

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, June 4, 1990 2:30 p.m.**

Date: 90/06/04

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

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Prayers

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

O Lord, grant us a daily awareness of the precious gift of life which You have given us.

As Members of this Legislative Assembly we dedicate our lives anew to the service of our province and our country.

Amen.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. members . . .

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Order in the press gallery, please. Mr. Speaker is standing. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: In the Speaker's gallery I'd like to introduce a number of people who wish they had that same kind of co-operation from the Sergeants-at-Arms in their particular jurisdictions.

Members of the Pacific Northwest Legislative Leadership Forum are meeting in Edmonton today and tomorrow. As I call their names, I would like to have them rise, and then perhaps members will welcome them at the conclusion. Leading the delegation is Senator Alan Bluechel, president, or Speaker if you will, of the Senate of the state of Washington; Representative Cal Anderson from the state Legislature of Washington; from the state of Alaska Legislature, Representative Sam Cotten, Speaker of the House, and Representative Fran Ulmer; from the state of Idaho, my good friend Speaker of the House Tom Boyd, together with Senator Mark Ricks; next, our immediate neighbours from Montana, a friend and fellow Speaker John Vincent, Senator Delwyn Gage, Senate majority leader, and also Representative Linda Nelson from the state Legislature; from the state of Oregon, Senator Eugene Timms and Representative Phil Keisling; from our sister province of British Columbia, the Hon. Elwood Veitch. I'd ask that they all rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

head: **Notices of Motions**

MR. CHUMIR: Mr. Speaker, I give notice of my intention to bring forward a motion under Standing Order 40 after question period with respect to recognizing the first anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

Bill 52

Natural Resources Conservation Board Act

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 52, Natural Resources Conservation Board Act. This being a money Bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of the Bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill establishes the framework and procedures for reviewing and approving a variety of developmental procedures involving non energy resources in the province of Alberta. Major forestry projects and large water management projects will be subject to a mandatory review. Recreational and tourism projects, metallic and quarriable mineral projects for which an environmental impact assessment has been ordered are subject to the new review and approval process. Specific projects identified by the government will also be subject to the new review and approval process prescribed in the Bill. No reviewable project will be allowed without the board's approval.

Mr. Speaker, among other things, the Bill empowers the board to hold public hearings, conduct investigations, authorize intervenor funding, and conduct joint reviews with other agencies and jurisdictions, including the federal government. The board will ensure that those directly affected by or who have an interest in resource development projects have the opportunity to make full representations before they are approved.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is unique. It will put Alberta in the forefront of jurisdictions committed to the twin objectives of stringent environmental protection and economic growth.

I look forward to a full discussion in further readings of this Bill.

[Leave granted; Bill 52 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Bill 272

Environmental Assessment Act

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce Bill 272, being the Environmental Assessment Act.

This Bill would establish a board of impartial experts to review all significant industrial development projects and other kinds of projects in the province of Alberta that would have serious potential environmental impacts.

[Leave granted; Bill 272 read a first time]

Bill 53

Parentage and Maintenance Act

MR. TANNAS: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 53, the Parentage and Maintenance Act.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill modernizes and replaces the maintenance provisions of the existing Maintenance and Recovery Act by addressing various administrative and Charter issues.

[Leave granted; Bill 53 read a first time]

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I would move that Bill 53, as introduced by the hon. Member for Highwood, be placed on the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

MR. MITCHELL: A point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: Clerk, please continue with announcing the orders.

CLERK: Tabling Returns and Reports.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Additional moving of Bills: Edmonton-Meadowlark, is this your intention? Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MR. MITCHELL: I was just making a point of order that I'd like to raise after question period, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the annual report of the Alberta Automobile Insurance Board for the year 1989.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the 1988-89 annual report of the Alberta College of Art.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Agriculture, followed by the Member for Clover Bar.

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly 34 grade 6 students from the Glendon school, located in the Bonnyville constituency. They're accompanied today by their grade 6 teacher Mrs. Thelma Watrich and the school principal Mr. Dave Mahoney. They're in the members' gallery, and I'd ask that they stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Clover Bar, followed by Ponoka-Rimbey.

MR. GESELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Hon. Ralph Klein, Minister of the Environment, and our government of Alberta, it is my pleasure to introduce the winners of the 1990 Alberta Environment Award to you, Mr. Speaker, and through you to the members of the Assembly and perhaps also to all Albertans. I ask that the winners rise as they are called and remain standing and wait until everyone has been introduced before they receive the welcome of the House.

Mr. Speaker, in the category recognizing the individual, Mr. Bill Bresnahan from Strathcona county was chosen. Mr. Bresnahan has demonstrated his concern for the environment and his community by being a volunteer leader of youth groups in Strathcona county, where the youth groups plant some 400 trees annually. Mr. Bresnahan is here with his wife, Connie, and, representing the next generation of Albertans, baby Drew Bresnahan.

Mr. Speaker, the recipient for this year's volunteer organization are the Boy Scouts of Canada, Calgary region, represented by Mrs. Grace Belzner, the regional commissioner, and Mr. Martin Trim, a member of the board of directors of the Calgary Regional Council, Boy Scouts of Canada. This group developed a 21st century camping program to implement a practical program for camping and environmental protection. As the project for this year, 1,500 youths are planting 10,000 trees under a program called Trees for Canada. In 1991 this will be expanded to 70,000 trees.

Our special achievement award for 1990 goes to Northern Telecom Canada Limited. This award is not an annual one, Mr. Speaker, but may be awarded by the committee for outstanding environment achievement. Mr. Don Coward, manager of the resource protection department, and Mrs. Kathleen McKilligan, health and safety hygiene specialist, are representing the dedicated management and employees at the digital switching plant, who implemented a comprehensive environmental protection program at the plant. They expect to reduce waste in the plant by 90 percent from 1988 levels. It is expected that the program momentum will continue into Northern Telecom's other 252 plants and offices in northern Alberta.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, how many more of those? I'm sorry; I realize this has been drafted for you by another department, but it is really not the purpose of introductions to be going on at such length, with due respect to the terrific work that these folks have been doing. So, please, wrap it up.

MR. GESELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two more introductions.

MR. SPEAKER: Will you shorten them, please.

MR. GESELL: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

For the industry, business, and government agency category, Mr. Ian Smyth and Mr. Doug Bruchet from Canadian Petroleum Association; and for the 1989 grade 8A class of the R.I. Baker school in Coaldale, the educational institution organization award is provided to instructor Mr. Perry Mirkovich and Mr. Darrel Nikoleychuk.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Hon. Ralph Klein, Minister of the Environment, and the government of Alberta, I congratulate the recipients and ask that members of the House give the 1990 Environment Award winners a warm welcome and our appreciation.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: I'm sorry. The Chair enjoyed a week away from the House – a little bit scrambled here. Ponoka-Rimbey was recognized first, then Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MR. JONSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm pleased to be able to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly the entire junior high student body of Crestomere school, which is located in the county of Ponoka. They are accompanied by their teachers Mr. Roger Stewart and Mr. Bryan Radmanovich, and bus driver Linda Turner. I would just like to add one piece of information, Mr. Speaker. These students have gone through a rather unique experience this year in that they've had to move the entire school nine miles to the north to Sylvan Heights while the board is seeing to the renovation and modernization of their school. So they've had quite a disruption in their school year, but they're coping very well. Mr. Speaker, they're seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask that they stand and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Meadowlark, then Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with a good deal of pleasure that I rise to introduce to the Members of the Legislative Assembly a grade 6 class from the Elmwood elementary school, a class of 26 students. They are accompanied today by their teacher Ruth McIntosh. I would ask that they rise in the gallery and receive the welcome of the Members of the Legislative Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly 12 students from the English as a Second Language class at the AVC Winnifred Stewart campus in my riding. They're accompanied by their teacher Sonia Ostashevsky. I request that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure, on behalf of my hon. colleague from Athabasca-Lac La Biche, to introduce to you and to Members of the Legislative Assembly 9 students from the Amisk community school. Amisk, Mr. Speaker, means "beaver" in Cree. They are accompanied by their teacher Mr. Dave Collins. They are seated in the public gallery, and I'd ask that they stand to receive the warm welcome of this Legislative Assembly.

head: Ministerial Statements

Senior Citizens' Week

MR. BRASSARD: Mr. Speaker, yesterday marked the beginning of Alberta's fifth annual Senior Citizens' Week, June 3 to June 9. The week is spearheaded by the seniors' advisory council for Alberta, chaired by my colleague Mr. Tom Musgrove, MLA for Bow Valley. I'm pleased to inform the Assembly that communities throughout the province are working with the council to build the tradition of honouring seniors during the first full week of June.

This year our theme is Seniors: A Strength of Alberta. This theme was chosen because senior citizens bring a very real strength to our families, our communities, and our province as a whole. Older Albertans have a tremendous wealth of knowledge and skill that contribute something special to the lives of their friends, their neighbours, their children, and their children's children.

There are three objectives for this week, Mr. Speaker. They are to recognize and honour senior citizens in Alberta, to highlight the positive contribution that seniors are making in their communities, and to promote the understanding of and encourage positive attitudes towards seniors. The seniors' advisory council for Alberta is attempting to meet these objectives by distributing posters and Senior Citizens' Week information kits to groups and communities across the province. Kits have also been sent to Alberta's media to encourage their support and coverage of the week's activities planned in their areas. Council members and I will be touring the province this week participating in teas, open houses, and so on.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that the vision, tenacity, and hard work of today's seniors shaped this province. They cleared the land, and they established schools, churches, businesses, and communities. They laid the cornerstones for the quality of life we enjoy today, and their contributions haven't stopped. The

October 1989 Alberta Bureau of Statistics estimates set the number of Alberta seniors aged 65 and over at 219,000. By the year 2016, one out of every seven Albertans will be a senior. Twenty percent of our volunteers are seniors, and six out of 10 seniors make financial contributions to voluntary organizations and to their families. This one week each year gives us a special opportunity to celebrate the many ways in which seniors touch our lives and make us all better for it, but this government acknowledges the importance of older Albertans all year round by providing ongoing programs and services for seniors.

Members of the seniors' advisory council for Alberta volunteer their time and talents to ensure that the needs of seniors in the province are identified and addressed. The council operates a toll-free telephone information service for older Albertans and others who work with them. The council also acts as liaison to community groups around the province and advises this government on specific programs and policies for senior citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I urge every member of this Legislative Assembly to join Mr. Musgrove and I in recognizing those who contribute so much to this province by celebrating Alberta's fifth annual Senior Citizens' Week, June 3 to 9.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, it's difficult to disagree with the contents of the ministerial statement. Any Albertan who has had the firsthand opportunity to meet one of the pioneers of this province has learned infinitely from that experience, and I know that we look forward to continuing to do so. But I find it difficult to accept that one week's worth of lip service can ever make up for the fact that this government promises one thing and delivers another.

Just recently their budget put on hold promised extended care facilities for seniors. These things are not just institutions, Mr. Speaker. They're needed facilities that are very cost-efficient, that allow people, seniors especially, to maintain some form of independence without being hospitalized. Similarly, the lack of funds for the health units to engage in health promotion for seniors and the need for more geriatric and gerontological assessment and treatment of the needs of seniors are things that need to be built into this government's budget. It's one thing to say, "We love you, seniors"; it's quite another to deliver on the programs and services that really make the difference to their lives.

Mr. Speaker, as a New Democrat I'm very proud to belong to the party that hammered out and pioneered important programs in Canada like pensions and medicare. Those programs really counted. They made a difference to seniors, and I challenge the government to put its money where its mouth is and not just announce every year the seniors' week and appreciate their contribution but to actually put some support to making sure that those people aren't consigned to the dustbin of history or are without the appropriate services they so seriously deserve.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: Oral Question Period

Telecommunications Regulation

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, last November the Alberta government and especially the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications banded together with his counterparts from the other two prairie provinces to form what was called the Prairie Telecommunications Alliance, the purpose of which was to fight the federal legislation that was going to put the gover-

nance of AGT under CRTC regulation. I'd like to quote the minister from last November. He said:

Although there is western representation on the CRTC, this body cannot hope to reflect Prairie interests and concerns as effectively as the existing provincial regulatory authorities. He had it pretty good at that point, Mr. Speaker. Now, since then the CRTC hasn't changed, and the federal Bill hasn't become law; his counterparts in Saskatchewan and Manitoba are still fighting the legislation. So I'd like to ask the minister: what happened? What changed between November 1989 and last week, when he decided that his government's willingness to fight the feds suddenly ceased?

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, indeed, the western ministers did get together. We have co-operated well from the standpoint of negotiations with the federal government following the Supreme Court decision. Bill C-41 was indeed given first reading in the House of Commons, and that made it very important for us to have a united front in order to hold Bill C-41 pending the development of a telecommunications policy for Canada that was sensitive to the regions of Canada. Those discussions have been ongoing. They are still ongoing, and in the meantime we have received certain assurances from the federal government that will ensure that indeed the services and rates that are now offered by AGT and are part and parcel of the fabric of Alberta will be incorporated as part of the CRTC regulatory responsibility.

MS BARRETT: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not surprised that the minister, who writes a so-called golden share that's written in sand, that in fact has no long-term protective measures, would believe the federal government when they say that they're going to take care of this. Mr. Speaker, that Bill hasn't received second reading. What, in fact, can the minister say to assure Albertans that the CRTC rules will change to allow the Alberta government to maintain control over what is rightfully our jurisdiction?

