

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, June 11, 1990 2:30 p.m.**

Date: 90/06/11

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

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Prayers

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

As Canadians and as Albertans we give thanks for the precious gifts of freedom and peace which we enjoy.

As Members of this Legislative Assembly we rededicate ourselves to the valued traditions of parliamentary democracy as a means of serving our province and our country.

Amen.

head: Notices of Motions

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I wish to give notice that it will be my intention to move, pursuant to Standing Order 30, to adjourn the ordinary business of the Assembly to discuss a matter of urgent public importance. Written notice has been given to Your Honour's office, and the question to be brought before the Assembly would be the final communiqué of June 9, 1990, for the first ministers' meeting on the Constitution.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice that under Standing Order 40 tomorrow I will rise at the end of question period to seek unanimous consent to consider a motion to have Motion 296 dealing with constitutional reform moved to the top of the Order Paper.

head: Tabling Returns and Reports

MR. BRASSARD: Mr. Speaker, I wish to file with the Assembly four copies of my reply to Written Question 257.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table four copies of the signed final communiqué dated June 9, 1990: the first ministers' meeting on the Constitution. Copies will be made available to every member.

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to file with the Assembly the annual report, March 31, 1989, for the Crimes Compensation Board.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table proposals for future constitutional discussions made up by the Alberta Liberal caucus.

head: Introduction of Special Guests

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, this week is National Access Awareness Week in Canada, an opportunity for all of us in Alberta to celebrate our achievements in improving access to transportation, housing, education, recreation, and employment for people with disabilities. The organizers of the Alberta committee overseeing our activities in the province are in the gallery today, and I am proud to introduce them; even more proud, sir, because of the kick off breakfast this morning where it was acknowledged that the vision put forward by the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, a vision which

was endorsed last year by Premier Getty and our government, as well as the council's action plan – these were recognized as proof positive of our government's commitment to persons of all abilities in Alberta.

In the gallery today are Chairman Iris Saunders, Vice-Chairman Penny Oman, Provincial Co-ordinator Janice Iantkow, and Daryl Rock, the assistant national co-ordinator. I would ask all members to give them a very warm welcome, Mr. Speaker.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, in the members' gallery today are 32 young people from Fort Assiniboine school located in Fort Assiniboine. They come from two classes, one a grade 6 class and the other a grade 10 class. The young people are accompanied by two teachers, Mrs. Donna Pechanec and Mrs. Tania Borg, and are also accompanied by their bus driver Mr. Ed Litke. Mr. Speaker, I would ask our young people to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I wish to introduce to you and to the members of this Assembly 24 members of the Major-General Griesbach school who are accompanied by their teacher Brenda Downey and one of the parents Mrs. Martin. I would ask that they stand and receive the welcome of this Assembly.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege today to introduce 12 students on their first visit to the Alberta Legislature. They attend the Meadowbrook school in Airdrie. They are accompanied by their teacher Pat Beingessner, and aide – a very appropriate name that Josephine has – Josephine Meech. I'm very pleased to see them in the members' gallery today. Would they rise and accept the warm welcome of the House.

MR. SCHUMACHER: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly nine members of the Drumheller seniors' recreational group, who live *in* and around the city of Drumheller. They're here to visit our Legislature today. I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: Oral Question Period

Constitutional Reform

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, it seems like a long time ago that we were here, and I'm sure we're all Meech-ed out, but I guess we're going to have to continue for a while.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier spent last week in Ottawa with other first ministers, on the Meech Lake constitutional amendments I was there, along with the leader of the Liberal Party, but like the rest of Canadians we were on the outside trying to figure out what was going on. I think we both commented about one of the more original signs out there of the people going in – I'm sure the Premier saw it – where the sign said "I'm confused," and I think that was true of many Canadians. Now, Mr. Speaker, I blame, frankly, the Prime Minister of this country for this situation: the constitutional talks being done like labour negotiations, if you like – politics by exhaustion. It's unacceptable, and I think the Premier would agree with me that this process was bad. As a result, what's unfortunate is that there's probably more intolerance across the country. I know Albertans are confused and angry. But my question flowing, then, to the Premier is: what concrete plans does the Premier have now to tell Albertans how and why the first ministers made the decision

they did, what the agreement means, and to bring Albertans into the constitutional picture?

MR. GETTY: Well, Mr. Speaker, I gather the Government House Leader has introduced a motion to suspend the regular business of the House and get into urgent public debate on this agreement and that we will be able, if you agree to the urgency of the matter, Mr. Speaker, to do it today. I would propose to speak to that matter. I would ask the Leader of the Opposition to speak to it and the leader of the Liberal Party as well, and any other members who would like to participate. I would hope that through that debate we can provide some considerable insight into not just the process but the conclusion, so that Albertans will know and members of the House will know, and then we can assess. Should there be more time in the Legislature or perhaps by some other means communicating with the people of Alberta, we will follow up in that regard as well.

MR. MARTIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that if that debate comes I will participate, but the calls we are getting today – and I'm sure the Premier's office is getting – are that there is a great deal of confusion and anger I think mainly directed at the process because people aren't aware, necessarily, of what's in it. When the Meech Lake amendment came to this province for ratification in 1987, the New Democrats held a series of public hearings on Meech Lake because we felt so strongly about the principle of public involvement. If I may say so to the Premier, it was one of the amendments we brought forward that this government defeated at the time: we suggested that hearings be mandatory before the province of Alberta agreed or disagreed with constitutional changes. My question to the Premier, flowing from this: now that I'm sure he's seen firsthand the results of insufficient public involvement in constitutional matters, can the Premier tell us how he plans to ensure that Albertans will not be on the outside again in any future events?

MR. GETTY: Well, Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. Leader of the Opposition that the process does need to be changed. But I will draw his attention back to the original Meech Lake proposal going through this House. We had public meetings; the government members went back and held public meetings while the resolution sat on the Order Paper here for some six months. We had public meetings with our various constituencies and then came back and brought that input to the Legislature, and of course, as you know, Mr. Speaker, the resolution was approved unanimously by the House. Nevertheless, I agree with the Leader of the Opposition, and I think all of my colleagues do. I would draw attention – I don't want to jump the debate, if you like, but I tabled today the document in which the Premiers agreed to now "review . . . the entire process of amending the Constitution, including the three-year time limit . . ." which is the period in which you allow where governments may change, Premiers may change, and therefore you can have a problem of actually having a resolution moved, "and the question of mandatory public hearings . . ." So I think the change is coming, because we all agree the process should be changed.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate knowing what's in the document: that the public is going to force politicians into this. And I'm sure the politicians don't want to go through this again either. But one of the major flaws with Meech is that when they said they had the deal, closed doors again, nothing

could be changed – not one dotted i or one crossed t – and so the public hearings people had were irrelevant because nobody was going to change. That's the problem, as I see it, Mr. Speaker. My question flowing from there: would the Premier guarantee, at least provincially, that in any future constitutional change there will be public hearings in the province before – and this is the key point – before the government agrees to any amendments to the Constitution?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I can't guarantee future governments of the province of Alberta at all. As I said, the complete amending formula is going to be reviewed, and also the question of mandatory public hearings. There were national public hearings of course: the House of Commons. And while the hon. member says that you couldn't change anything in the resolution, that is true, but I think it's fair to say that the meetings with Albertans, discussions with Albertans, and discussions in other provinces have led to the additions that are in this document I tabled today. While Meech Lake is proceeding as is, nevertheless there are additional constitutional additions now in the document agreed to by all the Premiers and also means of dealing with future constitutional issues.

MR. SPEAKER: Second main question, Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier. I'd point out that you could bring in a law, as they do in Manitoba, that accomplishes this for the next provincial government.

Poverty

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, also to the Premier. In the summing-up on Saturday morning in Ottawa – I believe it was about 1 o'clock – I heard him talk about the future, and specifically young people. This morning I announced that the New Democrat Official Opposition will conduct a provincewide task force to look at the future for children in Alberta. We know there are serious problems. We also know that there are some creative solutions to these problems just waiting for a government with enough political will to ensure that these children have a chance for a healthy future in this province. So we can do some concrete things to talk about that future the Premier was talking about. I want to ask the Premier, who talks a lot about the family, this question: if he is committed to ending the conditions that cause so many Alberta children to live in poverty, how does he justify holding out on the increases in shelter allowances that are so desperately needed?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, this is something that the Minister of Family and Social Services has been dealing with, and I'd ask him to respond to the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, again, we've said on many occasions in this Assembly that this province is committed to addressing the social needs of Alberta and particularly children. I think it's important that we try to keep things in perspective, though, when we talk about poverty lines, as an example. What we're talking about – at least the last definition I saw was: families that are spending more than 58.5 percent of their income on food, shelter, and clothing, and of course that very definition includes a lot of Albertans. But having said that, I want to reiterate that again, here in our province, our rate of those below the poverty line is amongst the lowest in Canada,

and I think that's a tribute to the good things that we as a government are doing already.

But we're not satisfied to sit back on our past accomplishments. We're committed to future reforms. If I look down this row, Mr. Speaker, and the row behind me and the row behind them and my members opposite, I think they could all talk about initiatives that we as a government have introduced. I look at the Provincial Treasurer, who has taken some 250,000 low-income Albertans off our tax rolls. I look at the Minister of Education and some of the initiatives that he's taken; we recognize that education is an important component to addressing poverty. I look at the initiatives of the Minister of Career Development and Employment and some of the things he's doing . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. minister. That's a pretty good list so far. Thank you.

A supplementary.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I thought I asked about shelter allowances.

Mr. Speaker, I've heard this drivel from this minister before. We hear the Premier talking about the future, about young people. I'm talking about the fact that in Alberta one in six children lives below the poverty level, and I'm telling you right now that 70,000 children living in poverty right now in Alberta live in families trying to get by on social allowances. That's the reality. To the minister: do the minister and the Premier, or whoever wants to answer it, realize that by a stroke of a pen you could help out these 70,000 people right now?

MR. OLDRING: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is trying to take a very simple approach to a very complex problem. He knows full well that this is a problem that's being faced right across this nation. We've said on many occasions in this Assembly that we're not happy to see it. But to suggest that we're doing nothing, Mr. Speaker, is not right. Again I would remind the Leader of the Opposition that for the third consecutive month we've seen our caseload numbers dropping, that here in Alberta we have amongst the lowest unemployment in the nation, that we have more jobs in our province today than we've ever had in the history of this province. That's a tribute to the initiatives of this government, of our Premier, who has said that diversification is important, and it's happening in this province.

Mr. Speaker, we're committed to working towards real, meaningful solutions. We're committed to social reform, and we will be bringing forward initiatives there just as quickly as we can. But again I want to emphasize that I'm not going to allow the integrity of these reforms to be compromised by rushing them through without adequate consultation. And it's interesting, again, to listen to the Leader of the Opposition call for a need for more consultation. I'm doing that, Mr. Speaker. This government's doing that right now as it relates to social reforms, because we believe that by working with Albertans, by working together, by working with our federal counterparts we'll come up with some answers.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, this minister can stand up and say that he's going to consult and consult and consult. The point I'm making is: one in six children is suffering from poverty. They're not doing well in school, they're not getting proper food or nutrition, and there are going to be problems later on in the future. You don't need to study that forever. Sure there are

broad problems. That's why we talk about fair taxation and equal pay for work of equal value. But I'm asking this minister – he could do something concrete right now. I'm going to ask him: what's it going to take? How much longer before he moves on this very important issue?

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, we are moving on this important issue right now. Again, we've done some very progressive things in this province. Our child welfare legislation is amongst the most progressive in the nation, Mr. Speaker; we're looking at some of the adjustments that we can make. But again I want to remind the leader that our caseloads are dropping as it relates to income security, our caseloads are dropping as it relates to children under our care, and it's a result and a tribute not just to government, because this government realizes that we alone cannot provide the solutions or the answers to this societal problem – it's a tribute to Albertans, to the many agencies across this province that are working with Albertans towards meaningful resolution, and it's a tribute to the co-operation we're receiving on the national level and the efforts that they're making there as well.

Mr. Speaker, I can only again say that we take no pride, we sense no comfort in seeing the kinds of statistics that the leader is talking about. We know that poverty is a real problem in our nation today. Again I can only say that we're committed to do what we can. We're committed to working with Albertans and Canadians, and hopefully by working together we'll continue to make progress as we have in the past.

Constitutional Reform

(continued)

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, as I sat with the leader of the NDP in the wee hours of Saturday and into Sunday morning listening to the Premiers sum up their respective positions, one matter, one issue became crystal clear, and that is that the process of constitutional change is wrong and that it needs to be amended, changed. The hon. Premier has referred to a section in the accord that was signed this weekend that calls for mandatory public involvement. I think it's time for Alberta and this Assembly to get on the record, to clearly state that public input is mandatory, is essential: you can't change constitutions, you can't make constitutions without input from the people. So my first question to the Premier is this: given the statements that have been made by all of the Premiers, given the fact that the accord calls for mandatory public input, will the hon. Premier agree that Standing Orders be changed so as to allow for mandatory public review before and after constitutional changes are proposed?

