

Legislative Assembly of AlbertaTitle: **Thursday, June 14, 1990 2:30 p.m.**

Date: 90/06/14

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

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Prayers

MR. SPEAKER-. Let us pray.

Our Father, we confidently ask for Your strength and encouragement in our service of You through our service of others.

We ask for Your gift of wisdom to guide us in making good laws and good decisions for the present and the future of Alberta and Canada.

Amen.

**head: Presenting Reports by
Standing and Special Committees**

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Private Bills has had certain Bills under consideration and wishes to report as follows.

The committee recommends that the following Bills be proceeded with: Bill Pr. 1, the Sisters of Charity of Providence of High Prairie Amendment Act, 1990; Bill Pr. 2, Edmonton Research and Development Park Authority Amendment Act, 1990; Bill Pr. 4, Canada West Insurance Company Amendment Act, 1990; Bill Pr. 7, St. Therese Hospital (Grey Nuns) of St. Paul Amendment Act, 1990; Bill Pr. 9, Young Men's Christian Association Tax Exemption Amendment Act, 1990; Bill Pr. 11, the Campbell McLaurin Foundation for Hearing Deficiencies Amendment Act, 1990.

The committee recommends that the following Bill be proceeded with with some amendment: Bill Pr. 6, the Alberta Wheat Pool Amendment Act, 1990.

The committee recommends that the following Bills not be proceeded with: Bill Pr. 3, the Nechi Community College Act; Bill Pr. 5, The Calgary Jewish Academy Amendment Act, 1990; Bill Pr. 8, Satnam Parmar Adoption Termination Act; and Bill Pr. 10, La Societe de Bienfaisance Chareve Tax Exemption Act.

I wish to ask for the concurrence of the Assembly on this report, Mr. Speaker.

MR. McEACHERN: A procedural question.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, the procedural question will be taken as a point of order.

MR. McEACHERN: There are a couple of those private Bills that I have some reservations about and would like to make some remarks on, and I was worried that . . . [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: No. It's out of order, hon. member.

MR. McEACHERN: Well, I just wanted to know . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. Later on when the report comes to the House.

Does the House concur on the report?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

head: Tabling Returns and Reports

MR. MAIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm tabling with the Assembly today four copies of the annual report of the Alberta Foundation for the Performing Arts for the year '88-89.

head: Introduction of Special Guests

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly some visitors from the United States of America. In the members' gallery – and I'd ask that they stand as I introduce them – from Minneapolis, Minnesota: Guido Rahr, chairman of Rahr Malting; John Alsip, president, Rahr Malting; Jack Gage, director, Rahr Malting. Accompanying them today are Jerry Bigham, president of Westcan Malting; Jim Hole, president of Lockerbie & Hole and a director of Westcan Malting; Ken Phillip, a director of Westcan Malting, and Neil Gilliat, a director of Westcan Malting.

These gentlemen will all be participating this afternoon in an announcement at 5 p.m. at the Hilton hotel of a project that will have significant importance to the agricultural community of this province.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Drumheller, followed by Cardston.

MR. TAYLOR: How big a subsidy this time?

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, hon. member. [interjection] Order.

Drumheller, followed by Cardston.

MR. SCHUMACHER: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly seven students from Rio Terrace elementary school. These students represent the best of Alberta's education system in that they are all French immersion students and are members of the grade 6 academic exchange program. I understand they met with you, Mr. Speaker, with respect to learning about parliamentary procedure, and that one of the group is the son of your executive assistant. I would ask that their academic challenge teacher Carol Smith and the students rise in the members' gallery and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. ADY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce 14 bright and active students from the community of Hill Spring, a very good community since I resided there for 10 years at one time. They're accompanied by their teacher Mr. Thaine Olsen, who is principal of the school, and parents Maria Wynder and Dixie Davis. They've all traveled some 350 miles to be here with us today. I'd like to have them stand – they're seated in the visitors' gallery – and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege this afternoon to introduce two people that are visiting our Legislature. The first person is Sylvia Keera, and she is the principal housing officer with the Ugandan ministry of housing from Kampala, Uganda. She is here looking at various housing projects that we have and taking that experience back to her home. Accompany-

ing her is Andrea Rogers of the Northern Alberta Co-op Housing Association. I'd like both of them to stand and be recognized.