MR. STEWART: The hon. member may think it's our rightful jurisdiction. Apparently the Supreme Court of Canada doesn't agree with that. The jurisdiction of telecommunications is clearly a federal matter. It is up to the federal government, therefore, to bring forward legislation. We had the Railway Act amendment set aside. A telecommunications Act is on its way and should be tabled in the House of Commons shortly, but in the meantime it's very important for us to ensure, along with our colleagues from the other provincial provinces, that there will be, in fact, a sensitivity of that regulator to the provincial interests. That will take place, as I say, from the standpoint of the assurances that have been given to us on the basis that all rates and services for our rural people – the ILS, the extended flat rate calling – will become part and parcel of the federal regulation. There will be a presence of CRTC right here in this province, and all of the rates will be factored in and an order issued by the CRTC as soon as, indeed, the regulator takes over.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, he sure hasn't told us why he's not willing to stand up and fight with the other Premiers from Saskatchewan and Manitoba to protect the interest of consumers. In fact, it looks like he goes like this: he's just crossing his fingers and hoping. My question to the minister is this: how can Albertans count on this government to protect Albertans in the long run against unnecessary price hikes and gouging when they've obviously bent over backwards and thrown in the towel?

MR. STEWART: I think the hon. member is being a bit of an alarmist, Mr. Speaker. The fact of the matter is that the CRTC right now regulates 70 percent of the subscribers in Canada. They do it effectively. There are no excessive rates; there is not gouging. It is a public process type of opportunity in which all opportunities for intervenors are permitted, and the essence of it is that Albertans can be assured that rates in the future will be regulated and adjusted in a reasonable manner.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, and there will be no new taxes either.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to designate the second question to the Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Alberta Government Telephones

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Speaker, AGT financial statements show that they've been a steady money-maker for a long time; in fact, AGT made over \$56 million in profits last year alone, a benefit that'll be lost to all Albertans if it's sold. As well, the government said there's going to be an interest-free loan plan to help Albertans buy up to half of the shares offered, which the minister estimates will be worth \$500 million. With interest rates at very high levels a financing plan will cost the government at least \$60 million. So my question to the minister is this: will he admit that the combination of lost revenue plus the cost of this interest-free purchase plan represents a loss to the province of nearly \$120 million next year alone?

MR. STEWART: Well, Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member would do his homework, he would find that the net profits of AGT have never gone to the benefit of the taxpayer by virtue of being added into the General Revenue Fund of the province. Those profits are used for the purposes of plowing back into the company to keep up with technology, and their requirements, Mr. Speaker, by way of capital expenditure now and indeed in the future are substantial. The taxpayer has in the past been the person that has had to stand behind that sort of borrowing. In the future AGT will have the opportunity to access capital markets generally, and the risk will be transferred to investors rather than taxpayers.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Of course, when AGT retains its profits, that ends up helping all Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, all Albertans know how this government is fond of handing money over to its rich and powerful friends like Peter Pocklington and others. Under the interest-free loan plan it appears that the more shares you can afford to buy the higher the subsidy you can potentially get from the government. AGT privatization adds up to the same old story, and I'd like to ask the minister: will there be any limits on the interest-free loan plan to ensure that wealthy purchasers will not have their share purchases subsidized by the government?

MR. STEWART: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Speaker, we'll keep him to his word.

The government is under tremendous pressure to make sure that all the available AGT shares will be purchased. I mean, it would be quite embarrassing if they had a privatization and they couldn't sell all their shares, so they may end up pricing them at fire sale prices so that those who, like Bell Telephone, are wealthy enough to afford to buy them end up getting a hidden subsidy. I'd like to ask the minister to ensure that the pur-

chasers of these shares don't end up getting a hidden subsidy. Can he give us a commitment today that AGT's share prices will represent the true value of the company and that investors will not get a hidden subsidy from this government putting those shares on the market at a discount?

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, like any share issue it will be sized, and the price will be determined in accordance with the market circumstances at that time. That matter will be translated into a price for the investors. It will be a fair price, a reasonable price, and one that meets the market conditions of the day.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-North West.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is asking Albertans to invest half a billion dollars in a company that they already own simply based upon the assurances of this government that this is a good deal. Given this government's track record on GSR, Gainers, Nanton Water, et cetera, I have severe doubts about recommending AGT as a wise investment for the long term. A responsible government would have undertaken exhaustive research before offering the legislation that we now have before us. However, since the research has not been made available to this House, I have no way of knowing if in fact the research has been done. My question is to the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications. The minister has stated that the calculations regarding the tax liability by the opposition have been incorrect. Would the minister please inform the House what his calculations and his research indicate so that we know what kind of tax AGT is likely to pay over the next 10 years? Will you make that available for us, please?

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, how can you determine what taxes are going to be unless you know what the income of the corporation is over a period of time? All I indicated was that under current corporate tax law the opportunity to minimize taxes is there, and that has been confirmed by Revenue Canada for us. Insofar as his preamble, I certainly hope the leader of the Liberal Party comes back soon. He says he's in favour of privatization in principle, and this member gets up and says something totally different. It would be nice to get them all together once in a while.

MR. BRUSEKER: Maybe the minister should read *Hansard* and see what I said in *Hansard*, because obviously he didn't pay attention then.

There's something called a pro forma that will tell you about the tax structure, by the way.

A competitive AGT, which this government claims they want, would need to reduce its debt to equity ratio from the current of about 90 to 10 closer to a 50-50 ratio. Has the minister examined the effect that would have on telephone rates and the effect upon Albertans?

MR. STEWART: Well, that is one of the parts of the exercise, Mr. Speaker. One of the whole purposes of it is to get that debt equity ratio at a 50-50 level, which is the norm in the telecommunications industry. So that will proceed on that basis.

MR. BRUSEKER: Finally, then, Mr. Speaker, on Friday the minister stated that he had had some communication with the CRTC and with the federal Minister of Communications. Will

the minister tell us exactly what discussions have taken place regarding the future regulation of AGT by the CRTC? What's going to happen?

MR. STEWART: It's a very hypothetical question, Mr. Speaker. All I can do is to give a general response to it. Yes, indeed, we had some very satisfactory discussions both with the Minister of Communications on several occasions as well as the CRTC: the commissioner, the deputy commissioner, and a number of the officials. As a result of all of that, we have the assurance that we are going to have a fair regulator, a just regulator, one that will be sensitive to the interests of Alberta, and indeed all the programs and services and rates that are now in place will be grandfathered in to that new regulator until such time as they're changed by way of some sort of a public process sometime in the future.

Petroleum Industry

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, as you and the other members of the Assembly well realize the lifeblood of the oil industry, especially our smaller producers without downstream operations, is investor capital. A number of junior oil companies have indicated to me that it's now virtually impossible in today's tight equity environment to attract investment. That obviously will have a very serious effect on small producer operations this year. I'm wondering what assurances the Minister of Energy can provide to the small producers that the government is prepared to help during this difficult period.

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm well aware of the concerns that the intermediate and small producers have with regard to securing equity capital, and the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek is the one who continues to remind me of the importance of equity in the industry, particularly at a time when we have high interest rates. We have some regulatory hurdles to overcome to be able to get our product, our natural gas, to market, the new expanding markets in Ontario and in the United States. I take every opportunity I can as a priority, Mr. Speaker, to speak to investment symposiums. I spoke to the Independent Petroleum Association of Canada investment symposium last year and I will this year, and I had the opportunity to speak to a group of institutional investors who were here from Europe and the United States. It takes a little bit of educating to have them look beyond the major producers to the smaller and the independent producers, and it's as much an education process as anything. All we can all do is continue to point that out and point out the long-term opportunities in this industry.

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, in these discussions that I've had with the smaller operators, of course the question of the Alberta royalty tax credit has come up, and I'm wondering if the Minister of Energy could indicate to the Assembly today to what extent the ARTC is helping in this current quarter and whether it's enough.

MR. ORMAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, we went through the exercise of retooling our Alberta royalty tax credit program with a couple of objectives, the first objective being that it is a five-year program. Now, for anyone that has tried to finance at the banks or financial institutions, longevity of this program is number one and most important. We were able to do that for the industry. That is a commitment that goes well into the

middle of this decade, and I think it is probably the most important aspect of the retooled ARTC program.

The second point, as the hon. member knows, is the price sensitivity of the Alberta royalty tax credit program. This sensitivity allows for the credit to increase as prices decrease and for the credits to decrease as prices increase. It's an inverse function, Mr. Speaker. That makes us have the opportunity to preserve the infrastructure of the industry at extremely low prices: \$10, \$11, \$12, \$13, and then move out of the program as prices increase. We believe that's appropriate. We'll continue to monitor the success of the program.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Belmont.

Social Workers' Contract Negotiations

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Labour. On May 17 the Premier promised social workers that if they agreed to return to work and to the negotiation table, he could pretty much guarantee that a good contract would be the result of such a return. He said that he felt very strongly that through management coming together with the employees and working it out across the table, a satisfactory solution could be reached. A back-to-work protocol was signed, workers kept their promises, and the government negotiators are now ignoring that protocol. More than two weeks have passed since the Premier promised a good contract. My question to the minister is: why have the negotiators for the Public Service Commission not acted on that promise?

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, it takes two to tango. At the negotiating table both sides must sit there and talk to one another and exchange positions until they come to some position that is mutually agreeable. That has yet to occur. The government negotiating team has indeed put two new proposals forward. There has been no new written proposal at all from the social workers, the local union bargaining team. Nevertheless, we are hopeful that by the use of what they wanted to call a facilitator – we've accepted that; it's a mediation process. Professor Tim Christian, dean of the University of Alberta law school, has indeed accepted the role. He has agreed to take on that role, and I am hopeful that with his assistance we will be able to make some progress.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, with such a detailed protocol having been signed, there shouldn't be any need at all for the use of a mediator or a facilitator. On May 17 the Premier told this Assembly, and I quote, "I have given orders to our negotiators to immediately negotiate the matters which they care about." The negotiators have not followed through on the key issues of caseload size, of workload, and of pay. So the question is to the minister, and I'll make it multichoice to make it easy: was the Premier's promise to the Assembly completely an empty one; did the Minister of Labour not pass on the orders to the negotiators?

AN HON. MEMBER: Two questions.

MR. SIGURDSON: No, I'm making it multichoice. This is not two questions; just relax.

Or, finally, the final choice . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. [interjections] Order please. One question. Thank you.

MR. SIGURDSON: Multichoice.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much. There's no multichoice involved in this outfit. Thanks very much.

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, we indeed have given those instructions to the government negotiating team. Would that we had the authority to give those instructions to the union's negotiating team. If we had, perhaps some kind of agreement might have occurred already. I might point out that the back-to-work protocol, which was signed by both sides, clearly says:

The employer and union agree to commence bargaining immediately . . . and to make serious efforts to engage in collective bargaining until an agreement is reached.

Our government negotiating team is doing everything it possibly can to forward those. In fact, we have gone so far as to invite a facilitator in, hoping that will bring the negotiations on to a quicker solution, a resolution of it. All of the issues that we said would be on the table, we have put on the table, but it is very difficult to come to an agreement when one side does not keep on negotiating and putting proposals forward. We are hoping, however, that Mr. Christian will have the same help for us as he did in previous discussions that led to his back-to-work protocol.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Buffalo.

Alberta Government Telephones

(continued)

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications. We have no objection in principle to privatization, but we're going to support this Bill only . . . [interjections] In principle, we don't, but we're only going to support this Bill in the event that it's an exception to the many business bumbles of this government and is established openly and thoroughly to be a good deal and serves the interests of the people of this province. We've had enough of decisions, like the Peter Pocklington decision, which are made in the back rooms without information and are totally representative of the insulting way in which this government operates [interjections] It announces the privatization of AGT and gives only general platitudes. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order in the whole House. The Chair can't even hear what the member is saying.

Hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, the question, please.

MR. CHUMIR: It's insulting that this government gives only general platitudes about what it's doing without releasing the many studies it has about the impact on consumers and the business rationale. Since this minister presents as a business rationale . . . [interjections] Do you want to hear the question or not? [interjections] Good. Well, I would want to hear it too.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, this has been going on now for two minutes. Could we please have the question?

MR. CHUMIR: Since the minister keeps talking about privatization making it possible for AGT to compete in a world-class telecommunications industry, I wonder if he can give us specific

information and table studies which will tell Albertans what opportunities we're going to have to compete in a world-class technology industry that we won't have if AGT remains under government ownership, what . . .

MR. SPEAKER: That's it. Thank you. [interjection] Thank you.

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the debate. I mean, that's what the purpose is of the Bill going through this Legislature. It's an opportunity for everyone to put forward their views with respect to the Bill and the contents of the Bill. I'm sure that we will get to the details of that Bill in the course of committee, and I look forward to the debate.

MR. CHUMIR: We need some facts. You can't debate without facts, and they're hiding all the facts. I'm wondering whether the minister will then tell us and table reports which tell us what benefits we're going to get as a province if AGT raises the \$2 billion that it needs for expansion as a private company instead of continuing to borrow the money at beneficial rates, which are available under the credit of this province.

