

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Tuesday, June 12, 1990

[The House resumed at 8 p.m.]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 48 School Amendment Act, 1990

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to move second reading of Bill 48, the School Amendment Act, 1990.

Mr. Speaker, in the interests of the request for brevity from the other side of the House and from members on this side as well, I will simply say that the amendments contained in this Bill come about as a result of our experience with the new School Act over the last 18 months. The proposed amendments laid out in the Bill are designed to improve the administrative and procedural requirements of the School Act, 1988, to correct some minor errors and omissions in that original Act, and to clarify the wording of some of its sections.

MR. SPEAKER: Stony Plain.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would agree with the minister's introduction in that the Bill does, in fact, clean up some wordings. In fact, I would say the amendments would go a considerable way to improving the interpretation of the various sections that are addressed in here. I notice there was quite a bit of attention paid to the separate schools and clarification there as to how the municipalities involved in new school districts are going to have to inform the ratepayers of what's happening.

The problem I have with this particular document is not so much what is contained in it; it is more the areas that have been left out of it. We have had quite a bit of controversy, indecision, concern, if you will, with respect to community schools. I was hoping there would be some provision in the Act that would ensure for the public, for the operators, that community schools are going to be here to stay and that there would have been some provision made to expand the creation of the schools. Now, that didn't come, and I could guess why the hon. minister didn't.

Along in the same note there is no mention, and I was hoping there would be mention, of what is really meant in the whole area - a very, very important area - of high needs. I was hoping there would be some sort of identification, because this is certainly going to become an issue in education. In fact, it has already become a rather significant issue in education, as the hon. minister has himself alluded to this particular concern in the House.

The other area that people have been waiting on, and I haven't seen any addressing of it, is the business of the francophones and the interpretation of the Supreme Court ruling on what their rights in education might, in fact, be. I was hoping the minister would give us some indication by introducing amongst these amendments some sort of provision, perhaps some identification of the direction that could be taken, because again there is a lot of confusion as to what the particular Supreme Court ruling really does mean. Does it mean that

francophone people are going to have the right to establish school boards? We don't know that. Does it mean that they are going to have schools administered under broader jurisdictions with a greater input on them? We don't know that. Is every time the requirement is met for the creation or implementation of greater parental involvement from the francophones going to mean an order in council to create some sort of mechanism? There has been left a lot of confusion as to how Alberta Education and the minister intend to implement what appear to be the rights of the francophone parents. With all due respect to the minister, I think the field is wide open as to the directions he may choose to take, and I was looking forward to seeing some indication of what those directions might be.

As I mentioned earlier, there's quite a bit of reference to separate schools. There's one area that I believe was in the previous Act and has been deleted in this Act, and perhaps consideration should be given for an amendment to be brought in. I've been speaking to the separate boards in my particular area, and they have a concern with the frequency of students doing school shopping not between schools within a jurisdiction but between jurisdictions themselves. This was an issue brought to me, like I say, by separate school people, and they would like to see some sort of damper put on, not a restriction for them having the right to change jurisdictions, but perhaps not being able to flip-flop back and forth, because this, especially to a small jurisdiction, can create some problems.

The whole area that is being a problem, and as the province gets itself deeper into debt the problem is going to become much greater, is the area of finance and how we're going to address the problem of school financing. Recently, back in the fall, there was the Industrial Property Taxation Task Force's Issues, Findings and Resolutions. In that particular document, which was prepared by Education, Municipal Affairs, Economic Development and Trade in September of last year, there were some recommendations that were banded about that deserve strong consideration by the minister.

One particular issue, one particular position the task force took was the suggestion to computerize the assessment base in Alberta, which would facilitate annual updates to reflect changes and market values and ensure equity between areas. We all know that one of the thrusts the minister claims to be going on is equity in finance, equity in education, and here is one recommendation that I think should be looked at with a lot of sincerity. Along with that particular thrust comes a need to clarify and simplify the Ramsay formula. That formula, as you know, prorates electric power and pipeline and AGT properties between school and hospital districts in the rural municipalities, and the Ramsay formula does create a lot of confusion. I don't think too many people understand it.

Along with that comes a need, I think - and I don't know if it's a possible one, but it should be something Municipal Affairs and Alberta Education should be looking at jointly - to have more frequent assessments. If you could go to an annual assessment, you could almost eliminate the need for equalized assessments. Now, that's something I would like to see the people involved have a look at, and again I must stress that there wasn't any kind of mention of education finance here, yet it is by far one of the most serious problems we can have that's going to be facing education.

The other recommendation that is worthy of thinking about in terms of divvying up taxation is the business tax. Should the business tax, a portion of it, be addressed towards supplementary requisition? I don't know if that is a good idea or not, necessarily. However, if you look at the business tax as a form of

property tax, then in fact it should be addressed and apportioned towards the educational sector.

The other area we get into is the whole broad spectrum of who is responsible for education. A task force position said, and if I might, I'll quote it:

Because education is a provincial responsibility, the provincial government with its broader tax base, should fully fund the prescribed program of studies deemed to be both necessary and sufficient for students in today's society. Local jurisdictions should be responsible for funding only locally determined educational enhancements (i.e., a true supplementary requisition).

It is recommended further - and this is an interesting one too, but before I go onto that one, I'll put in a plug here. The previous levels of funding provincially, mentioned somewhere by the task force, were at the 90 percent level back in the early '70s - close to it, at any rate - and because of the ability of the province to seek out the funds on a broader basis, there has to be a certain degree of going back to that position. Perhaps maybe another study of taxation and specifically how it applies to education in Alberta would be in order. I would strongly recommend that the minister should look at that.

The other area. Although the minister alluded to how to create new school districts, I think it's a known fact that Alberta already has too many districts. One of the task force recommendations I would like to again point out to the minister is simply that

it is recommended that a Boundaries Commission be established to review the current boundaries for educational jurisdictions. There are approximately 150 operating school jurisdictions in Alberta, many of which are both administratively, fiscally, and educationally inefficient. As school boards are required to rely more and more on the local requisition to support their educational costs, the disparity between those jurisdictions with a high assessment and those with low assessment increases. There is now a growing realization that if we are to achieve a semblance of fiscal equity, something must be done about structural equity.

If you look at the need for finance and what we have there, I think the time is long overdue for this government and for this minister to honestly have a look at what is happening in educational finance. It's fine to say that we have education as priority number one. It's also fine to say the amount of money is spent on secondary and regular education. However, that does take away from the fact that an inordinately high proportion of that funding has been shifted onto the local taxpayer. As that proportion is getting higher, the disparity between the school districts is getting greater, and this problem is on the increase.

There are a couple of other areas that I find absolutely no mention of in the School Act that I find rather interesting, and I'd like to see that addressed. I was quite astounded to find out that we accept - although I think we should accept - American students across the border every day into Alberta to attend Alberta schools and to do Alberta curriculum, and no provision anywhere in legislation of how that is achieved. Then we go a little bit further east along the Alberta border and we find a substantial number of children who are being enticed into Montana to keep their schools open at the expense of perhaps forcing a local jurisdiction to close a school right near the border in southern Alberta. That position with American children coming into Alberta I don't have any difficulty with, simply because they're on our curriculum and our program, and fine and dandy. I do have a problem when we have a sparsely populated area and we permit our children to go across the border for a variety of reasons, because then it seems to me that the goals of basic education which we prescribe in this province

are not being met. There's a possibility of school closures because of them not being there. If you have a small community that would be potentially closing its school because of an exodus of a busload of children every day across the line, I think that's very serious.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, like I say, at second reading I don't have a problem with the amendments the minister is proposing. There are some minor changes that will be brought up in Committee of the Whole. However, I do have some very strong reservations with what has been left out of the amendments as opposed to what is in fact being put in.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Calgary-McKnight.

MRS. GAGNON: Mr. Speaker, I also am pleased to rise in support of Bill 48. I have reviewed it very carefully and find that it is mostly a housekeeping Bill and that there are no objectionable sections in it whatsoever.

I would like to give the minister credit for consulting with educational groups extensively in the drafting of this Bill. I also consulted with many of them, and there seemed to be unanimous agreement that the minister had listened and that any concerns they had had been addressed.

I also, however, am somewhat disappointed with what is not in the Bill. I would have liked to have seen the issue of governance of French schools referred to and resolved in some way. I know the minister is still consulting, but it would be nice for that matter to be settled once and for all. Mr. Speaker, at the end of the Meech Lake conference on Saturday, the Prime Minister made a statement indicating that there is still much misunderstanding about the French and English duality of Canada being at the core of our nation. I think that since our government signed Meech Lake and agreed with Meech Lake and hopes to see further amendments to our Constitution, this government would give a very broad and very visible signal if they immediately moved to bring in legislation which would establish francophone regional school boards, which I think collective wisdom in the province is saying is the way to go.

I also would like to see the matter of equity addressed quickly. I do look forward to hearing from the minister in that regard. Again, I know that he is consulting. The consultation process is excellent. It is another area which we hope would be resolved soon.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Education in summation.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, just in closing the debate on second reading of this Bill, I thank the hon. members for their contribution. A number of comments they've made can be taken up at committee study, especially the programs as opposed to the legislation. The programs outlined by the Member for Stony Plain, community schools or high needs: those two programs were spelled out in the budget, and it's quite proper that they be in the budget and not spelled out in legislation.

The separate schools. The hon. Member for Stony Plain talked about - I'll use his word - shopping between school jurisdictions. If he'll turn to page 6 of the Bill, section 12, which amends section 27(7) of the Bill, he'll find the answer there.

Both hon. members talked about equity and the other about francophone education. On the equity side, Mr. Speaker, that is something that we are working with school trustees on and as

well consulting with the Industrial Property Taxation Task Force. We've got our work cut out for us there, because there are still children in one part of Alberta who cannot access substantially the same quality of education in another part of the province. That in many ways impacts the establishment of school districts. There is a denominational, a fundamental right of minority faith individuals to establish their own school district. That is true in Saskatchewan. It's true in Alberta, and as a result we have an inordinately high number of school districts in this province. I believe that if we can overcome the equity problem – and there is a problem, because the fiscal equity well is running dry from the provincial government and we must find another way to fund the important equity program that we have in place. But once that is overcome, I am convinced that the preponderance of school jurisdictions and the obstacles to reducing that number of school jurisdictions will melt away, will break down, and we will find greater incentives for efficiency, greater incentives for folks to come together to make sure that children get the best possible education.

Francophone education, Mr. Speaker: I would be happy to speak further about that matter at committee study. Suffice to say that the Supreme Court decision that came down on March 15 – isn't it ironical that that was the Ides of March? – made sure that section 23 and its interpretation is now the law in all provinces, including Alberta. It cannot be changed, and our only real discretion lies in enacting a legislative framework which is consistent with the judgment but which also better reflects the Alberta situation and the views and values of Albertans individually and collectively. The hon. members are correct, Mr. Speaker; we have consulted extensively with francophone groups, with school boards, school trustees and teachers, and many others across the province. I'm very thankful and appreciative of the efforts of my colleagues in the Department of Education who have gone out on the road and conducted that extensive consultation.

Our next step, Mr. Speaker, is to bring that together in what I believe will be a discussion paper, which I hope to be able to provide to all members of the Assembly and indeed to all Albertans, and take those thoughts and take models for providing management and control of francophone schools to francophone parents and their children, to take that back out to them and ask them to help us choose the best possible model, the best possible form of management and control that again provides for and is respectful of the values of Albertans, that meets the needs of the francophone community but, most of all, meets the needs of children in getting the best possible education we can provide to them.

So, Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues in the Assembly to vote for second reading of this important Bill.

[Motion carried; Bill 48 read a second time]

#### Bill 49 Ambulance Services Act

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure this evening to speak to and move Bill 49, the Ambulance Services Act, for second reading.

The Act provides for a provincially regulated and locally managed ground ambulance service in accordance with provincial minimum standards. It was in response to the hearings and recommendations of the report by the policy advisory committee chaired by the hon. Member for Drumheller and submitted to

the Minister of Health in May of 1988, entitled *New Dimensions in Emergency Health Services: An Alberta Solution*.

Highlights of Bill 49 include: basic life support as the minimum standard for ambulance service in the province, the establishment of ambulance districts and ambulance district boards across the province, continued local management of ambulance services, the appointment of a ministerial advisory and appeal board, and the required licensing and regulation of all operators and attendants providing ground ambulance service.

Mr. Speaker, I introduced Bill 25, the Ambulance Services Act, on August 16, 1989. The Bill was allowed to die on the Order Paper on that date with the intention that it be circulated to all interested Albertans to provide their comments. Extensive consultation occurred on that Bill, with over 130 written submissions and 65 presentations by departmental staff, primarily in rural Alberta. There was generally strong support for this legislation, the first of its kind in the province. As a result of the consultative process changes have been made to recognize the pending Metis Settlements Act; to allow hospital district boards to function as ambulance district boards under certain circumstances, a change from the original Bill; to address the concerns that were expressed by native groups through amendments to the Bill before you; to allow other forms of requisitioning than just equalized assessment, as was originally contemplated; and to reinstate provisions in the existing Municipal Government Act, which provided compensation to ambulance operators whose existing contracts were terminated prematurely in the creation of ambulance district boards. I'm hopeful that we've addressed the very well-reasoned concerns of municipalities, of health care professionals, ambulance operators, and the public about the initial draft of the legislation.

Certain comments have been made, Mr. Speaker, that this Bill merely imposes an added burden on the local municipal tax base. I think it's important to remember that the provincial government presently spends some \$25 million on the provision of air and ground ambulance services throughout Alberta through Blue Cross, through programs for senior citizens, through Family and Social Services, through the Motor Vehicle Accident Claims Fund, and through global funding to hospitals for interhospital transfers and other programs. In addition to that \$25 million already going to the provision of ambulance services, \$16 million of the \$100 million in grants and transfers from Alberta Municipal Affairs to municipalities is used by municipalities to fund ambulance services. That's a \$41 million commitment to ambulance services in our province at this point, and I think it's an important thing to remember.

I think some clarification is also necessary of the circumstances where the minister will grant permission for ambulance district boards to provide less than a basic life-support level of ambulance service. Prior to allowing an ambulance district board to provide service at the emergency responder level, I will require a very comprehensive review. There are remote areas of this province, however, where the number of emergency calls is simply not sufficient to attract and retain emergency medical technicians or to provide them a sufficient volume of work to continually upgrade their skills. To deal with these circumstances, staff in the Department of Health are working closely with educational institutions to develop an outreach training program particularly suited to rural ambulance attendants.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 49 is based upon the principles of, number one, access: clearly access to prehospital and to the health care system, access in terms of rural operators to the upgrading that must go along with the kinds of standards that are going to be

applied in the province, and clearly access to provincial resources already with respect to the \$41 million that I mentioned.