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and the Members of the Legislative Assembly today 32 very wise and educated individuals. They're grade 6 students from the Mannville school in my constituency and probably one of the youngest lobby groups that I've had in my office. They indicated they'd like a motion to go through to the Minister of Education to reduce the school year by about three weeks. They're accompanied by their teachers Robin Roland and Linda Davison and parents Diane Calder and Keith Kornelsen. They're situated in the members' gallery, and I would ask that they rise now and receive the very warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Career Development and Employment, followed by Stony Plain.

MR. WEISS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly a pleasure for me today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly two special guests. In the members' gallery today is Her Worship Mayor Betty Collicott, representing the city of Fort McMurray, and accompanying Her Worship is Mrs. Betty Osmond, the manager of community services for the city of Fort McMurray. I would ask that they both rise and receive the cordial welcome of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Stony Plain.

MR. WOLOSCHYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly 25 articulate, bright students from Stony Plain elementary school. They're accompanied by their teacher Mr. Mellott and five parents: Joyce Shoepf, Mr. Broere, Cheryl Smutt, Linda Adams, and Pat Hopp. I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

MR. THURBER: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly 47 bright young people from the Evergreen school in the beautiful but wet constituency of Drayton Valley. They're seated in the members' gallery, and they're accompanied today by their teachers Mr. Christopherson and Mr. Melnychuk. I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

**head: Presenting Reports by
Standing and Special Committees**
(continued)

MR. SPEAKER: Earlier the Chair was in error, and the Chair apologizes to the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway. Indeed, the motion to concur in a report is debatable under Standing Order 18(l)(b). While the Chair has reason to believe that concurrence in the report will be moved by the Assembly, perhaps the hon. member would like to make brief comments with respect to the matters.

MR. McEACHERN: Mr. Speaker, it was really a procedural question. I was wondering if this motion was accepted by the Assembly that there then would be no further debate on those Bills, or whether they will be brought back one at a time and recommended one at a time so that we can speak individually to the ones we are concerned about, or at least that I am con-

cerned about. I'm not quite sure of the procedure is really what the question was. I didn't intend to get into a long debate at this stage on the particular Bills.

MR. SPEAKER: No, hon. member. The report has now been brought to the House because all the opportunity for discussion should have taken place in the Private Bills Committee.

MR. McEACHERN: We didn't do that, Mr. Speaker. There were a couple of Bills that I dissented with, and each Bill, I believe, has to be accepted by the Assembly. I guess I was just asking if it's a one-on-one basis. I remember we had a couple of long discussions in this Assembly about private Bills in the past, and I just wasn't sure of the mechanism to arrive at that

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. The Chair takes it under advisement. Perhaps the member and myself can meet immediately after question period.

head: Oral Question Period

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition, please.

Advanced Education Institutions

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to direct my question to the Minister of Advanced Education. Yesterday I met with student council members at the University of Calgary, and like the president and the chancellor at the University of Calgary they are furious over Bill 27, the attempt by the Minister of Advanced Education to take away important decision-making rights from the university; i.e., the boards and the faculty councils. Mr. Speaker, on May 16, when my colleague from Edmonton-Highlands raised this issue, the Minister of Advanced Education said that he had consulted all the groups prior to bringing in Bill 27. I would say: some consultation. Last Thursday the minister met with the presidents, chancellors, and board chairmen of our four universities. Mr. Speaker, it would have been interesting; I would have liked to have been a fly on the wall at that particular meeting. These people have made absolutely no secret of their feelings about this power-grabbing legislation. My question to the minister is this: can the minister explain why he is forging ahead with this Bill when it is so totally unacceptable to these institutions?

MS BARRETT: Power, power, power.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I'm prepared to respond to the hon. Leader of the Opposition as opposed to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands, who seems to want to ask the question.

The whole question, Mr. Speaker, of Bill 27, which concerns all 29 institutions and certainly not just four universities, goes back several years. Indeed, consultation has been carried out through a system that has been in place – put in place, even, by my predecessor: a document the institutions have had called the Guidelines for System Development. I can give and have given assurances that there has been quite a high degree of consultation carried out with the institutions.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, meeting with people and telling them what's going to happen is not consultation. That's the reality of it. These people do not want this piece of legislation. Surely the minister is aware of that. I quote from a letter from

the president of the University of Alberta to his faculty dated June 6. He says:

We are convinced that in pressing ahead with this Bill, the Government is making a tragic mistake, which will rebound to the detriment of our Universities and Alberta generally.

I want to again ask this minister: how can this minister justify at this late stage ramming this legislation through in the face of the opposition of our most respected educators in this province?