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, I suppose there may be a difference in points of view from the standpoint of where those dollars should come from in the future, the substantial amounts that are required to keep up with technology; as the hon. member indicates, probably \$2 billion-plus in the next three to five years. We happen to believe that this company should be adjusted on the basis of allowing it to move into the capital markets, the equity markets, and have that opportunity to raise capital that is much needed, as opposed to the taxpayer. I think that's a reasonable way. The hon. Member for Calgary-North West earlier pointed out that the opportunities would exist if there was a 50-50 debt-equity ratio. I concur with that. I think the hon. member will just have to await the Bill and the debate on the Bill. We'll have full opportunity to debate it from every aspect.

MR. SPEAKER: Highwood.

Flood Relief

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to *direct my* question today to the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services. For several weeks communities in the Highwood and elsewhere in southwestern Alberta have been subjected to heavy rains, high water, and some flooding. Indeed, in my constituency flooding has occurred on the Highwood River and the Sheep River. My question is: will the minister please explain why it is that although the department's response to the emergency was swift and generous, by comparison the response to the disaster relief is so apparently slow?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, there hardly is a conclusion yet to the situation with respect to rain in southern Alberta. In fact, while some of the rivers from the Bow River south have seen their water flows decrease in the last 24 hours, the reality is that flow rates are increasing in rivers north of Calgary, and in fact it appears that the Red Deer River will probably peak tomorrow afternoon, as will the Dickson dam. The crest level behind the dam right now is near the top, and there may very well be a situation where the water will flow in that direction.

So what we basically do in the event of an emergency or disaster is deal with the ongoing situation that does exist, offer whatever help is needed, and when the matter is concluded, we'll go in and complete our investigation with the local municipality. It's hardly the time to do that now. Since these events started occurring last Wednesday and last Thursday and last Friday, every offer of assistance has been provided to the various municipalities as an assured offer of support from the government of Alberta.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Highwood.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, in the event that you're going to have to wait a brief while for the floods to subside, will the minister assure the Assembly that he will act quickly once the response for disaster relief comes to his attention?

MR. KOWALSKI: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd refer the hon. member to *Hansard*. I've made that assurance on numerous occasions in the last week, and certainly I've made that assurance on every disaster-related event going back to 1986. It's not a question of not responding and not responding quickly. I think the hon. member may just have a lack of experience in dealing with the kind of situation in his own constituency, and hopefully he'll never have to go through this experience at another time in the future.

Telephone Service in Rural Areas

MR. DOYLE: Mr. Speaker, rural Albertans have to pay thousands of dollars to private utility companies every time they want electricity or natural gas hooked up in rural locations. By way of contrast, new telephone hookups in rural Alberta are covered mostly by AGT. This is because new hookups are subsidized as a matter of public policy. It makes the telephone service equally affordable to all Albertans. I wonder if the minister can confirm that once it is privatized, AGT will no longer be required to subsidize the cost of new telephone hookups in Alberta, and rural Albertans will be forced to pay thousands of dollars every time they want to extend telephone lines to their new homes or farmsteads.

MR. STEWART: I don't know, Mr. Speaker, whether the hon. member had the opportunity of being in the House at the time of the estimates for the individual line service, but the individual line service, which is a program that will extend telephone service to each and every rural resident, will be completed in 1991 with the modernization of certain exchanges completed in 1992. Funds have been properly appropriated for that purpose, and indeed the program will be probably the best individual line service program in all of North America. So the opportunities for rural service will be there, access is there, universal service is there for rural Alberta, and it will remain.

MR. DOYLE: Mr. Speaker, I'm talking about new hookups to rural Albertans. I don't think this minister wants to level with rural Albertans about AGT's privatization and how it's going to drive up the cost of rural installation of telephone services.

Given that rural Albertans have to pay through the nose every time they want a power or natural gas hookup in new locations in rural Alberta and given that there is nothing in this government's Bill to prevent AGT from charging similar amounts once it is privatized, how can the minister justify forcing rural

subscribers to pay through the nose every time telephone hookups are required in rural Alberta?

MR. STEWART: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court of Canada says that the regulation of and jurisdiction over telecommunications is in the federal jurisdiction. We cannot put something in our Bill that says things like that, but indeed we can be assured, Mr. Speaker, that all costs in respect to rates and services over the years will be dealt with by a public body, an independent body, and will be dealt with on a just and fair basis.

Natural Resources Conservation Board

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the receiver/manager of the Environment portfolio, who would be the Minister of Energy, of course, tabling the first significant environmental legislation of the 22nd Legislature in the unfortunate absence of the Environment minister. I wonder if the minister would explain why the . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. That's unparliamentary. Let's not bother with it.

MR. McINNIS: I wonder if the Minister of Energy would explain why the loopholes in the earlier draft are still within the draft tabled today in that the government controls whether projects go before this board by designating an EIA. If there's no EIA, it's not before the board. Does this not give the cabinet authority to exempt almost every project?

MR. ORMAN: No, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

MR. McINNIS: The supplementary is a simple one. In the case of the Alberta-Pacific project a process was set up by the government. People went through the process, a recommendation came through, and the government negated the whole operation by setting up yet another study. My question is directly related to the new project put forward by Alberta-Pacific. Will the minister undertake that this process, NRCB, will be applied to the new project, and it won't be negated in the final analysis?

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, the projects that will be reviewed by the new natural resources conservation board are quite clearly outlined in the Act. I believe it's section 4, and if the hon. member would simply refer to it and spend some time referring to it, we'll be able to deal with that issue in second reading and committee study.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While social services consumers and helping professionals and volunteers and community agencies are struggling against immense odds in the real world trying to meet ever increasing needs and demands, the minister responsible for Family and Social Services continues to stall on making any positive changes and improvements because he says that we're all to wait patiently for some magical reform packages. Well, sources tell us: yes, the system is going

to be changed, but, true to form, the changes won't necessarily be for the good. My questions are to the Minister of Family and Social Services. Will the minister now confirm or deny that part of his plan is to abolish AISH, the assured income for the severely handicapped?

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure where the Premier's good friend the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar is getting her information. I can only reiterate what I've said in the past, and that's that I'm working with advocacy groups, I'm working with Albertans, I'm working with users, and I'm working with my colleagues to make sure that we make some appropriate and progressive changes to our social policies here in Alberta. We're constantly striving for improvement. Mr. Speaker, we recognize that some 65,000 to 70,000 caseloads depend on our services at this time, and we're not very happy about that. We know that for the most part they don't want to be on our caseload. We're anxious to work with them, as well, to see if we can't find alternatives.

MRS. HEWES: Well, there's no yes or no there. The recipients of AISH are vulnerable people, Mr. Speaker, who need the answers to this; they don't need to be left in limbo.

My supplementary question is to the minister responsible for the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. To the minister. This council supports AISH and has recently recommended increases. Will this minister, then, assure the Assembly that there'll be no dismantling of the AISH program?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I believe the hon. Minister of Family and Social Services has quite adequately answered the member's question.

MR. SPEAKER: Smoky River.

Highway Construction

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Transportation and Utilities. Highway construction and maintenance contractors indicate an apparent shift in day and core list use in construction and maintenance. My question is: is there indeed a shift to tendering, or just what is the process that seems to be becoming established?

MR. ADAIR: Well, Mr. Speaker, the tendering process applies to the primary and secondary highway system. In the past we've used day labour and a list of core equipment on the local roads. We are doing some shifting to going to more tendering in those areas, and we're going to see just exactly how that may work.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: My supplementary is also to the Minister of Transportation and Utilities. Basically, the question is: is this going to be a provincewide program, and will it involve things like grass maintenance and so?

MR. ADAIR: Well, we do some tendering now relative to grass-cutting and the likes of that, but this is primarily for the construction of the local roads. I would suggest that if it works, and we're doing some tendering in all of the districts, we would move in that direction at some point in the future, Mr. Speaker.

In relation to the part of the question that related to all of the province, most of this occurs in that area of the province that is under the improvement districts, and that's the north and north-central part.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Calder.

Day Care Funding

MS MJOLSNESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Minister of Family and Social Services. The wages for day care workers in Alberta are deplorably low, even though they have training. A worker who has graduated from a two-year college program earns approximately \$12,000 per year. Although limited training requirements appear in this minister's white paper on day care reform, there is no assurance that trained day care workers will receive salaries that reflect their education and their expertise. So my question is to the minister. When will this minister recognize the value of trained day care workers by subsidizing their wages in nonprofit centres?

MR. OLDRING: Well, Mr. Speaker, the member knows full well that this government spends some \$75 million a year subsidizing day care operators and users in this province, and that's amongst the highest level of funding of any province in Canada. I can only say that we're going to continue our support for quality day care in this province, that we're going to continue with our proposed reforms. I've had the opportunity of meeting with day care operators and day care advocates right across this province, and they've offered some very helpful suggestions before we finalize our reform. In terms of the actual salaries, Mr. Speaker, that's a matter between the employer and the employee.

MS MJOLSNESS: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. The fact remains that the workers are getting paid very poorly, and this minister should take some leadership in this area, because he should know full well that the centres are operating on limited funds. I would ask the minister: can the minister explain how centres are supposed to pay their child care workers decent wages without raising parent fees to cover the costs?

MR. OLDRING: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, I can only reiterate our commitment. This government is more – more – than meeting its share of responsibility as it relates to these day care needs. I can only reiterate, Mr. Speaker: amongst the highest per capita funding of any province in Canada. I appreciate the member's concerns for day care workers. I'm inclined to agree that perhaps they are undervalued by society, but it's not up to this government to set those wages and determine those salaries. It's up to, again, employers and employees to be able to negotiate those things through due process.

It's interesting, though. I would want to make one observation. The member is saying that these wages should be increased but that the sole responsibility for doing that is the government. I find that rather perplexing, because I feel, Mr. Speaker, that it's a partnership. It's up to operators, it's up to parents, and it's up to government to be a part of it. I said at the beginning that we are more than meeting our commitment as it relates to funding of day cares, and I think that for any additional dollars they're going to have to be looking to one of the other two resources.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Natural Resources Conservation Board

(continued)

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Minister of Energy and concern his Natural Resources

Conservation Board Act tabled today. It seems to me that while many issues need to be discussed with respect to this Act, two are immediately apparent and of an overwhelming nature. The first one would be that it's important to get this kind of independent board in place properly before such time as projects on the books now are allowed to proceed. A second important issue is that this board should be allowed to review projects that are already licensed and under way. Could the Minister of Energy please make the commitment today that he will ensure that a Bill of this nature, that a board of this nature, will be established and passed in this Legislature, that it will not simply be tabled and allowed to die on the Order Paper so that his government can jam through major northern projects this summer without proper review under this legislation?

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, he's a member of this Legislature. I'm in his hands. If I get the support of the Liberal caucus and the NDP caucus in discussion of this Bill, then there's no question. As a matter of fact, I could probably get it passed within 10 days. The extent of the discussion – I have members of the government caucus that of course want to make their representations on this important Bill, but as I've said, I'm in the hands of this Assembly.

MR. MITCHELL: That's a very, very revealing, evasive statement. Everybody knows, Mr. Speaker, that if this government wants to get a piece of legislation through, they can get it through.

My second question is: could the minister please confirm that this Act has been very, very carefully worded to ensure that the board, once passed in legislation and once structured in fact, cannot review a project that has already been licensed, such as the Daishowa project, such as the AI-Pac project that may be licensed before this goes through, so it could not review ongoing projects and make recommendations about how they could be improved once they've been started?

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, the legislation – in the answer to his question whether it's carefully worded or not, the answer is definitely yes.

The second point as to whether or not projects are reviewed: the thresholds that will be reviewed in the project are very clearly set forth in the definitions at the beginning of the Bill. Now, whether or not there are projects that do not fall within the threshold definitions, Mr. Speaker, projects can be referred to the NRCB by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, by the cabinet. So the Bill is worded in such a way that every project could be reviewed by the board. Now, I don't expect that; I don't expect projects that are in place would be reviewed. Now, whether there are expansions or other modifications – the decision of cabinet will be such that they could be reviewed. But the process as structured is really sensitive to the ordering of an environmental impact assessment. Now, as the definition indicated, major forestry projects are mandatory, as are major water diversion projects, Mr. Speaker. Beyond that the triggering mechanism is the ordering of an environmental impact assessment.

Irrigation Farmers' Power Subsidy

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to address my question also to the Minister of Energy, although I'm not positive because they've been doing a Tinker to Evers to Chance between Agriculture and the Minister of Energy as far as electrical energy is concerned. This is with respect to irrigation farmers, which I

feel have had a rather dirty trick pulled on them over the last couple of years. They were encouraged to invest \$20,000 to \$50,000 per farm in buying electrical motors and putting electrical poles in to pump water. Then in the last few months the government has announced that they were not going to rebate taxes on the power rates and also that the power companies are going to withdraw from the one-third subsidy through the power companies. Now, can the Minister of Agriculture or the Minister of Energy assure the farmers of southern Alberta that the irrigation power subsidy that has gone on for the last four or five years, under which they have laid out up to \$50,000 a farm, will continue? Which one?

MR. ORMAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, he rambled on for so long, I kind of lost my train of thought and stopped paying attention. What I will do is go back to *Hansard*, and I'll get a team of people in my office to try and decipher what he said and report back to him at the next opportunity.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to assure him that he wasn't even in the station when the thought took off on that one. The argument plain and simple is that there's been an implied promise to irrigation farmers, after spending \$50,000, that the subsidies of power rates would continue.

