by government, then I say: "Put your money where your mouth is and put your time where your mouth is. If you believe that the volunteer sector is important, give them a chance to come into this Chamber and make their case." Now, if the committee, which is constituted by the entire Assembly, is of the opinion that those representations are for nothing, in other words, that they don't count, then let the members stand up and say so – on division, I would challenge. Let them say so and proceed with the Bill.

But surely if we're elected to represent people in a democratic quorum, we have a responsibility to be as democratic as we can

in that regard. Bringing in a Bill and pushing it through the House a few weeks later is not exactly the most open forum possible. But we have right at our fingertips, Mr. Speaker, the wherewithal to listen to the public . . .

MR. DAY: I'd be choking too.

MS BARRETT: Well, it's the flu actually.

. . . in a way that's on the record, that isn't merely an exchange of letters in what can become a paper war.

Now, I was present – in the gallery, of course – during the hearings on Bill 44. A lot of that was stage-managed, I must say, and I'm not sure that it was the most democratic that it could have been. Only certain groups were allowed to make submissions, and in fact the number of groups supporting the government's position on Bill 44 outnumbered the number of groups that were opposed to Bill 44. [interjection] The Member for Calgary-McCall says that's good. Well, that's his version of democracy: stacking the deck. I don't happen to buy that version of democracy.

But even knowing the Conservative tendencies to do just that, to stack the deck, I think it is better that it happen in this forum even with that stacked deck than not at all.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we're not saying that the Bill is so awful that it should not under any circumstances be passed. I think the representations that have been made here today have been done so in the form of questions and raising concerns. It is a concern about the principle, of course, but they are a series of concerns that I think are legitimate. If this government is so sure that it is doing the right thing, then what harm does it do to set aside a few days of the business of the Assembly and listen to the public on this matter, Mr. Speaker?

I note the time, Mr. Speaker, and therefore I request leave to adjourn debate.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Having heard the motion of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands, 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. [interjections] It is the opinion of the Chair that the motion to adjourn debate was carried.

MR. HORSMAN: By way of advice for the members of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, there will be continuation of second reading of various Bills on the Order Paper. No particular order can obviously be stated at this time. It depends upon a number of factors, but obviously at this particular stage in the proceedings of this Assembly, members should be prepared to deal with all matters at any time.

[At 12:59 p.m. the House adjourned to Monday at 2:30 p.m.]