MR. GETTY: Well, Mr. Speaker, I've drawn to the attention of the hon. member that the entire amending process is going to be reviewed, and I would certainly give consideration, as a result of that review, to changes to the Alberta Legislature's own rules and proceedings. But I think we should carry out the review, obviously, to make sure the changes are the best possible.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, it seems to me, in my experience in Ottawa, that the Quebec delegation had a tremendous advantage over other provinces. They appeared better prepared, the people *in* their province were better informed, the whole process was one which all Quebecers were involved in, and I think they, because of that, got more out of the process in this meeting and the last meeting. I wonder if the hon. Premier

would agree to this: would the hon. Premier agree to establishing a special standing committee of this Legislature to be both proactive and reactive in establishing the constitutional needs for Albertans in allowing the government of Alberta to go to those constitutional meetings better prepared, better able to identify the needs and words of Albertans?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, as I said, the whole amending process is being reviewed, and we'll consider whatever comes out of that review. But let me first . . . Without putting down another province's capacity or ability to prepare, the Quebec delegation didn't come close — didn't come close — to the delegation that represented Alberta at this constitutional meeting. Our minister of intergovernmental affairs, our Minister of Municipal Affairs, who were with me, the members of the Attorney General's department and members we have as consultants, such as Dr. Peter Meekison and the members of the Alberta Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs department, I think were part of a delegation that was head and shoulders above any delegation in Ottawa at this meeting. I would tell the hon. member, because I know that was his first visit to one of these meetings, that it is recognized across our province and in the federal government that the Alberta constitutional preparations, the Alberta Senate reform knowledge, the committee that traveled the nation: all of these things have been leaders in Canada in this whole area of constitutional reform.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I don't understand how the hon. Premier can waffle on these issues. It seems to me that the experiences the three of us had in Ottawa are clear: the process has to be changed; it has to be changed quickly. There is a process that starts on July 15, and to say, "Well, we'll discuss it and we'll consider it," seems to me is just putting it off and again offending Albertans. We have to get the people of Alberta behind this constitutional process.

My last question to the Premier is this: would the Premier agree to allowing a special standing committee of the Legislature to start working on the strategy, working on the matters that should be specifically included to bring forward and bring about Senate reform, so that we can start from July 15 and know that we can succeed?

MR. GETTY: Frankly, Mr. Speaker, I must caution the hon. member that Alberta is succeeding and succeeding dramatically. I told him we're going to review the process and then, after the review, make the changes that are necessary. There's no waffling on that issue. I also tell the hon. member: if he wishes to propose to this Assembly a new standing committee of this Assembly, then he should propose it — there are ways to do that — and let the House deal with it.

MR. SPEAKER: Rocky Mountain House.

Oil Spill near Rocky Mountain House

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week there was a major sweet oil spill northwest of Rocky Mountain House. I understand that the Minister of Energy has been out there. I also understand that the oil is contained so that there won't be any getting into the North Saskatchewan River, thereby even possibly making a problem for the city of Edmonton. To the Minister of Energy: has it been determined if all of the regulations governing pipelines in this province have been followed?

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, I did have the opportunity this morning to inspect the oil spill on the tributary flowing into Buster Creek in the Rocky Mountain House area. I should also point out to the hon. member that on the weekend I had an opportunity to discuss this matter with the chairman of the Energy Resources Conservation Board, together with the senior vice-president of Amoco, Mr. Sherrold Moore. Mr. Speaker, I did inspect the site, and I have been assured to date that the oil spill in the tributary will not seep into Buster Creek which feeds into the North Saskatchewan River. I'm pleased with the job they've done to date.

With regard to the other issue the member mentions on the regulatory side, I guess there are a number of questions that must be answered. My first priority and my first instructions to the ERCB were to be sure that their first priority was to make sure that we contain the spill and keep it out of Buster Creek. Fortunately, Mr. Speaker, the weather conditions are working in our favour in that the water is running is high and the oil is sweet and at the top of the water and in that the muskeg bogs are saturated with water; they are not absorbing the oil. If conditions from a climate point of view were different, it would have a little different environmental impact.

We will be reviewing and gathering information, as we are now, to determine whether or not there was a breach of the Pipeline Act and what recourse we have. To date I do not have all that information, so at this point I cannot report specifically on that matter to the hon. member.

MR. LUND: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. It really concerns me how this volume of oil could possibly be escaping for those many days and still not be detected. To the Minister of Energy: do you see now any need for changing the monitoring of pipelines in the province?

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, it is also part of the review that we will be doing in concert with a review of the Pipeline Act. There are, as I've indicated, a number of questions to be answered by the operator of the pipeline: firstly, was it human error; secondly, was it mechanical error? Was it a fault of the welds in the seams on the pipeline and/or was it related to the age of that pipeline?

Amoco does flow balances, Mr. Speaker, in the pipelines on a daily basis and as recently as May 31 did a fly-over inspection of the Rangeland pipeline and its arteries and reported no evidence. However, the period of time between the detection and the time it should have been reported was longer than should have happened, and that is part of the review that the ERCB is conducting. I hope to be able to have that information as soon as possible. We will be trying to find out where we can lay blame for this tragedy, but as I indicated, the first priority is to contain it and not allow it to spread any further and get into the major water tables. I'll report back to the hon. member as soon as I have that information, Mr. Speaker.

Trucking Industry

MR. DOYLE: Mr. Speaker, recently Albertans have become aware that there are serious problems in the trucking industry. They're responsible for hauling over 75 percent of all the freight in the province, and in their struggle to survive, truckers have to haul too much too long for too little, possibly putting excess loads on the province's highways, jeopardizing their own health and safety, plus always facing a threat of bankruptcy. Can the minister in his meetings tomorrow with the independent

operators agree to go beyond just hearing their concerns and be committed to setting up a public review process to examine the situation in all of Alberta?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, I met with the president and the vice-president of the newly formed organization this morning, Mr. Comeau and a Mr. Berridge, I believe it is. We went over a number of the concerns that they had, and I expressed to them a concern that a private businessman dealing with a private businessman was still something other than government and that we probably would not interfere. I asked them if they had at any time met with the owners or the companies, and they had not. They have tried to, but as a newly formed organization they're just in the formative stage. So I suggested to them that, number one, that was a must, that they had to do that, and if they had some difficulties with that and they gave me a list, using my good offices I would give them a call and ask them if they might get together with them, recognizing they may tell me where to go.

MR. DOYLE: Mr. Speaker, Alberta highways are at risk because of these heavy weights on vehicles, and the public is at risk because of the risks that drivers are taking when they try to make their ends meet. Will the minister take some steps to ensure that Alberta roads and all the people including the truckers are protected?

MR. ADAIR: Well, Mr. Speaker, just to correct that particular statement, there are standards that are in place for weight loads. There are safety standards in place. There are inspections that take place almost daily of the industry. [interjection] You might just give me the time; you asked the question. In this past year, the 1989 year, there were 17,500 inspections of those particular vehicles on the road, and if they do not meet those standards, they are pulled.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

Senate Reform

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Premier. Much has been written and spoken over the last week on what's going to happen to Senate reform, which is a very key item that has to be settled if western Canada is going to become a full partner in Confederation. Last year, after a year of prodding by the Liberal opposition, the government did decide to hold an election for the Senate. Now, since the Prime Minister . . . [interjection] Somebody's laughing; I guess they can't read. Since the Prime Minister and members of the federal Conservative caucus have said that the appointment was contingent upon the resolution of the Meech Lake impasse, an excuse that the government was content to live with despite the appointment of other unelected Senators in the country, can the Premier now tell this House whether our Senate election winner will be appointed?

MR. GETTY: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I should point out to the House and the people of Alberta that the Liberal Party voted against the Senatorial Selection Act and now, I gather, are strongly for it. That's quite a reversal, I must say. So we do have an opportunity, if you allow us, to suspend normal business to debate this matter. I would like to provide members with the results of some of my discussions on this matter.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, it's hard to imagine that our Premier spent a full week in Ottawa and didn't think of bringing up this issue. Did the Premier even maybe consider throwing a block on the Prime Minister when he got ready to leave until he made up his mind?

MR. GETTY: As I said, Mr. Speaker, I did discuss the matter and would like to tell the House about those discussions.

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

Disaster Assistance Program

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past week there have been letters to the editor throughout many of the rural agricultural papers criticizing the farm aid package. They indicated that the disaster aid program is in shambles, farmers are very upset and very unhappy, and so on and so on: the usual the doom and gloom. My question is to the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services: could you share with me and with the House how many applications have been processed to date and for what amount of money?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I noticed as well that there were some of these letters of doom and gloom sent to editors in various newspapers in northwestern Alberta. I should point out, I guess, that the author of the letters in fact is the Member for Vegreville. I was kind of disappointed at the things that he basically said in his letters, because unfortunately they are a fair great distance away from what would commonly be referred to as the truth.

When the announcement was made by the Premier in Sexsmith, Mr. Speaker, we talked about a program that would be available to farmers in northwestern Alberta that would provide assistance in the neighbourhood of \$14.9 million. To date cheques have been allocated and addressed to over 1,600 farmers, recipients, at a total support level from the province of Alberta at over \$16 million.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is also to the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services. Could you expand upon that particular aspect of the program? I understand there is also a two-year interest-free aspect to this program, loan interest-free. Could you give us some indication as to what the uptake has been on that particular program, please?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, this was a multifold disaster assistance program, and in addition to direct support that would be coming from the government of Alberta through Alberta Public Safety Services, my two colleagues the two ministers of Agriculture also were very, very much involved with assistance through the Agricultural Development Corporation. To date I believe that there are some 120 farmers that receive special disaster assistance loans that would provide for no interest for two years totaling over \$3 million.

Meech Lake Accord

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs. Back in March the

minister was good enough to tell me that he would have his department look into the legal underpinnings for the assertion of the federal government that there was in fact a deadline of three years to the acceptance by everybody of the Meech Lake accord, and he said he'd do that. I wonder whether he is in a position now to assure the Assembly that in the opinion of his department that assertion of the federal government has a basis and is valid, despite what I would say are many appearances to the contrary.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's interest and concern in whether or not the three-year deadline in fact is in place. It is our considered legal opinion and on our advice that the three-year deadline for ratification was not established by the political accord but rather was established by section 39(2) of the Constitution Act of 1982, and that the only way to change that would be to begin the ratification process all over again. That, therefore, would be very difficult indeed and impossible to do.

MR. WRIGHT: That's my point exactly, Mr. Speaker, because that section, surely the minister will agree, was satisfied years ago when two-thirds of the provinces comprising 50 percent of the population of Canada assented to it. So I challenge the minister to file an opinion from his department or from anybody else showing that the deadline remains for the remaining three provinces.

MR. HORSMAN: Well, it is a question then, of course, as to whether or not the agreement is severable. There has been, of course, some opinion to that effect, that legally speaking it might be severable, but it is quite clearly the view – unanimously held, I think, and endorsed again today by the Premier of Newfoundland – that politically it would not be possible to sever the accord and therefore to bring into place certain of the amendments or to change the deadline for ratification.

MR. WRIGHT: Let's have the opinion.

MR. HORSMAN: Well, legal opinions are valuable instruments for governments to follow, but of course it has been a long-standing rule that legal opinions are not tabled in the Legislature. We have a remarkable difference today in the sense that the legal opinion attached to the accord arrived at last week is made available for consideration, but it is not the intention of the government to share legal opinions on this or any other matter which might come before the House. It's just not done.

MR. SPEAKER: Nor are legal opinions part of question period.
Edmonton-Jasper Place.

Oil Pipeline Monitoring

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are also on the oil spill near Rocky Mountain House. On Friday the Minister of Energy indicated that he's satisfied with the situation in which it's the responsibility of the pipeline operator to detect flow balances and determine leakages. What he did not say is that the rules and procedures under which this takes place are in fact an industry document prepared by the Canadian Petroleum Association: Recommended Practice for Liquid Petroleum Pipeline Leak Prevention and Detection in the Province of Alberta. It's an industry document and not a government document. Over the weekend one of his officials

indicated that there are some 900 leaks of various kinds from pipelines in Alberta annually, most of which go unreported to the public. I'm certain the minister has had a chance to reflect on this over the weekend. I wonder if he'd indicate if he is satisfied that the pipeline regulations in Alberta fall entirely under industry regulation rather than government regulation.