The second issue is the issue of standards. Just as we expect our nurses and physicians to be registered, so do we expect our prehospital care to be, in the same way, registered and not in any way different, because it is in fact part of that health system. The second issue within standards is obviously the bringing up of the province to basic life support level at least.

In the issue of fairness, which is certainly the third principle on which the Bill was structured, there's the issue of fairness to volunteers and recognizing the very important role they have played and will continue to play in providing ambulance services throughout our province. Clearly this Act is meant to reinforce, in fact enhance the opportunity of volunteers to operate our ambulance services.

Finally, all Albertans clearly have right of access to their health system, and I believe that this Act goes a long way to ensure that the network of health as opposed to facilities existing unto themselves, which we've discussed at some length in this House with respect to facilities living within their four walls - this issue of access to health services through ambulance services becomes some of the glue which holds together that very precious institutional sector within our province.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I didn't say thank you to a particular person within the Department of Health who was very, very helpful to me as minister in being part of those 130 submissions and the 69 presentations to groups across the province. I'm referring to a gentleman by the name of Jon Pascoe within my department, without whose help I don't think we could have gone from Bill 25 to 49 with as much confidence as I do have tonight standing before the Assembly to tell you that I think we have reached a balance with respect to that legislation.

I'll look forward to the comments that will be made by my colleagues before I sum up.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Edmonton-Centre, followed by Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**REV. ROBERTS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's about time we had this Bill before us for second reading. It's been on our agenda as the New Democrat caucus here since my first weeks in the Assembly four years ago, in 1986. I know before that the hon. Ray Martin and the hon. Grant Notley had also brought in Bills requesting that this province finally do something not just to regulate but to put into statute some standards, some provision for assured access to high-standard emergency care in this province. Finally, like so many other things this government does, they are true to their title in terms of being conservative and have been dragging their heels and taking their time being, I think, the last province in the dominion to even bring in a Bill to oversee the provision of emergency health care services. So it's hard to be too complimentary about such a process that has delayed an essential part of the health care system so reprehensibly. On the other hand, of course, with some mixed feelings we're glad it's finally here, and we rejoice that Albertans will finally have the kind of service that they have been entitled to and deserve.

Even so, in my comments I'd like to point out where I still feel there are some major oversights. I think that in principle some things have not been provided in this Bill that are satisfactory to me or to my caucus, and yet upon further debate we've yet to be fully satisfied with what's before us. I must say when I first wrote down my comments - I think it was 10 days

ago when we were going to have second reading; it seemed like it was just three days after the Bill was first introduced - I was thinking, "Well, not only have they brought in the Bill, but they're going to try to ram it through quickly." I thought "Power to them to finally get some speed behind this," although even now it's been two weeks, and so I guess my initial comment that it was going to go through the Legislature quickly is itself taking time.

I must say I appreciate the minister's comments with what has gone on over the last almost a year since Bill 25 with respect to the kinds of changes that have gone on. I will review more of them. Actually the minister mentioned a couple which I hadn't quite picked up, but I thought that not a lot had changed, that in fact Bill 49 before us is really in major, substantive ways precisely what Bill 25 was last year. Certainly some references to training have been omitted in this new Bill. The revision to section 4 with respect to contracts between boards and the government of Canada: there are some changes in that that we'll get into in some detail, particularly as it pertains to services on treaty lands for native people. The major collapse of sections 6, 7, and 8 of Bill 25 into one simple section 6 in the current Bill I think just mostly prescribes in regulation how local district boards will be able to attain their funding. I don't know if these things have all been swept under the carpet, but certainly that has been a major change. We'll get into some of the details of what I think that represents.

Certainly, as the minister pointed out in terms of the principles of this Bill, Mr. Speaker, there are some principles at work which I do not think are sufficient or don't go far enough, and I'd like in the time here tonight to explain why I think it's inadequate and some of the directions I'd like to continue to see some progress being made. We in the New Democrat caucus want to applaud and encourage and support this minister in the several improvements with respect to the access though as we know over 50 percent of Albertans still do not have assured access because they do not have Blue Cross or any other kind of insurance coverage to cover them in the case of needing an ambulance or emergency or catastrophic services outside of hospitals. So access is not reasonable nor is it assured for Albertans. I think if we're talking about access as a principle what's provided for in this Bill is not enough. As well, with standards, you know, we appreciate the increase to the basic life support as being a minimum standard, but I still have difficulty with the section which allows, I think, a major loophole for some district boards to not comply with that minimum standard. It's up to the minister to make some arbitrary judgment about that. So the principle of standards I don't think is sufficient. So with these and other serious flaws I just don't think at this point that we'll be able to support this Bill in principle at second reading.

Moreover, it seems to me that this Bill and this government have failed to put into statute with Bill 49 one basic principle which is of great concern to us and I think supported very largely by the Schumacher report or however we want to call it, the New Dimensions in Emergency Health Services. That's a basic principle, that we need to look at the whole sector of health care called emergency prehospital care. In fact, I'd be much more satisfied if this were called an emergency services Act instead of just an Ambulance Services Act because I think what we're looking at in terms of ambulance is major but only a part of the whole prehospital emergency care sector. So just to focus on ambulance, and ground ambulance at that, with respect to this Bill, I think violates what we would like to see as a basic principle, which is to look at and to have this province

regulate and have some assurance for Albertans that the whole of the emergency prehospital care is provided for.

That sense of comprehensiveness is not here. I think: why not? I mean, many other provinces in Canada have attempted to look at integrating ground and air, and a whole range of other parts of the prehospital emergency care is provided for, not just what happens aboard an ambulance with some attendants and some paramedics once an Albertan is put into that ambulance. There's a lot more to it than that.

So with respect to prehospital emergency care it seems to me that the least we can do for Albertans, the least we can do for the providers and for emergency physicians, for the Alberta Medical Association, for paramedics, for the air ambulance side, for everyone involved, is to more closely follow the recommendations of the Schumacher report. Even the primary recommendation of that report two years ago was "That an Emergency Health Services Act be established" and "That a provincial Emergency Health Services Commission be established." What we have instead before us tonight is an Ambulance Services Act – which I've said is less than what's been recommended – and an advisory board or committee to the minister, not a commission, as I think might well have better served the minister and the department, not to mention Albertans. I wonder why. If this is, as I am impressed it is to be, a kind of a state of the art report with some very strong recommendations to catch up with an area of great neglect in health care in this province, why not go the whole distance? Why have we stopped with just Bill 25 and now Bill 49? So I'd like some further explanation from the minister on that score.

I don't think it's just a semantic quibble here, Mr. Speaker. It seems to me that once any Albertan who becomes sick or injured or hurt in any way, shape, or form who is in need of health services has been touched by a paramedic or an attendant, anyone in the health care system, then I think they by definition have entered the health care system in this province, a system of which we want to be proud. Yet as I've said, for thousands and thousands of Albertans there is no insurance coverage for the cost of that, there is no co-ordination of their care with respect to a 911 number or a central dispatch, which we'll get into later. The linkage between air and ground, not to mention between different districts, is still lacking. I think there has therefore been an abdication of full provincial responsibility in this matter.

So again I just wonder, why hold back? I mean, I know we in the New Democrat caucus have been arguing for this. The Alberta Medical Association, I think, has been very strong in advocating for much more comprehensive principles to deal with emergency prehospital care. Yet it remains, I think, by virtue of this Bill still clearly not an integral part of the Alberta health care system. It's sort of an add-on. It's an adjunct to the system. We're going to regulate it. We're going to let it be locally managed. We're still going to let some Albertans not have insurance coverage for it, and as a result not only will Albertans not be served, but it's well argued by the AMA and others that to not have first quality prehospital care, we can often end up paying for it once they've entered the hospital by virtue of perhaps a poor health status once they've arrived or financial difficulty once they're in the hospital, and the rest.

Furthermore, I think what is happening by virtue of this Bill is that it will represent a confusion of the Tory government now trying to get its hands into the regulation of what is going to be remaining a half-public, half-private health industry under the guise of a provincial health mandate, this Bill 49. So to go halfway, I think, is going to cause certain problems. Municipalities

are going to say, "Well, we want to have some power and some authority here." Or Blue Cross is going to want to have some sense of fees and payment and so on. I think it's just going to continue to be a mixed system that's not going to serve Albertans well, and it's going to have anomalies in it, which I don't think we need to have any more of in this province.

So failure on this point of principle, I feel, forces a failure to adequately deal with so many of the other relevant issues, which have continued to be raised. I know that this minister says she supports the Canada Health Act and the fact that there should not be any more extra billing and that there should not be a privatization of certain aspects of the health care system. I guess it's too much for us in the New Democrat caucus to think that this minister and this government would go beyond the Canada Health Act. I know they want to probably meet the letter of the law, but as we know, even the Canada Health Act does not say that prehospital emergency care is part of a universal health care system. I think that whether it was Monique Bégin's oversight or the fact that the House of Commons at the time didn't foresee the need here or what the problem was, we are left in Canada with nothing from the federal level forcing the provinces to really take this matter seriously. So it's leaving many Albertans uninsured, having to pay for services out of pocket, and we still get constituents and others saying they were in the hospital and were transferred from Drayton Valley to the Misericordia and back and left with a bill of \$200, \$300, \$400. I just cannot understand why. Well, I guess I can understand in terms of the Canada Health Act not forcing it and this minister not wanting to go beyond what is provided for in terms of minimally meeting the Canada Health Act, but I think we're going to pay the price.

Certainly if we New Democrats were in government in this province, it would certainly be a fully insured service under the Alberta health care insurance plan. Why not? Albertans deserve it. It's going to mean a better service overall. The \$41 million or so that the minister already talks about in terms of payments here, payments there – it's such a fragmented payment system, it sounds like an American health care system with payments coming from all sides to cover a basic, essential service. Why have all that bureaucracy and those competing ways – not competing, but certainly ineffective and inefficient ways – of dealing with the funding of it, not to mention leaving so many Albertans uninsured.

Another basic principle; Mr. Speaker. I just can't understand how it is that somehow if an Albertan is critically ill or wounded or hurt or injured and needs prehospital emergency care and that's received by their flying in a fixed-wing or helicopter or air ambulance system, somehow that has a very different status than if they were to receive services on the ground. Certainly in this day and age we want an integrated service and a compatible service, and to leave air ambulance separate and apart from ground ambulance, with respect to this statute, to me just doesn't make sense. Now, I know section 32(1)(b) will give the minister any power she wants with respect to air ambulance services. That's very nice. Why don't we just have a section 31(a) which says the minister can have anything she wants to do with ground ambulance. I mean, it just leaves it so unaddressed, so wide open, and I know that Bill Tudge and others have tried to work hard with respect to the costs and the standby costs of helicopters and fixed wing.

It's a very complicated issue, the whole issue of air ambulance. But still I think I would like to see more in this Bill which addresses clearly what Albertans can expect with respect to air ambulance and what the province's responsibility is as an

integrated way to deal with that. I think it's the AMA, again, who came up with that rather telling example of someone who's in a motor vehicle accident the other side of Hinton and the only people that can get to them is one ground ambulance and another air ambulance. If the mother is taken to the University of Alberta hospital in the air ambulance and the father is taken to the University hospital on the ground, it's all covered by the province in terms of the air transport, but the ground is left to the responsibility of that person. It's the same care, the same distance, and yet there's just no integration there. I think that's, again, kind of an anomaly which I would have hoped could have been resolved in a far better way than just section 32(1)(b) which leaves the minister to do anything she wants with respect to that.

Again, with respect to the central dispatch and the need to move to a 911 number, Mr. Speaker. Many other provinces have an ability for you anywhere in the province to just be able to dial 911 and get access to a central dispatch service which is going to ensure that the best available care will get to you as soon as possible and that the response time or the vehicle or the ambulance services you will get will be there in a co-ordinated fashion. Again, we still have an anomaly where maybe a local district board might have some services and might get an ambulance to one person but maybe others are busy and they don't know at the neighbouring district that somebody's waiting and they could access. So there's not going to be the co-ordination, which I think a 911 number and central dispatch can provide for. Again, if we're going to co-ordinate and ensure access for Albertans, then we need to have more in that regard.

Interhospital transfer is another area where I know most ambulance operators I've talked to make most of their business or where a lot of their time is spent. I'm still not sure, with respect to this Bill, what is going to be the minimum standard with respect to a person being transferred from a nursing home to a hospital or a hospital to a nursing home. I've been told that some interhospital transfer units can just hire a glorified taxi and have a person who has maybe some training to do that interhospital transfer, but there doesn't need to be any oxygen on board or any other critical services in case of a heart attack or some other problem which a frail person in that interhospital transfer might encounter. So, again, some strengthening not only of the provision of service but how that's going to be co-ordinated, I think, is wanting.

I know the minister, and I'm trying to believe her with respect to the exemption clause, 5(1)(b), which allows the minister to basically waive basic life support as a minimum standard when the minister authorizes another level. I know it's difficult in remote areas where there's not a lot of business and where there are maybe a few calls a week or a month. It's difficult to know how to provide for a guaranteed service in that part of the province. But, again, I would think there's got to be better language to provide for that kind of difficulty than the language provided for in section 5(1)(b), that the minister can just authorize another level. That just is too wide open and provides, to me, too great a loophole. I'm wondering, if the district is, say, up in High Level, and the minister says, "Okay, you've convinced me you don't have enough need to have basic life support as the standard here," and so they don't have to meet with this standard, what about the neighbouring district which might be just on the edge of whether or not they can provide it in a full-time way or not, who say, "Well, if our neighbour in the district board doesn't have to meet that standard . . ." Then maybe they will lobby that they don't have to have it either because it's costing them too much, or they might argue for a

variety of reasons they don't want to have to meet this minimum standard either. I think it just leaves it too wide open and too many dynamics at play in the system.