Let me go to the Provincial Treasurer. He's usually clued right in, although sometimes a little bit of a Nijinsky in answering. Mr. Speaker, could I ask the Provincial Treasurer whether he would consider suspending, at least as far as irrigation farmers are concerned, the question of holding back taxes and would indeed rebate taxes to them?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, I'd love to talk about agricultural policy and energy policy, but I think the Minister of Energy, who is fundamentally responsible for the electrical rate problem, has already committed to answer that question.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Glenmore. Happy birthday, Calgary-Glenmore.

MRS. MIROSH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker; 39 and holding.

Housing Rent Increases

MRS. MIROSH: Last night Calgary caucus had a wonderful phone-in from constituents throughout the city of Calgary who are still expressing concern about increased rates of their apartments and what have you. I wanted to direct my question to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, who had set a task force in place. I'd like to ask the minister if this task force is still taking concerns from constituents or people in Alberta with regards to rental increases, where that task force is in the process, and what is the response that that task force has to the minister.

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Speaker, in answer to the hon. member's question, the task force reported, we tabled the report in the House, and I have since that time asked Albertans in general and specific groups who have expressed an interest in this topic – landlords and tenants across the province – to give us their response to the recommendations in that report. The report itself recommended against rent control and rent review. It did, however, suggest a number of innovative ways that we should look at the relationship that exists between the landlords and tenants in the province and recommended the establishment

of a residential tenancies commission. I am asking for that response. I have provided some assistance to the landlord and tenant advisory boards in the province for them to have that input and look forward to receiving that this fall from those organizations and individuals.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is to the Associate Minister of Family and Social Services with regards to seniors, in particular who are on a fixed income, and this is a special tribute to Seniors Week. I would like to ask the minister how he would be helping the seniors who are on a fixed income with these rental increases.

MR. BRASSARD: Well, Mr. Speaker, we recognize that the rental increases are affecting all walks of life, not just seniors or people on fixed incomes. I find the question from Calgary-Glenmore a little strange in light of the booklet of the programs that we just passed out today in this Assembly. As a matter of fact, I found the remarks from the Member for Edmonton-Highlands even more confusing.

If they would turn to the table of contents, I'd like to just outline a number of the programs we have to assist the seniors in this province: the renter's grant, \$1,200 per year; renter's assistance for owners of mobile homes, \$1,000 a year; seniors' emergency medical alert program, which enables them to stay in their own homes, \$700 a year; property tax reduction benefits, \$1,000 a year; senior citizens' home heating protection program, \$100 a year. We have the seniors' independent living program, \$4,000 a year; we have the home adaptation program, \$5,000. I could go on, Mr. Speaker, on and on. Let me suffice to say that we are currently spending cumulatively \$1.2 billion on seniors' programs in this province, and I think we're doing very well.

MR. SPEAKER: Prior to question period there was a point of order raised. It has subsequently been withdrawn.

Motions under Standing Order 40

MR. SPEAKER: We have a request under Standing Order 40. The Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Mr. Chumir:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta reaffirm its commitment to the fundamental principles of democracy and freedom in China and its support for Chinese freedom fighters in light of the first anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre in Beijing, China.

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe copies of this have been circulated to all members. I will restrict my comments at this stage, make them very brief and restrict them to the urgency issue, pursuant to rule 40.

Now, last year this House passed a resolution decrying the Tiananmen Square massacre and supporting the democratic movement in China. Today is the first anniversary of that massacre. This past weekend in Calgary I attended several functions commemorating the massacre, one held by a Chinese students and scholars association, the other by Amnesty International. The people involved in this struggle are facing huge odds, and I know from my meetings this weekend that they are looking for support throughout the world because such support

gives them courage and lets those involved in the struggle know that they're not alone. Now, our expressions of support are important, and the expression of support now is urgent in the sense that if we don't do it now, it loses significance. So albeit it's a small gesture, it's an important gesture of leadership, and it would be very disappointing to those involved in the struggle if the motion did not proceed.

So I would urge all members to support the motion and to give unanimous consent to have it go forward.

MR. SPEAKER: Under Standing Order 40, all those in favour of giving consent that the matter proceed, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: It fails. [interjections] Order please.

Orders of the Day

head: Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 17 Municipal District of Badlands No. 7 Incorporation Act

MR. SCHUMACHER: Mr. Speaker, Bill 17 is the Municipal District of Badlands No. 7 Incorporation Act. The area covered by this proposed new municipal district lies within the Drumheller valley on both sides of the city of Drumheller and includes the hamlets of Nacmine, Rosedale, Cambria, East Coulee, Wayne. The area is presently governed by an improvement district. This Bill comes before the Assembly as a result of a commitment made some time ago by a former Minister of Municipal Affairs, Mr. Julian Koziak. In 1984 Mr. Koziak stated that municipal district status would be seriously considered for improvement district No. 7 when it proved it had a viable tax base and after it was shown after serious negotiation with the city of Drumheller relative to a possible amalgamation that such an amalgamation would be detrimental to the residents of the improvement district.

The present situation, Mr. Speaker, is that the improvement district has developed a viable tax base, but no meaningful negotiations have been held based on a study prepared by the Department of Municipal Affairs. In view of this background, the government has decided to proceed with Bill 17, which is more or less a model Bill, very similar to the last legislation of this nature, which was passed by the Assembly a couple of years ago with reference to the municipal district of Bighorn. The only significant difference between that Bill and the one that is before the Assembly today is that Bill 17 will become effective upon proclamation rather than upon a specific date. This feature will allow for flexibility and hopefully will encourage both jurisdictions – that is, the city of Drumheller and improvement district No. 7 – to work towards some form of valley government which will be to the benefit of all.

It is hoped the department will become involved in those negotiations, but if as a result of such negotiations it is shown

that after sincere efforts have been made by both sides, there really is not a good solution for all the residents of the valley – that is, those of the improvement district and the city of Drumheller – then I as the Member of the Legislative Assembly for the area will support proclamation of this legislation. But I have to say that it would be difficult for me to support proclamation until I was satisfied that there had been negotiations carried on in good faith by both sides.

I therefore move second reading of Bill 17, Municipal District of Badlands No. 7 Incorporation Act.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Beverly.

MR. EWASIUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the Member for Drumheller quite clearly outlined the situation as it exists relative to this particular Bill. Certainly I think one cannot stand in opposition to what I believe to be a sort of natural progression for IDs to become municipal districts. However, in this particular case there are certain situations that I think do require a fair amount of study and review before this in fact can become a finality. Indeed, negotiations with the city of Drumheller need to be dealt with at length. There are certainly problems there that need to be discussed and resolved.

On the other hand, I think there is a Bill in place, as has been suggested. When the municipal district of Bighorn got their Bill, when they became a municipal district: I think there is an example of what can be done and perhaps indeed should be done. We're prepared to give second reading to this particular Bill, but I think, again, keeping in mind the situation and that indeed it will not become a final Bill until all the issues have been resolved. I think we can agree with that.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In keeping with our positive approach to legislative change when such change is deemed to be desirable, and this Bill being the first such positive Bill introduced during this session, I'm pleased to announce that the Liberal caucus throws its whole support behind this Bill.

MR. SCHUMACHER: I'd just like to thank my colleagues in the Assembly for their support. Thank you.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: There's a call for the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 17 read a second time]

Bill 50 Alberta Cultural Heritage Amendment Act, 1990

MR. MAIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased today to move second reading of Bill 50, the Alberta Cultural Heritage Amendment Act, 1990.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned at the outset when this Bill was introduced last week, this is a turning point for the concept of multiculturalism in this province, and generally the recommendations and the legislation included in this Bill are flowing from the report of the Multicultural Commission, which conducted a series of hearings across 14 centres in the province of Alberta. By the time the tour of the province had ended and the briefs had been received, there had been 161 written submissions and 246 oral presentations from a total of 354 individuals.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

As a result of that input, the Multicultural Commission completed its report and presented it to government in the late fall of 1989, and it presented a basis upon which we as government could move forward with some new policies and new direction ideas in the report called *Multiculturalism: Focus for the 90's*. What we had received was a framework within which we would be able to develop some new policies, some new programs, that would more accurately and effectively reflect the current atmosphere and the development of multiculturalism.

Of course, the throne speech that opened this session announced continued government commitment and, in fact, a strengthening of government's commitment to multiculturalism, and we announced several new initiatives. Today as we take a close look at Bill 50 and initiate some debate, which is about to begin here, we're going to start the first step in implementing some of those recommendations, some of the directions that were outlined in the report.

The recommendations in this legislation focus on a couple of areas. One of them includes a rewritten preamble and rewritten objectives of the Bill which more accurately reflect current thinking on the issue of multiculturalism. In the past I believe our legislation and I think our government's approach and the approach that was in the minds of most people not directly affected was that multiculturalism was the exclusive purview of active ethnic groups, but we know that that is not in fact the case. We want to more accurately emphasize what multiculturalism as a concept is, that it describes what we have in our province, which is a very, very diverse population coming from many different lands, many different areas, many different backgrounds, cultures, and beliefs, and that rather than being a detriment to our success as a society, it in fact allows the society in Alberta – and, of course, more broadly speaking, in Canada – to be very, very strong. We can gather ideas, we can gather strength, we can gather input, and we can gather knowledge from people who come to this country from many, many lands. So the fundamental change in the preamble to the legislation and in the objectives more accurately reflect that line of thinking.

As well, one of the key recommendations in the report that was presented in October was the need to have a broader base to the Multicultural Commission. The current makeup of the commission is six members, three of whom were mandated by legislation, one being the chairman of the commission, who currently is the MLA for Redwater-Andrew, and he will have a few remarks to make on this subject as well. Also the chairman of the Alberta Cultural Heritage Council was mandated to sit on the commission, as was a representative of the Department of Culture and Multiculturalism. That allowed us to appoint three members from the public at large, and I'm sure you'll agree, Mr. Speaker, as was mentioned to us during the course of these hearings, that that is just not enough to give broad regional representation or to represent in any sense the broad diversity of the makeup of the population of Alberta. So it will be my recommendation in this piece of legislation to double the size of the Multicultural Commission.

As well, we want to more effectively streamline the method of reporting and to also give the commission and government and the minister a more effective link to the issues of the day. To that end I'm proposing the creation of an Alberta multiculturalism advisory council which will be appointed by the minister but not necessarily from individual ethnic groups or individual organizations or umbrella organizations; rather, I'm looking at

an organization that will provide input from sectors of society. I'm thinking of someone from law enforcement, from health, from education. I spent a good part of the weekend on Saturday afternoon meeting with the Multicultural Education Council, a group organized under the umbrella of the Alberta Teachers' Association. This group has been working for many years developing multicultural educational class modules. They engage in conferences and workshops and so on and so forth. It strikes me that a member of that council would be an ideal representative to sit on the advisory council on multiculturalism, providing a link to that sector of our society. We want to get people from trade, from tourism, and also, of course, people involved in multiculturalism from the Multicultural Society standpoint.

So I have now a transition team that is working to take us from the old model, the Alberta Cultural Heritage Council, which was an elected, roughly ethnic-based organization, to a new sectoral-based advisory council. The gentleman who is chairing that transition team was introduced to members of the Assembly a few days ago, on the day the Bill was introduced. It's Mr. Uwe Welz. I believe the recommendations he will be making to me with his advisory council will give us a good, solid foundation from which to seek advice – to the government, to the commission, and so forth.

So, Mr. Speaker, as we move second reading on this important piece of legislation that provides us with the framework, the mechanism, and lays the groundwork for continuing with our policies of advocating for equality of treatment for all Albertans, I believe we'll see our efforts continue to focus on three main areas. They are: to increase Albertans' awareness and understanding of what multiculturalism is as a concept and what it provides for all of us, that we will see our continued efforts to provide access to and availability of all the institutions and services that Albertans have access to and should enjoy – we want to increase that – and we also want to increase and encourage integration and participation in all aspects of our society, cultural, political, and so on and so forth, to have people involved in society, because without everybody being involved, our society is not as rich, nor can it realize its full potential.

Mr. Speaker, I'm looking forward to the comments of my colleague the chairman of the Multicultural Commission and others as we press forward with this important piece of legislation.

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

MR. ZARUSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a pleasure to be part of the opening comments of debate on Bill 50. I think the minister has outlined very well the direction of multiculturalism for the province. As you can see in this legislation, it's this government's continued commitment to multiculturalism, because this government always was a leader in multiculturalism and the direction which we want our people to live in: in a very multicultural, suitable environment.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation represents the second or next step of a process embarked upon by the commission in 1988. It is based on extensive consultation with Albertans, and that's meeting with Albertans and making sure that their needs are fulfilled and, at the same time, that they are an important part of this society and indeed productive citizens of this province. The amendments introduced will now allow the government to move towards implementing policies and programs arising from the commission report, as the minister has indicated, and that's *Multiculturalism: Focus for the 90's*.

One part of the legislation I would like to touch on is the streamlining of the advisory process. I think the minister has touched on that. I think this new council that'll be implemented by the minister will provide the commission and the government, basically, with advice and a dialogue between Albertans and the commission, government, and advisory council.