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, I can tell the hon. member that in the last five years there have been less than 10 spills of this magnitude, and we're obviously not here to justify the nature of the spill or the impact that it has. I'd point out to the hon. member that there are over 200,000 kilometres of pipelines in this province, and the monitoring mechanisms have essentially worked. However, there is no such thing as fail-safe, because there is human error involved; there is human error involved in the construction and in the monitoring.

The unfortunate aspect about the Rangeland pipeline, Mr. Speaker, is that one of the arteries that feeds into the Rangeland is the one that lesioned and created the spill. Amoco has had in process a mechanization program that is to be completed by the end of the year to phase out the manual monitoring of flow balances, and unfortunately this happened in the middle of this, so they certainly were taking responsibility for it. There is nothing related to this Bill that I'm satisfied about, Mr. Speaker, so I reject the preamble to the question.

MR. McINNIS: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't think we can dine out forever on the fact that we've been lucky in the past. Luck is one thing, but I think preparation is probably a little better.

It's my understanding that the minister has moved in some direction, and he's now in favour of automated measurement, automated shutdown, and that's a good thing. But there's another issue that's arisen. Some of the independent pipeline servicing companies provide a service where they run a pig through the line, and they X-ray it and look for dangerous spots on some of these aging pipeline systems throughout the province. I wonder if the minister would confirm that the industry's recommended practice, the industry document that governs this industry, makes no mention of X-raying pipelines whatsoever. Will he undertake the responsibility himself to regulate the industry and look at the prospect of X-raying some of the aging pipeline in our province?

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, we have a regulation, the pipeline regulation. As the member indicated, under section 6(3) it requires all new pipelines to conform to the CPA standard. Now, this is not unusual for the industry to set standards, then, for monitoring and reporting. Certainly when you talk about 200,000 kilometres of pipelines in this province, you can't expect the government to monitor and regulate every inch of that pipeline. You have to rely on the industry to do their own checks and balances. However, they must report results to the government. Certainly in this case we are not sure what the problem was at this particular point. All we know is that we have a pipeline leak. Once I've conducted my review, as I clearly indicated to the Member for Rocky Mountain House, we will be taking in the information and trying to determine what the problem was. I can undertake to the member that if the results of this investigation point to the fact that we need greater regulation, then I'll certainly give that full consideration. But I'm not going to jump to that conclusion yet. I don't have all the evidence.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Senate Reform

(continued)

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many Albertans have expressed disappointment with the Premier's inability to secure a commitment to the Triple E Senate in the recent Meech Lake discussions. I expect that disappointment is shared by the Premier. Albertans, I believe, are not prepared to give up on all of the principles of Triple E. Now with what is left to us in the current resolution, I think it's incumbent on Alberta as one of the primary promoters of Triple E to take initiatives immediately to develop our own agenda to lead the process rather than just participate in it or follow it. My questions are to the Premier. What mechanisms does the Premier have in mind to develop precise proposals, within the contemporary situation, for effective Senate reform to meet the needs of Alberta and the west?

MR. GETTY: First, Mr. Speaker, I must say that I'm astonished by the question from my hon. friend, that she would say that Alberta was not leading in the matter of Senate reform. I think that is an astonishing conclusion for her to come to. After all, there was one government and one Premier who moved Senate reform from number 200 or something in constitutional matters to the number one constitutional issue in Canada. I draw to her attention that because of Alberta's efforts, there's a new national commission on Senate reform that will be created. We can debate and consider the ways in which we can influence that commission and gather a sense of all the views of Albertans, but remember we are going to fundamentally change for all time the manner in which our Parliament operates. Let's do that thoughtfully and sensitively to make sure that it is done well.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, what I'm asking here is that we get on with the process and that this time we do involve Albertans and get them to be part of it right away, because I don't think we have any time to lose here.

Will the Premier, then, commit to public hearings and full discussions of Alberta's proposals prior to the first ministers' meeting on Senate reform? Can we get our own people involved, Mr. Premier, and now?

MR. GETTY: Again I'm astonished by the question, Mr. Speaker. My hon. friend knows that the Alberta Legislature set up a special all-party committee that brought out the Triple E concept. I mean, it is there, and it's been endorsed by this Legislature. So hardly should she now say: let's try and find out what we believe in terms of a Triple E Senate. After all, it's there; it was a Legislative committee that brought it out. I would tell the hon. member, my good friend, that surely she should update herself on that report and know what it was that we were voting on. I understand those who have centralist tendencies, but I want her to realize that the Senate reform we're looking for is one that no longer allows centralists to dominate this country.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Bow.

Native Artifacts Purchase

MRS. B. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In view of the protest of the native American groups of Montana with regards to the acquisition of the Scriver collection by the Provincial

Museum, would the Minister of Culture and Multiculturalism please inform this Assembly as to whether the Blackfoot people of Alberta have been consulted about the purchase of this valuable collection of artifacts?

MR. MAIN: Mr. Speaker, on Thursday last the Provincial Museum of Alberta opened to the public the Scriver collection of Blackfoot material: I must say a very impressive collection of artifacts and material from the Blackfoot culture. There was some suggestion at that time that somehow the government of Alberta through the museum had breached a trust with the native people and that there was widespread unrest because of that. I must say, Mr. Speaker, that at that opening ceremony, at which I was a proud participant, there were in attendance a number of elders of different Blackfoot bands, many tribal councillors, chiefs, former chiefs, and other representatives of Alberta natives. There was a Sweetgrass ceremony that took place prior to the ribbon cutting, and there was a wide endorsement of the efforts of the museum and the government to preserve these most important relics and artifacts of native culture not only for study in the museum context but for study by native groups and those interested in native culture.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Calgary-Bow.

MRS. B. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, there of course have been many reports of unhappiness among the Blackfoot communities of Montana because of the sale of these artifacts. Could you please tell us what the legalities are of the challenge to the ownership of them?

MR. MAIN: Mr. Speaker, there have been some threats and some suggestions made by individuals in Montana, individuals who, I must indicate, do not have elected positions with bands, who have indicated that there may be challenges in the courts, challenges to the United Nations, and elsewhere. But it should be pointed out, Mr. Speaker, that the artifacts in question had been owned for a period of some 75 years by an individual and his father in Browning, Montana. They were his personally, acquired as gifts or through purchase. He decided that because of the pressure of owning such valuable commodities, he wanted to dispose of these. He made a decision to sell them. He wanted them to go to an institution and not go into foreign hands and thus be lost forever. We dealt with this individual for many months, and we have now acquired them legally and paid money for them. The ownership was transferred from the gentleman in Montana to the ownership of the Provincial Museum of Alberta. Everything was completed in legal fashion, and I cannot perceive of where there could possibly be a legally based challenge to the ownership of these materials.

MR. SPEAKER: Request under Standing Order 30. Deputy Premier.

head: Request for Emergency Debate

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I would request and move that we adjourn the ordinary business of the Assembly to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, and I have indicated that written notice was given to your office. The matter of urgent public discussion would be the subject of the accord and the final communiqué of the first ministers' meeting of June 9, 1990, on the Constitution. The nature of this accord, of course, is important to all Albertans and all Canadians. It will form the

basis for the future constitutional development of this country following the ratification of Meech Lake and, in particular, with respect to the future of Senate reform. Really, we believe that in this Legislative Assembly it is important that our Premier and other members of this Assembly who were in attendance in Ottawa have an opportunity of informing Albertans and this Assembly of the nature of the discussions.

Therefore, I would move that this request be granted.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Under Standing Order 30 of the Assembly indeed the proper notification was given, and as far as the Chair is concerned the fulfillment of urgency is met. The Chair therefore rules in favour of the motion, and therefore puts the question: shall the debate on the urgent matter proceed? Those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. None registered.

For purposes of the viewing audience and the general public our Standing Orders state that every member who wishes to speak and is recognized by the Chair is limited to 10 minutes only. That, naturally, is going to somewhat limit some of the comments made.

Hon. the Premier.

head: **Emergency Debate**

Constitutional Reform

MR. GETTY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to participate in this debate because we are talking about a very difficult, a very tense, emotional, and dangerous time for our country, and we were experiencing all of those feelings in our six and a half days of meetings in Ottawa last week. I can describe those meetings. While there were only the first ministers involved, I can describe them to the hon. members and to Albertans as a time of great emotion, a time of tears and joy, a time of anger, and a time of great concern for the future of our country. All of those types of expressions were being made in the meetings themselves. Finally, I would say to my fellow first ministers how much I appreciated the manner in which they participated in those meetings.

Now, I also want to say to the Alberta delegation that supported me how much I appreciated their solid support: my colleagues in cabinet the Deputy Premier, the Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs; and the longest serving member of this Legislature, our Minister of Municipal Affairs. The two members of our cabinet were very, very valuable in helping and supporting me with our decisions and our participation in the meetings.

I also want to say to the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the Liberal Party how much I appreciated them coming to Ottawa and the time that they spent there participating in discussions of various natures to help the whole constitutional process succeed. I know from talking to them – and I knew it before, I guess, but I think our discussions down there merely confirmed it for me – that they are very strong Canadians.

When I say that, just think of the difference in the province of Quebec, because when the Premier of Quebec stands up and looks across the aisle no broader than this, he looks at a leader of the opposition that is not a strong Canadian, that is working to dismantle and unravel this nation. Think of what that means in terms of the intensity of the debates where a leader of the

opposition there is using all of his wisdom and knowledge and political pressures he can to take the country apart. I had that feeling, as I was talking to the two leaders of opposition parties here, how great it was that they so clearly were strong Canadians. I think that provides a better base for us to discuss this matter within our Legislature.

I want to say a word, too, about my caucus. It's impossible for you to go and be involved in that kind of intense discussion, where there are 11 first ministers all expressing the views and objectives of their province or, in the case of the Prime Minister, the federal government, if you aren't there with the confidence and support of your caucus. I felt at all times when I was in Ottawa representing Alberta that I had that confidence and support of my caucus, and I appreciate that very much.

Now, I wanted just for a moment to confirm again the principles that Alberta went into this conference believing in. That is, first, a united country. As we've always said, Canada can be a great country, but it will only be a great country, it will only reach its potential, if it is united, and therefore it was the number one principle, in my mind, in participating in those debates. Second, we must have strong, equal provinces unable to be dictated to from the centre of our nation; and thirdly, we wanted to make progress on meaningful Senate reform. I want to look at the document as it measures up to those principles.

Just before doing that, I want to say a word about the opposite result of the result we have here and the advice or the urging of some people in Alberta to me and our government, where some people say they would have the Premier of Alberta break a commitment under Meech Lake, break a solemn agreement of the province of Alberta, dishonour a resolution of this Assembly unanimously passed, risk our nation, and at least in our lifetime remove the possibility of meaningful Senate reform. If you consider that: break your word, break a commitment of our government, go against a unanimous resolution of this Assembly, wipe out all chance of Senate reform, and put your nation at risk – and some would say that would make you a hero in Alberta. Think about that, Mr. Speaker. Who would urge the government to conduct themselves in that way in this province?

Mr. Speaker, I think we have to look at the accord which we have before us as it measures up to the principles I've described. We have the document, and I presented it to the House, and I hope every member is getting a copy as quickly as possible. This meeting was described by one of my fellow first ministers as the longest dinner meeting in history, since in each case we continued to extend it before going into the public conference. This meeting was so important to the future of our country. I'd like, first of all, to recall for members what Alberta received and achieved in Meech Lake itself, because that was really the purpose of this meeting, to have the Premier of New Brunswick, the Premier of Manitoba, and the Premier of Newfoundland-Labrador agree to take that Meech Lake constitutional amendment to their Legislatures and ask for ratification.

Just let me touch briefly on the Meech Lake accord and what it achieved for Alberta, because that is the base we were going to work from. Now, I know it's not a perfect document; it has flaws. When you bring together 11 first ministers, obviously you have leaders of governments who have their own objectives and their own views of their province or the federal government. Therefore, how could it be a perfect document? How could you just dictate to other first ministers? You don't. But remember what Meech Lake does provide to us. On an overall basis Meech Lake gives the provinces a greater say, a greater influence on national decisions . . .

MR. CHUMIR: Sovereignty association.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. GETTY: . . . than ever before, Mr. Speaker. With Meech Lake we would have for the first time in history a Constitution made in Canada, agreed to by all the provinces in Canada. It reverses the centralist directions that our country went in under the Trudeau/Lalonde years, because what it does: it provides for the principle of equal provinces. It controls federal spending power in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction where they had been moving; that is stopped now because of the opting out clause. We have for the first time a major say on immigration. We have for the first time input on Supreme Court decisions. We have for the first time input on Senate appointments. Constitutional conferences are guaranteed, and then for the first time in history Alberta has the same as Ontario and Quebec, an equal ability to have to agree: the veto. Never before has Alberta had that. So that's the Meech Lake accord.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I received a note saying that I have just about used up my time . . .