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, there are those who do not believe there's been consultation when, in fact, they don't get their way. I represent the taxpayers of Alberta. I think the proposal in Bill 27 is reasonable, in the interests of everybody in Alberta, and I find it strange indeed, Mr. Speaker, that a week ago tonight when I had a meeting with the very people the hon. leader is quoting, the reaction was totally different than what I'm hearing at the moment.

MR. MARTIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I've been talking to the people: consulting, not telling them. I'm quoting from a letter from the president of the University of Alberta, so don't hand us that and tell us that they're satisfied with what the minister is doing.

So my question, then, is this: will the minister make a commitment at this very late date, Mr. Speaker, either to withhold the legislation for the time being or at the very least bring in some amendments to allay concerns raised by the Official Opposition and by the universities?

MR. SPEAKER: Your supplementary referred to the first question not to the second, because the questions so far have been dealing with process. The House knows full well that questions on Bills that have reached Committee of the Whole are under certain constraints with regard to question period. So the first question is fine on this supplementary, but not with respect to amendments.

MS BARRETT: It's not up tonight; it's not been called.

MR. SPEAKER: That's the order . . . [interjection] That was the clarification.

Hon. minister.

MS BARRETT: Hey, that's a change of the rules again. God almighty.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The question is asked.

MR. GOGO: Well, Your Honour, I certainly don't want to take exception to what, in effect, has been a ruling of the Chair. The reference to amendments will obviously be dealt with at Committee of the Whole.

I can only reassure all members of this House that I met a week ago tonight with the chairmen of the institutions who, in terms of reporting, report to me. I also met with the presidents. I am assured, Mr. Speaker, at the conclusion of that meeting that a consultation had been done, and the conclusion reached was agreeable by both the government and the institutions concerned.

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

MS BARRETT: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: It's already been noted.

MR. MARTIN: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to designate my second question to the Member for Edmonton-Avonmore.

Abortion

MS M. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the minister responsible for women's issues. Two ministers in this House have responded to concerns about access to abortion under the new law by pointing out that the law has not yet been proclaimed: therefore, we needn't worry. However, this approach does nothing to allay the fears of doctors or of women who, indeed, may resort to self-induced or back-street abortions. In the last two weeks we have heard of two young women who have tried abortions. One has been severely damaged; the other has died. Would the minister commit to publicizing the status of the Bill in that it is not yet law and therefore it cannot be used against women and their doctors, and would she call on the federal government to refrain from proclaiming the law if, in fact, the Senate passes it?

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, I am sure we were all saddened to hear of the two women the hon. member refers to. In fact, when I read about those two cases, my stomach turned over. It is very sad, and we don't ever, ever want to go back to a society where women are at such risk in such terrible back-lane induced problems.

Now, in terms of access to this procedure, let me say that I've done the following. I know my colleague the Minister of Health would supplement my answer and will perhaps have another opportunity to do so, but I know she also has been involved. I have spoken to the minister responsible for the status of women at the federal level and arranged with her that she would be kept up to date in a timely manner with the situation in Alberta as it progresses. I also asked her to consult with the Minister of Justice at the federal level, which she has done. I understand that the Minister of Justice has had some conversation with various people here in Alberta, particularly, I think, those representing the medical profession, and has made the point very clear that that is not a law as yet. I think we've seen some positions publicly being taken as a result of those representations. I do know that we as a government are monitoring the situation very, very carefully, because we are, as always, most concerned about the health of Albertans, and we want to maintain our services in such a way that the health of all Albertans is protected and that there is access to necessary services.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Edmonton-Avonmore.

MS M. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the question was about publicizing the status of the Bill which is not yet law.

Doctors have threatened to withdraw services, and women are frightened with the prospect of being unable to obtain abortions. Will the minister responsible for women therefore advocate for alternatives such as reproductive health care clinics or funding of travel expenses for women who are forced to travel out of province to obtain an abortion, in the same way that travel for the other medical procedures such as organ transplants are funded?

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, I will continue to monitor the situation and work with my colleagues to maintain the services that are necessary in Alberta.

MS M. LAING: Mr. Speaker, my third question is to the minister responsible for women. The superintendent of police in Calgary reportedly said that one way investigations under the new law could be conducted would be through the use of undercover sting operations. Such a statement does nothing but increase the fears of doctors and women. Will the minister responsible for women encourage the Solicitor General to discuss with police commissions a policy that would prohibit the use of such undercover sting operations, as they engender fear in both women and doctors.