I would rather have the basic minimum standard there in place, everyone to meet it, and there could be provision for some standby, some co-ordination with the neighbouring district or something that could provide for the difficulty that might be represented by low use. But I don't like this language where the minister can authorize another level when or however the minister wants to do that. I just think that's too wide open, and though we might want to trust this minister, I don't know what other ministers might want to do. I don't know what pressures will be brought to bear on the minister to have them waive that basic life support system or so on. I just think, again, on behalf of Albertans, we just can't allow that kind of loophole and that political authority just to sit there, as it does in section 5(1)(b). I'm sure we're going to try to address it at committee stage, but again it's part of a principle which I just don't like.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

I mean, again, what a precedence this provides. Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, if there were in the Hospitals Act an allowance for the minister to say: "Well, listen. If you're going to have surgery in some remote part of the province or you're going to have some other medical service, we'll waive the provision that it be a fully certified or fully licensed doctor or nurse or rehab specialist or home care nurse." I mean, we don't do this in any other sector in the health care system, where we say, "Well, there are not a lot of people, it's fairly remote, so we'll provide basically an inferior level of service for that Albertan." We don't do that in the in-hospital sector; why should we allow it to happen in the prehospital sector? I just think, again, it's a principle which we just can't support.

One of the other principles, Mr. Speaker, I alluded to a bit earlier, but I would really like to ask the minister by virtue of this Bill if she can answer the basic question or question of principle, which is the question of authority. Who is now really in control of the ambulance service in this province? Where does the ultimate responsibility rest? Who is in control? I think we need to know clearly, if we're talking about health care services for Albertans and we want to know where the buck will finally stop in terms of the ultimate responsibility or in terms of planning or deployment or delivery, all the many other questions.

It's the basic question of: who is in control? Who is the final arbiter of how this is being directed? Is it the Minister of Health who, in this Assembly, would have to be able to be ultimately responsible for the great gains that are to be made or the loopholes which still exist in the prehospital emergency service? Will it be the registrar as provided for in this Bill? Is the registrar going to be the one who maybe didn't check the licence of this or that operator or wasn't hard enough on a particular district board? Is it going to be the district board? Is it all going to be that when we ask the question of the minister, she'll say: "Well, it's not my responsibility. You should check with the local district board. It's their responsibility to ensure that things are handled properly?" Is it going to be the municipality, say in the city of Edmonton: "Well, don't bother us. Go and check with the Edmonton or Calgary service. It's really their responsibility." Or will it be the private operators? Are we going to say, "Well these private, for-profit ambulance operators; it's their responsibility." Or is it the Alberta Ambulance Operators Association? I guess they can't take respon-



sibility, but are matters going to be still left to them to have to monitor and police the system in some way?

In fact, it was a very interesting question at the conference in Calgary a while ago which I know the minister was at for a while. Later in the day someone raised the whole question in the area of health care about there being, in his view . . . . It was the Deputy Minister of Health from Ontario. I think the minister knows Mr. Barkin, who said what we're getting in terms of health care now is the problem of who is really going to enter the management zone. We don't know and we're not clear about the management zone in health care because government doesn't seem to want to get too much into it, though they are the primary funder. The local hospitals and health units want to come up, but their administrators are sacked with having to deal with their own local responsibility of their hospital or whatever. But a whole middle area of management of the system is left really in flux. This was the deputy minister in Ontario who was saying this, and I had some sympathy for him.

I would have thought this question could have been answered to my satisfaction by what was outlined, again, in the Schumacher report by virtue of an emergency health services commission. The commission, as I understand it - even the organizational chart seemed to me to clearly say yes, they'd be responsible to the minister, but they would ensure that management of the system proceeded in a very orderly, very understood, very responsible sort of way. Again, I think that's smart; I think that's a good way to ensure that this vital part of our health care system is going to be well managed. I don't see the commission just needing to become an appeal board or an advisory board. I guess that appeal or advisory board will take on some of these management functions which might look at issues of control and responsibility and the rest. But it seems to me that an appeal and advisory board should be there to react to things as they happen, instead of carefully understanding and moving the system ahead as new advances happen, as new problems are encountered. As I understood the commission, they're able to deal with those things and to take them responsibly, not to be, as is provided for in Bill 49, an advisory or appeal board which is there to be a reactive management system.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think members of the Assembly should really know that we for the first time in the history of the province of Alberta are being asked to look at a Bill which is going to do something about ambulance service in this province. Never before . . . This Bill isn't amending any other Bill. This is brand-new stuff, brand-new legislation, and it's taking unto us as legislators and the government of Alberta many, many powers with respect to ambulance services. We're going to be asked to pass a Bill that is to give us at the provincial level a lot of powers in this area, yet I still am at a loss: isn't it just a kind of a halfway intrusion into the system, and what about the rest?

Even clearer about these matters than me is the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association. I'm sure we'll get into some response that the minister has had in terms of dealing with their many, many concerns. But, you know, even in January, February of 1990, after Bill 25 had been around for some months, even then the AUMA had a number of different key concerns. They said, "Okay, if you at the provincial level want to take these powers and responsibilities unto yourself, then we really want to have clarified what the level of funding is going to be and who's going to be responsible for it." They resent the minister having the powers of setting the districts. I think somebody has to set the boundaries of the districts, but the AUMA said, "No, we want to be able to say what should be in and what should be out

and where the lines should be drawn between different district boards."

Setting the fees. It's left to the minister to set the fees, and yet the AUMA said that they want to have some sense of what the ambulance call fees should be and have some say in that. Or reviewing the budget of the district boards: it's still left up to the municipalities, to be locally managed, as the minister says. Why then, they ask, should the annual budget have to be reviewed by the minister in such a heavy-handed way? The whole area of additional requisitioning I guess has been reviewed by the regulation in . . .

We'll have much more - much more - to say at committee stage, Mr. Speaker, and I hope nobody's had to call an ambulance, but thank you for the time so far tonight.

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

**MRS. HEWES:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do want to comment on this. I plan to support second reading of this Bill. I anticipate our caucus may have some amendments for committee stage, but hopefully the minister will answer some of the questions I have tonight before we get to that.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased that we finally have this ambulance Act. The astonishing thing to me is that we've managed as long as we have in this province without having some kind of standardized service. It appears from my checking that most of the stakeholders are reasonably supportive of the Bill. I realize that it follows on the recommendations of the report called *New Dimensions in Emergency Health Services: An Alberta Solution*. This, of course, was the committee and report chaired by the Deputy Speaker, the hon. Member for Drumheller, and it was a report that I thought was very useful and led to Bill 25 and eventually to Bill 49.

Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, the purpose of this legislation is to provide a provincially regulated but locally managed ground ambulance service in accordance with provincial minimum standards. The provision is also made in the Bill for the regulation of interhospital transfer and for the definition of air ambulance services. I endorse the principle of this Act, the idea that prehospital care is required when transporting patients to a medical facility or that the care required when transporting patients between medical facilities or institutions should be considered as an integral part of Alberta's health care system. I'm also pleased to see that the province has finally moved towards accepting its responsibilities in providing standards for services in Alberta.

But it seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that this Bill is leaving a great deal of principles and policies yet to be filled in either by the municipalities or through the regulations, which we have not of course seen at this point in time. I am concerned about the fact that there are some things that are left out, and these gaps are noticeable. The minister has spoken tonight about the funding that is provided through other means for ambulance services in the province, and I do question whether or not there are any further grants contemplated with the passage of this Bill. That is, what about start-up grants for municipalities who are going to be required through their boards to provide this ambulance service and do not have the capacity for capital? Now, I realize there are provisions in here for borrowing and so on, but will the province provide any backup for such municipalities? This is particularly applicable, it seems to me, to certain special areas of the province where the population may be further spread out.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to funding, the inspection and regulation – the monitoring – of the boards is not here, and I wonder if that is going to be dealt with in the regulations as well. The section that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre mentioned regarding the minister allowing lower or a different level below basic life support in certain districts has puzzled me as well. I'm going to listen carefully. The minister has mentioned it before, but I am going to listen carefully to her comments, hopefully tonight, about how she would deal with it. It occurs to me that some of the districts that could be in this category may in fact need higher than BLS service. Because of their demographics, because of the isolation, they may require not a lower level of service but a different level of service or a different mix of services, including such things as air ambulance, and I would like to hear the minister's comments on that. Their need may, in fact, be greater than that of the other districts.

Mr. Speaker, I am, however, very concerned about the sections of the Act that give to the boards that will be named and appointed by the minister the power to "requisition the payment of its capital and operating costs from included municipalities" in that board in a manner that's prescribed in the regulation. I have a great deal of concern about this because I'm not sure to whom they will account. That is, it appears that these boards will have power to requisition from their municipalities, but we don't understand that they are in turn accountable to those municipalities, and how that requisition, how that budget, is controlled by the municipality, or if it is, is not clear to me within the terms of the Act. It seems to me that the municipalities will be responsible for the budget of the district but have no control under Bill 49 over the budget or the borrowing of the board. So I have asked myself: well, then, if this is the case, who's going to be responsible for any liabilities that the board incurs? Perhaps the minister can describe that for us.

Mr. Speaker, it's clear to me that Alberta municipalities are already having difficulties in funding existing service needs of their citizens. We all know to our sorrow and dismay the difficulties they have in funding FCSS programs because the government share has not kept up. The municipal revenue pool is limited to property taxes, fines, penalties, and so on. I believe they are already hard-pressed, so I think it's important that we have a clear understanding and the municipalities have a clear understanding of where this accountability is. If, in fact, district boards named by the minister then can requisition amounts to run the ambulance service without being accountable for the use of those funds, I believe this could in fact undermine the role and authority of local councils if that is the way it is to operate. It's not stated in the Act how all the boards will be fiscally accountable to the local municipality.

Mr. Speaker, further, there seems to me to be a lack of information for some of the critical areas that I see that are going to be required in a new ambulance system. I know there are certain powers given to the Lieutenant Governor to make regulations, but again while the Lieutenant Governor may make regulations respecting the manner in which boards can borrow money and fix interest rates and so on, it doesn't tell us who's going to be responsible if any liabilities are incurred. The minister, of course, can make regulations regarding a great many things. One of the sections here indicates that

The Minister may make regulations . . .

(h) respecting agreements entered into by a board for the purpose of providing mutual support and co-ordinated service delivery.

I have no idea what "mutual support" might refer to in that instance. It's simply a term that has no explanation.

Regarding the qualifications examinations, training, registration, and licensing of ambulance attendants. Now, we know we're talking about BLS. There is nothing in this Bill nor anything I have heard regarding where such training will be provided, under what circumstances, whether bursaries will be provided for it, how long the training will take, who will pay for it. These things are all missing from my information about this Act.

Again:

The Minister may make regulations . . .

(s) [regarding] ambulance communications systems.

Now, Mr. Speaker, an ambulance communications system is one of the primary features of preinstitutional, prehospital care, and it's a very significant and very important and very expensive part of the operation. I had always contemplated in my own mind that the communications service would be provincially undertaken and provincially operated. There is no reference to that in this Bill, simply that the minister may make regulations regarding the communications systems. But it occurs to me that if we are to have a comprehensive prehospital system, it might require using high-tech methodology to be able to talk with acute care institutions in other parts of the province as an individual is being transported. I see no provision for that. Perhaps that's yet to come. Once again, who pays for that?

Mr. Speaker, there's nothing in the Bill that tells what the fees are to be charged, if these are to be standardized. There's a section in the Bill that makes reference to bylaws of boards. Are these to be standardized, or can they be different from one district to another, or is there any move to make sure they all conform?

The Member for Edmonton-Centre has spoken about native concerns. The minister didn't mention this, and perhaps she will go through this, because we have had some correspondence about the special needs of our native communities and the reserves. It's my understanding that this is one group of stakeholders that is not happy with this particular Bill, and they have a number of questions. Perhaps the minister will answer, or we may have to consider some amendments in this regard as well. The Bill doesn't speak to some serious jurisdictional problems that could arise between the province and some of the reserves. For instance, who's going to service highways that run through reserves that will be required for ambulances to operate?

There has been a workingman's agreement with regard to neighbouring communities and ambulance services, and I wonder if the minister is assuming that this kind of agreement will continue or how these particular communities are going to be served. Finally, in regard to native communities the complaint that in fact there wasn't a great deal of communication between the department and native groups, who didn't, I gather, make a submission to the Schumacher study: I think that's an oversight, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what it doesn't deal with. The Act doesn't deal with communications in a significant way, and I believe it should. The Act doesn't deal with funding, to say what the limits of funding are or will be and funding for special areas, special needs. The Act does not deal with educational requirements, where they will be available and who will pay for them. The Act does not deal with air ambulance, and I find this to be a real oversight. The Act, finally, does not deal with the precise relationship between the government, the district, the board, and the municipal councils. In fact, there are some rather puzzling things in it. In 5(2)(f) it indicates that a board in fact could become an operator, and I find that again a real anomaly,



if I read it right, because it seems to me there could be a conflict there if that's the way it is intended.

Mr. Speaker, in summary, I'm glad we finally have a Bill to deal with standards. There is, however, no real plan set in motion for start-up and operating, for funding, for central communications, education of personnel, monitoring, that I have yet seen. I support the Bill in principle because it deals with standards which I have spoken to and asked for for some time, some years, in this House. But there's still too much information missing. I think the government is asking us to accept this very critical and necessary piece of legislation with a number of the pieces missing from it. We do need to know in our Liberal caucus, Mr. Speaker, what the plans are going to be for start-up and operating funding, central communications between services, education, monitoring, resolving jurisdictional disputes, and the protection and security of native ambulance services.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask whether or not the minister has been or will be in consultation with all the interested stakeholders, including the AMA, in drafting and developing the regulations, because although I know there have been many submissions since the Schumacher study, I believe some of the stakeholders feel that they have not been fully consulted. I think that needs to happen before we get to the development of the fine-tuned regulations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. GOGO: Give 'em hell.

MR. HYLAND: This is our Bill, John.

Our House leader just walked by and said something. I reminded him it was our Bill and not their Bill that we were debating tonight.

Mr. Speaker, I must say I do feel better about this Bill when the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre said he was voting against it. It does give one a certain relief to know that if they're voting against it, then we've done something right.

We've heard a lot of comments about service and access to service. Let me approach some comments on this Bill, Bill 49, as it would affect my area and some of the concerns that have been expressed to me by constituents so that the minister can respond. It's an area where some parts of it are a long ways from a hospital, probably 60, 70-plus miles in some cases. In some of this area we have a couple or three ambulances now stationed in various locations throughout the county of Forty Mile, for example. Those ambulances are manned by volunteers, very dedicated volunteers that have taken CPR and St. John Ambulance and then give their time to serve the area. In one instance, they're employees of a company that has some houses and a plant south of Orion. In another case, in Foremost, they're members of the volunteer fire department and they serve to pick up patients and take them to the hospital in Bow Island. Now, in those two cases the county has made somewhat of an agreement with the Medicine Hat ambulance authority to serve that area. In Bow Island it's served by volunteer firemen with one ambulance less than a year old, one seven or eight years old. But these people have taken basic training, and they give their time to serve their fellow man as volunteers.