[The hon. Premier's speaking time expired]

MR. GETTY: Is that it? Would it be possible that the members might give me . . .

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, point of order.

MR. GETTY: Could the members give me by unanimous consent a chance to go on into this a little bit?

MR. SPEAKER: The point of order takes precedence.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I think this is such a crucial matter that I would move, if that's the appropriate way of doing it, that the Premier be allowed an opportunity to take as long as he wants to state his position, along with the Leader of the Official Opposition and the leader of the Liberal Party.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, with due respect, hon. members, the Chair tried to negotiate this earlier today and invited the House leaders to have a conversation in that regard. The message back was that everyone was supposed to stay to 10 minutes. Now, that's fine. Let us now, then, work out that the hon. Premier and the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the Liberal Party get 20 minutes each so that other members also have a chance to participate in debate. Could I take that as being the substance of the motion from the leader?

MR. DECORE: Yes, sir.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much.
Those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carries unanimously.
Hon. Premier.

MR. GETTY: Thank you. I'll go faster. Mr. Speaker, I had to establish the Meech Lake accord because that's what the meeting was all about, and that had passed.

Then, Mr. Speaker, I want to measure this document against our principles of a united country; strong, equal provinces; and meaningful Senate reform. Well, by the Meech Lake accord being brought to the Legislatures of New Brunswick, Newfoundland-Labrador, and Manitoba, we do have, I believe, the basis for a united country, where we are all together within the constitutional framework and Quebec is welcomed in as equals within that constitutional family.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of Senate reform, the meaningful progress in Senate reform, if members will look with me at the first page under the covering page, the area of Senate reform. For the first time in history, we will have a national commission on Senate reform set up, with the provinces putting people on in equal numbers. Consider the importance of that, where we'll have the best minds in Canada able to make recommendations on how our Senate reform will proceed. Now, if you remember, we've been able to convince eight first ministers that the Triple E Senate is what we want; therefore, what are their people whom they have on this commission going to reflect? Obviously it's going to be Triple E. So there is going to be a national commission working, made up of a preponderance of people who believe in the Triple E and making recommendations to – again, the first in history – a conference on senate reform. We've never had one before in the history of our country. It'll be held this year in British Columbia.

Then, Mr. Speaker, the objectives that that commission must give effect to and that the reform must give effect to:

The Senate should be elected.

That's never been agreed to by all governments in Canada ever before, a major breakthrough.

The Senate should provide for more equitable representation of the less populous provinces and territories.

Now, we've always said we want that. We think it should be done by equal members in the Senate. We're halfway there, perhaps, with "more equitable," but we're not going to stop. We're going to work and make it equal.

Then, Mr. Speaker, our third E: effective. There it is:

The Senate should have effective powers to ensure the interests of residents of the less populous provinces and territories figure more prominently in national decision-making.

That's what we've been fighting for. We've moved from just discussing Senate reform to the kinds of objectives that will make meaningful Senate reform along the lines of the people of Alberta and western Canada and, I believe, of the Atlantic provinces and in the long run all governments in Canada.

Then, Mr. Speaker, as additional pressure, to make sure they aren't just discussions, the Prime Minister will report to the country every six months on the progress of Senate reform. Again, Alberta wanted reconfirmed, because there are other constitutional amendments proposed here, that "Senate reform will be the key constitutional priority" until that reform is achieved. That's stated at the top of page 2. Then one more pressure point, and this is the one that if there isn't Senate reform achieved by 1995, we will acquire more seats in the Senate. I hope that doesn't happen. I hope we reform the Senate long before 1995.

So, Mr. Speaker, I believe we have set in place a process, we've set in place objectives, and we have it agreed to by all governments, hopefully by June 23, that we'll have made a major move to reform one of the Houses of our Parliament and change forever in a fundamental way the way the government will operate in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, we go on to deal with the matter of sex equality rights, the role of the territories, language issues, aboriginal issues, how new provinces are created, a Canada clause and how

it will be drafted, confirming that the process must be changed, considering the mandatory hearings, reviewing the three-year time limit. We then go on the matter of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, ensuring that it operates the way we intended. Finally, we had an opinion from the best legal minds in Canada that in fact the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is not in any way impinged or derogated from by the distinct society clause. Then there was an amendment for the province of British Columbia.

Mr. Speaker, I think you can see that we went into this conference with the principles I have mentioned, and I believe we have met those principles. I think it is a major step forward for Alberta, the benefits of Meech Lake, the new moves forward on Senate reform. That has moved so fast from just several years ago, when one Premier and one government set out on a kind of lonely journey trying to convince other Canadians and other governments about the importance of Senate reform, and look what we've been able to achieve.

Quickly, Mr. Speaker, a word on the matter of Mr. Waters, Alberta's elected appointee. On Thursday I had a meeting arranged with the Prime Minister, and we discussed Mr. Waters. I've obviously raised the issue with him many times. It just turned out on Thursday that it was one of the darkest moments for this agreement. I wanted to make sure that whether or not this agreement progressed – I wanted to ensure that whatever the outcome, failure or otherwise, Mr. Waters would be appointed. The Prime Minister said to me, "Is that the opinion and is that the position of the Premier of Alberta?" I said yes, that we have Mr. Waters here; we set up the Senatorial Selection Act to keep pressure on the process. I am pleased to say that this afternoon His Excellency the Governor General has appointed Charles Stanley Waters to the Senate of Canada. [applause] Mr. Speaker, we're very pleased with that. It was the direction of this government, and I trust that Mr. Waters will represent the people of our province well.

I want to say one other thing that I told the Prime Minister and my fellow first ministers, because they asked me about the future. They said they felt that while the Senate reform process was going on, would we consider that we do not all move as first ministers in a holus-bolus way with additional elections of Senators. I only made this commitment: I said that I will watch the Senate reform process and we will see if it works as intended, and only if it works as intended will we consider whether we may or may not proceed with additional senatorial selection Acts. But I'm extremely pleased that we have been able to have this appointment. It was the result of the people of Alberta selecting in a free and democratic way. By the way, I should say clearly that it was not a condition of this agreement, absolutely not. It was, as a matter of fact, confirmed right on the darkest day, if you like, of this agreement.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all hon. members to look at this document, consider it in regard to the principles we went to Ottawa to achieve. I think they will find that in fact, with the backing of my ministers, our delegation, and my caucus, and with the help of the Leader of the Opposition – and I mean that: help and very strong help – and the leader of Liberal Party's strong help as well, we were able to achieve this for Alberta.

MR. MARTIN: First of all, Mr. Speaker, let me thank the Premier – well, I'm not sure if I should thank him or not after spending a week in Ottawa – for participating. It was certainly, to say the least, interesting, frustrating, and a lot of other experiences that we had in Ottawa, and I'm not sure who I send

the bill to for the three shirts that I had to pick up, but I will try to find somebody to pay for them.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want, first of all – and I don't think it will surprise people – to talk about the process and go back in history, and then I'll talk if I can briefly about what we ended up with. Unfortunately, like every other document I think people could look at this and say there are some good things in it and there are some bad things in it. I think that was true when we go back to '87 when the original Meech Lake accord came up. Now, the problem I see is that that particular process at that time left an extremely bad taste in people's mouths because all people saw . . . I know there was work behind the scenes with the first ministers. I know it started off in Edmonton that the prime reason for constitutional deadlock or constitutional talks at that time would be to bring Quebec in so that we could be a whole country again in terms of the Constitution. I know that a lot of work went on behind the scenes at that particular time.

But what it must have looked like, if you go back, in '87: all of a sudden you have 11 men I think at 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning signing a document and of that document saying to the people of Canada that not one dotted i or one crossed t can be changed. This document is final. In some cases, people holding public hearings and in some cases not, trying to get the government here to hold public hearings because I knew there was a fair amount of interest among the public and I knew that a lot of people didn't understand what was in the Constitution one way or the other. In many cases, people were getting mixed up with the last Constitution. The notwithstanding clause I would hear, for example, as a criticism, and that was part of the last Constitution.

So we had a problem, and the problem started to get worse. You could feel the ripples throughout this province and throughout the country, Mr. Speaker, of people being anti-Meech. It started off that people were glad to have Quebec in, and the polls would indicate that people were generally in favour of Meech Lake. The longer it went on and the more that people talked about it, the more angry they became, and we know the polls started to turn around, I'm not sure for whatever reason, on Meech. Everybody found a different reason to hate it. That's what often happens in constitutional talks; everybody finds some reason or other why they don't like that particular document. Then we had new governments come in, three new Premiers that fought the elections – well, I'm not sure of Mr. Filmon, but certainly some people fought the elections in Manitoba against Meech Lake. Certainly that was the case in Newfoundland-Labrador. It certainly was the case in New Brunswick. So with the three-year deadline you have a new problem. These people that got elected, I think rightfully so, said: "We cannot accept it. We want to be part of these constitutional deadlocks. There have to be some changes in Meech Lake."

Now, Mr. Speaker, I daresay that if we'd gone back in the process and we'd said: "This is a document we think we've done a pretty good job on here. Maybe it's not perfect, but maybe we can make some changes. Now we're going to hold public hearings across the country both nationally and provincially, and let's take a look at it. We're going to explain it, because we think it makes a lot of sense, and maybe there are some things we could do differently" – then I expect we wouldn't have had these three Premiers . . . They would have had an out. I would have suggested too, and this is a criticism of the Prime Minister, not here, that knowing the game had changed then, when you had three new Premiers, the process we went through last week at the last minute should have been done a year or two before

and you might have solved some of the problems. But we went along at the last moment. We were wondering what was going to happen. It became clear that at least Manitoba and Newfoundland – I wasn't sure about New Brunswick, but it looked like there was some movement there. As the day grew closer, June 23, and Manitoba has to have public hearings, it looked like Meech was dead. So the first ministers – and I think it was the right thing to do, to bring the ministers together and talk about it even at the late date. I think the Premier here did the same thing. Finally, we get a meeting.

Now, when we went down there, I don't know what people here expected. I tell you I was certainly surprised by spending a week in Ottawa, but I thought maybe they'd have their meeting and go public and that would be it, or they'd get an agreement and be back Tuesday. But we got into a marathon, Mr. Speaker. I have to congratulate the Premier at least on his stamina. I'm not sure about his common sense, sitting there for that week. The point I want to make about this: this is Brian Mulroney's style. He's very good at it. He used to be a labour negotiator; he worked for management. I understand he was excellent at it. It's politics by exhaustion, Mr. Speaker. We get into what my colleague Gary Doer has called the Stockholm syndrome, where the captives start to like the people that have got them captured. If you keep people there long enough, eventually, you hope, you're going to get an agreement. Now, maybe people would argue that that was the only thing you could do at that particular time, but the reality is that he could have done this much sooner when the pressures weren't there and made the process much more public.

So, Mr. Speaker, imagine again that you're the Canadian public. I was sitting in Ottawa, seeing this go on, admiring the stamina of the first ministers, knowing how hard it must be. But we're dealing with the Constitution of the country. What does it look like in Edmonton? What does it look like in Calgary? What does it look like in Delia? What does it look like across the country? Again, it looks like they're making the same process problems again: 11 men behind closed doors. Even the product that people come out with: because the process is flawed, people are going to be angry, and they are angry. I'm not sure why in many cases. Of the phone calls I get, some of it, unfortunately, is intolerance. That's unfortunate. I think the process has increased that in the country. But some of it: again, they're just not sure. As I said in question period, I think the sign that summed it up best for Canadians was, going in to the first ministers, when a person had a sign: "I'm confused."

Now we have a problem, Mr. Speaker. The process, we can argue, has got 10 of the first ministers on board. But I still don't know what's going to happen, because Mr. Wells has gone back to Newfoundland to a hero's welcome and indicates now – I understand it's the latest today – that there's not going to be a referendum, but it's going to be a free vote in the House. Knowing how popular he is in the House, I just wonder what's going to happen. So even this latest process may have been self-defeating; you know, the idea of brinkmanship politics: pressure, pressure, pressure, "You're wrecking the country," and all the rest of it. So I really do suggest that this process has been so bad that if there's anything that comes out of this, hopefully, never again – never again – will we deal with our Constitution in this manner.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to just take a look at what was done this week beyond Meech Lake. As the Legislature should be aware, we wanted some amendments, and again this is a frustration for us. There were some things in Meech Lake that I thought were important. Certainly bringing Quebec into the

Constitution has to be important. For those people that think they can go along without Quebec and have the same standard of living, the same benefits they have now, with the country splintering up, they'd better think again, because this country will be in serious difficulty if we lose Quebec, and it will happen right across the country.