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, I most certainly will. I have no desire to see such practices followed either. I think this is a very delicate issue, I think it's a very emotional issue, and I think we have to deal with it in a sensitive manner. Those are, I think, also the instructions I'm sure my colleagues will give to all persons acting on behalf of the government.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary Buffalo, on behalf of the Liberal Party.

Provincial Tax Regime

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The philosophical difference between the Alberta Liberal Party and this government is best exemplified by the fact that since 1986 our government has more than doubled the tax burden on low- and moderate-income Albertans while rich Albertans boast about the lowest income taxes in Canada. Over the past four years the Provincial Treasurer has decided to raise taxes through increases in medicare fees by \$216 per family, by a gasoline tax of 31 and a half cents per gallon, by eliminating the renter's tax credit of \$500, and other such measures which impact hardest on low- and moderate-income Albertans. Now, Mr. Speaker, the total burden on a single parent earning \$20,000 has increased by about \$900 in additional taxes and fees since 1986; that's more than double the 1986 . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Now the question, hon. member.

MR. CHUMIR: Momentarily, Mr. Speaker.
. . . while a single person owning . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Order please. Order.

"Momentarily" is not a sufficient answer, and it's not too likely to be the introduction to a question. The member is on the fourth sentence. We will now have the question, please.

MR. CHUMIR: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Provincial Treasurer is actually aware, whether he realizes that because of changes in his policies low-income Albertans earning as little as \$15,000 to \$20,000 a year will be paying \$900 a year more in taxes, medicare fees, and such other matters than they did in . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Thank you, hon. member. You're no longer recognized.

MR. JOHNSTON: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that Albertans listening to that question would be just as confused as I am, and

that's why I have to explain our policy in very simple terms so that the people of Alberta understand what it is we're doing here and how this government's policy has emerged over the past – I guess, since 1971.

The policy is very clear, Mr. Speaker. We in Alberta believe in one simple postulate, one simple objective: we want to have the lowest taxes of any province in Canada, and that's what we've done. Now, within that objective we can say very clearly that with respect to personal taxes, that personal income tax charge that you and I have to pay is in fact the lowest personal income tax of any province in Canada. On top of it, we have selectively taken from the tax rolls over 500,000 Albertans, low-income Albertans, who have either reduced their taxes dramatically or are paying zero by the provincial tax elimination.

AN HON. MEMBER: Speech.

MR. JOHNSTON: Well, the member asked about a general policy, so I guess I have to respond.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, this province is the only province in Canada with no sales tax. On a consumption of an average family, say, of \$20,000 a year, that works out to be about a \$1,600 benefit per year, making Alberta the very best place for the small individual businessman, for the small individual consumer, and for the lower-income individual. This is the place to protect it, and that's our policy and it's clearly . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member.

MR. CHUMIR: Mr. Speaker, the facts are that the numbers show that low-income people are being eviscerated by rents and fuel taxes and medicare fees which have been levied by this minister.

Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering why it has been the policy of this government to more than double the total tax on the little guy – more than double the total tax on the little guy – while leaving rich friends of this government such as Peter Pocklington relatively unscathed.

MR. JOHNSTON: Well, Mr. Speaker, I have never seen such a confused state of mind for some time. Can you imagine that the government is being blamed for the rent that individuals pay? We don't tax rents. Where that notion came from is absolutely perverse. As well, the member talks about medical care insurance. It's not a tax; it's an insurance plan, Mr. Speaker, and that's why it's the best in Canada. Those rates, in fact, are the lowest in Canada as well.

Now let me point out one interesting point. We have heard from the federal Liberal party – which is meeting in Calgary for some kind of event coming up – with respect to the GST. I understand, Mr. Speaker, that the leaders who are running for the leadership of that party are in favour of the GST, as is the leader of the Liberal Party of this province. Now, if you talk about a tax that'll take away your dollars, it's the support of the GST by the Liberal Party provincially and federally, and they're on record as supporting it. That's going to take the money out of the consumers' hands, and that's going to hurt the small consumer, and these people make no apology for it.

MR. CHUMIR: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's quite clear that the only response the minister has is to be economical with the truth, and I'm wondering whether the Premier now, since the Provincial Treasurer seems to be little concerned, will represent that his government doesn't just represent the rich and take some steps

to reintroduce such initiatives as the renter's tax credit and greater protection for Albertans from the medicare fees in order to reduce the tax burden on low-income people?

MR. GETTY: Well, Mr. Speaker, I thought the Provincial Treasurer dealt with the matter very adequately. I would say from this last little back and forth question and answer, that my advice to the Liberal Party is: bring back Laurence. And if the hon. member wants to represent the little guy, let the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark speak for himself. [interjections]

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Cheap shot.