I just want to touch on the transition team. As the minister has indicated, it is made up of members of the former Alberta Cultural Heritage Council and other community members. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, at this time that it's been hard at work looking at options for membership, operation, and other aspects of the new advisory council. Recently the commission had the pleasure of meeting with the transition team, and I can tell you at this time that I am very pleased with their excellent work in the short time that they've been formed. They're going ahead with their mandate to see that this new advisory council is a good working council with representation from all aspects of society, the institution and industry and others. I can tell you that under the direction of the chairman of the team, a good, solid, hardworking gentleman that takes his work seriously, this committee has taken its work seriously. The transition team is recommending that the multicultural advisory council membership should be made up of individuals who are selected, first, for their expertise, skills, knowledge, and ability to contribute to the development of multiculturalism in this province. So I think you can see that multiculturalism is moving into this decade and the future for the province, and I'm sure in every decade there are changes.

The transition team has taken the opportunity to discuss its ideas with other community members, and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, the response has been overwhelmingly in favour of a council built on this notion rather than on group or community representation. I am pleased we are getting this type of feedback on the formation of the council. It's very positive, and people are seeing that this government is moving in the right direction.

I should point out as well that I am receiving very positive feedback from individuals throughout all Alberta on Multiculturalism: Focus for the 90's. That's a report, Mr. Speaker, that was put together by Albertans from all sectors of society. The direction that's been undertaken is the right direction. This should not be a surprise, as our report was a distillation of input, as I said, from all cross sections of Alberta. I don't think I can repeat that enough, that it was a report put together by Albertans, not government, and that's why it is positive.

In closing my comments, Mr. Speaker, I think our commission is given strength with Bill 50. It will allow us to move forward with new initiatives and strategies to serve this government and the people of Alberta. So at the commission we're very excited that we're going in the right direction. I know our staff is very excited that things are happening, and in fact people are pleased with the way our mandate is for the future of multiculturalism.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'll let other members into debate.

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

MR. GIBEAULT: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I wish to get into this second reading debate of Bill 50, the Alberta Cultural Heritage Amendment Act, to express on behalf of many, many people across this province who have contacted me their very serious disappointment with this Bill. People have called this a betrayal, a sellout, a total abandonment of the government's commitment

to promoting multiculturalism in this province, and I want to go over several of the reasons for that.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Now, Mr. Speaker, let's start with the positive. There is one element I'm going to give the government credit for here, and that is in terms of the change to the objectives of this Act. Where it says in 2(b) that the Act will "promote an awareness and understanding of the multicultural heritage of Alberta," that's a change from the previous objective, "to promote tolerance and understanding of others." To that extent, I would be quite agreeable and commend the government for making that change, because we've got to get beyond tolerance. People don't want to be tolerated, they want to be respected, and that's the direction we have to go.

Now, having said that, I have to go over a very long list of problems with Bill 50. If this government in fact had been honest about it, they would have called it the Alberta Cultural Heritage Council destruction Act or termination Act or betrayal Act, something like that. That would have been really what we're talking about here, and the . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Hon. member, it's a parliament. Careful with words like "betrayal." Now, let's go back to the principle – you know, as second reading of this Bill.

MR. GIBEAULT: Yes, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Cultural Heritage Council had several objectives. One was to make recommendations and provide information and advice to the government regarding ethnocultural development in Alberta, a second one was to give Albertans increasing awareness of their cultures and identities as a people, and a third one was to develop through understanding of our individual ethnocultural backgrounds and sharing of our cultural diversity and richness an appreciation of our evolving identity.

Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Cultural Heritage Council was a body – and you'll notice I'm using "was," the past tense, here – that had some 175 volunteers around the province giving this government the benefit of their views on ethnocultural and multicultural program and development policy for Alberta. It had representatives from virtually all the ethnocultural communities in the province, ranging from Afghan to Welsh and many umbrella organizations including representatives from the immigrant servicing agencies, the multicultural centres, folk arts councils, heritage language associations, teachers of English as a Second Language, Heritage Days associations, learner centres, multicultural education groups, the media, multicultural associations, and historical associations. So this was a broadly based agency, and it had regional councils throughout the province. It had very much to commend it. It had volunteer grass-roots representation. People were able to meet annually at the annual convention of the Alberta Cultural Heritage Council. So it really was a shot, I would suggest, to many of those representatives who are doing their best as volunteers again, for the most part, to try to give recommendations and advice to the government. Why all of a sudden did the government just terminate the council?

Now, there are a number of things to be said about that. The Cultural Heritage Council in the past had given many recommendations to this government about policy and program changes, and I think, Mr. Speaker, there was some feeling of disappointment particularly with this minister, who has made it clear repeatedly over the past year since he's been minister that

he really is not keen about multiculturalism, he's afraid to take a stand when the issues are developed, and he doesn't respond to the recommendations this body, which the government created, in fact made to the government. For example, one of the recommendations of the Alberta Cultural Heritage Council to this government was in regards to employment equity. They submitted a resolution to the minister: be it resolved that the Minister of Culture and Multiculturalism become involved with the minister responsible for personnel administration and that they would complete and table in the Legislature a comprehensive study of provincial government employees done in co-operation with government employee groups, and that this study would identify the percentage of women, persons with disabilities, native people, and representatives or members of visible minority communities and their overall positions in the various departments and levels of the public service. Now, this is something that we know the Minister of Culture and Multiculturalism has got an ideological problem with, even though the concept of employment equity was endorsed by the Conservative federal government almost some six years ago now. It's been endorsed by the Human Rights Commission of this province, by the Premier's council on persons with disabilities of Alberta, by numerous other jurisdictions, provincial and municipal, throughout the country, yet we've got a minister – and I've never heard the chairman of the commission express an opinion on the matter. I don't know if he's allowed to or not, but he certainly hasn't come out in favour of employment equity.

Mr. Speaker, the point I'm getting at here is that this broadly based council, which this government has now terminated and destroyed, has given this government advice that is coming from the grass roots, from the membership organizations representing ethnocultural and multicultural communities around the province. I suppose when you come down to it, if the government is not prepared to accept the advice of agencies it created and if it is just going to continue to ignore that advice and go ahead on its own regardless of what the people of the province think, then maybe it's just as well that we terminate that body if it's only going to be there for public relations, for the government to point at and say, "We have this body, but we don't listen to it." Well, what's the point? But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, there are some very hard feelings out there in the ethnocultural communities. If the government really wanted to enhance the work of the Alberta Cultural Heritage Council, I'm sure they would have been very open to that. There's no question there's always room for improvement. If the minister and the chairman of the commission were concerned, we could have had an enhancement of the Cultural Heritage Council; we could have had representatives from law enforcement, health agencies, educational groups, and so on. That would have been received warmly, I would suggest. But why gut the council? Why basically tell 175 volunteers from around the province, who've donated much time and effort to try and give good advice to the government, to get lost and we're now going to have instead of this broadly based agency, the Alberta Cultural Heritage Council, some kind of advisory council which will be much less representative?

So it puzzles many people in the province, Mr. Speaker, why the government has taken this particular position on the issue, especially when we look at the first objective of this Act which is now being put before us here. It says that the objective of this Act is to encourage respect for the multicultural heritage of Alberta. Now how do you show respect for the multicultural heritage of Alberta when you destroy an organization that has been working hard and in good faith with the government to try

to promote a good, sound ethnocultural and multicultural policy and program for the province of Alberta? You cannot say one thing and do something else and not expect people to be concerned about it. People can see that that's a total contradiction. I don't know, Mr. Speaker. We had all these groups represented on the Cultural Heritage Council, and I think now we're just shortchanging ourselves by basically telling this group that we no longer have any use for them and we're now going to have this much more restricted little body to give whatever advice it may have to give to the government.

Now, there's another problem many groups see with this particular Bill. Objectives (c) and (d) are fine as far as they go in terms of the words, and that is:

(c) to foster an environment in which all Albertans can participate in and contribute to the cultural, social, economic and political life of Alberta;

(d) to encourage all sectors of Alberta's society to provide access to services and equality of opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans are reading that, especially the former members of the Alberta Cultural Heritage Council, and it's really hard to reconcile those lofty objectives with the fact, as I said before, that this minister and the commission are not prepared to support employment equity which many of the groups who made representations to the commission during Interchange '88, that series of public hearings which was conducted last fall – and we don't have leadership in terms of the government and the commission speaking up on the turban issue with the Sikhs, the lapel pins, you name it. Over the last year there's been a total abdication of leadership. So to have nicely worded objectives is fine, but that's got to be supported by action. Albertans are frankly very disappointed to see that total lack and abdication of leadership when it is so badly required.

Now, another concern we have about this particular Bill is that section 4 establishes the multiculturalism advisory council and we see that "the purpose of the council is to provide advice to the commission on policy and programs." Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Cultural Heritage Council formerly was "to provide advice to the Minister." So now we have one more barrier for ethnocultural and multicultural groups and people who are concerned about policy and programs in those areas. There's one more barrier. The government has said right off the top that we're going to get rid of most of the people on the Alberta Cultural Heritage Council. There might be a few that survive on the multiculturalism advisory council, but instead of having access to the minister, as the council did, they now have to go through the commission. So we don't know how often it might be before any concerns from grass-roots individuals and groups are going to ever make it to the minister, because not only have most of the representatives from the former council been terminated; those who do survive are now going to have to report to the commission.

We may recall that when the commission's report came out, it was the subject of very severe criticism, and the chairman of the commission . . . I have to confess my surprise that he waxed so eloquently about it, because he didn't refer to a single person. I challenge him today to stand before us and read from letters of support or whatever else he can do to point out specifically who's in favour of this. It would be nice if he could point out to us someone whose credentials are more than simply being a card-carrying member of the Conservative Party. The minister himself referred to the involvement of Mr. Uwe Welz. I suspect it's no secret. Mr. Welz told me frankly at one gathering I was at that he's a card-carrying member of the Conservative Party.

I don't hold that against anybody, but I and many people in multicultural activity do wonder if that seems to be the principal characteristic, if not the only characteristic, that causes people to be involved in advising this government. If that's not the case, we have to wonder why all the people who have been working hard as volunteers on the Alberta Cultural Heritage Council basically have been given the heave-ho. Maybe this government only wants to hear advice from people who are carrying Conservative cards. I don't happen to know. I think if it is, it's shortchanging the people of Alberta, because there is a much broader point of view than simply those who hold orange and blue cards that could be giving some very valuable advice to this government.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this Bill deals with the multiculturalism advisory council, which we hear is going to replace the Alberta Cultural Heritage Council. I've been receiving so many letters and calls from people who've been involved with the Cultural Heritage Council expressing their concern about this – I guess "betrayal" is not a good word, but how about "sellout" or "compromise." There are many words that could be used to describe this government's approach here. I got one letter from a Mr. Ralph Dihvorth, who's involved with the Cultural Heritage Council. He writes to me on April 25, actually sending a copy of a letter he sent to the minister, speaking to the minister: "I must tell you however that I feel betrayed by your government and your party with regard to multicultural matters." He goes on to elaborate on that. Then, of course, there was a letter from Mr. Roly Thomas, the immediate past chairman of the Calgary and district region of the Alberta Cultural Heritage Council. Among other things, he says that

Playing political games with multiculturalism does little to promote anything but an abject loss of credibility for himself and the sincerity of his government!

Then we have Mr. Wim Vonkeman, an ex-member of the abolished southwest cultural heritage council. He indicates his very serious reservations and concerns about the government's change in direction in multicultural policy, indicating that the "changes in the operation of the Council," culminating in its abolition, "were not called for in Focus for the 90's." We challenged the minister and the chairman of the commission to point out exactly where in the commission's report it was recommended that the Alberta Cultural Heritage Council be abolished. I couldn't find that particular reference, and obviously neither could many of the people who have read it and have been involved with the Cultural Heritage Council. I challenge either of them today to point out exactly where that recommendation is in Focus for the 90's. He goes on to suggest that if there are "low levels of awareness and appreciation of multiculturalism," that would be "a reason for strengthening rather than abolishing" the council and its regional bodies. He concludes by saying that to close the operation of the Alberta Cultural Heritage Council even before the passage of the amendments to the Alberta Cultural Heritage Act does not show any respect for a democratic process and does not bode well for the future of this Act in the ethnocultural and multicultural communities.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on with letter after letter and people who have called me and expressed such concern about the way things are going and how the changes are such a reversal of former members of this government who seemed to have some vision about multiculturalism. It seems that this minister and this chairman of the commission – with the blessing of the Premier, I have to assume – are going in exactly the opposite direction. Bill 50, the Alberta Cultural Heritage Amendment Act, is one that is causing severe disappointment among people

who, as I said, have been active in many ways over the years in the ethnocultural and multicultural field. I challenge the minister and the chairman of the commission to respond to some of these concerns, because they are ones that have been voiced to me very assertively by people who have some great concerns. They feel that if this Act is passed and we go this particular route, it will close off doors that used to be open. It will close doors that ethnocultural and multicultural community organizations who work at the grass roots used to have in terms of making an impact on policy and program direction for this government.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are some very grave concerns about Bill 50. I challenge the minister and the chairman of the commission to address those concerns here today, because otherwise I can assure you we will not be supporting this Bill.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I look at the whole question of multiculturalism in this province and look at the Bill in front of us at the present time, I do have a concern. To me, the approach that is being used by the minister responsible for multiculturalism simply doesn't demonstrate a commitment. There have been, I think, some tremendous strides made in past years.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please, in the whole House. I'm glad the Liberal caucus is taking the good advice of the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, there have been some tremendous advances made in years past, particularly under the leadership of the minister responsible for multiculturalism at that particular time when the original Alberta Cultural Heritage Council was put into place.