Mr. Speaker, we brought in a number of amendments. They were all defeated. I've never gotten many amendments passed in the Legislature, so it didn't surprise me, but I think there were some good ones there. I think now that obviously the Premier must agree with me, because some of the amendments that we talked about, some important agendas that we had, are now going to come up in round 2. This is one of the reasons, and as the Premier is well aware, I've talked to many of our party people, and certainly Gary Doer was a player there. I spent a lot of time with him. It's not what we wanted. We wanted amendments to Meech right now, but we did get some things that we raised in this Legislature that are extremely important for our party.

If you look, the further constitutional amendments are going to be the Charter. Sex equality rights that we talked about is an amendment; it's going to come about. Another amendment that we brought in had to do with the role of the territories, Yukon and the Northwest Territories. They are now going to have appointments to the Senate and the Supreme Court. We talked about the process dealing with aboriginal rights in one of our amendments; that's coming about. One of the other major things we talked about was the creation of new provinces in the territories. If Senate reform is on the top of the agenda, the Premier would also agree that the creation of new provinces in the territories, in fairness to the north, is on the top. We also raised to bring into the Constitution what Canada was about besides a distinct society, Mr. Speaker, dealing with women, dealing with aboriginal rights, and dealing with multiculturalism. I'm pleased to say that the new Canada clause is going to hold public hearings to look at that.

So the bottom line for us, Mr. Speaker, when you get through all the emotionalism of a very bad process, an extremely frustrating, angering process, is that some things were brought forward in round 2 that I look forward to, and I will be watching to make sure those things are done because they're our agenda here in the Alberta Legislature.

Now, let me just briefly mention the Senate, Mr. Speaker. I've not been one that's spent a lot of time talking about the Senate. They may have done themselves in during Senate reform when they raised their wages \$150 when people were talking about the Senate, which may have done more for Senate reform than almost anything in the country. But I want to be fair about this particular issue. I've never seen a need for the Senate. I believe in the triple A – abolish, abolish, abolish – because it's a patronage outfit for the Liberals and Conservatives. And we talked about equality in the House of provinces. I'm sure the Premier and people here are well aware that was our concern, to deal with the regions.

But I'll give the Premier credit for this matter, Mr. Speaker. Those people from Alberta that think they have all the answers, simple answers – why didn't you just go down and get Triple E? You know, it shouldn't have been any problem; just bring back Triple E. It was not even on the agenda of other provinces, not even on their agenda. To think that anybody is that simple and naive that they think they can go down, say this is what we want and that's it – I'll come back with it. Other provinces have to think about it, and in fairness to the Premier, it is on the national agenda now. It's not Triple E, but as the Premier said,

it is on the agenda. I'm going to take a look at it, because I believe – and I'm not sure if Triple E's coming; I'll be totally honest – there's going to be an elected Senate, and I believe it's going to be more equitable. But I want to say here and now that I'm worried about what "effective" means. I think we have to get to that matter, Mr. Speaker, because if it means that we're going to have one party controlling the Senate and another one controlling the House of Commons, I can see the potential for a lot of constitutional deadlocks in the future. I hope that commission is going to take a very good look at what the third E means in terms of effective. I agree that there has to be some say for the regions, and I hope that it moves in that direction, but I don't want to see this country tied up in a constitutional deadlock. I can say to the Premier that talking to our constitutional people right across the country, we're going to move this up on our agenda and start to look at it and make some recommendations about it. So Senate reform is there; there's no doubt about it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I understand . . . [interjection] What are they for, the Triple E or triple A? Anyhow, just in conclusion about all this, I want to conclude in this way. I am worried regardless of what happens with the Meech Lake accord, depending on what happens in Newfoundland or Manitoba, because they have to go through a difficult public process in a very short period of time. What worries me about it – and I blame this on the flawed process – is that unfortunately I am seeing more intolerance, more bigotry than I've seen in the country before, and I wish all people could keep a calm head at this particular time and at least understand: let's have the serious debate about what's in the Meech Lake accord. Let's change the bad things in it, but let us not get sort of simple answers, and let's not get to name-calling about other Canadians in this country, because this country is going to fall apart.

This is one thing I do agree with the Premier on: we're in a very delicate stage in our history in this country. That's not to say that this person is right or this person is wrong, that there aren't legitimate concerns with Meech Lake. There are, Mr. Speaker, and I have some of them. I blame, again, the process. But I would hope – as we said many times, we need Quebec in. We said yes to Quebec; I was quite prepared to do that. What was worrying me was that we were saying no in some ways to women, no to aboriginal people, no to multicultural groups, and no to the north. I hope by round 2 we're saying yes to Quebec and yes to these people that need to be represented in our Constitution.

But I say, Mr. Speaker, that the final dot on the i isn't there. It's going to be an interesting two weeks to see what does happen in Manitoba, to see what does happen in Newfoundland-Labrador. Again, I just conclude: hopefully, out of this the country at some point will be stronger, there will be changes, the next round will go better, and we will learn from this process that we never ever put our country through this heart-wrenching experience again.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to participate in this debate this afternoon. Recognizing that it's a very brief 10 minutes, I do want to touch on some points. I'm particularly pleased that we can now begin to look at Canada and our evolving Constitution beyond the accord rather than without it. I'm breathing a little bit easier about the future of our nation today, and I hope the issues that have been so difficult for us will be a memory, an unfortunate one, for this country.

[Mr. Schumacher in the Chair]

I agree with some of the remarks just made by the Leader of the Opposition about the process. There's no question that it's very difficult. I recall the time we debated this in the House and the amendments that were brought forward by the Official Opposition at that time. We said at the time, "Yes, those are very important things that must be addressed, and they will be in the second round," and that's what is happening.

I want to just say, though, that an important participant in the debates there was my deputy minister, Mrs. Oryssia Lennie, who's in the gallery today. I can tell hon. members that during the Meech Lake discussions and the Langevin Block discussions she was in the room, the only woman in the room. I can tell you that after the Langevin Block, the CBC reported it this way: the federal government was represented by Norman Spector; the provinces were represented by some woman from Alberta. That's the CBC for you, folks. A coined phrase by the Premier of Ontario, I think, should be recognized in this Assembly. The Premier of Ontario referred to Mrs. Lennie as the mother of Confederation. I'm glad that after all these years we do have one.

Just touching on the process outlined in the agreement, it has to be put in perspective that what we were trying to do was make sure that there was full participation by all the partners in Confederation, and that was to get Quebec in. The Premier has touched on that. We cannot have a Constitution developed without the participation of all 11 governments, and eventually, as I've said many times, the territories, when they emerge into provincial status, will also be full partners.

But the issues discussed and resolved over the past week were not simply issues related to Quebec's role in our country, and second, the issues that do relate to Quebec's role are long-standing issues that we've been trying to resolve for many decades. The five conditions outlined in the 1988 Edmonton declaration and then in the '87 constitutional accord were a compromise by Quebec – a compromise by Quebec – in their long-standing efforts to have their place in Canada more clearly defined, not enhanced but defined. That is certainly the effort made by the current government led by Premier Bourassa. I've said again and again in this Assembly and in speeches and in personal discussions that the Meech Lake accord and this new agreement do not enhance the powers of Quebec over any province and do not provide Quebec with special status. They do, however, lay the groundwork through which all the provinces will have a greater role to play in Confederation and through which the equality of all the provinces can be obtained.

Now, with respect to Senate reform, we have already heard from the Premiers on how this new agreement will help us achieve a Triple E Senate. I want to again stress what an enormous achievement this part of this agreement is, and I also want to point out again that it was through our Premier's efforts at this last conference with regard to both the Senate reform issue and his personal effort to ensure that everybody stayed at the table. Without that this agreement could not have been reached. We can only speculate on what actually took place in the room, and no doubt there will be many published memoirs about that, and I'll leave it to the Premier for his memoirs to say what actually took place. But in any event, I do think we can now offer real hope for Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say what an accomplishment the Senate reform proposal is: from 1983, when we came into this Assembly, set up a select committee of the Legislature, to 1985, when the Legislature approved the report of the select special committee, became the first advocate of a Triple E Senate; to 1986 and the Edmonton declaration; to '87 and the inclusion of

Senate reform as the number one constitutional agenda item after Meech Lake; to May 1988 and the Parksville accord, by which the western Premiers agreed with the principle of a Triple E Senate, and since then getting our Atlantic provincial brethren to support the proposal; and in August 1988, the same year, in Saskatoon, to the appointment of a special task force which I had the privilege to chair and which traveled across this country in company with you, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Drumheller, as a permanent member of that committee, joined by Bert Brown and Dr. Peter Meekison and a number of my other colleagues in addition to Mrs. Lennie, whom I've already mentioned, and other staff people from Federal and Inter-governmental Affairs.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

I want to pay tribute to the work done on that task force by our former member Nigel Pengelly, from Innisfail, and to members who are still in the Assembly: Steve West, the Member for Vermilion-Viking; Stock Day, the Member for Red Deer-North; Steve Zarusky, Redwater-Andrew; Bill Payne from Calgary-Fish Creek; and Bob Bogle from Taber-Warner, who all at one time or another joined the task force as we traveled across this country and met with every government. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that those governments, as the Leader of the Opposition has just pointed out, were not prepared to deal with Senate reform. It wasn't even on their agenda. Now what do we have? A federal/provincial commission with equal representation from each province and appropriate members from the federal and territorial governments – and I underline that territorial governments will be participating with us – to begin public discussions, which we sorely need, across this country. The public who want to have a say are sure going to have it in this case. To have an elected, effective, and more equitable Senate as the objectives of that committee; to have a First Ministers' Conference by the end of this year and every year thereafter until Senate reform is achieved; to have the Prime Minister report on a semiannual basis to the House of Commons on the progress made towards Senate reform; and then, if necessary – and I hope, as the Premier said and as members of this Assembly have clearly indicated, they agree with that point of view; I hope we never get to this point – to have a redistribution of the Senate. I hope that by that time the Senate will in fact be truly reformed and using our agenda, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta government agenda, established on the floor of this Assembly by unanimous consent, is a major achievement for the people of Alberta. I've been proud, indeed, to be part of that process.

Well, I'm going to conclude, Mr. Speaker, and say this. While I'm optimistic, I want to share the concerns of the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition that we as Canadians have got to stop talking about those things that divide us and start working together on those things which unite us, because there is so much going for Canada: an opportunity to bring together people of French origin, the aboriginal peoples, the English, and the many ethnic groups who came along behind those other settlers from different shores and who are coming here today. Why are they coming to Canada? Why are they looking to Canada? They're looking to Canada for freedom, for opportunity, and for tolerance and understanding. We can give it and welcome to these shores people from all over the world. I hope they will be secure in the knowledge and understanding that this province and the people of Canada have big enough hearts, big enough understanding, and care enough for each other as

individuals and people, no matter what our backgrounds may have been, to make this the best country in the world in which to live. I'm proud of what our Premier has done on behalf of Albertans and Canadians in the past week in Ottawa. It wasn't easy, but it was a great job well done, sir.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to start by acknowledging with thanks the invitation I received along with the leader of the New Democratic Party to participate in those discussions on this most recent accord. I think that's a good movement in terms of taking away the partisanship, the stridency, that has gone along with Senate discussions, with constitutional discussions. A lot more needs to be done, but it was a very positive move. It should be noted for the record that the only other province to bring their opposition leaders was Ontario, in Mr. Rae and Mr. Harris. It's my understanding that other oppositions requested to be present but were not given that opportunity. So I hope the hon. Premier will continue this process.

AN HON. MEMBER: Manitoba.

MR. DECORE: Of course, Manitoba had to be there because of the minority government situation.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier started by talking about Meech Lake. With respect to Meech lake, it's our view, it's my view, that the position the Premier and the government took on Meech Lake was wrong. It is my view that the flaws of Meech Lake – and I note that the Premier today acknowledges the fact that there were flaws – were likely not evident to the first ministers when they put their signatures to that 1987 accord. Only after there was time for reflection did women's groups come forward and say there is a danger here to sexual equality, only after multiculturalism groups came forward was there a recognition that harm was likely to come to those groups because of Meech on the Charter of Rights, and the aboriginals found unhappiness with the fact that Meech perhaps took away rights from them under the Charter. Worst of all, our position on Meech with respect to unanimity was wrong. It continues to baffle me as to why Alberta, that is pushing for Senate reform, that is on the offensive to get Senate reform, would put up such an incredible obstacle against Senate reform by insisting on unanimity. I think it must go back to the times of negotiations with Ottawa on other issues, but I think that continues to be an impairment to a successful conclusion to Senate reform for Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the matters that occurred in Ottawa this last week with respect to the participation and involvement of the Canadian government I think also need to be put on the record in terms of our position and the way I saw it, and more particularly the role played by the Prime Minister. I think the Prime Minister was sucked in. I think he was duped by Mr. Bouchard and the influence of Mr. Bouchard, who had an agenda for a much different kind of Quebec than Mr. Bourassa or other Quebecers had. Mr. Mulroney was taken into a position that was strong and rigid and inflexible and always, always one of assisting Quebec and not looking at matters objectively and not being a facilitator and not trying to bring Anglophone provinces and the Quebec province together on issues of difficulty. I saw that continued through these discussions in the last week. I don't think our Prime Minister, our federal government, was fair to the other provinces. I think they continued and the Prime Minister in particular continued to show favouritism to Quebec.