I hope that in this Bill under basic life support these things can continue, because it's these kinds of things where people get

out and help people that are really the part that makes this province work. I know that some of these groups work together very closely with doctors. If there's an accident that they feel they can't handle, they take either a doctor or a nurse from the hospital out to the scene to assist them with what they may find. I would hope that this can continue.

The other comments I would have would be about the way the ground ambulance in the area, and especially in and around Medicine Hat with the Medicine Hat ambulance authority tied to the hospital in the Hat, gives good service for an area outside the city limits. They also move a lot of patients from the regional hospital there into Calgary. They have found that it conserves time and money. They can move patients with the co-operation of a fixed-wing operator by air into Calgary a lot faster and somewhat cheaper than they can move that patient by ground into a hospital in Calgary. I think their timing is something less than an hour from hospital to hospital. They have arrangements with the medical people in the Hat that run the ambulance to cover with the fixed-wing operator, get in the plane with a patient, go to Calgary, take that patient to whichever hospital in Calgary, and return to Medicine Hat. That service doesn't cost us as taxpayers any money for standby because of the agreements with the fixed-wing operator, Bar XH, in the Hat. I notice the Member for Edmonton-Centre was making some comments about how the ground ambulance and the fixed-wing operator, or air in whichever case, can work together to serve the patient the best way possible in moving patients between hospitals. I would hope, and I appreciate the minister's comments and support to see that those kinds of things can continue.

I was interested in one comment that was made, that if we don't have a full service or full level of support in the ambulance system in this province, it will cost us more money in the end in hospital costs. I really wonder about a sweeping comment like that. I really wonder if it's true, because I can remember during the debate on seat belts, Mr. Speaker, we were assured by the medical profession that we would save \$55 million or thereabouts if we just instituted seat belts; we would save that in their fees and in hospital costs. I didn't see that in the last two or three budgets that the minister of hospitals has presented. I didn't see those savings. So I wonder about these sweeping comments that are made.

Mr. Speaker, I would appreciate, as I said, comments from the minister assuring the concerns that are raised, but I'd also like to say to her that I know, and many of my constituents know, what she and the government are trying to achieve in the Bill, and I applaud that. As I said, those concerns have been expressed to me, and I wish to lay them out during debate on second reading of Bill 49 so that the minister can see the concerns that do exist out there in rural parts of Alberta, because they know they now have a service they can afford, and they are concerned that something could be forced on them either now or later that they can't afford and they would, indeed, lose what they have now.

Thank you.

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

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In her opening remarks this evening the Minister of Health made a comment about how Bill 49 has gone some way in dealing with the concerns that had been raised by native groups with the previous Bill that she had tabled in the Legislature.

Let's say I was a bit surprised at that comment because I don't feel that that may, necessarily be the case, that Bill 49 has responded to the concerns and issues they have raised. I say this because just as recently as last week at the annual general assembly of the Indian Association of Alberta held at the Sarcee Reserve, a resolution was adopted by the delegates, to that Assembly, and that would have been just last Wednesday or Thursday. It's a resolution that specifically raises concerns about Bill 49, and I'd like to take some time tonight to raise some of these concerns with the minister and with the Assembly.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

One of the number of reasons for this resolution coming forward to the Indian Association was, as they stated in the resolution, that they feel that the concerns and the positions they had previously brought forward have been completely ignored. They feel that the government of Alberta has failed to consult. It doesn't seem to recognize the special relationship treaty Indian people have with the federal government, and they're concerned that because of this Bill there is an intrusion on aboriginal rights and the jurisdiction of Indian people over health care that they provide to their members.

I would just like to quote the clauses regarding the resolution presented, Mr. Speaker:

The Indian Association of Alberta, together with the Alberta Native Ambulance Operators Association, and the Alberta Indian Health Care Commission advise the Federal Minister of Health and Welfare Canada as to the detrimental effects of the Ambulance Services Act proposed by the Government of Alberta.

Secondly:

The Alberta Indian Health Care Commission take all steps necessary to reverse the detrimental effects of the proposed Ambulance Services Act on funding arrangements between Indian Nations and the Federal Government for pre-hospital care transportation.

Thirdly, the final clause of the resolution:

The Alberta Indian Health Care Commission take all steps necessary including legal action to protect their constitutional rights, treaty rights and to reverse the detrimental effects of the proposed Ambulance Services Act on Indian Nations and Treaty Indians.

Just so there are some copies of the resolution for the Chair, I've got them to file with the Clerk, Mr. Speaker.

I think this matter arises because, Mr. Speaker, over the last several years a number of native ambulance services have been organized on reserves around the province. They were organized in response to specific concerns and needs of their people, primarily because other ambulance services were not providing the kind of care or the quality of service that people felt they needed or deserved. So now in Alberta there are, as I understand it, five native ambulance operators, including Maskwachee Ambulance Authority Ltd. serving the Samson, Ermineskin, Louis Bull, and Montana reserves; the Blood Tribe ambulance service at the Blood reserve; WD Ambulance Service at Wabasca; Peigan ambulance service; and Frog Lake ambulance service. Out of those five services, Mr. Speaker, 25,000 treaty Indians are served, and as I understand it, based on the experience in these reserves other Indian bands are in various stages of organizing ambulance services on their respective reserves as well. So what we're dealing with tonight is provincial legislation that of course is of interest to those who provide ambulance services on Indian reserves.

I think this was all precipitated under the previous legislation when the minister, under Bill 25, brought in a specific section

which actually named Indian reserves within the mandate of the legislation. For example, section 4 of that previous Bill stated that

subject to the approval of the Minister, a board may enter into an agreement with the Government of Canada respecting the provision by the board of ambulance services to a national park, penitentiary, defence establishment, or Indian reserve.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the fact that the Alberta government was contemplating legislation that would establish jurisdictional responsibility in some way, perhaps even an indirect way, on Indian reserves is what prompted the initial concern. What was obvious was that Alberta does not have the legislation, the jurisdiction, the mandate, or the responsibility for Indians or Indian lands, so the concerns that were raised to the minister as a result of that Bill were to state quite clearly the very serious concerns they had, that the province might be inserting itself into an area of federal jurisdiction and infringing on some treaty rights. They made it quite clear to the minister, I hope. They don't feel that they did, but they did present position papers which stated and, I think, made fairly clear that treaty Indians could not become subject to provincial regulation.

Now, the other aspect of it is that regardless of how the Bill might be stated or written, whether by joining in with this in some way, the operators and the Indian reserves that they are subject to or work for or operate on behalf of - if they enter into arrangements with the provincial government, they want to be sure they can do it in a way so that it cannot be construed as them voluntarily giving up those treaty rights, especially in the area of health, Mr. Speaker. In fact, Treaty 6 is an example. Health care is one that's explicitly and specifically mentioned as being a treaty right. This was the wording of Treaty 6: "that a medicine chest shall be kept at the house of each Indian Agent for the use and benefit of the Indians . . ." So they don't want to do anything that might somehow be construed as voluntarily giving up that particular right, because a concern has been stated to me - and I think in reading the recent Sparrow decision of the Supreme Court, others have also read between the lines of that judgment - that it is possible for Indian people to lose their treaty rights if they give them up voluntarily. So they're very concerned that this new legislation be enacted in a way that they may be able to participate and yet be able to do it in a way that doesn't violate the problems I've outlined tonight.

Now, we do have some examples, Mr. Speaker, where this has worked. The province of Alberta has entered into a tripartite arrangement, for example, with the Blackfoot Band in southern Alberta for the provision of child welfare services. But it's a tripartite arrangement between the government of Canada, the province of Alberta, and the Blackfoot Band. It's a model for child welfare that hasn't been repeated on other reserves, and it isn't another model that's being established for other services either. Yet they feel that that model this province has entered into previously would serve as an example for the government of Alberta.

So in looking at the new legislation, Bill 49, that's before us tonight for second reading, the concern still centres on the wording of section 4 and the principle that is enunciated there regarding agreements to provide services. Now, the wording has been changed. We no longer have any reference made to national parks, penitentiaries, defense establishments, or Indian reserves. What we have is that "Subject to the approval of the Minister, a board may enter into an agreement with the Government of Canada." The concern here, Mr. Speaker, is that this mechanism the minister has chosen does not satisfy the concerns

these people have that I've already explained. What the minister is doing is delegating an arrangement to lesser parties . . .

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Oh.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Well, whether the minister agrees with me or not is irrelevant. This view as I understand it and has been explained to me: she has been delegating her power to lesser parties and doesn't allow for the kind of mechanism I've outlined.

So the concern seems to be: what happens if changes to section 4 are not made? I've been assured that it wouldn't take a major rewriting of section 4 to accommodate the concerns I'm raising this evening.

At the present time, Mr. Speaker, to give a couple of examples, these treaty ambulance services are able to transfer a member of, say, the Samson Band that's perhaps at the hospital in Wetaskiwin to the University of Alberta hospital. If they request the service of Maskwachees, they can presently transfer their people. Or if they're a member of the Blood Reserve and they request the Blood ambulance service to transfer them from Fort Macleod to the Foothills hospital in Calgary, that's presently occurring. That's the present arrangement, the present situation, the present experience. But if they're unable to be licensed under the Act or unwilling to come under the Act, their concern is that their ability to serve their people in this particular way will disappear and they would be effectively barred from continuing to provide this service.

At the present time all of them provide emergency services to transfer members of the reserve to nearby hospitals in the event that there is an accident or a medical need, and that kind of service may continue. But once that ambulance leaves the reserve boundary, what is their status? They're no longer on the reserve; they're now within the province of Alberta under the jurisdiction of the Act. What is their status as a service? I had one example explained to me, and they've had this experience at the Blood Reserve. One of their residents was involved in a motor vehicle accident near Great Falls. They were transferred by ambulance to the Alberta border and, at that point, were transferred to the Blood service and moved to a hospital. I believe it was in either Fort Macleod or Calgary. Yet their concern with this new legislation was: what happens if they're transferred to the Blood service at the border and then once it reaches the reserve boundary, that person would have to be transferred a third time to another service? So it causes some concern, and I'm raising these questions tonight because people are wondering whether it means in reality the demise of a service they're presently offering to their people.

So they're effectively placed in a difficult situation on one hand of watching their service disappear because they no longer fit under the new legislation, yet on the other hand, if they voluntarily submit to the new legislation we're discussing tonight, they're concerned that by doing that voluntarily a treaty right that's very important to them may fall away. I'm not talking tonight and they're not bringing to me concerns about presently providing the poor quality of service and that they're afraid of some new standard that might be imposed. It's not that at all, Mr. Speaker. They provide good quality service and have trained emergency paramedic personnel. That's not what's at issue. And they're not afraid of meeting the provincial requirements or standards. What they're concerned about is falling through the gaps.

Mr. Speaker, as well, there's concern about the setting up of districts. Reserves are not likely to be part of those districts, so

they wonder what authority will be granted for outside services to enter reserves and what authority there will be for ambulance services from the reserve to leave and provide services within those other districts surrounding the reserve. What arrangements are going to take place?

Mr. Speaker, I hope I've been able to explain the problem raised with me as I understand it: the concern about falling through the gap; the concern about having to choose between two very, very difficult options; not feeling sure that this legislation is going to answer those concerns; and that the minister may not be able to hear their concerns before the final legislation is passed. So I guess one of the questions I would have of the minister at this point has to do with the process. I know that the people providing the ambulance service - as I understand, they don't feel that their role is a political one or their job is a political one; the responsibility rests with their elected representatives through the Alberta chiefs or the Indian Association of Alberta. They feel that it should be the political arm speaking to the political arm in order to bring these concerns forward. After all, they're providing a medical service, not a political one. So I'm wondering if the minister would be willing to give some commitment to meet with perhaps representatives of all chiefs and the Indian Association of Alberta sometime prior to committee reading of this Bill.

As I understand, there may well be - I can't say for sure - some wording amendments to this particular section that would address the concerns these tribal services have and also would not undermine the principle of this particular section. I think it is a modest wording change, and I would hope that kind of consultation would take place whereby the minister and her staff, her representatives, would listen carefully to what's being expressed. Half of the concern that was raised with me seemed to be a sense of being totally outside this process, being a bystander, being invited on rare occasions to appear at meetings or conferences and then not being asked what their concerns were or taking serious note of them. That is my interpretation of what people were saying to me, and that's my interpretation of what's contained in the resolution adopted by the Indian Association general assembly last week. I know that the minister has got those very skills. I would hope she would give that commitment, because with her intervention and her willingness to listen, I'm sure this can be mutually resolved to everyone's satisfaction so not only will these reserves continue to be able to provide services to their people, but for the other 30-some reserves in Alberta that don't yet have these forms of services, perhaps the opportunity would then exist for them to follow along with this if they wished.

Mr. Speaker, I do have a couple of other concerns regarding matters raised with the minister through the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association. However, I see that my time is rapidly drawing to a close, and I'm sure there are others who would be willing to address this matter as well. I appreciate the minister listening to these concerns, and I look forward to her committing to resolve this particular problem.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for West Yellowhead.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I listened closely to the minister while she talked about the \$25 million that goes toward ambulances in the province, increased up to \$41 million by the municipalities' grants. In no way do I agree that those grants for the municipalities should be used for ambulance services. If there are grants out there for ambulance services, then it should be totally from the hospital budget. The municipi-

palities badly need that money that the minister sends to them. She well knows that they need that money. They use that for policing, fire protection, several other important things municipalities need in their infrastructure. I was pleased to see that it is a step in the right direction, but it surely doesn't go far enough.

It was interesting to hear that they're going to start training people in the ambulance services. Many of us know of experiences in the past when great volunteers in this province tried to do their job with the best training they could get through some voluntary arm of municipalities or government, then went out on the road and found themselves in a bind or short of equipment. Those grants that came from Municipal Affairs certainly have helped increase better equipment in ambulances and better response equipment like jaws of life and other things needed in the ambulance services.

I have some problems with the fact that we are now setting up more and more boards in the province to govern these hard-working volunteers. We have, Mr. Speaker, yet another board now that can requisition municipalities to raise capital and operating costs for the ambulances. I was pleased to hear the speaker from Cypress-Redcliff mention how important the volunteers are in the riding of Cypress-Redcliff. Indeed, the volunteers are just as important in the riding of West Yellowhead and work day and night at the first call they get to assist people that are injured or in serious medical health. I do have some question as to how this minister will continue to support volunteers. I know how she underhandedly did away with a volunteer hospital in my riding. I do not trust her that she's now going to allow these volunteers to continue in the ambulance service.