Now, if I had to have a message for the current minister, that message would be to demonstrate a commitment to multiculturalism, to ethnoculturalism within the province of Alberta. Ethnocultural leaders and members of the ethnocultural community have not found it easy in recent months. I think we've all witnessed a certain backlash that has occurred, where people are now questioning multiculturalism, where we see a greater and greater lack of understanding and respect of each other's values. That has to be of concern to all of us. Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the minister was not there, up front and centre, when we dealt with the turban issue. The minister was not there, up front and centre, when we dealt with the issue of access to the Jasper Place Legion. The minister was not there when the question of the types of pins that were being . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. WICKMAN: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker.

. . . manufactured and distributed out of Calgary. I don't believe the minister was there to respond to the Alberta heritage council when they took objection to some of the statements that were made by the current chairman of the Human Rights Commission. The ethnocultural leaders or the members of the Alberta Cultural Heritage Council were simply trying to point out that they had a concern and they wanted the minister to address that concern. They wanted some demonstration as to who was responsible for speaking out on multiculturalism within this province. Possibly the minister has responded to that

particular letter of communication. If he has, I don't have access to that particular information.

Mr. Speaker, ethnocultural leaders are becoming very concerned in the province. They're becoming very concerned with not only the lack of commitment but the lack of leadership. They're very, very concerned with the lack of a master plan that would advance multiculturalism within the province rather than set it back. When one speaks to ethnocultural leaders, you try and develop a flavour for multiculturalism. To me and to ethnocultural leaders, I believe, what multiculturalism is all about is a recognition of certain principles, principles that to some degree are within our Constitution: the right of equality; the right of equal opportunity within the workplace, within public buildings, within training facilities, and so on; an understanding of the economic benefits that are achievable to society as a whole by tapping into the diversity and the knowledge that members of ethnocultural communities have, while at the same time, however, retaining their values, their beliefs, and their religious rights.

Mr. Speaker, I don't fully understand – and I say this in all sincerity – what the minister responsible for multiculturalism is attempting to achieve. I could possibly speculate, but I'm not sure. I see the Act that is in front of us. It destroys to a very large degree the objectives of the current Act. It certainly takes a great, great deal away from the powers of the Alberta Cultural Heritage Council. I'm not sure what the minister visualizes is going to become of that council, and I'm not sure if this new commission that is now being engraved within the Bill, which is being strengthened from six members to 12 members in terms of numbers, is simply going to be a group of people there to carry out the wishes of the minister or if in fact the commission is being set up to represent the ethnocultural communities throughout the province. I suspect that it can be maybe cumbersome, maybe difficult at times trying to work with the widespread network that is there at the present time; nevertheless, it's effective, and I don't think that should be achieved to simply try and get a group of people that will say yes and carry out the minister's wishes. I don't think that's what commitment is all about.

If we go back a number of years ago, Mr. Speaker, when we saw the activity carried on by the first minister responsible for multiculturalism in this province – and I believe we all know who I'm referring to: a minister that went to various ethnocultural functions, to socials, but more than that, shared a commitment with them, shared a compassion with them, and went to them not only to eat their food and watch their performances and such; he went to them to determine what multiculturalism was to them, what they wanted to achieve – it was during that period of time that we saw a tremendous advancement of multiculturalism in this province and saw tremendous respect for that office, tremendous respect. There are people today that by and large will still refer to those good old days of multiculturalism in the province when the government had a minister that understood multiculturalism and was willing to work with ethnocultural leaders. It was during that period of time that the Cultural Heritage Council came into being, and I believe it's worked fine. It's provided an outlet. It's provided an avenue of communication. It's provided the opportunity to utilize government employees. They haven't always said what the minister might like to hear, but you don't set up councils to just be there to say, "Yes, sir; No, sir; Yes, ma'am; No, ma'am." Councils are set up to give advice, to assure that the minister responsible is on track of the wishes of the people he represents.

I see there are instances where the heritage council may do things or advocate things that aren't favourable to the minister, questioning, for example, lack of action when it comes to some controversial events that have occurred. Even the recent one, the letter that was sent to him taking objection to statements made by the chairman of the Human Rights Commission – possibly the minister doesn't like to hear that type of objection or that type of criticism of that commitment that should be there toward multiculturalism.

You have this organization that has been in place for a number of years, it's served what I feel has been a very worthwhile purpose, and it's now like somebody is saying to them: "See you later. We no longer need you. You're gone. You can still exist, but you really aren't going to fulfill the type of role you should." Because my interpretation in reading the Act that is in front of us is that it's going to take away the council's ability to utilize government employees; it's going to mean that the council chairman is no longer a member of the commission. I think those are the types of questions, Mr. Speaker, that the minister has to address. The minister has to give assurances that the council is, in fact, still a useful tool and it's going to be relied on for the purposes it was set up for. Otherwise, it's very, very difficult for anyone to sit in this House and say, "We're prepared to support this Bill." In fact, the way it's reading at the present time, it's even difficult to say that with some amendments it can be a workable Bill, because I'm not convinced, in the form that has been presented to us, that it can be a workable Bill, that it can gain the support, win the support, of the ethnocultural communities throughout Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I respect the minister's opportunity, his right, to present his case, to try and convince us that, yes, this is going to advance multiculturalism; his right, if he wishes, when it goes into committee stage to propose some amendments based on what's being said here today to try and make it into a very workable Bill. I would think that possibly what the minister may want to do, the best advice I could give him at this particular time, is not to attempt to proceed with the Bill during this session or this portion of the session; rather, leave the thing lie on the table or die on the Order Paper, or let it come back up during the fall session. Meanwhile, get out there and meet with some of the ethnocultural groups, with some of the ethnocultural communities, and find out: is this what they really, really want? Is this what they feel is going to advance multiculturalism? And once the minister has gone through that exercise, I think he would come back in the fall and he would admit that it's not a good Bill, and he'd go back to the drawing board and start working on a comprehensive plan to allow multiculturalism to be promoted, to recognize multiculturalism the way it should be recognized, and to attempt to gain a much greater understanding and respect for members of the ethnocultural communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Forest Lawn.

MR. PASHAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not quite as critical of this Bill as my colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods seemed to be in his remarks, although we tend to focus on different parts of the Bill. My colleague focused essentially on section 6 of the amended Art, which is section 4 of the current Act, I guess, which has to do with the establishment of the multiculturalism advisory council. I must say, though, that I've had a number of people from the ethnocultural community in Calgary bring to me the same concerns and questions that my colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods brought forward.

Where I see some positive measures in the proposed amendments has to do with the changes to section 2, the new objectives of the Bill. I like the notion where it suggests "to encourage respect for the multicultural heritage of Alberta," for example. Well, that's just the same as in the current Act, and I don't think anyone can quarrel with that. But section (b), the proposed change there suggests that a new objective of this Act is "to promote an awareness and understanding of the multicultural heritage of Alberta," and I think there's an important language change there which is typical of a number of, I think, significant language changes that are included in this Bill. The former wording suggested "tolerance and understanding," and many people in the multicultural community have told me that tolerance suggests that there's been an intolerance or that something is weak there and that they'd prefer to see something like "respect" or perhaps what the minister has suggested here in his Bill, which is "awareness and understanding." Because certainly awareness would have to precede, I suggest, respect. So I think that's a positive change.

I must say, in speaking to this Bill, that I think the next two changes, (c) and (d), if implemented the way I read them would go a long way to address problems that I see as being very *severe* in my own constituency. When I was first elected, I became very aware of some real difficulties that exist between ethnocultural communities in my own constituency. I happen to have a constituency that is probably the most ethnically diverse of all the constituencies in the province, and I've mentioned that a few times before.

MR. GIBEAULT: Except for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

MR. PASHAK: Well, Edmonton-Mill Woods may be just as ethnocultural, but in that same general range in terms of its composition.

The second most spoken language in my constituency, as I have mentioned, is Chinese. There are large numbers of people who speak Arabic and most of the languages of southeast Asia and a large Chilean population. One of the things that disturbed me in the first few years after I was elected was the kind of segregation of these groups. If you went to a community meeting, for example, you only saw mainstream Canadians, by and large, at those meetings. If you knocked on doors during election campaigns during school hours, you might see some elderly woman typical of a visible minority peer out from behind a curtain and never come to the door. If you came around . . . [interjection] No, it's true. They're frightened. A lot of senior citizens who are new Canadians are just ghettoized, or even worse than ghettoized: they're almost housebound because they're fearful to even go out into the larger community. If you went around at lunch hour or just after 4 o'clock, the young children in those families would come to the door and talk to you.

So there is that segregation of people taking place, and it was becoming even more serious than that, because you had definite antagonisms between groups. The mainstream Canadians couldn't understand the new Canadians that were coming into their community, and they developed a whole language to describe new Canadians in fairly racist terms, and conflicts were beginning to break out in the schools. You could see very positive things happening in the elementary schools. During the elementary grades kids would work and co-operate together, but by the time they got into junior high school, you had divisions along ethnic lines, and you often had hostility, conflict. Nothing was happening at all in the community to try to promote what

I'm sure most Canadians would really want to see happen, which is a growth of tolerance, understanding, respect for each other, and that sort of thing.

In trying to understand what's happening here, I had to look back at the kinds of policies that governments at the provincial and federal levels had embraced over the years, and it became quite clear that the emphasis in terms of funding tended to promote uniqueness. In fact, it's kind of embedded in the language of the existing whereas in the current Bill. It says:

Whereas the cultural heritage of Alberta is enhanced by the freedom ethno-cultural groups have to express their ethno-cultures . . .

So the emphasis was on encouraging that, encouraging ethno-cultural groups to maintain their distinct identities and this sort of thing.

Now, I don't find anything wrong with that. I think that's reasonable, to encourage that, and if money can be provided to assist groups in promoting awareness of their own cultural identities, that's fine. But if funding only goes that far and doesn't begin to deal with other aspects of Canadian life, promoting English as a second language, encouraging programs that would actually allow multicultural groups to do what's being suggested here in the two new objectives in this Act, which are:

- to foster an environment in which all Albertans can participate in and contribute to the cultural, social, economic and political life of Alberta;

Those are all worthwhile goals and very much worthy of support. But my colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods raised the important question: how do you go about doing that? I might come back to that point in a moment.

And secondly:

- to encourage all sectors of Alberta's society to provide access to services and equality of opportunity.

Again, I'm suggesting that funding has to go back into these ethnocultural groups to help them learn English as a second language, because that's the basis for communicating with other Canadians. That's a must; it has to be in place.

Also, with respect to the equality of opportunity, I've discovered from working with many new Canadians in the work force that they do have some difficulty in having equality of opportunity, because often they're not aware of their rights as Canadian citizens; they're not aware of their rights in the workplace. We don't do enough as a province, I guess, to actively encourage people, first of all, to become aware of their rights and then to help them promote and insist that they get the rights to which they're properly entitled.

But I would like to say, and I say this from the point of view of someone who actually developed and taught courses in race and ethnic relations over a 15-year period of time, that the way you bring people together that have different cultural backgrounds is not to isolate them or segregate them; the way to bring people together and to really promote tolerance and understanding is to bring people together to work on common or shared problems. Because once people begin to work on a problem that's common to everyone, they begin to appreciate each other's skills, they learn to co-operate, they learn to say hello to each other, and then they learn to socialize with each other.

In a community like Forest Lawn there are all kinds of problems that the people of that community experience collectively. I mention Forest Lawn because of course that's the community that I relate to most closely, but I think you could generalize from that to all of our communities, at least certainly in our larger cities throughout the province. There are problems that all people in those communities share. They have to do

with lack of recreational outlets and opportunities, shortage of regional parks. They have to do with high crime rates in some parts of the community, problems with respect to transportation and major intersections, this kind of thing. They have to do with high-need schools, and the list goes on and on. Most of these new Canadians come into areas that aren't particularly affluent where you have a lot of other social problems in the communities, where you have a lot of social housing, and so you get a concentration of difficult social issues. You have unemployment issues; you have, as I say, single parent issues; you have inadequate housing; you have problems that renters experience in large urban areas. If you could bring all of the people in those communities together regardless of their ethnic background, get them working together, co-operating together, I'm quite sure that that's how you'd really bring about true tolerance, understanding, and respect for one another as individuals.

I'm really quite pleased to say again to the minister of multiculturalism that his department has been very helpful in initiating a program along these lines in the greater Forest Lawn area, a program that has attracted the attention of the Secretary of State of Canada, who's really interested in looking at developments that are taking place in Forest Lawn to see whether in fact that could become a model for promoting what I might call functional integration of new Canadians into Canadian society, a model that could be used from one end of the country to the other.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say that I'm not as critical as my colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods with respect to this Bill, perhaps because I see some very positive things that are being proposed and suggested in the changes that are being recommended with respect to the objectives that are implicit in this Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister, in summation.

MR. MAIN: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This has been an enlightening, enjoyable, and at times entertaining few minutes as we discuss the Alberta Cultural Heritage Amendment Act, Bill 50. I should review some of the comments that were made and just try to set the record straight. I was offered the challenge of attempting to convince colleagues in the opposition that this is a good idea. I think we may find some clients for conversion; others appear to be intransigent and are operating on different wavelengths.