I use as my most telling example in evidence what happened to the clause that disappeared on Friday night. It was clear in the mind of our Premier that that clause was to be included, because when he briefed me, he said that clause would be included. He said to the media on Saturday morning that if the clause that related to a review after 10 years of the distinct society provision affected the Charter, it would be changed. That clause disappeared. Our Premier, when he spoke to it on Saturday morning to the media, said, "Well, if the lawyers can't get the wording straight, we'll get rid of those lawyers and bring in other lawyers that can put it in." That was a position that I think clearly evidenced the fact that the Prime Minister and the government of Canada continued to give advantage to Quebec and continued to not see things objectively and fairly. I hope Canadians all across Canada note that our Prime Minister hasn't been fair and hasn't been reasonable and hasn't been objective through this whole process.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that our Premier, our government, went to these discussions in Ottawa with a mind-set, a mind-set that was to finish the dealings with Quebec, to finish the agenda for Quebec, to get Quebec problems out of the way. It's my view that we had the opportunity in Meech in 1987 to talk about not only the matters that concerned Quebec as part of an agenda but also matters that concerned Alberta and western Canada and the regions, and specifically to get guarantees and commitments on Triple E. We didn't have to sign anything, and I think we would have been in a much stronger position. If we had continued, as the Alberta government did, with that mind-set without having Clyde Wells and Gary Filmon and Premier McKenna come forward, we would have been in a much worse position – much worse. I think it should be noted for the record as well that these provinces had provision to review Meech Lake, in one case mandatory review. It was during those reviews in those provinces that there was the time and the ability to see the flaws and to start thinking about new directions and new initiatives.

I give full credit to Mr. Filmon and to Mr. Wells and to Mr. McKenna, but particularly to Mr. Wells. If anybody moved the agenda of Senate reform during this last go round, it was he. If anybody assisted him powerfully it was the Premier of Manitoba and to a lesser extent the Premier of New Brunswick, because what happened is that Alberta had a mind-set: finish the agenda for Quebec; we'll do it some later time, have a meeting to deal with the issues that concern Alberta and the other provinces. That's the way it went, members of the Assembly. That's the way I heard it from my vantage point in Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, my view is that our Premier continued that mind-set until the halfway point in the meetings in Ottawa. When he was pulled in, there was a vacuum, a current, whatever you want to call it, that was created by Wells and Filmon particularly, that forced discussion and forced concrete development on Senate reform. Now, that's the point where our Premier starts his involvement.

MR. R. SPEAKER: You're wrong, Laurence.

MR. DECORE: Well, I think I'm not wrong, hon. minister. I think that's . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Through the Chair.

MR. DECORE: I think that's where it started.

I think one has to give some credit to our Premier, because at that moment, halfway through those discussions, he does become

involved in the process. I think the objectives that are set out for the commission with respect to Senate reform have input from Alberta, have input from our Premier. One example that was given and explained to me was the question of an elected Senate. The words that somebody wanted to use were "democratic Senate," that there should be a democratic Senate. It was the position of our Premier that that word wasn't acceptable; it had to be "elected." I give him credit for that. I give him credit for advancing the position of the three Es, even some of them in a watered-down form, in that commission. But, Mr. Speaker, hon. minister, I can only come away from Ottawa believing that we would have had more, Albertans would have been in a stronger position, and we would have advanced the cause and the issues involved in Senate reform further if our mind-set hadn't been wrong from the beginning, if we had aligned ourselves with Mr. Filmon and Mr. Wells much earlier, perhaps a year and a half, three years from that meeting.

One of the things somebody asked me today and over the course of many days: what's this fellow Wells like? I said, because I've known him for many years, that he's a man of principle. If he believes in something, he sticks to it no matter what. I'm told that during the course of these discussions over a period of six days in Ottawa, he came to tears on a number of occasions, and he didn't and wouldn't sign that agreement right up until the end. All of the pressure was on Premier Wells – all of it. He's a hero in my eyes. I think he should be regarded as a hero in the eyes of Albertans, because he did advance the cause of Senate reform.

Mr. Speaker, I also am glad to see the comments made today by the leader of the New Democratic Party with respect to his attitude toward Senate reform and the likelihood – he wasn't specific – that the New Democrats would now be more involved in issues involving Senate reform. I note for the record as well that the Leader of the Opposition in Saskatchewan has said similar things, perhaps even more specifically, that there should be Senate reform. I think now we have three parties along with Albertans going in the same direction.

Some final comments about process. I sat listening to all the first ministers giving their wrap-up comments. Almost every one of them talked about how bad the process was. Even the accord that was signed on Saturday and Sunday morning says that the process has to be changed, that there should be mandatory review; that will be looked at. I mean, you don't have to be around for very long to know that Canadians were very much offended by that process. I thought it would be a matter of course and quick action by our Premier and our government and the Deputy Premier to talk about specifics to improve that process. I'm saddened by the fact that they have waffled on this issue. I'm saddened by the fact that when the Leader of the Official Opposition and when our party have talked about mandatory review, the only answer that we've received today is that that matter will be looked at in the future, will be reviewed in the future. I'm saddened to listen to the Deputy Premier agree to say that there were difficulties with process but not to specifically address what things should be done to clean up this mess so that it doesn't reoccur.

The Liberal Party has put forward a number of suggestions. The first is to have mandatory hearings both before and after actions are taken. I think that's important for a government to acknowledge and to specifically state. I think it's important to start setting our agenda and communicating that agenda to Albertans and having Albertans involved in the establishment of that agenda, a timetable and the specifics of what they need and want in Senate reform. To hear nothing about that, to hear that

it's going to be studied, sounds to me like this is an attempt to sweep it under the rug: "Don't bother us, Albertans. We're going to study it. You don't have to care about it; you don't have to worry about it. We'll continue looking after your problems for you." Well, Mr. Speaker, Albertans aren't going to accept that kind of action, and I would hope that between now and the end of this week, the Premier and the Deputy Premier would come forward with some concrete action to deal with process and to ensure that this never, never, never happens again.

Why do we keep persisting in the desire for Senate reform? It is because – and I even learned from Liberals, Conservatives, and NDPers who come from central Canada that they don't understand that regions in Canada continue to get the short end of the stick. To me, representation by population will always be there. It is a sacred democratic principle. It will always give political clout to central Canada; that gives them economic clout. Therefore, you have to look for another check and balance in the system. Senate reform in a Triple E form is that check and balance, and that's why it's important to push this issue along. Because now we have it documented that from 1961 to 1985, when you look at what Albertans have paid to the government in Ottawa and all of the things that we've received back, we paid in more by some \$100 billion over those many years. And it continues – even last year, and the year before, and the year before that – so nobody can say it's because of Trudeau or because of the Liberals. It's because of the way the system works, and it needs to be changed. Those same professors identified that only two other provinces – Ontario paid in \$18 billion more than it got back; B.C. paid in \$4 billion more than it got back. Yes, Quebec got \$91 billion more over those years than they paid in. So that's the reason that Senate reform is needed: there needs to be that check and balance.

But, Mr. Speaker, the immediate objective for us is to put a process into place that Albertans are satisfied with, that this House is satisfied with; to put into place a process that Albertans will be allowed to participate in, that allows them to provide input into the agenda and the necessities of what that Senate reform will entail. There are many people in this House and many people outside of this House that don't even know what "effective" means or what it should mean. That should be an area for intense concentration in the weeks and months to come.

My last plea, Mr. Speaker, is to urge the government, to urge the Premier and the Deputy Premier, to urge the Minister of Municipal Affairs, who was at that week's process, to come forward soon with the ideas on how the process can be cleaned up, cleared up, and made right for Albertans.

Thank you.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker and colleagues of this Legislature, I want to, first of all, thank the Premier for the opportunity he gave me during this past week to observe the making of history and also observe the decision-making with regards to some very excellent progress in the framework in which Canada will survive and will grow in the years ahead.

I thought what I would do in the few moments I have, Mr. Speaker, is make some comments with regards to impressions, observations that I saw during that past week so that the members here can see and better understand some of the things that happened. My colleagues the Premier and the Deputy Premier have outlined the details of the communiqué and I don't intend to go into those in further depth.

I want to talk about the Premier first of all, Mr. Speaker, and his involvement and his very, very important role. I was

impressed. I came to this party and joined it a year ago because of the leadership provided by the Premier. I knew that in that person there was a deep commitment to do what is right not only for this province but, as well, for Canada as a whole. That deep commitment was carried into that meeting during this past week, and in an unwavering and a steadfast way our Premier gave guidance to the formation of a communiqué that he believed and I believe, and I know Canadians and other Premiers believe, when we finalize it on June 23, is a framework that will put us in good stead for the future.

Our Legislative position: I was in the opposition at the time when that position was taken by the government. When I joined the government, I accepted the position in support of the Meech Lake accord, that in that Meech Lake accord we would fulfill two commitments and objectives: first of all, to bring Quebec into this nation; secondly, that we would have special powers and benefits as a province in this nation of ours. Those two objectives were there. Our Premier, when he left here last Sunday to proceed to Ottawa, carried those two objectives on our behalf with commitment, and our message and our goal were carried out. That's the first thing; we must remember that when we're discussing this very issue.

Secondly, the commitment was unwavering as the activities took place. There were many times in those debates where the leaders of our provinces and the Prime Minister could have taken political actions, could have reflected on some of the attitudes that prevail across this land of ours, could have looked at local attitudes within their province that would secure many votes and much support if you inflamed them. But what our Premier did when that happened a number of times by various provinces is that he brought the debate back up on the table. I heard this from other Premiers, and they said it very clearly: "When we got down to that place where we'd be looking at our own somewhat crass political motives and our own political future, the Premier of Alberta reminded us many times that we should be talking about the future of Canada. We were sent here to this meeting to talk about its future, not just about the future of some local political need back home." He did that for us and kept the level of debate on a very high plane.

The other item that I noted in more than one instance was the respect our Premier had from the other first ministers. They believed and supported our position in Alberta with regards to Senate reform because of that respect. I'd like to make a comment with regards to Senate reform and how our Premier kept that matter up as a number one item on the agenda. When we arrived in Ottawa on the Sunday night, the staff of the Prime Minister's office had prepared an agenda, prepared a draft of what might have been a communiqué on items that were under discussion. In that draft, Senate reform was down the line; it wasn't at the top of the list. Our Premier said, "Hey, we came here, and Senate reform is to be the number one item." And as you see in the communiqué that you have before us, Senate reform that evening was moved up to the top of the agenda where it was supposed to be. All others ministers agreed with that, and the Prime Minister said, "Yes, Meech Lake is to be discussed as the core of this discussion, but the number one agenda following that is Senate reform." Our Premier did that and kept it in the foremost position so that it became the number one item for discussion in those talks that were carried out in this past week.

I want to say a few things with regards to this in terms of the comments that were made by the leader of the Liberal Party. The leader has said that our position with regards to Meech Lake was wrong. Well, that position's been before this Legisla-

ture. It was here prior to the last election. The leader of the Liberal Party has sat in this House for the past year, has had ample opportunity to bring forward some kind of a resolution, to bring forward some kind of suggestions, to debate this issue in a significant way, to lay those matters before this Legislature, to make it his number one cause if he wished to, but he did not take that opportunity in any significant way to try and influence us and send this information with us to Ottawa. [interjections] But it's after the fact – after the fact. And I hear in his speech continually: if we would have done this, then that should have happened, and it would have been better; if we would have done this, this would have been better. We can be politicians of "if" if we want. If I'd invested in a business last week and the business made money, I'd have maybe a million next week. I could have done all of that kind of "if" politics. It's nice to sit in this House and be critical of items like that, but in a situation, in a subject that is as important as the future of Canada, the Constitution of Canada, I think it is rather unfortunate that the Liberal leader wants to play some politics with the issue.

I want to make a further comment with regards to that as well. The Premier of this province invited, in good faith, the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the Liberal Party. In our discussions there, the direction to myself as a minister responsible for liaison was to provide all the information and to work as closely as possible with the two leaders, to take the input. The Leader of the Opposition made his case very clear to me. That case was related to the Premier not only indirectly through myself but also directly in one meeting attended by the Leader of the Opposition. The opportunity for input to the Premier was provided to the leader of the Liberal Party on two occasions. The suggestions from the Leader of the Opposition with regards to the territories, aboriginal rights, and sex equality rights were well placed and considered and were presented by the Premier. The position of the Liberal leader with regards to keeping the Triple E as a high priority was conveyed and certainly placed into that meeting, and that presentation was much respected. All of the contributions at that time by both leaders, contributions where they talked to their counterparts in the other provinces and tried to influence them to get this process of negotiation on track and to arrive at a positive conclusion, were excellent. I would just like to commend both leaders with regards to that.