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

Water Management

MR. SCHUMACHER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask a question of the minister responsible for Public Safety Services, but I must say it is with some embarrassment that as a newly-elected and uninformed MLA in 1986, I questioned rather vigorously the need to spend money on dikes in Drumheller. Thankfully, the wisdom of the then Minister of the Environment prevailed and the dikes are all now almost complete, but nevertheless the city of Drumheller suffered damage as a result of a controlled release of water from the Dickson dam. Can the minister say whether the dam is performing to expectations in the present abnormal atmospheric conditions?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, the dam in question that the hon. member is talking about is the Dickson dam, which is located to the west of the city of Red Deer. In recent weeks there has been a high flow of water in central Alberta, and there continues to be a high flow or movement of water in central Alberta, including major serious conditions right now in the Brazeau area. There was a controlled release of water through the Dickson dam downriver, and it's now surfacing in the Drumheller area. I think that the Dickson dam has performed extremely well, as of course have the two dams to the west of the city of Edmonton. The high flow of water moved through Edmonton yesterday; it's now downstream of Edmonton. We don't have any massive flooding in the municipalities downriver of the Dickson dam nor the municipalities downriver of the two dams located to the west of Edmonton, and of course the same applies in the city of Calgary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SCHUMACHER: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister advise whether he sees the need for more water management projects in our province as a result of these experiences?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, there's always an ongoing debate in the province of Alberta in terms of the importance and the need for water management. There's absolutely no doubt at all in my mind that we hope that we could control water in this province, because it's the most precious of all resources we have. One of the important reasons for the erection and the development of dams in this province is water control, flood control. We have many examples in our province. Of course the Glenmore dam in downtown Calgary, the half a dozen dams to the west of the city of Calgary have mitigated any damage in that particular major urban, metropolitan environment. The same of course would apply: the Dickson dam and downriver from there the dams to the west of the city of

Edmonton, and surely the Paddle River Dam along the Paddle River has certainly made sure that we have not had incredible damage this year.

I think it's the responsibility and an onus on behalf of good management and good government to ensure that we do control and manage this most important of all resources. By doing so, we ensure that there's a minimal amount of damage to the environment in our province.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Belmont.

Merit Contractors Association

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Labour. Some weeks ago I provided the Minister of Labour with a copy of a document that urges the promotion of workers with a strong antiunion bias and the demotion of workers that have a strong union bias. At that time the minister requested that I provide her with more information regarding the authorship of that memo. Subsequent to that, sir, I delivered to the minister information which establishes that the memo was written by Mr. Willard Kirkpatrick, the president of Maxam Contracting Ltd., one of the province's largest antiunion contractors. Mr. Kirkpatrick is also a leading figure in the Merit shop organization, an antiunion group which the minister recently addressed. My question to the minister is this: will the minister make good on her past assurances that workers' rights to organize free from intimidation will be upheld and prosecute Mr. Kirkpatrick and his company to the full extent permitted by Labour Relations and the Criminal Code?

MS McCOY: Well, Mr. Speaker, the allegation has been made but not proven as to the authorship of the piece of paper, as least a copy of which the hon. member has provided me. It is a very serious allegation. I am not rushing to take the assumption that it is proven, the way this hon. member seems to be doing. It is under investigation at the moment. I thank the hon. member for providing more information. What he had supplied earlier was insufficient to establish the truth of what he alleges. We now have more information, and we will look at it very carefully and proceed with due process and all due caution.

MR. SIGURDSON: Mr. Speaker, I am fully satisfied that the memo written is written in the hand of Mr. Kirkpatrick.

But let me say this: in other jurisdictions where Merit shop organizers have been involved, they've busted unions, they've busted communities, and they've busted the economic futures of a number of families. In Alberta it's very evident that they're prepared to bust the laws that have been passed by this Legislature. So I would ask the minister: is she prepared to send a strong message to every Merit shop member in Alberta advising that any attempt like this to intimidate and harass workers will not be tolerated in Alberta and will result in their prosecution?

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, unfair labour practices are not tolerated and there are mechanisms by which to deal with them. The member, however, has not to my satisfaction proven the truth of his allegation. But as I said, once again we are looking at it very carefully, and we will proceed with our investigations.