Also, she has in here very clearly that penalties will be charged against municipalities if they do not pay their bills directly. There is also the fact in 33(2) that

No person shall employ or engage as an ambulance attendant a person who does not meet the requirements of the regulations respecting ambulance attendants.

We've had no clear indication as to where these people will be trained, whether their records will be checked for past occasions of violence with the law or safety while in those vehicles, and whether they'll be checked for criminal records in regard to confidentiality.

It says also in 34(1), Mr. Speaker, that the minister or a person who provides . . .

**MR. SPEAKER:** Hon. member, thank you. Thank you. The Chair has allowed certain things to occur at second reading tonight, but enough is enough when it comes to detailed examination. This is second reading, principle of the Bill. Get on with that, because I'm sure you can make your points that way. Now the Chair will recognize you.

**MR. DOYLE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My point on that was the fact that these people sometimes jump in an ambulance, take a long-distance trip, and jump out, and the ambulance business is stuck with that cost. In the past they had very serious problems in the municipality where I was councillor and mayor. The ambulance service couldn't collect this money, so they had no alternative but to come to the municipality. It cost them almost \$100,000 to pick up back debts or else let that ambulance close down. So if these people have no money to pay, I don't know how they're going to pay. I would suppose they're going to go back to the municipality to make them pick up the costs. But the person that jumps out of the vehicle, I'm sure, Mr.

Speaker, would in no way be able to have the money on hand to pay, or they would have no way of tracking them down.

The minister should take the responsibility of putting total funding towards the ambulance service in this province. No matter where you live, you should have good ambulance service, especially in the remote areas of this province.

Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Edmonton-Beverly.

**MR. EWASIUK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to rise and say that I agree with Bill 49 in principle. However, I think many of the comments that have been made by my colleagues suggest there are obviously some deficiencies in this particular Bill. There's no doubt that an ambulance service, to be effective and to provide the service ambulances are intended to provide, first of all, of course, needs to be well equipped, well manned, but more specifically has to be properly and adequately financed. I believe the proposition of this particular Bill would suggest that the onus of financing seems to be incumbent upon the municipalities, and I think the municipalities already are in trouble in this province. Certainly attaching another cost to their operations is not proper, and I think this Bill does not meet the requirements of a universal ambulance service.

We have alluded to the volunteer component in this service at the present time. One, I think, must rise and commend the men and women that work in our fire departments and quite often in conjunction with the ambulance people. I think they provide a very good service to the citizens of the province. But they are volunteers and they're doing things in many cases on a minimal basis. An example of a case in point was the ambulance service just to the north of the city of Edmonton, where the dedication of the group that was serving that particular community finally ran into exhaustion. They threatened and, in fact, in the final analysis had to resign their positions because they just couldn't continue to provide the service on a voluntary basis, particularly in light of the fact that there was inadequate funding and, in this particular case also, a lack of volunteers. So while we can and do appreciate the work volunteers do in this area, I don't think we now, in the sort of progressive society we're in, can continue to rely on volunteers in this very important component of our health care system. So if we're going to introduce a Bill that is going to deal with this issue, then at least I think we should make it such that we'll provide the kind of care we in the province of Alberta deserve to have.

Now, the Member for Calgary-Mountain View did allude to problems that the municipalities have expressed through their organization the AUMA, the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, and they made a few comments, and I would like to just make reference to them. They in fact suggested they could not endorse this Bill until the government committed to a level of funding that provides for the legislated minimum standards. So you see, this organization, that I think speaks for the municipalities of this province, does have difficulty in the way this Bill has been put before them. They were concerned "to provide municipalities independence to form ambulance districts within a time limit of eighteen months." They were concerned about the kind of time frame that was provided for them to establish the framework for the ambulance service. They, of course, do not support the ministerial authority to appoint board members. If they're going to have board members, they feel it's within their jurisdiction to do so.

So there are a number of deficiencies in a relatively good Bill, and I think those deficiencies need to be addressed, need to be

taken into consideration with what someone like the AUMA would say, because I think their word should be taken seriously. I would hope that the minister, before proceeding too much further with this Bill, will take into consideration the comments of this group and the comments so far this evening by the various speakers. I think the intent here to establish an ambulance service in the province is a good one, but if we're going to do it, let's make it really a good one.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Member for Taber-Warner.

**MR. BOGLE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 49, the Ambulance Services Act, is here because of a commitment by the government of Alberta to bring in an ambulance Act to provide a provincewide set of standards that would be enforced across this province. The minister has worked long and hard, and clearly Bill 49 is an improvement over Bill 25, the legislation that was introduced last year and allowed to die on the Order Paper so there could be further input from not only the municipalities, the hospital boards, the various ambulance associations, and other stakeholder groups but the public as a whole. I'm very pleased to see some of the improved elements that have been brought forward in this legislation, and I'll focus primarily on the fact that we now authorize a hospital district board to be an ambulance district board if the boundaries are coterminous and members of the municipalities agree. I think that's a good improvement over Bill 25, and it was certainly responding to some of the needs and the requests that were made to the government through the minister for a change.

I would like to add and amplify several comments made by our colleague in the Assembly the hon. Member for Cypress-Redcliff. They relate to the role of the volunteer; to the training provisions, both the initial provisions for the BLS level of service as well as the in-service requirements that are necessary on a year-by-year basis; and of course the costs of the service. The role of the volunteer has been mentioned, and while it's often pointed out that we currently have 89 percent of the population in our province covered by the BLS level of training and therefore the remaining 11 percent should be brought in, it's important that none of us lose sight of the fact that the 11 percent remaining outside that current benchmark figure lies primarily in the more sparsely populated parts of the province and the parts of the province where there's a lower assessment base.

Volunteers have played a key role through a number of parts of the province. I appreciate that some members of the Assembly represent hospital boards and work with private ambulance authorities where that isn't the case. In the Taber-Warner constituency all of the ambulances that operate are volunteer. The two larger, Taber and Coaldale, have an element of training at a higher level, but for the most part the services are provided by a straight volunteer component. I think it's incumbent upon us to do everything humanly possible. I know the minister is doing her utmost to ensure that we do not erode the volunteer element that's so important, particularly in the more sparsely populated areas, where the number of calls per year would be considerably less than in the urban centres.

The training requirements for the program are of course a concern. Discussions I've had with ambulance attendants in communities like Milk River and Warner lead me to believe that it's a real concern as to how these young men and women in the communities are going to, first, obtain the necessary training, keeping in mind that they have jobs. Whether it's in a grocery

store or the butcher shop or a garage or they're a farmer, they've got other full-time activities. So that's a concern.

I know the efforts made some years ago to bring the SATT program to the local communities. I think that was an extremely good example as to how we can be sensitive, and I certainly hope that we don't lose that sensitivity. But, also, the in-service training that's required to maintain the BLS level may be again in some jeopardy in terms of our volunteer programs. I would ask if consideration is being given, particularly where the ambulance board and the hospital board are one and the same — if indeed the individual or some of the individuals could be working in the hospital itself so that the in-service training is taking place whether that particular ambulance authority has 150 calls per year or, as would be the case in a larger centre, many, many times that amount.

I want to conclude my comments, Mr. Speaker, by commenting on costs. While the minister has brought forward some further refinements which I believe will help a number of situations, where you could have local requisitioning on a per capita basis in addition to requisitioning by equalized assessment, that is going to have minimal impact on a sparsely populated area with a low assessment. Some MLAs in the Assembly are acutely aware of the concerns that school boards are having where there isn't a high assessment and more and more of the burden is placed on the few businesses that you do have in your communities. I'd hate to see us get into a position where there's not flexibility. I know the minister has very limited dollars within her budget that can be applied in this area, but I do believe it's a matter that needs to be monitored very carefully. So for those areas which cannot move in terms of either the per capita basis or the equalized assessment to maintain that level and if they have the other elements in place, it would be such a shame to see the service lost.

I use as an example my own constituency. If someone requires emergency care in Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park, they're currently less than half an hour from an ambulance service based at the Border Counties hospital in Milk River. If that ambulance disappeared and we didn't have a service in Warner, then the closest service would be Lethbridge, another hour away. We have to ask ourselves: at what point in time do we say our objective is self-defeating, the distance too far?

So I'm merely pleading with the minister to ensure that there's flexibility in terms of looking at the ability of the local hospital district ambulance authority to pay for the service. If it cannot be achieved through the equalized assessment or the per capita basis, then clearly find some other avenue to assist that jurisdiction with some of the costs.

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to adjourn the 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.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung]

[Eight minutes having elapsed, the House divided]

## For the motion:

Betkowski	Evans	Osterman
Black	Gesell	Paszkowski
Bogle	Gogo	Payne
Bradley	Hyland	Severtson
Brassard	Johnston	Shrake
Calahasen	Jonson	Speaker, R.
Cardinal	Laing, B.	Stewart
Cherry	Lund	Tannas
Day	Moore	Thurber
Drobot	Musgrove	West
Elliott	Oldring	Zarusky
Elzinga	Orman	

## Against the motion:

Barrett	Fox	McInnis
Bruseker	Gibeault	Roberts
Chumir	Hawkesworth	Taylor
Doyle	Hewes	Woloshyn
Ewasjuk		

Totals: Ayes - 35 Noes - 13

[Motion carried]

## Bill 37

Alberta Government Telephones  
Reorganization Act

[Adjourned debate June 8: Mr. Stewart]

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications.

MR. STEWART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I last had the opportunity to deliver remarks with respect to this Bill, I indicated that this decision, this Bill 37, was a win, win, win situation. It's a win for the company and the employees, it's a win for the province, and it certainly is a win for the people of Alberta. We also talked, Mr. Speaker, about the reasons that make this the right decision at the right time. It's a matter of adapting Alberta Government Telephones to change: change in a growing telecommunications market, change in jurisdiction, change in competition versus monopoly, change in technology, change in the requirement for capital investment, and . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Perhaps some of the minor discussions could take place out in the members' lobby. Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, I also dealt with how the opportunity for Albertans and the investment in AGT would be realized, that we would be pursuing a matter of achieving a widespread ownership of AGT among Albertans through the use of the financial institutions. We would have a special preference for Albertans to enable them to invest in this company: a priority of purchase period, a one-year deferral for one-half of the purchase price up to a set maximum. The details of the offering, of course, Mr. Speaker, the percentage of the offering, the price per share, and other matters like that would be dealt

with at the time of the prospectus, when the market conditions are right and the offer is put forward.

Mr. Speaker, I know that during the course of the debate with respect to this we will see all kinds of scare tactics put forward by the opposition, but I want to express the assurances that this Bill and this plan provide for Albertans. Firstly, for the employees, there will be no layoffs as a result of this decision. The pensions and the benefits will continue. There will be new career opportunities and skilled jobs for Albertans, employees of Alberta Government Telephones. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Let's have this perfectly clear, hon. members. There's no need for the interruption to continue. There will obviously be plenty of time for lots of other representations to be made in terms of the debate, and so let's have that happen. We'll adhere to our own Standing Orders about interruption of members. Thank you.

Minister.

MR. STEWART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The employees will at last have an opportunity to have a labour relations legislation that in fact protects their collective bargaining positions.

There will be preservation of this company that we know as AGT for Albertans. That will be done, Mr. Speaker, through provisions in this Bill that deal with the fact that there are no takeovers or control group opportunities, the limit being 5 percent for any individual shareholder or associated shareholders. There will be no indirect takeovers through amalgamations or mergers that would remove the control or the physical presence of this company from Alberta. Resident Albertans will make up two-thirds of the board of directors. Foreign ownership will be limited to 10 percent.

With respect to the relationship with ET, ET and the city of Edmonton have the assurance that the toll revenue sharing agreements will continue and protect the relationship that now exists. Areas of co-operation that are being pursued will be preserved.

In the regulatory end, Mr. Speaker, there are assurances for subscribers. All programs and rates and services will be adopted by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission. The CRTC now, of course, regulates 70 percent of Canadians. Its record of acting as a public regulator is sound. The basis of the regulation is similar to the one that existed with the PUB. Rural programs are regarded by the CRTC as being a standard for the rest of the provinces to try to achieve. There are assurances that notwithstanding this federal jurisdiction Alberta will continue to have a presence from the standpoint of participating in the development of national telecommunications policy. Alberta will participate in the review of the regulatory system as we look ahead to new ways to ensure that the public interest is protected in the regulation of telecommunications. There will be a CRTC presence right here in Alberta, Mr. Speaker.

Albertans know and they can be assured that phone bills will not increase as a result of this decision. There is the phenomenon of rate rebalancing, Mr. Speaker, and it's known that throughout Canada and indeed beyond, rate rebalancing is occurring, with long-distance rates going down and pressures on the local rates. But the worst thing we could do is to stand around and let that happen, where we have a fence around AGT and not allow extra revenues to be pursued. If we leave AGT as it is, with diminishing revenue on long distance, indeed local rates would have to rise. Rates will in fact be regulated and continue to be regulated in the public interest, and that Alber-



tans know and can be assured of. Other provincial telecommunications companies are regulated by CRTC, and it's known from their record that that regulation is fair and reasonable.

Tax impact, Mr. Speaker. Under corporate law the minimum income taxes will be paid for several years. As I mentioned, 70 percent of Canadians are already subscribers to companies or of companies where they already pay income taxes. If you compare the rates, there's not a significant differential between those rates.

So, Mr. Speaker, what will we hear from the opposition? We will certainly hear that they oppose it. They will not pay any attention to reality, to what's going on. They will employ scare tactics. They will say that the rates will skyrocket, when they know that they are regulated. They will say that there'll be excess profits, when they know that profits are regulated. They will refer to the United States, which they know has got nothing to do with privatization because it's private companies already. AT & T was already private; it's got nothing to do with privatization. They'll cite the Olley report and the circumstances with respect to that, when they know that the basis of the calculation that was used in that was already turned down by CRTC when CNCP made application.

But, Mr. Speaker, Albertans will not be fooled. Albertans know that this is the best thing that has happened to AGT and Alberta, and Albertans will be the winners with respect to Bill 37.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, this Bill is rotten from page 1 to page 38. It constitutes the worst sellout this government has ever engaged in. They didn't have the guts to go to the electorate. No, they wait until year two to sell out \$3 billion worth of public assets owned by the people of Alberta to their friends, as few as 20 of their friends. If ever you needed an example of a government that is so corrupt, so blindly devoted to helping its own wealthy friends, Mr. Speaker, this is the Bill that proves it. And all the propaganda from this minister, whether it's letters that go out to the public signed by former MLA and cabinet minister Neil Webber or whether it's propaganda that this government takes out at the taxpayers' expense in newspapers, at the bottom line it is nothing more than that: propaganda, plain and simple.