I only want to temper those remarks though. When I returned to Alberta – and I don't want to make my comments crass, but the opposition Liberal news report doesn't reflect that positive attitude that I heard in Ottawa.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member.
Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciated the comments from the Minister of Municipal Affairs, who, I understand, did a fair amount of liaison work in Ottawa between all of the Albertans present during last week's meetings, and take note of his observations.

Mr. Speaker, my comments are related to my role as the Official Opposition New Democrats' Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs critic. Three years ago, after the Meech Lake accord was initially signed, I worked with my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, Gordon Wright, on a task force struck by the Official Opposition to travel throughout Alberta to solicit the views of people on the contents of the Meech Lake accord. Now, we received 130-odd submissions, all of which were good, all of which were well thought out, and

most of which recommended some changes to the accord, some of which have now made it to the first ministers' accord signed just two days ago. I'm glad to see that, Mr. Speaker. I congratulate the Leader of the Official Opposition, Ray Martin, for having had the guts to allow us to go out on that task force, in fact to recommend to our caucus that we do so, because there were no public hearings scheduled by the government at that time. We knew we were in for a difficult task. It was one that was worth while.

But in the ensuing years, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to tell you what I found out about what people know about the Meech Lake accord and why it is that in future these constitutional discussions need to have wide public discussion. It is this: the confusion about the original contents of the Meech Lake accord is widespread. There are a lot of people, for example, who believe that the unanimity clause contained in the Meech Lake accord applies to every constitutional change. Now, it is not easy to explain that when you're talking about structural changes to the government of Canada – that is, the legislative bodies of Canada – that that was the limit to the unanimity requirement. It's not easy to explain all of the subtleties in terms of definitions or who qualifies for what at what time under the terms of the Meech Lake accord nor will it be easy to explain to the public the contents of this agreement.

The reason that it's not going to be easy is because there has been an absence of solicited public input. There has been public input, let's make no mistake, but it has not been solicited and it has not been easy. And you can't draft a Constitution in plain language. I know that the Minister for Consumer and Corporate Affairs, who's been very interested in this issue for years, has a Bill in plain language right now. It's as close to plain language as you can get for some legislation, but good luck trying to draft a Constitution in absolutely plain language. Legalese is ultimately required. If for no other reason, Mr. Speaker, every Canadian should now appreciate, and I'm sure most already do, and the Prime Minister should appreciate the importance of constitutional discussions being – you can't hold every meeting in public, but frequently being discussed in public and allowing the public to come to forums almost no matter where they live, with very little requirement for traveling, for instance, so that they can ask the questions, because some of it is not easy to get through.

[Mr. Moore in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker, I think that the Leader of the Official Opposition made a very good case when it comes to the importance of building our nation. He pointed out the importance of Quebec being a partner in our Constitution, and, obversely, the consequences were for Quebec not to be part of our Constitution. I have another thought on that as well, and it is this: if we believe that we could kiss Quebec good-bye and engage in some sort of sovereignty association of whatever description, we must also recognize that the chances for Canada to survive as a country around that province as its own country are almost impossible, particularly in the wake of events such as the free trade agreement. What inevitably we would be forced into looking at would be several smaller countries, I think, and various themes of trading relationships with countries and a country that is much bigger than us. If you have any doubt about that – I know the Provincial Treasurer and I talked about it not quite this last week; we talked about the value of the dollar going up and down and the implications of the accord on our currency and on long-term trading ability.

For once the Provincial Treasurer and I agreed on something, and it is this: if we have any doubt about the long-term consequences for our country were we not to be a country inclusive of Quebec, one only needs to look at the markets last week and see what the speculation was, particularly watching the fluctuations of our Canadian dollar. So, in the long run, it would be not only socially, I think, a very unfortunate and regrettable incident but economically as well. I'm not sure that Canada would survive as a single Canada sans Quebec. We might be forced into much smaller countries yet and thereby weakened.

Mr. Speaker, it's not only out of fear that I make those observations; it is out of recognition of the importance of building Canada, that being the most important thing. Luckily, some of the things that we asked for in the amendments that the New Democrats sponsored in 1987 were also considered by the 10 Premiers, two territorial leaders, and one Prime Minister as important enough to put on the deck in the subsequent amendment, and those are not insubstantial. Surely territories have a right to be invited to discussions that affect their future. Surely women have a right to expect equality in a modern-age society. Surely the original founders of our nation, the aboriginal people, have a right to go to the top of the agenda as well. Let's make it clear: everybody wants to be at the top of the agenda, and there is, in the long run, a way to ensure that that happens without finger pointing, without provoking hostilities, and without provoking political manipulation. One way and one way only, Mr. Speaker, and that is by allowing enough time for the public to debate what is being considered, not something that has been signed and is being dealt with after the fact but what is being considered, and then allow the people who are democratically elected to lead those governments to go back to the table saying, "I've listened."

Surely in the modern age of politics we are able to do this. If we are unable, then we should admit that the heat is too much and get out of the kitchen. But I would be very much surprised if there is a person in this Assembly, each of whom has had to work hard to be elected, who would not agree that if we haven't got the strength to go out and listen to people before we sign on the dotted line, then we shouldn't be here. I think everybody would agree with that. This is, after all, a modern democracy. Let's use the example of the last week, the teeter-totter of the future of a nation – the pain, anguish, anger, resentment, frustration, happiness, relief, and every other emotion that came into play during the last eight days – as the best example of why democracy has to be open, why we can't just talk about a China or a Chile or another country that doesn't have democracy. This is a real, living example, as far as I'm concerned, of why it is that we need to learn how to be even more open in the supreme law of our country and the establishing of amendments thereto.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Speaker, did you recognize myself?

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes. I recognized you.

MR. ANDERSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's hard to miss me, I know.

In rising to speak to the agreement that is before us today, I would make the statement that in my opinion it's a crucial

agreement for Canada, an important agreement that may be a make-or-break agreement for Canada, and it is, in my opinion, the most significant constitutional agreement since 1867 for the province of Alberta. I say that from the perspective that this Assembly has given me. A couple of times I had the opportunity to serve on the Select Special Committee on the Constitution as we discussed and debated in every province, in every territory of the country, the 1982 accord, and then again as chairman of the Select Special Committee on Senate Reform, again crossing the country to review our history, to discuss constitutional amendments with those experts that we have in the nation as well as some of those who happened to be part of creating those constitutional amendments.

I now believe that for Albertans we have changed inexorably, have changed now in a positive way, the way in which we see ourselves and the way in which we participate in this democracy. Mr. Speaker, if you look at the provisions of this particular accord, you will find a change in our relationship, a coming into being of a full partnership in Confederation which, frankly, has not been there in our past. It has not because we're an evolving nation; we're a nation with concerns; we're a nation that has had to see its parts become full and ready to deal with all aspects of the future. This agreement now negotiated by our Premier and the delegation that went to Ottawa includes our participation in the appointment of Supreme Court justices. It includes the right to guarantee our constitutional position by having that opting-out provision whereby if the federal government chooses to initiate a program in an area of exclusive provincial jurisdiction, we can take the dollars attached to that and tailor make it in the best interests of Albertans.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker, I believe firmly that our philosophy with respect to how this country should operate, one where equal partners help to determine the future of the people living within that partnership, has been recognized here. And for that I believe we owe many people a word of thanks, but particularly the Premier who has led this battle throughout the past three years. There are those who would suggest that this agreement was made over seven days in a closed room among 11 men. I agree with comments that have been made that we can improve the process, that we must improve the process, that there are better ways of dealing with constitutional reform with our new sight in this new time. But let us not forget that this has been an agreement discussed by Canadians for three years by 14 different governments. I say 14 because the 11 represented last week were not the same as the 11 represented three years ago, so three former governments agreed with this. There have been more miles of print, more miles of *Hansard* remarks, more footage of television and film than I believe has ever been the case with any national discussion, and that's as it should be. This was a crucial agreement for our nation.

My particular interest has been Senate reform ever since this Assembly asked me to chair our Select Special Committee on Senate Reform – with the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar too, I would remind you – which traveled from one end of the country to the other and discussed Senate reform. It also held public hearings from one end of the province to the other, getting the input of Albertans and defining the specifics that we have now been using, that the Premier has now been using in his discussions on Senate reform. I have to say, with respect to the remarks of the hon. leader of the Liberal Party, that I disagree in the strongest possible terms with any suggestion that Senate

reform has been left behind. In fact, for the first time in 123 years Senate reform is at a level of discussion in this country where it is part of the nation building that's taking place. When we went across the nation, when we discussed this issue, I have to tell members of the Assembly, as I did some years back, that the interest was Alberta's, with some mild interest from Prince Edward Island and some innovative suggestions from there, and a growing but subservient position for Senate reform in our sister provinces. Now the nation has said, through its first ministers, that we will have this as the major topic of discussion in the future.

The Premier has managed above all else to have Senate reform made the issue of paramount importance to our nation and has established a process to do that. Even more amazing to me – and I say "amazing" because I have to admit to the Assembly that when I presented the report in 1985, I believed we were decades away from any fundamental change – this agreement underlines the need for the Senate to represent the less populous provinces in the federal decision-making process. That has been debated by constitutional historians for the last some hundred-odd years, with others saying that it is primarily a House of sober second thought or that originally it was a House to represent the property owners or that it should be one that represents the trades or other distinct groups in our society. We now have recognition that an equal commission will make recommendations regarding it. We have today seen history made with the appointment of the first elected Senator in the history of the nation, and we have in all respects moved this debate further than anyone could reasonably expect it to be moved. For that I think we owe thanks not only from the province of Alberta's perspective but from the nation's perspective to a man who has piloted this when others were saying, "This is not of importance to Canadians."

Mr. Speaker, I suspect that my time is running short. I would only say that while I've been speaking of what's important to Alberta, what's important to us, last week we did have to tug at the heartstrings of the nation in order to bring this agreement together, one that I hope will hold through the process that now has to take place in Manitoba and Newfoundland-Labrador. I know we all would say to our fellow Canadians that we are stronger as a whole than we are as parts. We have a process today to make those parts as strong as possible, to fortify that whole, but it is an agreement that gives us that impetus to deal with the fast-moving future of a great nation.

I once more, on behalf of the citizens of Calgary-Currie at least, would like to say how much I appreciate the work of those who were in Ottawa, opposition and government members, and in particular of the Premier of the province.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The deal concluded this weekend with respect to the Constitution puts reasonable Canadians in a dilemma. We in the Alberta Liberal Party share that dilemma. We don't like the package, we don't like the process, and it's clear that Mr. Wells and Mr. Filmon were manipulated into a position where, because of the intensity of emotions and expectations in Quebec, they feared breaking up this wonderful country. We reluctantly agree that it is now probably necessary – let us describe it as the lesser of two evils – to conclude this deal. We don't like it, and we believe this government will pay the political price at the next election for

foisting off on Albertans and Canadians this deal that they don't want but apparently must now accept.

Now, the Meech Lake accord has been accepted virtually intact, and this constitutes a major victory for the sovereignty association concept of Quebec's relations with Canada. [interjection] Well, they laugh, but it's no mistake that Lucien Bouchard was in such heat for the Meech Lake accord. Think of it. But let me make it clear that we want Quebec as a part of our nation, as a full partner in Canada with generosity, but we don't believe that the Meech Lake accord is the appropriate basis and certainly not the basis that we would have chosen. We feel that it weakens Canada by eroding the national fabric at the same time as it fails the interests of the regions and Alberta by making meaningful Senate reform virtually impossible.

The distinct society clause, Mr. Speaker, in fact does create special powers for Quebec. Why else does one imagine that Quebec is fighting so hard to get it if it doesn't do that? The distinct society clause, in fact, is going to allow Quebec to pass legislation that other provinces can't enact because the Charter of Rights will be interpreted by courts in light of Quebec being a distinct society, a criterion that doesn't apply to others. The opinion of the legal scholars doesn't in fact deny this reality, and that's why Mr. Wells tried valiantly to get his 10-year review. Unfortunately, he failed. But what we have, really, are a whole bunch of weasel words being used – "not infringed," "denied" – which really can't hide the reality that Quebec is getting extra legislative rights as a result of this agreement. Once you create unequal provinces, you erode the principle of an equal provincial partnership, which is at the heart of federalism. This creates the potential for future serious divisions in other parts of the country. Mr. Wells saw this, and he was right.