I am pleased, however, to see that this hon. member is now saying that this Legislature and this government should uphold the laws and that we should not encourage in the labour field anybody to break the laws. I'm pleased to see they've come to that view. In the future when there are illegal strikes, I presume

they will be supporting the government when it makes the same statement, and that is that the laws of this province should be obeyed.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Yellowhead Youth Centre

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The social workers' strike is over, so to speak, and the workers a couple of weeks ago went back to work in good faith. But many questions still remain unanswered regarding some workers being temporarily terminated, and the caseload question remains unsolved. The situation at the Yellowhead Youth Centre continues to be a critical one: workers are temporarily laid off; one unit appears to be closed while waiting lists, as we understand them, remain very high. Mr. Speaker, our concern is that children may be at risk. My questions are to the Minister of Family and Social Services. Have all the children who were receiving treatment in the centre before the strike been found and been re-established in the centre?

MR. OLDRING: Well, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't necessarily appropriate to return all of the children to the centre. Some of them were reintegrated back into their homes and have adjusted very well there, so we've left them there. But I would point out to the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar that the centre had been downsized to as low as 18 residents. At the beginning of the strike there were 67 in there, and as the member can appreciate, obviously the day the strike ended we didn't all of a sudden integrate 67 troubled youth back into the facility again. We've done it on a very effective basis; we've increased it gradually. We're up to close to 60 of those beds being filled at this time.

In terms of layoffs, no, there haven't been any layoffs from that, Mr. Speaker. Again, obviously it wasn't necessary to call back in all of our casual help because of the number of youths that were there; no, some of the casual help were not called in. But layoffs, there were none.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, the fact of waiting lists who need care in the centre is still there and very much present, and we are very concerned about it. The suspicion also remains that the centre is partly closed and workers were temporarily laid off, or whatever expression we want to use, whatever euphemism, to punish those strikers for striking. This would amount, Mr. Speaker, in my estimation, to exploitation of children who need care. We need to know the real facts here. What are the minister's intentions in this regard?

MR. OLDRING: Well, Mr. Speaker, the real suspicions are being raised by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. The facts are very clear, and I've laid them out in this Assembly before. The facts are that we had a facility that had 67 troubled youths in it. There was a strike. The facility was downsized to 18 youths: Children were placed in some instances in their homes, in some instances in other facilities, in some instances in foster homes. The strike ended. As soon as the strike ended, Mr. Speaker, we began placing children on a timely and appropriate basis back into the Yellowhead Youth Centre. I say "timely and appropriate," because we're dealing with very troubled youths. You can't just up and move them back and forth around strikes; you do it around the children. And the needs of those children were what came first and foremost. In case planning with those

children we made sure that it was their interests that were taken, and when it was appropriate, we integrated some of them back into the facility. We have added others that weren't in the facility before. The facility is being used to its capabilities, and we're going to continue to do that.

MR. SPEAKER: Drayton Valley, followed by Edmonton-Calder.

Cormie Ranch Sale

MR. THURBER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently there's been considerable interest and a lot of publicity about a deal being signed by a Japanese company in conjunction with the purchase of the Cormie ranch in my constituency. My first question would be to the Provincial Treasurer. Could you give us an update to indicate if the concerns of the Principal stakeholders and this government have been addressed sufficiently at this time to allow this deal to proceed?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, what I can say is that as I reported in the House, the procedure with respect to the protection of the proceeds from the sale of this land to the contract holders and the taxpayers of Alberta has been put in place. I indicated over the course of the past month that we had put it in the courts' hands to adjudicate this matter, and if the courts decided some fair way in which some dollars could flow to any of the principals involved, in fact that would be the court decision. Our responsibility was to ensure that it was in the courts' hands to adjudicate it, and that has taken place.

I can also report, Mr. Speaker, that on Friday afternoon Mr. Justice Berger did decide that some money could go to Mrs. Cormie to provide her with funds for legal defence and other miscellaneous costs. As a result of that, it's my understanding that both parties to the sale will complete the transaction to allow the transfer of title to take place subject to the conditions put out by the order in council. Whether or not the development will take place, of course, is up to the private sector and the municipalities and other tests, but I'm sure my colleague and other colleagues may want to add additional information.

MR. THURBER: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. My next question would be to the hon. Minister of Tourism. Because of the magnitude of this project that is proposed there by the Japanese – and it may very well make Kananaskis south look like a very small park if it's completed according to their schedules. It's very important to my constituents where it may provide from 300 to 600 permanent and part-time jobs within the area and a lot of spin-off. Could you indicate, Mr. Minister, some of your thoughts on what the impact of a major tourist attraction like this would be in Alberta?