MR. JOHNSTON: Go get 'em, Pam. You almost changed my mind there for a minute.

MS BARRETT: You bet.

Mr. Speaker, I wish this was one debate I didn't have to engage in. I wish there were any brains registerable at all on the other side, to the point where this Bill had never been introduced. This is the last debate in the world that I want to engage in, Mr. Speaker, but the Conservatives are on notice: this Bill will never have the approval at any reading stage of the Official Opposition New Democrats. And Albertans in the long run are going to say, "Thank goodness for the 16 members of the New Democrat caucus, who fought this Bill and piped up for ordinary people."

In the first place, what a rip-off. I mean, aside from the fact that these people are so ideologically bound to helping out people who are already rich, companies which are already rich - and we'll get into that in a while - aside from that, the fact remains that these people, including the Provincial Treasurer,

haven't even learned how to use an abacus yet, let alone a calculator. Because since when do you sell \$3 billion worth of assets for \$1 billion? Tell me how that adds up.

I note that the minister has got shifting ground the whole time in his defence of why he wants to sell this natural utility, this natural monopoly. The Premier stood up here a few weeks ago, and he was glad about, you know, offering shares to the people. Hey, let's just get something straight, Mr. Speaker: the people already own AGT, so don't give us that garbage. Then the minister responsible for steering this Bill through the House, which I hope hits a brick wall, gets up and says, "We have to sell it because the CRTC is changing the rules; they're going to allow competition." Well, what happened to the minister, who was on the radio last October, last November, acting like the big, muscular champion of the people of Alberta? He was going to join up in this alliance with the other prairie provinces to fight the CRTC and to fight the federal government. He even went on the record and said: "Even though we've got a representative on the CRTC, it ain't enough. Those people are not fair, and they're not balanced in their views." He was going to fight, and he was going to save AGT.

Well, I'll tell you what was tickling that man over there. What was tickling that man were the results of the 1989 snap election, when these people had the guts to go to the people of Alberta early and not tell them what their agenda was. Oh, he was still stinging. So was the entire government, Mr. Speaker. They were still stinging over the defeat of their own Premier. That's why they didn't come forward with this agenda. That's why they sent this minister to make like he was going to be the champion of the people's telephone company, the telephone company that keeps consumers' basic subscriber rates at a level one-third of our American counterparts, Mr. Speaker. Now, that's a company that's been serving the mandate.

MR. JOHNSTON: Is that in U.S. or Canadian funds?

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, I would appreciate a little order in the Assembly from the Conservative side.

That's the company that's been serving the mandate that it was given in 1906 and has served it consistently to the benefit of ordinary consumers.

But I'll tell you what this agenda is really about. It's not just about selling to 20 people like Peter Pocklington or Ron Southern, or maybe you want to throw in a Japanese investor while you're at it, Mr. Speaker. It's not just about letting their friends have the lion's share of a profitable corporation. No, no, no. This is further to shift the burden of payment for telephone subscriptions onto ordinary people so that the business consumers, particularly those who have heavy-duty long-distance bills every month, can get off the hook. Well, I say, Mr. Speaker, those are the very people that aren't paying their fair share of the taxes. Those are the people who are going to get a good deal out of this Bill.

But, Mr. Speaker, you know that there are 16 members of this Assembly who will speak up for the ordinary people, who will speak up for the basic homeowners, the basic subscribers, the people who have benefited, and, more than that, the people who have paid for this company. And if this government thinks that it can get away with this legislation without paying a political price come the next election, whether it's called early or late, they're wrong. They're absolutely wrong. [interjections]

MR. JOHNSTON: I bet you won't even bring it up.

MR. TAYLOR: Yes, but Pam, are you for it or against it?

MS BARRETT: Welcome to the House, Nick. What a pleasant surprise.

MR. SPEAKER: Order. [interjections] Order. I'm sure there'll be ample time for the Provincial Treasurer to engage in the debate. The same thing probably holds true for Westlock-Sturgeon. Both hon. gentlemen have not been noted for their shyness in debate, but perhaps they could save it until they're recognized by the Chair.

MS BARRETT: Oh, Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are so rarely here, it's a pleasure to see them tonight.

MR. JOHNSTON: But where is Laurence?

MS BARRETT: Well, he's never here.

All right now. Here we've got the quotes from the minister who was going to gang up and fight with the prairie provinces, the fight that he's abandoned. Now he's saying, "Don't worry; you can trust the CRTC." So what happened between October of '89 and June or May of 1990? I'll tell you.

AN HON. MEMBER: Flip-flop.

MS BARRETT: No, there is no flip-flop. I don't expect flip-flops over there; I expect them on that side of the House, the Liberal side. No, the Conservatives have always got an agenda, and they unfold it year after year after year. Instead of standing up to the feds and the CRTC, instead of fighting that Bill C-41, this guy leaves his prairie brethren on the hook and he walks away. What sort of an attitude is that? So much for his championing the great cause.

AN HON. MEMBER: It's corporate centralism.

MS BARRETT: Corporate centralism. Oh, I must do this while I've still got the notes. Mr. Speaker, the minister . . .

MR. JOHNSTON: Stick to the script, Pam.

MS BARRETT: I don't have a script, Mr. Treasurer. I never have a script. The Treasurer knows that he and I never have scripts.

Mr. Speaker, I did take notes though, and the minister said: "Don't you worry. There aren't going to be any layoffs." Now, I ask you, folks: have we heard this before or what? Yeah. "There's not going to be any layoffs." What about Canadian Airlines International? What about PWA when it took over CP? They do this all the time. You know what their real drive is in all of this, every time they sell off a public company or when their federal counterparts - because these people don't have the power to control it - allow the mergers of certain companies? It's in the long run to lay off jobs. That's always what's going to happen.

Now, I know that the members across the way might doubt the predictive powers of the person speaking, but I'll tell you what. Last summer on the last day of the sitting - you remember the last day of the sitting? I do. We did a little news conference, the New Democrats did, had this beautiful glass box, call it a time capsule, and we put a whole bunch of things in.

Because these are the Conservatives that went to the electorate saying: "No new taxes. No tax increases. None of this, none of that. Don't worry. Hidden agenda? No, it's not real." That's what they said to the people. They got by on the skin of their teeth; but by cracky that won't happen again. Anyway, we put all these little artifacts into this time capsule including a health care card, an empty bottle of beer. You know what else we put in, Mr. Speaker? An AGT telephone book. We predicted, accurately if this Bill passes, which I hope it doesn't, that Alberta Government Telephones would not be Alberta Government Telephones by this time this year. That's what we predicted, and, sure enough, their hidden agenda unfolds. And this guy wants us to believe no layoffs? Come on. What does he figure? We anticipated his Bill. You know, you'd think we'd have dreamt up the number for him at that rate, Mr. Speaker. We should have said that Bill 37 will be the axe Bill.

Then he says, "We're not going to allow any amalgamations." Oh, come on. What a bunch of jokers. I've seen these guys change one little bit of legislation, stroke of the pen. They attempt to do it sometimes in what are euphemistically called housekeeping Bills, and away you go. I saw it happen with AEC. Remember that sore subject, Mr. Speaker, that caused such discomfort? Because, in fact, every Conservative in the House was in a conflict-of-interest situation as far as I was concerned. What did they do? They changed the rules. They changed the ownership rules. Remember that, Mr. Speaker? They did that last year. This guy wants us to believe that they're never going to allow greater than 10 percent foreign ownership. Well, as far as I'm concerned, as far as the Official Opposition is concerned, 1 percent foreign ownership is wrong in principle, and if for no other reason the Bill should be defeated on that basis. But we know where these guys are at. You know, they probably cook up legislation years in advance.

Remember the former Government House Leader Neil Crawford? He held a number of portfolios, and in 1987 he held a portfolio called Special Projects. You know what that was about, don't you gang? That was about looking at what the government can privatize so they can get some money to fix the Treasurer's cash flow problems.

This is the Treasurer who brought us from no debt to now up to 11 and a half billion dollars debt. This guy is hungry. He's looking for public assets that he can sell off cheaply so that he can so-called balance his budget. These are the same guys that said, "No tax increases," but health care premiums went up, taxes for motor vehicle registration, long-term care facilities. You name it, Mr. Speaker; every little tax that they could jack up they did. Now they're looking for another cash cow, and they think they've got it. They think they can sell a \$3 billion business for a billion dollars, tell consumers that they've got to pay more, and get away with it. They're not getting away with this.

You know, it makes me wonder what they won't sell next. In Britain their political guru the infamous Madame Thatcher has even privatized water. Doesn't it make you grateful that these guys don't operate, through a provincial agency, the distribution of water? Because they'd privatize that too. They'd let a private company come in, maybe as few as 10 owners this time instead of 20, maybe as few as one or two, maybe a couple of foreign owners, and they'd let them sell to us our own natural resource for a profit. If you need an analogy that is clearer, I don't know if you can get one, Mr. Speaker, because they are going to try to sell to Albertans what we already own. We're going to have to pay more for it, and there is going to be a handful of people who are going to make mega bucks.

Do you think they're going to keep that money in Alberta? Come on. Come on. Surely the Provincial Treasurer is not so naive. They're going to take those profits, which last year came to \$56 million, and these guys are going to be big companies by the end of the day. It might take a couple of years, but it's going to change hands. You're going to have big companies. In fact, one western telecommunications authority figures Bell itself will own the company within a few years. They're going to take that money, and they're going to invest it in Third World countries where they can get cheap labour and cheap natural resources. That's what they'd do with the money. They couldn't give a darn about the Alberta economy, just like their Conservative brethren who sit across the way from us, Mr. Speaker. They have no loyalty. They are selling the people out, they are selling the province out, and if they don't . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: And the sky is falling.

MS BARRETT: No, the sky isn't falling; the Conservatives are falling, right through the floor.

MR. JOHNSTON: Get into the issue.

MS BARRETT: I wouldn't buy a cent's worth of this, Mr. Treasurer, because I already own a share. I own one of 2.4 million shares, just like every other Albertan does. I don't buy what I already own. I know how to count, Mr. Speaker. I know how to use an abacus.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, order.

MR. JOHNSTON: Political issue. We're giving you the political issue.

MS BARRETT: Ah, the political issue.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? I wonder why I want to save their crummy little Conservative necks. I cannot imagine . . .

MR. JOHNSTON: That's what we're asking you. I mean, we can't understand it.

MS BARRETT: But I do. I want to save the public telephone company from 20 rich friends of the Conservatives, from 20 people who'll rip the people off. I want to save this company from the unfair and unbalanced rules and regulations of the CRTC and the federal government that's going along with those decisions, Mr. Speaker, and by God the New Democrats are going to do it.

But in the meantime, I'm going to have to sponsor a reasoned amendment. I started off by saying that this Bill was rotten from pages 1 to 38. There isn't a single word in there that is worthy of contemplation. So I'm going to try to convince you guys of this and sponsor an amendment. It's a reasoned amendment. I'll have copies distributed. I'm sorry I didn't do that earlier. I meant to actually. Somebody want to help out? Mr. Speaker, I believe you had a copy of this amendment last week. I think it was on the 7th that I handed this in. I'll read this amendment. The amendment is to the motion for second reading of Bill 37, the AGT privatization Act. It's called "reorganization," but we knew the day before they introduced it that it really meant privatization Act. It reads as follows. [interjections] Hey, Mr. Speaker, aren't you going to call order on these guys? I keep having to talk louder and louder just to get over the banter. We were told a little while ago to go out in the lounge.

MR. JOHNSTON: You're becoming shriller and shriller.

MS BARRETT: Oh, no, no, Dick. That doesn't work anymore. Your sexism and condescension have hurt you.

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Enough, enough, enough. [interjection] Provincial Treasurer, I've warned you once before. This is the second time. You'll get a third time, and the fourth time you will be asked to go take a hike.

MR. JOHNSTON: It's getting late anyway.

MR. SPEAKER: All of us had noticed.

Because of the distribution of the reasoned amendment I need to hear the exact wording to make sure it's exactly the same wording that I had received as notice.

MS BARRETT: Yeah.

MR. SPEAKER: So if we can have the reading with the correct title of the Bill this time, please, Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Gee, Mr. Speaker, I'd be glad to read what they call the correct title of the Bill: Alberta Government Telephones Reorganization Act, which should be called Alberta Government Telephones privatization Act, but they don't have the guts to use honest, open, clear, plain language. Not only do these guys write in euphemisms; they live in euphemisms. But I'll tell you, after the next election, we've got a euphemism for them.

In any event, the amendment to the motion for second reading reads as follows: by striking all the words after "That" and substituting:

Bill 37, Alberta Government Telephones Reorganization Act, be not now read a second time because this House believes in the principle of a public utility being operated with a primary mandate of serving the interests of the public in a fair, equitable, and affordable fashion, which could be superseded by the Bill, which makes possible providing handsome profit opportunities for the shareholders, who could be as few as 20 individuals or corporations.

Mr. Speaker, that's the amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. I'm glad we had it read out because it's quite different from the one the Chair had received a few days ago.

MS BARRETT: No, Mr. Speaker. I've got four.

MR. SPEAKER: Forgive me, hon. member . . .

MS BARRETT: Well, I'm just trying to help.

MR. SPEAKER: Forgive me. The Chair sees that this still is in order, but it is different from the one the Chair had received.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, to clarify, Mr. Speaker, I . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Could we get this straight, hon. member? I'll sit down in a moment and recognize you, but until we get this straightened away, I'm not sitting down.

MS BARRETT: When you get what straightened away?

MR. SPEAKER: The fact that the member keeps jumping up while I'm still standing.

MS BARRETT: Oh, for crying out loud. I thought you were done.

MR. JOHNSTON: Order.

MS BARRETT: Oh, Dick.

MR. SPEAKER: Perhaps there's something wrong with your eyesight tonight, hon. member.

MS BARRETT: No.

MR. SPEAKER: Now, let's now get on to the reasoned amendment, which is in order.

MS BARRETT: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would only point out...

MR. SPEAKER: Good. Good, hon. member.

MS BARRETT: Oh, for crying out loud. Don't play games. This is a game. If you want to run interference, Mr. Speaker...

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, that's enough.

MS BARRETT: Oh, well. [interjection] Who said that? Hey, I'm still in a good mood, gang. I've got lots of time left.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, please.