Nevertheless, the commitment of this government and of the Conservative Party of Alberta to the concept of multiculturalism and to a multicultural society is well evidenced in history with the establishment many years ago, as my friend from Edmonton-Mill Woods suggested and noted, of a minister responsible for multiculturalism, with a division of cultural heritage. Then the department in fact was established; its name was changed. More recently, the Multiculturalism Commission was established. The hearings, as I referred to earlier, were held across the province seeking input from folks as to what they felt multiculturalism was, is, and should be, and there was a report. We've now made the commitment to implement many of the recommendations in the report, some verbatim, in the preamble and in the objectives of the Act, some of a mechanical nature in expanding the size of the commission.

We do see that we need a new mechanism to implement what I believe is now the next stage. We've spent a long time finding out what multiculturalism is, what people think it is, what people need. The Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods thought we ought to do that again. That seems to be the Liberal answer to

everything, to have a six months' or a 12 months' hoist on everything and find out what we already know. We've had the hearings; we've spoken to people; we know what their feelings are on the issue of multiculturalism. They presented government with the challenge of getting on with it, and that is exactly what this Bill is attempting to do.

There are two components to the Bill, and I guess this is where the ideological split comes. The objectives and the preamble provide a scenario for a multicultural society in Alberta that I think the Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn describes pretty much the same way I think: an opportunity to get folks together. There were then the mechanics of doing that, and that's where Edmonton-Mill Woods falls apart, when he sees us making change. But, Mr. Speaker, change is inevitable. The opposition is uncomfortable with changes in telecommunications, and they're obviously uncomfortable with changes in multiculturalism as well.

The Alberta Cultural Heritage Council has done an awful lot of good work over the years. They've made a number of recommendations to government. I did not in any way, shape, or form – as the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods suggests – tell them, either individually or collectively, to get lost. That is a complete misrepresentation of what is actually going on. I corresponded with each individual, thanked them for their valuable contribution, and urged them, as individuals and in the organizations from which they came to the council, to continue that valuable contribution to multiculturalism. I'm sure many of them will.

The current structure required some change. It will be reporting to the commission, yes; that's just a mechanism to allow direct input to the commission, which will be formulating policy. But in terms of being inaccessible, Mr. Speaker, my phone number's in the book. I go to functions all the time, and if anybody anywhere has an issue they want to raise with me, I'm more than glad to hear it. So the notion of no access again is at variance with the way things really are.

I do appreciate the support of the Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn for the objectives and the preamble to the Bill. He and I have had personal conversations on this issue, and I'm glad to see that the pilot project he has going in his community is moving along well. I, too, am of the view that people learn to live with each other by working with each other on common objectives. That's why I feel a function such as Heritage Days in Edmonton is so important, not merely for what it is on the surface, which is a celebration of different cultures and foods and lands and regions, but for the greater good that is done by having people from those different lands work together on a common objective. This one happens to be a multicultural festival, but it could just as easily be a rodeo or a hockey rink project or whatever it happened to be. Folks from all over working together towards a common objective are what is going to make our province even better than it is today.

I touched briefly on the issue raised by Edmonton-Whitemud, which was defining out what multiculturalism is and what folks want, as addressed by a former gentleman who held this particular portfolio. As a matter of fact, I spent Saturday evening with that particular gentleman at a German Days function here in the city of Edmonton, and we both enjoyed ourselves immensely. But I must say, with all due respect, that we do know what it is that we're talking about now; that's not the issue. The issue is: how do you get that message and that implementation across the province? That is exactly what we're attempting to do with this Bill. We have stated some new objectives, stated a new preamble that sets the atmosphere. We

want to change the mechanism that will implement that, because we do have our plan that we see as the way to go, the way to move to turn the corner from what has been largely a concept focused on ethnicity, turning the concept into something that focuses on all Albertans.

We have three main thrusts that I've spoken about before. We want to make sure people are aware of the benefits of multiculturalism, of the fact that because we are a diverse society and we have people from many lands, this gives us a unique strength, a unique foundation upon which to build our society. We want to make sure that all of those individuals have equal access to all the institutions, and it's true that in some areas, because of built-in systemic problems or long-seated misunderstandings, some people are denied access. But we want to make sure that people are educated, that people are aware, and that guidelines, rules, and encouragements are in place to make sure that everybody has equal access.

Then after we've done that, we want to achieve what is the ultimate objective, the objective referred to by the Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn and an objective that I've referred to in many addresses that I've given. That is integration participation, having all citizens of this province, no matter where they're from – whether they were original peoples here; whether they're third, fourth, fifth, sixth generation Canadians; whether they just arrived from a different land a few minutes ago – get an opportunity to participate fully in everything that this province has to offer. It is a great province, and it is a great province because of the great people here. My commitment as the Minister of Culture and Multiculturalism, the commitment of my colleague the chairman of the Multicultural Commission, and of our staff and the members who are working in the government is to make sure that that happens.

Mr. Speaker, with the passage of Bill 50 we will be well on our way to assuring that that is in fact the case.

[Motion carried; Bill 50 read a second time]

Bill 27
Advanced Education Statutes
Amendment Act, 1990

[Adjourned debate May 31: Mr. Gogo]

MR. GOGO: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We had, I believe, a very interesting discussion the other evening with Bill 27, the Advanced Education Statutes Amendment Act, 1990. I'd simply like to close by reiterating what I said the other night.

The principles upon which this Bill has been established really flow from the consultative form that all 29 of the institutions and the department had, Mr. Speaker, the principles being access to all Albertans who have the ability and desire to pursue higher education, and accountability, which is fundamental; that is, the minister being accountable to the taxpayers of Alberta through this Legislature for the expenditure of public funds and to the boards of governors who serve these institutions.

I look forward to hon. members supporting this Bill.

MS BARRETT: I hate to disappoint the hon. minister, but he is not going to enjoy the support of all members of this Assembly on this Bill.

As far as I'm concerned, Mr. Speaker, this Bill is nothing but a guise for a power grab. He's put in other housekeeping measures to cover up the essence of the Bill, which he euphemistically refers to as accountability. I would also like to correct

one other statement that the minister just made. He says that we had an interesting discussion. Correction: he had what you might call an interesting soliloquy, but it was not a discussion.

Now, I'd like to point out the offending parts of this Bill and suggest to the minister where in principle he's gone wrong and where in principle he's avoided doing things that could have been useful. Everybody who pays attention to legislation already knows the contentious parts; even the minister raised that subject matter, and I will in a moment. But let me start by saying that if the minister had any sense of what accountability really means, and particularly with respect to the boards of governors of institutions, his latter reference, he would also appreciate the importance of taking partisanship and the old-boys' network out of appointments to boards of governors. That hasn't happened yet, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of documents related to this Bill. I'm afraid I won't be able to refer to them by name because I'm not sure which ones I got by brown envelope and which ones I didn't. But I can certainly tell the minister and the members of this Assembly that more than one institution has suggested, at least to me or within memos, that they're tired of the government controlling the appointments to the boards of governors.

[Mr. Moore in the Chair]

One interesting brown envelope that I got a few weeks ago made me think I should call the person who was cited in it, and I did so. I said, "Well, you know, what would you suggest as an alternative?" His suggestion at first was a little too grandiose, I think, because of the numbers involved, but after discussion we whittled it down and agreed that perhaps the way to take the partisanship out of the appointments to boards of governors and to make sure that there's a good cross section of people represented on those boards is to have a committee of the Assembly, like Leg. Offices for example, once a year go through the vacancies and nominations and make the appointments on a nonpartisan basis. The person with whom I spoke about this finally agreed at that point that that was the way to whittle down what was originally his larger idea. So when the minister talks about, you know, boards of governors, I know what he's talking about technically in the context of this Bill. I think he misses one of the most important principles that could be addressed, and that is how they are arrived at.

In terms of the role of boards of governors, and particularly upon dissolution of those boards, I'm inclined to ask a question which relates to the interim governing authority. I realize that this will come up again in committee reading, although I'm hoping the Bill won't get that far. In the event that it doesn't, perhaps the minister would outline in his closing remarks at second reading or in his motion for second reading, which I do hope will fail, what the implications are for the powers of the interim board with respect to the associations of the institutions – in other words, the faculty, staff, and student associations – particularly with respect to the assets that they hold. My reading is that unless there are specific bylaws of those associations, the interim governing authority takes power over their assets. I haven't talked to a lawyer about it, but if that is true, it will constitute yet another major principle flaw in this Bill.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker, when the minister was moving this Bill for second reading, he talked about, you know, the history of the Alberta government and the institutions having attracted trust

funds for the institutions. That is nothing more than a euphemism for the fact that these people have been forced to beg. In other words, they've been so chronically underfunded for so long by a government that gives lip service to high tech but fails to realize that the most important components of high tech – that is, the institutions that can put it to the greatest use and the broadest networking and, in the long run, the broadest application – have been starved for cash not only on the operating basis but also on the capital formula funding to the point that it is now the exception rather than the rule that the equipment within those institutions, unless they are brand spanking new institutions like perhaps the university of Stettler, is seriously outdated and makes them incompatible with most of the high-tech world.

So when I hear words like "attracted trust funds," I won't go into really graphic detail about what that does to my innards, but you can get the picture in a general sense, and that is that that's just a nice phrase for covering up the reality. Even given that the institutions have been forced to go out and beg for money from whatever sources they can – which, by the way, will ultimately lead to contract research and contract departments, as far as I'm concerned; corporately-run universities – even then, Mr. Speaker, they haven't been able to keep up. In that context I say: shame on the government for trying to make this picture look rosy. It is not at all rosy.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill does replicate a lot of what is suggested in what I would call the autocratically designed guidelines for systems development to which the minister referred earlier. This Bill really is a cover-up for a power grab. The sections of the Bill that are the essence of the Act being sponsored are to give the minister and, in effect, cabinet more power to directly control what expands and what doesn't expand, what is deleted or transferred within colleges. In other words, these guys think they know so much and they've got such a monopoly on knowledge, Mr. Speaker, that they're going to tell the universities, colleges, and technical institutes that they consistently underfund which programs they can have and which programs they can't have, which programs they can delete and which ones they can't delete. Now, if a college or a university or a technical institution says, "You guys have just gone the nth degree too far; you've underfunded us over an eight- or 10-year period; we're, in real-dollar terms, behind where we were 10 years ago – which, by the way, is true, Mr. Speaker – and we have no choice but to close a program," this government is going to decide which ones they close and which ones they don't.

Now, you tell me how institutions that are supposed to be academically qualified to train tomorrow's professionals, institutions which are responsible for long-term research for the benefit of our society – and make no mistake; the corporate sector enjoys a lot of those benefits – institutions that have enjoyed an historical autonomy that is an arm's-length relationship from this government are to maintain those abilities in the face of this type of legislation. The answer can logically be only one: they will not be able to do so, Mr. Speaker.

But let me just take you on a little Orwellian journey here. What if this government decides that the department of humanities at the universities has just grown too big? "There ain't no need to investigate philosophical history." Never mind that . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Agreed.

MS BARRETT: Yes, I hear a member, probably – oh, I can't speculate which.

REV. ROBERTS: Whitecourt.

MS BARRETT: Oh, it was Whitecourt? Yeah, I'm not surprised that it was Whitecourt saying "agreed."

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

MR. TAYLOR: Go get 'em.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. TRYNCHY: I made no such comment. Let her retract that.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Member for Whitecourt did not, that in fact it was . . .

REV. ROBERTS: It was probably Red Deer.

MS BARRETT: Red Deer? Was it?

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. TRYNCHY: Point of order.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: No citation has been quoted, and there's been a disagreement on the floor. Please proceed with your speech.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In any event, the important matter . . .

MR. TRYNCHY: On the point of order, Mr. Speaker. Withdraw it.

MS BARRETT: I did. I withdrew. Sit down.

MR. TRYNCHY: No, you sit down. Point of order.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Point of order, hon. minister in charge of worker's compensation.

MS BARRETT: What's your citation?

MR. TRYNCHY: Mr. Speaker, citation 23(i). The member across the floor accused me of saying something when I never said a word. Imputed motives. I ask her to withdraw those comments.

MS BARRETT: This happens all the time. The Conservatives put words in the mouths of all sorts of people in the Assembly, and the fact is . . .

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. [interjections] Order. The Chair did not recognize you to proceed, hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands. What was the citation, hon. minister, 23(i)?

MS BARRETT: It's not a point of order. It's been ruled a million times. [interjections] I still get my half hour. No, I get 40 minutes on debate. This is an omnibus Bill. I get 40 minutes.

MR. DAY: Put a sock in it and . . .

MS BARRETT: Did Red Deer-North say, "Put a sock in it"?

MR. DAY: I'll stand behind that one.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Edmonton-Highlands, the point of order is before the House. Were there any other members wishing to rise on that point of order?

MR. DAY: On the point of order, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite also falsely impugned myself as having made a comment in relation to her comments on the Act. I agree with her: all members do say things from time to time, but we don't blame other . . .

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. Hon. member, if you have a point of order on your behalf, that could come at another time. The Chair . . .

MS BARRETT: You never did recognize me on the point of order. You had just asked if other people were in.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: By all means.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is no point of order under 23(i). It is commonly referred to as a dispute about facts amongst members, but the defensive and irritable minister might also note that I was more than willing to . . .

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. Order.