MR. SPARROW: Yes, Mr. Speaker. It's an exciting project to be part and parcel of, and it's nice to see the private sector come forward and propose such a massive project in northern Alberta. Northern Alberta has been waiting for a long time for a major project. Very definitely the spin-off benefits will be many and varied, and we're working with Economic Development and Trade and other departments of government to make sure that there are major opportunities for Alberta entrepreneurs to work with the proponents in the business activities. Potential job creation is upwards of something like 2,000, and some 8 million hours of construction jobs are estimated already. Mr. Speaker, it is very definitely a positive project to have in northern Alberta.

Disabled Persons Assistance

MS MJOLSNESS: Mr. Speaker, my questions are to the minister responsible for the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. This government is great at making sure that they have a photo opportunity with Rick Hansen when he comes to town, but when it comes to taking concrete action to support persons with disabilities, this government has a shameful record. In this province once a person in need of an electric wheelchair reaches the age of 18 years old, this government abandons them. They no longer qualify for this equipment under the aids to daily living program. So my question is to the minister: in view of the fact that the Premier's council has identified this issue as a concern and as there are 26 people throughout the province on a waiting list for a power mobility aid, when will this government truly support persons with disabilities and provide them with these power mobility aids that they deserve?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister of Health will no doubt want to supplement my answer with details about the aids to daily living program when she returns to the Assembly. But I would suggest to the hon. member that her allegations about this government's commitment to making sure that Albertans of all abilities, no matter what their abilities are – will continue to be number one. It's a number one priority of this government, because clearly with Premier Getty's clear commitment by establishing the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, this government is putting our commitment into action by virtue of endorsing the vision paper that was tabled last year and is fully in place now, and the action plan which our government has committed to review and has begun to take steps already to implement. And I might ask my hon. colleague the Minister of Transportation and Utilities to supplement my answer with respect to an announcement that he made in Calgary last week with respect to barrier-free access to those with disabilities.

MS MJOLSNESS: The fact is that 26 people are on a waiting list and this government is not concerned about them. What is more shameful, Mr. Speaker, is that this government refused to even provide a matching grant to a nonprofit agency in this province that does its best to supply these aids to these people throughout this province, but they can't keep up with the demand.

So a supplementary to the minister: will this minister immediately commit to at least providing a matching grant to the Easter Seal Ability Council so that persons on the waiting list can receive these power mobility aids?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I will reiterate what I said earlier: the Minister of Health, when she returns to the Assembly, no doubt will want to fully answer the hon. member's question. But there should be no doubt in any hon. member's mind about this government's commitment to make sure that Albertans of all abilities have access to a quality of life that is unequalled in this province.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Jasper Place.

Tire Tax

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before he left for Ottawa – to lobby, I guess, on behalf of Al-Pac – the Minister

of the Environment casually announced that there will be a provincial tax on tires. The minister said that he wants a \$3.50 tax on each tire sold, and he rejected a proposal to place it on the vehicle licence fee because then it goes in the General Revenue Fund where he can't get at it. Well, I think what he means to say is that the General Revenue Fund is under the control of this Legislative Assembly, and he's much envious of the cheque-writing, picture-taking ways of the minister responsible for lotteries. He wants his own slush fund, is what the minister's saying. Can the Provincial Treasurer, who last time I checked was the person responsible for taxing Albertans – we've certainly come to expect that – assure the House that he will not agree to a new tax on tires unless the funds are placed completely under the control and audit of this Legislative Assembly?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, first of all, we have not come to any conclusion with respect to that form of taxation, but all Albertans know that this form of taxation has been used in at least two other provinces. We are one particular government who likes to have the views of Albertans. We want to discuss these issues, and from time to time, to provoke discussion and debate on these public policy questions, ministers suggest that we have some comment from Albertans. I'm sure it was in that tone that that happened. But it's far too soon, Mr. Speaker, to either address the question as to whether or not a tax would be applied, and secondly, of course, how it would be administered is far too far down the road for a "Dick" comment.

MR. McINNIS: I take it the Provincial Treasurer will not make that commitment today.