MS BARRETT: They are the ones that are showing off, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Please. You're now recognized.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, for the information of the Assembly I have drafted four reasoned amendments, several subamendments, and a hoist motion, and I've handed in almost every one of them. I continue to hand them in because I believe it's appropriate to let the Assembly know in advance that they're in for a long fight on this, and if anybody thinks they can put me in a bad mood over this, let them think again.

I am motivated by a desire to serve the people of Alberta, unlike the Conservative dinosaurs that are trying to muscle this Bill through the Assembly, Mr. Speaker. That's why I'm asking this Assembly, including the Conservative dinosaurs, to rethink this grossly offensive Act, to tell the Provincial Treasurer that he got them into the mess; let him get them out of the mess without selling out the interests of the people of Alberta, without abandoning the mandate of the provincial government telephone system that has served the people of Alberta fairly and affordably since 1906.

You got a problem? Oh, I see certain Conservative members ripping up the amendment. Oh, they look so condescending, Mr. Speaker, ripping it up, flipping it around. Yeah, well, that's the flippant attitude that this government's going to account for during the next election, I can tell you. Not only are they going to be called on their lies and their deceit from the 1989 election about what they were going to do and what they weren't going to do; they're going to be called on the selling out of a \$3 billion publicly owned asset, invested in by pioneers of this province,

current taxpayers, Mr. Speaker, a profitable company that they want to sell for one-third of its value - one-third of its value - to 20 of their rich Conservative friends. Shame on them.

They have no right to be government as far as I'm concerned. If they had had the guts to go to the people in the 1989 snap election and say: "By the way, we're going to raise your health care premiums. We're going to raise your motor vehicle registration premiums. You want to stay in a long-term care facility; you're going to pay more. And we're going to sell the telephone company that people have invested in for 85-odd years." You would have told them: "We're going to take the money that we're making from this company. We're not going to reinvest it into the company. We're going to subsidize the interest so that our rich friends can buy this company." That's what this Conservative government thinks of the people of Alberta. They believe that they can manipulate. They believe that they can state one thing and do another. They believe that they can unfold a hidden agenda.

Mr. Speaker, this Conservative government thinks Albertans are stupid. Let me tell you: Albertans are not stupid. They will not support this Act. Three years from now when ordinary consumers are paying the American average rate for basic telephone subscription, you know what I'm going to be doing? I'm going to be knocking on doors in the Provincial Treasurer's riding to remind them who gave them that new telephone subscription rate, who to thank. Maybe I'll go the minister's riding too. Maybe I'll go next summer when rates start to rise, and I'll tell them who they've got to thank for this.

But in the meantime, even though it is not my ordinary interest to serve the interests of the Conservatives, the dinosaurs, I'm going to try to help them out by sponsoring this amendment and hope to heck that they've got the common sense to agree to this amendment, to say the House believes in a public mandate for a public utility. We stand up for consumers, and we're not going to let this Bill through. Come on, join in and support this amendment, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Point of order.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, since this motion is fairly elaborate in its amendment...

MS BARRETT: What's your citation?

MR. JOHNSTON: ... and in fact *Beauchesne* in citation 668 is quite specific on what it is that a hoist amendment can say, then in fact this amendment is probably out of order.

MS BARRETT: No, it isn't. No, it isn't. It's not a hoist.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

MS BARRETT: He thinks it's a hoist.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Thank you.

Provincial Treasurer, in actual fact it's a referral to a committee, which is one of the three subheadings under 666. Thank you.

Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak on this amendment and of course to support it. I guess I would

like to suggest to the members from the across the way that they might like to get in on this debate. I think it would be interesting to have a good philosophical debate about the pros and cons of the effect of privatizing AGT. I think that this motion is exactly ideal to set the stage for this kind of a debate. I won't read the whole of the motion again because it's already been made, but that "this House believes in the principle of a public utility being operated with a primary mandate of serving the interest of the public in a fair, equitable and affordable fashion" is exactly what we on this side of the House believe. I'm wondering what the people on the other side of the House believe and wonder if we will get a chance to hear that in the course of this debate, or will they sit in silence and just vote it down, like they so often do. So the term "this House believes" I guess may be a bit of an exaggeration at this stage, but we will see as the debate proceeds or as the vote takes place in any case.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that Canada has been developed in a different way than our cousins to the south, the Americans, because in this nation we have used Crown corporations in quite a number of innovative and interesting ways. We have quite a different culture in this country than what the Americans have in terms of developing the economy. For a start, when we decided to become a nation and we wanted to link eastern Canada with western Canada, the first rail line was built with government money. Now, unfortunately there happened to be a bunch of Conservatives in power, and when they were finished, they couldn't possibly think of running it like a Crown corporation or setting up a Crown corporation.

AN HON. MEMBER: It still loses money.

MR. McEACHERN: No, no. You're quite wrong there. CP doesn't lose money. CP was given not only the rail line bed right-of-way but for three miles on each side of the rail line they were given every second square mile in checkerboard pattern. In fact they didn't even have to take it in a checkerboard pattern; they could take it in solid strips in the better areas where there were lots of resources and had mineral rights with it. That's why CP has become such an incredibly powerful and rich and wealthy corporation. Unfortunately, the government didn't have enough sense to hang on to it and set it up as a Crown corporation; they gave it away to a bunch of private entrepreneurs.

Nonetheless, the fact is that the start of this nation and the history of this nation is one of using Crown corporations and government money to develop the economy and to develop this country in a method and in a way that puts service to people ahead of private profit in many cases. I can think of another Crown corporation that served Ontario particularly well, Ontario Hydro. It's since fallen off the rails a bit. I guess it had the Conservative government running it for too long, but when Ontario Hydro first started, they delivered electricity to southern Ontario at 15 percent of the cost of what they'd been getting it from the private companies. When Ontario Hydro then proceeded to lead the way in electrical developments and supplying electrical services to the people of southern Ontario, they led the world for 30 years before private companies caught up to them. Often we did this in Canada out of necessity. Often you couldn't get private companies to come in and invest the amount of money that was needed to develop projects like Ontario Hydro developed and like the building of the rail line across this country.

The same was true of AGT. Private companies were delivering some telephone services around the province of Alberta in 1906, but nobody was prepared to do what AGT was able to do, and so the government set up AGT, and they proceeded to provide excellent service to this province. All one needs to do if you want to check it out is read some of the things that the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications said about AGT and the incredible service it's provided to the people over the last 84 years in his speech to the chamber of commerce on Wednesday, March 28, 1990. He talks in here about how well AGT has served the people of Alberta and what a great job it has done. Let's see some of the great expressions that he's used here:

In the early part of this century, the private sector couldn't justify the cost of extending telephone service to all areas of Alberta, to every small community, to every farm home. So the Alberta government created Alberta Government Telephones to do the job.

And that's exactly what they've done, and they've done a good job of it, as the minister himself says.

But the funny thing was, Mr. Speaker, on reading this speech, although he was full of praise for what AGT as a Crown corporation has done for this province, you could tell what the minister was really doing was setting up the rationale for selling the company. You know, he goes on to say things like: Well, you know, it's a new and different age now and AGT can't keep up. I don't know where he gets that idea. The fact is that AGT is in the forefront of technological developments in the telecommunications industries and is right in there with everybody else in providing perfectly good services and new and innovative technologies. Then he falls back on the final thing: but, you know, they need \$2 billion in capital over the next three to five years, so we're going to have to get that from the private sector; you can't expect the taxpayers to pay it. So what he proposes is selling out the taxpayers' investment in AGT to 20 or so friends of the government, I suppose, or people with money certainly, so that we will end up with a few people making a handsome profit, as this amendment says, instead of all the people of Alberta sharing in the good services and reasonable rate services of AGT to the people of Alberta.

It's interesting. If we're going to have this debate, of course, then we need to have some facts to base this debate upon, and the way it's shaping up, it looks like this side is going to have to provide all the facts. The minister releases nothing but propaganda, nor do the companies involved in the breaking of the monopoly of AGT. One of the reasons that AGT has been successful is because a telephone system is in fact a monopoly type of situation. I mean, nobody is going to run a second line into every home in Edmonton or every home in Calgary or every home in the province of Alberta. So what is this notion about competition, that somehow that's going to provide better service or cheaper service?

Now, there is one area in which there will be cheaper services out of what's happening, and that is in the long-distance telephone rates. I mean, we know that Unitel has applied to the CRTC, that wonderful regulatory agency of the federal government that this minister says is going to protect Albertans' interests now that he's talked to them. A few months ago, of course, he said he didn't have any respect for them or any hope that they would in any way, shape, or form look after the interests of Albertans. But as soon as he decided to use the fact that the CRTC is heading toward giving long-distance competition rights, if one can use that word, to Unitel, then he's used

that as an excuse to sell off AGT, which is something this government has wanted to do for the longest time.

I guess the thing that upsets me most about that, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that he lost the regulatory fight. I mean, the Supreme Court ruled, and the minister acknowledges that: well, okay; so they've won this round in terms of regulations. But why would anybody that wanted to protect the interests and the rights of Albertans to have their own telephone system providing good telephone services to them without somebody ripping off a great profit then use that as the excuse to abandon the rights of ownership, which is really what he's doing by selling it? I just don't understand, Mr. Speaker, why anybody would give away the rights of ownership. The rights of ownership could be quite helpful, of course, when you're applying to the CRTC.

Okay, I agree the CRTC is going to regulate the telephone industry in this country. The Supreme Court has ruled, and the federal government is passing Bill C-41, which the minister has abandoned the fight on even though he had started, along with Saskatchewan and Manitoba, saying he was going to fight that. He's now abandoned that fight, given in on the fight on the regulatory side. But why would he give up his ownership right? Because when AGT applies to the CRTC for some rate changes, as owners of AGT this government on behalf of the people of Alberta could ask for modest increases when and if needed to raise more money to put into the system, to upgrade the system. But they could avoid gouging, for instance, which is quite likely and quite common among private enterprise companies that are just concerned about the bottom line. So I don't understand why he would give up the rights of ownership to compound the problem of having to deal with so-called long-distance competition.

Now, certainly if we are going to move in this direction, we should have a full and fair debate about this throughout Alberta, not just in this Assembly for a few days and a few hours ending, probably, in closure. We really should have a well-informed debate. But do we get any of the studies the government has that say that this is a good deal for Albertans? Do we get any facts? No, Mr. Speaker, we get a rationale for the privatization that is nothing more than propaganda like the minister gave to the chamber of commerce. Of course, most of the people in the chamber of commerce believed it because they just believe automatically that somehow private enterprise is more efficient and better than Crown corporations. But I would dispute that, and it's very clear that the problem we're running into is that Unitel is muscling in on long-distance rates. I do not understand why we in this province, or anywhere else in Canada for that matter, would want to give up our telephone system where we've worked out a series of monopoly situations across this province. Yes, they're monopolies, but they're also public utilities. Even the privately owned ones in the maritimes and Bell and so on are regulated by provincial regulatory authorities. Okay, in the future they're going to be regulated by Ottawa, and that scares me, because who trusts the Ottawa government or Ottawa's regulatory agency? I mean, that is a problem.

Nonetheless, the essential fact behind all of this is the fact that Unitel is going to muscle in on the long-distance rates, and they're going to do that by asking that their long-distance line, which is sort of a series of microwave towers and fibre-optic lines across this country, be allowed to hook into the systems already built by AGT and by Sask Tel and by Manitoba Tel and B.C. Tel and Bell Canada and some of the maritimes. Now, why should we spend 84 years building up a system, a line into every home in this province - we've got two years to go on the rural areas, I realize, but we will have an individual line into every

home in this province at the end of the two years - the best system in North America, built with tax dollars and utility telephone user dollars, the best system in North America, by the minister's own words, and we're going to let some capitalist who's using his . . . [interjections] Yes. Well, Rogers of cable fame, who runs one of the biggest monopolies in the TV cable service industry, is now trying to claim that he should be able to break into the so-called monopolies of the various telephone companies in this country. Because of course monopolies are bad. A monopoly is not bad if it's a natural monopoly, and utilities are natural monopolies. I don't notice very many companies wanting, for instance, to get into running the sewage systems and the water systems of the cities, because at this stage nobody would pay them enough money to make any money out of it. Some day they will.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Order please, hon. member. The Chair has now listened for almost 15 minutes. There has been no reference following along the amendment of referring the matter to the select standing committee. Now, if we're going to deal with this referral matter, then we'd better start referring back to the exact text that's here so there can be at least one reference to it in the 30 minutes that's allotted to the member. Let us also, then, take into consideration the other words that are here. This is not a full-blown debate on everything related to AGT that one can possibly conceive of.

So thank you, Edmonton-Kingsway. Please continue.

MR. McEACHERN: Mr. Speaker, what I'm trying to get at is the relative value of running a public utility as a service to the public compared to allowing private companies to make a profit. I guess I was just giving a certain number of basic facts to set the stage for that.

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

MR. McEACHERN: Okay, I will move it to the . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. We've got a point of order. Thank you.

Now the Provincial Treasurer.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, just for clarification. I noticed when you talked about the amendments, you did indicate that there was more than one amendment, and in fact you may have had in your possession an amendment, one or two. If I understood you right, you just now referred to referral to a committee, and I don't know if that's the issue before us. If it is, then there is some confusion about which amendment we're dealing with.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. You're indeed in order, and this is part of the problem in the shuffle that went on. It's a reasoned amendment that's being dealt with, not the one to committee. Therefore, the Chair apologizes to the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. JOHNSTON: On a point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: This is a new point of order? Thank you. The Provincial Treasurer.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, since you have now raised the question of whether or not this is a reasoned amendment, then I would like to suggest that in reviewing *Beauchesne*, it seems to



me that this in fact is not a reasoned amendment as the criteria spelled out in *Beauchesne* describe. In particular it proposes an alternative scheme, and secondly, it opposes the subject matter. For those two reasons themselves, this is not a reasoned amendment and clearly should fail, as an amendment out of order.

MR. McEACHERN: Mr. Speaker, on the point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: On the point of order, Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You see, we're on second reading, which is about the principle of the Bill. The principle of the Bill is to sell AGT. Right? What we are saying here is that this sale should not take place

because this House believes in the principle of a public utility being operated with a primary mandate of serving the interests of the public in a fair, equitable, and affordable fashion, which could be superseded by the Bill, which makes possible providing handsome profit opportunities for the shareholders, who could be as few as 20 individuals or corporations.

So I think it is focusing in on a certain aspect of the problem that we have with this Bill. So I would really argue that it's in order, Mr. Speaker, as you've already ruled.