MS BARRETT: I did withdraw, Mr. Speaker. [interjections] I said I'm sorry.

MR. TRYNCHY: Isn't that nice?

MS BARRETT: Beats what he has to say.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, since you have, with such alacrity, agreed to withdraw your remark, you may proceed.

MS BARRETT: That doesn't account for me being cut off on my point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: I would also remind you that exhibits are not allowed in the House.

MS BARRETT: That what? Exhibits?

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Would you like to proceed, please?

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, that doesn't account for me being cut off on my response to the point of order, and I respectfully request your citation for having cut me off on the point of order. [interjections] You want games? You'll get games. I'll play all day.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, I believe that the tenor of your point of order was not leading to the resolution of the matter. If you have something more to say on the point of order, please proceed to do so, but I think the interests of the Assembly would be served if we could just get on with the debate.

MS BARRETT: The interests of the Assembly would be well served, Mr. Speaker, if we didn't have dinosaurs sitting across the way arguing or agreeing with the postulation that I made that Conservatives don't believe that there is . . .

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. Order.

MS BARRETT: I'm back in debate, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please.

MS BARRETT: What's your problem? I'm back in debate.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: You're back to debate now? I thought you were on your point of order.

MS BARRETT: No.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Oh. Fine; let us proceed.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, let me restate the real problem that goes along with an Assembly like this: it is filled with such dunderheads on the Conservative side that, first of all, they don't appreciate the logic to an argument, and, secondly, when one even begins to postulate that it would be ideologically comfortable for them to try to wipe out programs – for example, philosophical history – an argument which I'll develop in a moment, these people jump up and say, "Agreed, agreed," meaning that is precisely what this government has in mind. A bunch of power grabbers who think that they have a monopoly on knowledge that is superior to that enjoyed by every scholar and every instructor at an advanced education institution in the province, they have proved my point.

This is like – do you remember? What was that medicare Bill? Who was the . . .

REV. ROBERTS: Stan Cassin.

MS BARRETT: Stan Cassin. Bless his soul. Mr. Speaker, do you remember? We were having a debate about Bill 14 – that was the two-tier medicare Bill – and he piped up one day and basically let the cat out of the bag by saying yes, that is what they want. As far as I'm concerned, I'm not even into the substance of the debate yet, and I already have Conservatives saying, "Yes, that's what we want to do with the powers of this Bill." I'm glad the debate and the points of order ensued. It is absolutely perfect; my case is made. The minister may hop up and say, "Oh, that's not true," but the minister may be the exception to the rule when it comes to the ideological dinosaurs with whom he sits every day.

Now, to carry on the argument that I was developing in this context – I think it's important to do so.

MR. ORMAN: To who?

MS BARRETT: To whom. You know, I'll tell you. I would like to answer the Minister of Energy, who asks: to whom? I must be an optimist, and I confess that sometimes I am so at my own vulnerability, but I believe that there is a chance once in a while that I can convince even Conservatives of the errors of their ways. Mr. Speaker, we did it a couple of times before. A good example would be Bill 14, where we got them to back down. I don't even think they called that for second reading. You know, this is what it takes. I guess you've got to be an

optimist. Even sitting with the Conservatives that I have to sit across from every day, I believe there's a chance that one or two might be convinced of the errors of their ways.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

So let me just make this argument now about how it is that the government could make a very serious error if they decided that they wanted to shut down, say, philosophical history; you know, something that they would consider not quite relevant to the running of the world. The fact of the matter is that when you become a scientist, for example, you're asked by universities, technical institutions, and colleges to take courses in English. Okay? Everybody is supposed to be literate. Now, for some reason the Conservatives would probably say, "Well, that's all right." But if you're asked to round out your education so that you don't just know one subject, they might say, "You're doing it at the taxpayers' expense; go study your three Rs, and that's all you get." If a university wants to wipe out a program . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Forgive me, hon. member. Order in the House. Thank you. Hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, it is really not the custom to read newspapers in the House. [interjections] No. Order in the whole House. Order in the whole House.

MR. TAYLOR: It was a Tory speech.

MR. SPEAKER: I don't think Edmonton-Highlands will take that kindly.
Please continue.

MS BARRETT: Shame on you, Nick. I'm surprised you didn't write a note. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order in the whole House, including the ministers.

MS BARRETT: I guess I'm just going to have to state that argument all over again, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: No, the rule of repetition.

MS BARRETT: The rule of repetition doesn't kick in until you've said it several times, Mr. Speaker, and twice does not constitute several in the context of statements.

MR. SPEAKER: Please don't anticipate argument with the Chair. Take your place.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to do what . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Sit down.

MS BARRETT: Yes, Connie.

MR. SPEAKER: All right. [interjections] Order please. There'll be plenty of time for this kind of conduct, if you wish, in Committee of the Whole, but it won't happen in second reading stage.

Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: It's quite all right, Mr. Speaker. I know I'm entitled to 40 minutes on the motion for second reading, and I'm going to take my 40 minutes. If these guys want to waste the time of the House, well, gee, I wouldn't want to argue with them, Mr. Speaker.

Now, to make the case that I was making. If you do not have a well-rounded education, what happens, first of all, is that employers don't appreciate you much because what it means is that you can't apply yourself in a general way to the job at hand. If you are meant only to do very rote and mechanistic jobs, that may be okay, but I hear the government – I hear the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications argue that, you know, the future is in high tech. Actually, I agree with him; I think a lot of the future is in high tech. But you know what's interesting? This is true of some of the greatest scientists in history: their most important inventions or discoveries were made not because they were pure technical scientists but because they had the ability to apply logic to some of the empirical data that they were dealing with all the time.

Now, I think this government would like the power to tell institutions which programs it can expand, which programs it gets to keep, which programs it can delete, in order to impose its own ideological blueprint on the future of academic endeavours. Wouldn't that be a shame? I think that would really destroy the importance of education, which, by the way, occupies an escalating role in our – what can I say? – rapidly changing, in fact changing at an accelerating rate, society. Education is critical to it. It cannot be up to one minister, like this minister, or one cabinet, and least of all this particular cabinet, to decide what's important in the world of education.

Now, I want to point out to you that the minister argues that his powers are basically no different than they were before. That ain't true, Mr. Speaker. See, previously this minister was allowed to – and the word was "may"

regulate or prohibit

- (i) the extension, expansion or establishment of any service, facility or program of study by a . . .

Fill in the blank. You can have, you know, college, university, technical institution, private college.

- . . . so as to reduce or avoid an undesirable or unnecessary duplication of a similar service, facility or program of study.

Now, that was the limitation. See? In other words, if he could demonstrate that, you know, we've got 29 institutions, they're all offering an identical program, and we can't afford this, this would be his argument, and it would be legitimized by this legislation. But that section's going to be removed. That's what this Bill is really about. Anything else, Mr. Speaker, is just hiding the truth.

And it also said that he could

- (ii) regulate or prohibit the establishment of a new school or faculty

by a university or private college or technical institute or college designated under the old legislation. That's fair enough, because establishment of new schools usually involves a fair amount of money, and you've got to come and get the agreement first by the agency that historically – although I'm not placing any bets for the future, Mr. Speaker – provided most of the money for postsecondary education.

But let us get to what this Bill is really about. Here's the shift; here's the change in words. They want to repeal that section, and now they want to replace it with this:

The Minister may . . .

- (b) ensure the orderly growth and development of the post-secondary educational system by

- (i) regulating the establishment, extension or expansion of a service, facility, or program of study by a university, or by a private college . . .

Technical institute or college, filling in the blanks.

in respect of a program of study designated under [the Bill].

And, of course, he still gets to regulate "the establishment of a new school or faculty", blabbity blab. But, interestingly, also under the rule of ensuring "the orderly growth and development of the postsecondary educational system,"

- (2) A proposal of a university or a private college designated under section 645 to reduce, delete or transfer a program of study shall be submitted to the Minister in the form prescribed by the Minister and the Minister may approve or refuse to approve the proposal.

See, there is no corollary in the current legislation to that, Mr. Speaker. That's a brand-new addition. He wants it both ways. He wants them coming and going. You know, I don't even believe that this minister is the real driving force behind this legislation. I think this legislation is coming right from the top, and that makes me worried even more, quite frankly. That really makes me nervous about who's ordered this legislation.

The fact is that these guys want all the powers now. They want to control all of the 29 institutions, which currently get about \$1 billion. But don't hold your breath, Mr. Speaker. In real terms that'll be down by 10 percent in another five years, in real monetary terms. And I say no; I just can't see agreeing to this. Why? I mean, have we ever heard any justification for this major power grab? I haven't heard of any, unless it is that they want to underfund the institutions and then tell them which programs they can or cannot offer. In fact, logic dictates that that's the only conclusion one can come to. There is no other argument. The minister sure didn't offer one. I think these guys are nervous about this Bill, and I would be too, if I were sponsoring it. In fact, if I were sponsoring it, I wouldn't have called it for second reading. I'd let it die a quick death on the Order Paper.

One has to wonder about the timing of the introduction of this Bill. Oh, it was very clever, Mr. Speaker. If this doesn't tell you what the principle of this Bill is about, nothing does. Hey, they waited until the academic institutions were shut down for the academic year. I mean, they're not even geared up for spring sessions yet, and they waited until all or almost all of the student activists were in Winnipeg at a national students union conference before they introduced this Bill. [interjections] Yeah.

Then the minister said a few years ago in question period: would you feel any better, hon. member, if you knew that I consulted with the institutions? Hey, listen; walking over with a blunt instrument saying: "See the Bill I'm introducing? This is what I call consultation. Tough luck; you're out of luck, institutions." That's the consultation that this minister offered. There's no agreement. I haven't received a single letter from any institution saying: "Barrett, vote for this Bill. New Democrats, we want you to agree to this Bill." In fact, I've got rafts of letters that say exactly the contrary, and they're not fooled either.

There are little technical housekeeping details in this Bill, Mr. Speaker, just a few. Some of them actually are innocuous, and one or two are probably okay, but you don't introduce a big Bill like this to do one or two housekeeping measures. Those little wee Bills are usually two or three pages. They just tidy up language problems. Not this one; this one has one thread that goes throughout all parts of it, with the exception of the private vocational schools, and that thread is the power grab. That

thread says: "We get you coming and going; you lose your independence. To heck with the future of education in this province. To heck with your ability to develop research, to work on the leading edge of things that the private sector sure as heck isn't going to do unless it sees a buck in it, that has been historically done by scholars for the benefit of society as a whole." Society as a whole pays for our postsecondary education system, Mr. Speaker, and society as a whole benefits from it, not least from informed decision-making. It's too bad we don't have a little more of that in this Assembly, or we wouldn't be facing Bills like 27 or 37 right now.

I know I could use up my 40 minutes. It is an omnibus Bill, and I am entitled to a little extra time, but I'm not even going to use up the 30 minutes because I want to provide the members of this Assembly, including those dinosaurs that form the Conservatives over there, a chance to get out of this, and here's their way. Mr. Speaker, I'm going to move an amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 27. If a page would like to come along, I've got copies all ready for distribution. I'll read the amendment. It says:

by striking all the words after "that" and adding:

The Bill not now be read a second time, because the principle of handing more power to the Minister deprives the post-secondary education institutions of the traditional and vital autonomy of program decision-making and self-governance, and further because the violation of that autonomy constitutes an unwarranted threat to the scholastic endeavours of those institutions, and current and future faculty and students.

Mr. Speaker, this is a reasoned amendment, and there are more to come if this one fails, but I'm hoping that the government will see the light of day, that they'll realize they're courting fewer and fewer votes out there, and this is the fastest way to get rid of several thousand that I can think of.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member should be apprised that the Chair will have to review the proposed amendment because it may or may not be a reasoned amendment. So the Chair is holding. You may continue to discuss the matter, but the Chair is withholding judgment at this time.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was quite careful in drafting the reasoned amendment. I did consult Parliamentary Counsel. It is not a hoist, although it is possible that if we can't convince the government to agree to this, we may have to proceed to a motion for a hoist. But in the meantime, I'm arguing not for anything else, not for a second chance on this Bill, not for it to go away for six months. I think this Bill is so bad that it should be axed right now. Don't approve it. Let's just say no and get rid of the Bill and force the minister to go back and engage in some meaningful dialogue with the people that he's attempting to affect by this power grab. There's no reason for this power grab. In fact, it's going to hurt in the long run. For that reason, Mr. Speaker, I would argue that this amendment should be upheld, that we should prevent second reading, throw it away, and let the minister go back and start again. If he can come back with a Bill that has the agreement of the 29 institutions that he's so proud of, then fine; let 'er rip. We'll support it. But he doesn't have that right now, and while he doesn't enjoy the confidence of those institutions, he does not enjoy the confidence on this Bill of the members of the Official Opposition.

MR. SPEAKER: It's quite clear there will not be a vote at this stage on what is proposed as the amendment. The Chair would

be recognizing another member of the House, but there's a difficulty with regard to the wording.

The Chair would advise the Deputy Government House Leader to make a motion to adjourn the debate and for the House to come back at 8 o'clock.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I take it, then, that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands has adjourned the debate. I would move that the House do now adjourn until 8 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: In that regard, first, the Member for Edmonton-Highlands has adjourned debate because of this procedural wrinkle. All those in favour of the motion to adjourn debate, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Carried. Thank you.

[The House recessed at 5:25 p.m.]