Now, what about Alberta's vision, Mr. Speaker? Why have we been so strongly supportive of the Meech Lake accord? Well, just think of the Deputy Premier's statements that Quebec has been our closest ally and our best friend. I can well understand that because I've been watching their views of the Constitution. The fact is that this government has a sovereignty association view of the Constitution in the direction of Quebec.

AN HON. MEMBER: Oh, nonsense.

MR. CHUMIR: That's exactly what they have in mind. It's all a matter of degree. But the Canada we hear supported by this government involves a weaker central government. What else is sovereignty association if it doesn't mean that? It involves a weaker central government, with greater powers being vested in the provinces. It envisages a fragmented nation in which individuals consider themselves to be citizens of provinces rather than citizens of a country, in which they consider themselves to be Albertans or Ontarians or Quebecois first rather than Canadians first. It envisages a Canada with 10 separate immigration policies, separate social programs – not Canadian social programs but Alberta social programs, Ontario social programs. It envisages squeezing to have judges appointed who will see exactly the same narrow, fragmented view of the country as they do. With this view we will end up ultimately being, if that continues to prevail, as a recent wag said, a confederation of shopping centres.

So this is a formula for fragmentation. It is not, I believe, what Albertans want. Unfortunately, Albertans did not have an opportunity to tell us what they wanted because of the refusal of this government to hold public hearings. But fragmentation

is the agenda for this government, and make no mistake about it.

What about Senate reform? We in the Alberta Liberal Party, contrary to this government, do support a strong national fabric but not one which continues to be dominated by central Canada. That's why we support Senate reform. So what does the Premier do after he goes down to Ottawa claiming Senate reform as his number one agenda item? What he does is he sells the farm and he comes back the laughingstock of the country, creating dismay amongst the strong Senate reform advocates by not only agreeing to but proposing unanimity at the same time as he gives up all of our bargaining chips.

Then what did we get this past weekend in respect of Senate reform? Our goal is a Triple E. Well, first, we get an actual agreement not to get a Triple E but .333 of one E, one-third of one E. We're going to get eight Senate seats five years from now, and Ontario is going to have 24. Beyond that, we have an agreement to talk. Well, you know what that is worth. But the second scenario, the second thing that emanated from the deliberations this weekend is that we finally got on record a very clear indication from Quebec that they are not going to go for any meaningful Senate reform. We saw that in many ways but particularly through the withdrawal of Premier Bourassa's early agreement to reduce the number of Senators that Quebec had from 23 percent to 19 percent. I mean, they wouldn't even go for that. What other kind of meaningful reform are you going to get?

I've been trying to figure this government out, Mr. Speaker, and I guess I find myself believing that they are not really supporters of meaningful Senate reform. I mean, compare their performance with that of Premiers Wells and Filmon. Who has been really doing the supporting of Senate reform? Who's really been fighting for Senate reform? Why has this government done so little, and why did it agree to unanimity? Well, yes, the Premier's been talking it up. The government talks it up, but, hey, such talk is cheap and easy, and indeed it's absolutely essential politically in this province. But let's look beyond talk. Action speaks louder than words, and every time you look at the actions of this government, they shout out that either they are unbelievably incompetent, although no degree of incompetence is unbelievable with respect to this government, or there is some hidden agenda.

Now, the Premier talked about the fact that he was not about to have this province breaking its word that he gave at Meech Lake. But with that comment he pinpoints much of the problem in this whole process, and that is the manner in which the governments have gone about foisting Meech Lake off on the people of Canada. Now, what consultation, might I ask, did the Premier undertake with Albertans before he entered into that agreement? The answer is none. How is it that he refused to hold hearings in this province despite widespread disagreement with the Meech Lake accord on behalf of Albertans? The fact is that the Premier is one of the parties that got us into a situation where we were blackmailed into this deal at the threat of Quebec's withdrawal. Now, don't blame Quebec. I don't blame Quebec. I think Quebec's well within their rights. I respect them. They say they tell it as it is. But I do blame our Premier, our government, and Prime Minister Mulroney for getting us into this, and as I said, they'll pay at the polls because Canadians agree with our view of this.

So the process has been totally unacceptable, and I say never again must we get into a situation where a government binds the people of this province, as this Premier did, and then have the Premier come back and tell us that we can't change one comma

of this agreement because the Premier doesn't want to break his word. Now, we have a wonderful country, Mr. Speaker. Unity is very fundamental. I'm sure we all agree with that. We want to see Quebec as an integral part of this country, but we need leadership which is principled, and that we haven't got.

MR. SCHUMACHER: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has aggravated me; he's provoked me. I'm sorry he's done that because it's probably going to mean that I'm not going to get my absolute message out that I wanted to get out if I wasn't so upset by — and this is a parliamentary term according to *Beauchesne* 490 — the use of at least one barefaced falsehood. I would say there's probably a collection of them in his remarks. I can't understand how the hon. member can get up and spout in a serious manner the type of material that he attempts to lay forth before this Assembly.

I do want to take this opportunity to congratulate our Premier and the Alberta delegation who went to Ottawa and worked with a lot of other people to try to see this Meech Lake thing through. It's not through yet, and it may never be through when you consider you're dealing with players who are supposed to be friends of the leader of the Alberta Liberal Party. I think maybe some of Premier Wells' other friends may have a little better description of him than the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenarry gave today. But, Mr. Speaker, we've had, I think, a very responsible response from the leader of the New Democratic Party, and I congratulate him for that.

There has been a call in this Assembly this afternoon from many corners for public hearings, public input into the process. I would make this plea to our friends in the press gallery, Mr. Speaker, because quite frankly the difficulties that we've got into over the last three years have been as a result of a complete failure on their part to communicate what is before the people. The people of any democratic nation have to have informed opinion, and quite frankly the people of Alberta and Canada have not had the benefit of being able to become informed on this issue. If they're going to carry on with the type of distortions and the appeals to bigotry and prejudice that our national and provincial media have engaged in over the last three years, then we're . . . [interjections] Oh, I'm wrong. I hear this coming from the Liberal Party. There certainly seems a very close relationship between the media and the Liberal Party. Every time they sneeze over there, they can get all the coverage they want. But, of course, we know that particularly on this subject of constitutional reform the people over there share the view of Pierre Elliott Trudeau as to how this country goes, and whenever anybody tries to make a change from that, all we can get are fears, concerns which the people in the media immediately pick up.

The hon. member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has certainly done the same thing today too. She raises the question of: times have changed now. Well, she's absolutely beyond time when she talks about the Triple E Senate and what's happened in this country.

MR. TAYLOR: She's actually younger than you are, Stan.

MR. SCHUMACHER: That could well be. I've always thought of her as my very good friend too, but after her performance today in her questions I just wonder what she is trying to accomplish.

It doesn't say much for the bona fides of that party who now get up — the leader of that party gets up today and says, "We've had no opportunity; I haven't had the opportunity of bringing my

concerns about Meech Lake before this Assembly in the last year." Well, that's just so much piffle, and we all know it. Look at the Order Paper. Look at the Order Paper. The Liberals had the very good fortune of having motions 202 and 208 called for debate. They have been debated. Who had Motion 202? The Liberal House leader, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. Who had Motion 208? The great constitutional expert from Calgary-Buffalo, who knows absolutely nothing. What were their great earth-shaking subjects that were more important than the life of this country? Well, 202 was poverty, I guess, and 208 was freedom of information. We all know the rules of this House. The leader of the Liberal Party, if he wished to – he still doesn't have any motions on. He chose budgetary processes in Motion 226 and an economic plan in Motion 279. Where are his bona fides if he wants to discuss this thing? He could have had his motion on constitutional reform, Senate reform before this Assembly long ago if he'd wanted to do it. Mr. Speaker, that group over there has absolutely no bona fides on this subject, absolutely none.

They talk about patriotism being the last refuge of a scoundrel. Well, I think this public hearing process that the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has brought forward is the last refuge of a bankrupt party.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Avonmore.

MS M. LAING: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I would reflect on the events of the past week in Ottawa, and although we must agree with the goal to bring Quebec into the Constitution, we cannot agree with the process. I would like to reflect upon that process, a process that the Prime Minister called nation building, yet at the end of this process our country has never been more fragile.

The process was in the context of a process set as a precedent in 1987 in which 11 men were locked in a room, not to be allowed out until they had reached an agreement. Well, this time we had 11 men, and a few of them chose to speak on behalf of those who were not there: women, aboriginal people, and the multicultural community. But we saw a process that was not unlike the holding of 11 hostages being subjected to brainwashing techniques, including sleep deprivation, isolation, psychological and physical threats with avenues of escape being blocked.

Mr. Speaker, this is not nation building. This is not a thoughtful process. This is not governing a nation. This is management of ideas, of dreams and aspirations, of emotions. It is managing consent and dissent. This process does not serve a nation. It may have served a Prime Minister's ego, but it did not serve a nation. What those of us who watched saw over and over again was those participating subjected to an emotional roller coaster that they could not resist. We had images of hostile and violent confrontation. I would express the shock many experienced . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please, in the House. Perhaps these interaisle conversations could take place somewhere else.

MS M. LAING: I would express the shock many experienced and have communicated to me when a first minister was blocked with the threat of possible physical violence from leaving a room filled with hostility and anger. The message given by this action was that might is right, that the powerful have the right to coerce and impose their will on others, that the ends justify the means. Indeed, this whole process was based in the belief of might, that those with power have the right to force those who

resist to accept their answers. We can only be struck by the arrogance of such a belief and such a position, but more importantly this view is out of touch with the political climate in this nation in 1990. Mr. Speaker, although we were told that this was consensus building, a nation building process, it was a bargaining process that sought to overrule dissent.

In this year of 1990 the people of this province, of this country want to be treated with respect. They want to be consulted as to what is important to them. They want to be told what is happening. They want an open consultation process. They want to know the truth of the matters being discussed. They resent half-truths and manipulations. They resent being told one thing one day and another the next day. Mr. Speaker, if what is being proposed by the politicians is just and right, those who would do it should not have to resort to oversights and misinformation and creating an environment of political brinkmanship.

Mr. Speaker, we have known for some time that several provinces had serious problems with the 1987 Meech Lake accord, yet the Prime Minister waited until less than three weeks prior to the deadline for passage before seriously addressing those issues and concerns being raised. Instead of hearing the concerns about the 1987 Meech Lake accord, the Prime Minister hid behind a rhetoric of, "Nothing can be changed," even as he said that there would be public consultation and we would all have our say. Well, our say was for naught, for we were told that nothing could be changed. We were simply going through the motions and were powerless to change anything. Mr. Speaker, such a process makes people angry. A process that does not allow for open and honest discussion and meaningful debate is an empty promise.

Mr. Speaker, Canadians of 1990 want to be part of the consensus building process. They want politicians that will listen to them, that will hear their concerns. They want politicians, first ministers, that would nation build on their behalf, that would build a nation that reflects their needs, their values, their aspirations as ordinary Canadians, the Canadians whose lives will be most profoundly affected by the decisions taken by those politicians.

Canadians want politicians that truly understand nation building and consensus building, a process that looks at the whole, a process that does not pit one group against another, but a process that's built on that which we all hold in common: that we look with care and concern to the needs and aspirations of others as well as of ourselves; that such a consensus is achieved in an atmosphere of co-operation free of the hostility and violence in evidence in Ottawa last week. We would ask our Prime Minister or any other Canadian Prime Minister to enter the 1990s and to never again subject Canadians to the process we witnessed last week.

MR. SPEAKER: Banff-Cochrane.

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I very much regret that the hours have passed during this very significant debate and that I won't have an opportunity to make all of the points I would very much like to make with respect to this agreement.

However, I would like to begin by firstly saying that this is a pivotal day in Alberta's and Canada's history, and to listen to the comments from the opposition members downplaying the importance and the severity of the situation that Canada faced over this past week is an unbelievable disservice to this House, to this province, and to this country. The contributions that have been made by our Premier, our Deputy Premier, and all the others who have made a positive effort to reach a consensus

in this debate are to be applauded today and certainly will be applauded tomorrow.

Constitutional law is an extremely complex issue; it will always be an extremely complex issue. What we have today is an agreement that recognizes that Albertans and Canadians will have more to say in future constitutional debate. That is what is one of the most important issues that has been decided through the Meech Lake consensus, the Meech Lake agreement.

The distinct society, Mr. Speaker, is in my view a recognition of the historical fact that we have two founding cultures, two founding languages, in this great country of Canada and that we will recognize that in the future.

Finally, I would like to say that Senate reform has found its way into the living rooms and the kitchens of Canadians thanks to the dedication, the time and effort, and the leadership of the Premier of this province.

Because of the hour, Mr. Speaker, I would move that we adjourn debate.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion carries.

The Government House Leader.

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

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

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion carries.

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