MR. SPEAKER: Provincial Treasurer, your reference in *Beauchesne* was which one?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, the references I am citing are in the Reasoned Amendments section, *Beauchesne* 670, in particular

(2) It may not propose an alternative scheme.

In my view it does.

(4) It may oppose the principle rather than the subject-matter.

This amendment is opposing the subject matter of the Bill, Mr. Speaker, and therefore would be out of order.

MR. FOX: I'm glad to hear the Provincial Treasurer make that argument, because he's just defeated his own argument he tried to make previously. In order for that argument to stand, the Provincial Treasurer would have to agree with us that the outcome of this share issue would be that as few as 20 individuals or corporations would end up owning the company. That's clearly not the opinion advanced by the government, the Premier when he made his initial statement, or the minister when he opened debate in second reading on this Bill. 670(2): "It may not propose an alternative scheme." I submit that this amendment does pass that test. It doesn't propose an alternate scheme; it objects in a reasoned way to suggest that the House believes in a principle somewhat different from the principle expressed in the Bill here. It's a reasoned amendment dealing with the purported principle of the Bill here, and it doesn't propose an alternative scheme. It does not oppose the subject matter. In fact, the subject matter is something that we'll be able to deal with at length after we go through 40, 50, 60 hours of debate in second reading. We'll be in committee. We'll have a chance to deal with subject matter at that point.

MR. SPEAKER: With due respect to the wisdom of the Provincial Treasurer, the Chair must still rule that it is a valid reasoned amendment.

Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. WOLOSZYN: Son of a gun, Dick.

MR. SPEAKER: Now, hon. members, there is no need for that kind of nonsense.

AN HON. MEMBER: Which kind?

MR. SPEAKER: The kind as expressed by the Member for Stony Plain. This is not just a little shouting game from a school yard.

Edmonton-Kingsway, on the reasoned amendment.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, what I was saying a few minutes ago is that we should have this debate over the pros and cons about having a utility, a Crown corporation that has provided good service to the people of Alberta, privatized so that a few people can make a profit out of it. If we are going to have that debate, then we have to have some facts on the table, and I would challenge the minister to release his studies or any documents he has, including the Alexander report, that set out some facts and show that it is to the advantage of Albertans to have a private telephone company rather than a publicly owned one as in the Crown corporation AGT.

The interesting thing about the material that the minister has made available so far is his speech to the chamber of commerce, for example, and the kind of terminology he uses. Like, you notice this long-distance telephone competition which is coming whether we want it or not is going to lead to rate balancing. Now, what a nice euphemism for saying that all those people in rural Alberta are going to pay more for their telephone services and all those people that pay monthly flat rate telephone bills are going to pay more for their telephone bills every month when you bring in this so-called long distance competition.

As I said a minute ago, why should any group of people spend 84 years, like the people of Alberta did, building up a telecommunications system in this province which has service into every home, or will have within two years, and then let some, as I said, big capitalist who's a giant of the TV cable industry, who knows what a monopoly is about there - and do you think he wants any competition in that industry? I guess not, eh? He's fighting tooth and nail to see that he keeps his monopolies there. But at the same time, he's applying to be allowed to hook into the system built by us and the people of Saskatchewan and the people of Manitoba and so on across this country so that he can then rip off a profit from our system, and all he had to build is one line across the country. Somehow he wants the right to hook into our lines that we've built into the private homes.

So, Mr. Speaker, the kinds of words the minister used, like rate balancing, don't do very much to further the facts of what's going to happen. I challenge every rural member of this Assembly to go out into their ridings and tell the rural people, "Your rates are going to go up and your services are going to go down under a privatized AGT," which is the truth of the matter, rather than the kind of nonsense that we're getting from George Harvey, the president and chief executive officer of Unitel, who's making this application that is the root of the problem as to why you guys want to privatize AGT. Now, he's got a whole series of great expressions in their application. This is the covering letter to the summary he sent me of the Unitel application to the CRTC to get into the long-distance "competition."

Because the CRTC currently lacks jurisdiction, we will not be applying to serve the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta.

But that's coming, of course, with the passage of Bill C-41 at the federal level.

So what will this competition do for Albertans? Wonderful things. And for the people right across Canada, because what he wants to get into is the long-distance service across Canada: "Competition in long distance will create winners everywhere." Here's Santa Claus come to rescue us. "Thousands of jobs will be created." Funny thing; I got a newspaper article the other day from a magazine that's as prestigious as the *Financial Post* which says that in anticipation of heading off this long-distance competition, Bell Canada have reduced their rates by 15 percent, and it's going to cost 1,100 jobs in the next few years, yet these guys say thousands of new jobs will be created.

Secondly, the telephone company's overall revenues will increase because of market stimulation brought on by vigorous competition.

Isn't that wonderful?

All this can be achieved without having to raise local telephone rates. Aw, he really is Santa Claus, isn't he?

That is, we can provide the benefits of lower prices, a greater array of services, and new jobs, while at the same time avoiding the requirement for local rate increases.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I happen to have done a little homework, and I'm prepared to provide some of the facts that the minister does not seem to be prepared to provide. The Sherman report, which is a report done by the telephone companies of Canada looking ahead and anticipating that they were going to be into this kind of having to fend off long-distance competition, put out some facts and figures. I'm not going to read a lot of them right now, because we'll save that for another time, but the fact is that "long-distance competition" has led to rate increases at the rural level and at the residential level right throughout the United States wherever it's occurred. And if this minister thinks that we're going to get away any differently in Canada, he's got to be kidding.

I mean, I know that Unitel makes a nice little statement here that of course should lay everybody's fears to rest. This part is about thousands of new jobs going to be created and everybody emerging stronger, including Canada's telephone system.

The first reason is that the new company, Unitel, will make massive contributions (over half of its total revenue) to the existing telephone companies, much of which will be used to subsidize local rates.

There are two things I say to that, Mr. Speaker. One is that I don't believe them for a minute. They are not Santa Claus; they're in this to make money, not to give money away. And they have refused to file their full business plan. They want the CRTC to hold their plan in secret. I don't know if they want the hearings in secret, but they don't want their business plan made public. Now, every other application to the CRTC has been debated in public and all full information made available to everybody. So their plan is totally without substance, because what they do is give you this kind of covering letter which really summarizes what's in the summary, and that's all they want to give. They don't want to give enough details to back up their exaggerated claims.

The other thing I want to take up on this particular point, Mr. Speaker, is this business of the long-distance rates subsidizing the local rates. I think this is something that the minister should really put in his pipe and smoke. You see, that's really a misinterpretation of what's really happening in the telephone industries. The long-distance rates are quite high, I agree, when you look at it on paper, and they contribute the most to the revenues of the various telephone companies in Canada. Okay? I forget the exact numbers, but something like two-thirds or 70 percent of the revenues that AGT shows each year come from long-distance rates. However, you tell me the benefit of having

a long-distance cable network across this country that isn't hooked in to all the homes in the country that have telephones. What the hell good is it?

MR. SPEAKER: Excuse me?

MR. McEACHERN: None at all.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Would you like to take back your cuss word?

MR. McEACHERN: Sure. What the heck good is it - okay? - to have a network of microwave towers and a cable network across this country if you can't hook it in to the structure of telephone systems that goes into almost every home in this country?

Now, since you have to have people to use that long-distance phone in large numbers, the long-distance rates are only paying some of the fair cost of setting up and maintaining that big structure into the homes across this nation. So if you didn't have 600,000 people in Edmonton and in Calgary prepared to phone Toronto every now and again, you couldn't afford to hook them up in a long-distance system. I would argue that the long-distance rates are probably not any more than paying their own fair share, so if you want to talk about rate balancing, they're not paying any more than their fair share now.

The flat rate users, which are the ones that give enough bulk to the system to take advantage of economies of scale . . . If you didn't have as many users - you know, two and a half million users in Alberta - you couldn't afford the cheap service that we give to our rural people in Alberta. Certainly I agree that they are subsidized to some extent, but that's only rightly so and fair. If we can deliver liquor to all parts of this province at the same price, surely we can at least try to give the rural people a decent telephone service system. We've got a big enough system and enough people and enough of a network in this province to afford to do that under the Crown corporation setup. As soon as we turn it over to private enterprise, they'll start milking the system, start raising the flat rate user charges to the residential users, and start making the rural people pay their own way. All you have to do is look at B.C. Tel or Bell Canada and their rates to the rural people to know the incredible advantage we have in using AGT as the Crown corporation that provides a service to people and is concerned more about providing a good service to everybody than it is about the bottom line.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think the idea of long-distance telephone services subsidizing the local rates is far overblown. Having said that, it is still true that if you cut the long-distance rates, particularly with a private-enterprise company that's out to make a buck and concerned only about the bottom line, they will raise the flat rates for residential users and to rural people in Alberta. So, again, I challenge everybody in here to go back to their rural ridings and tell the local people that that's what they've got in store for them.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in this debate about whether you should have Crown corporations or private enterprise developing what's really a natural monopoly, I want to just say that this government has not been reluctant to get involved in the economy. They've done so in many ways and ended up subsidizing an incredible number of their friends, whether it's through Vencap or whether it's through Peter Pocklington and using Treasury Branch money or whether it's using heritage trust fund money to set up a company. They set up Alberta Energy Company and

didn't even have the courage to really make it a true Crown corporation, even though they put up half the money. They put up an incredible amount of money in Syncrude. They did take some shares in it, which was one of the right things to do, at least. They built Kananaskis. I mean, this government is not afraid to interfere in the economy. Yet when it's convenient, they like to back away from interfering in the economy, or when they interfere in the economy, they often don't do it in the interests of everybody. They do it in the interests of either the few personal friends or some big multinational corporation, often, that they don't even know. I mean, why would we help Daishowa set up that plant up in the Peace River country? Why would we bring in all these pulp companies to cut down our forests and sell the pulp to Japan so Japan can turn it into paper and then come and sell it back to us? Why would we want to develop our economy with foreign control?

You know, we were at a banquet tonight at the Royal Glenora where a group of Albertans said, "Hey, it's better to buy Albertan," and the Minister of Agriculture stood up and made some kind of little snide comment about hoping that the New Democrats and Liberals could see the worthwhileness of what they were doing. Hey, man; we wrote the book. We wrote the book. We believe in developing an economy from the indigenous population, the local people, giving them a chance to get involved in the economy. Now, this government puts a fair amount of money into the local economy. But at the same time they do it, they turn around and supersede that in a different way, in a paradoxical way that cancels out a lot of the good of what they do, by going into a free trade deal and encouraging multinational foreign corporations to come into this country and rip us off. I mean, you can say that the big oil companies have done nothing more than rip off this province of Alberta's oil industry. Now, the small companies have been taken for a ride. [interjection] Well, just go back to 1986, when the price of oil was lowered if you need an example. While we lost three and half billion dollars in oil revenues, Imperial Oil made a killing and laughed all the way to the bank while they picked up all the little companies that were going bankrupt in the exploration side of the oil industry in this province, because Imperial Oil has the downstream side and made a killing there when the price fell from \$32 U.S. a barrel down to about \$8 U.S. a barrel.

AN HON. MEMBER: Comic book research.

MR. McEACHERN: No way. I've followed the oil industry very, very closely.

What is really extraordinary is the belief this government has that what's good for Imperial Oil is good for us. Now, Mr. Speaker . . .

MR. SPEAKER: And now Alberta Government Telephones.

MR. McEACHERN: Yes. Well, it's the same principle that I'm referring to here. The idea of developing an economy with private entrepreneurs, either friends of the government or big foreign multinationals, is exactly the wrong way to go. The right way to go when it's a monopoly is to put it in the hands of the government on behalf of all of the people. Now, if you want to convince us otherwise, then you have to release the basic documents, the basic facts that show that it's good to do it the other way, and have a full-blown debate. In other words, when I sit down, I expect one of you guys to get up and refute some of the things I said. But, likely, Mr. Speaker, if past patterns are typical, they will sit there and say not a word and just merely

outvote us. I challenge you to stand up and give a different analysis of what happened in 1986 with the Imperial Oil thing I just talked about.

You guys know, and if you were honest you would admit, that developing an economy with big foreign corporations or with government favours to friends - even your right-wing compatriots, particularly in the Reform Party, resent the government interference in the economy. I mean, why are we helping the Peter Pocklington? Why are we refusing to regulate the Principals and the Abacuses and the Dials and all the other companies that operated in this province, those some dozen financial institutions that went bankrupt? In most cases it wasn't just the fall in the real estate markets that did them in. In many cases, when you get down to it - in CBC, for example, or in Principal, for example, and some of the others as well . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: CBC? Is CBC bankrupt?

MR. McEACHERN: The CCB, the Canadian Commercial Bank. You know which I meant.

In Northland and some of the others, in fact there was some misuse and abuse of the investors and the customers, and this government sat by and watched that happen and did nothing about it.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-North West, to the amendment.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to make a few comments opposing this amendment that I see before us. Strangely enough, I am going to speak to the amendment. Looking at the amendment, the amendment proposed tells us that the Legislature shouldn't do what the Legislature is here to do, which is to discuss the Bill. It says that we're just going to stop, and that to me would be going against the whole purpose of having a Legislature. So from that standpoint, I can't support the amendment.

Looking at the amendment as proposed, the logic in here fails to be enlightening: "could be superseded by the Bill . . . could be as few as twenty individuals or corporations." Well, we're on the flight path of the Canadian Airlines International flights from Calgary, and we could be in danger of a plane falling through the ceiling, but fortunately that hasn't happened yet. So when we look at all the things that could be happening, I don't think that that's sufficient reason to support the amendment.

Finally, the words that are put in here, "serving the interests of the public in a fair, equitable, and affordable fashion": to suggest that a corporation will suddenly decide that they're going to charge one user \$20 and somebody else \$10 and somebody else \$50 is totally absurd, and the notion put forward in this amendment is also totally absurd.

MR. McEACHERN: Where did you get from? The amendment doesn't say that.

MR. BRUSEKER: Read the amendment, Alex. If you'd read it before you blathered on for 30 minutes, you'd know what it said.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I will close my remarks and say that I speak against this amendment and hope that it's defeated.

MR. SPEAKER: Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thought for a while that when I'd stepped out to have a coffee, the Government

House Leader had reverted to calling the throne speech when I heard the last member speak, because we seem to be on that subject.

But, Mr. Speaker, I would beg leave to adjourn debate.

MR. SPEAKER: Those in favour of the motion . . . [interjections]. Order. Those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion carries.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, it's the intent of the government tomorrow to call various government Bills for second reading, perhaps beginning with Bill 31.

[At 11:26 p.m. the House adjourned to Wednesday at 2:30 p.m.]