In his statement yesterday, the Minister of the Environment indicated some reluctance to cave in to the initial demands of the people proposing the Trochu tire incinerator, which is small mercy, because the incinerator represents a very low-level type of recovery of waste energy. It would lose enormous amounts of money. We should be recycling tires and not burning them in the province of Alberta. Can the Treasurer assure the House: given that the Minister of the Environment refused to call an environmental impact assessment on that Trochu operation, will he assure the House that he will not fund any project from this new tax which does not have an environmental impact assessment first?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, the member may as well go to the race track, because it's the same kind of speculation. We have not come to that conclusion, as I've pointed out, and for me to comment on whether or not the tax would be a decision will be, of course, put off to some time into the next budget discussion. There are obviously some clear principles which we work on, Mr. Speaker. Those show up in the variety of other forms of minimum taxes that the province has put in place, and those principles will be applied. But to suggest that we should comment now about some discussion about taxation is in fact out of order.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Bow Valley Development

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, six golf courses have been proposed for the Bow corridor. A recent study commissioned by the Alberta Department of Tourism raises the prospect that wildlife populations and local water quality may

well be affected adversely by these projects. This is clearly a job for the natural resources conservation board. To the Minister of Tourism: has he contacted the Minister of Energy to ensure that these projects will be reviewed by the natural resources conservation board, or will they be arbitrarily excluded by the government, as has been the case for projects such as Daishowa and Alberta-Pacific?

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, I'm looking with anticipation to the final discussions and the passing of the natural resources conservation board so that it can be put into place, because very definitely we're interested in having tourism projects that are environmentally sensitive in a process that can be fairly looked at. At present, until that legislation is in place, the Department of the Environment has not asked for EIAs on specific tourism projects. This report that is referred to – out of all of the many issues it comes down to basically two issues that should be looked at in that area – is a very positive report that we commissioned to make sure that the MD and the town when making decisions had the information on environmental issues. That's why we commissioned the report.

MR. MITCHELL: The minister said that the Department of the Environment has not yet requested an environmental impact assessment, which of course would be necessary before the NRCB could initiate a review of this project. Is the minister saying that there is some doubt as to whether or not this government will submit these six projects to the NRCB, the natural resources conservation board, for a review before these projects are allowed to proceed?

MR. SPARROW: No, Mr. Speaker, I'm not. That decision has not been made. We do not as yet have the process set up, and I'm looking forward to having it set up.

MR. SPEAKER: The problem with that supplementary as well as the lead question is that it violates the rule of anticipation with regard to the debate later today.

Lesser Slave Lake.

AN HON. MEMBER: You may not ever do that again.

Aboriginal Rights

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It sounds like Friday. To the Premier. Alberta has been a leader in dealing with aboriginal issues in Canada, and a few examples . . .

MR. DECORE: Well, where did you hear that?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, hon. member. At least let the member get the question out.

MR. DECORE: Okay.

MS CALAHASEN: I know for a fact: number one, we've been settling Indian land claims; number two, the framework agreement; number three, the Metis Settlements Accord. It certainly has made a lot of marks in history. I commend you, Mr. Premier, and thank you for these particular initiatives that you have started. Some of my constituents have expressed concerns regarding the fact that aboriginal people have not been included in the negotiations of the Meech Lake accord to address their

rights. Could the Premier explain why the aboriginal people were not included in these negotiations, please?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to confirm for the hon. member and for the Legislature and the people of Alberta that myself as Premier and our government feel very strongly about working with the aboriginal people in this province and in protecting their rights. We believe that aboriginal rights – as the rights of women and multicultural, linguistic groups – are adequately protected in the current Constitution. Therefore, we felt that first ministers were able to represent all of these groups in our meetings in Ottawa, although there were additional discussions regarding the possibility of additional participation.

MR. FOX: Mike and Pearl are the only ones that believe that.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Lesser Slave Lake.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know why we're hearing such hogwash from the other side: they're just jealous.

MR. DECORE: Why don't you show a backbone for the aboriginals, Pearl?

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MS CALAHASEN: Could the Premier please give some assurance that he will continue to provide his leadership, particularly with aboriginal issues, and consult with the aboriginal people in any future constitutional changes?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, we certainly give that commitment of constant consultation with aboriginal people in our province. But for additional comfort Alberta was strongly in favour of – and it was contained in the agreement which I tabled earlier this week. For additional comfort, as a result of our meeting there will now be a requirement entrenched in the Constitution, if it passes, to provide for constitutional conferences on aboriginal matters every three years, with the first one within the first 12 months. Mr. Speaker, aboriginal representatives obviously will participate in those meetings, but in addition the Prime Minister will invite, at our urging and his agreement, aboriginal representatives to any conference in which matters of concern to them are being discussed. I believe that this shows again the commitment of our government to our aboriginal people.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Beverly.

Renters Assistance

MR. EWASIUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, responsible for housing. The minister yesterday issued a news release that suggested that he's still considering extending the mortgage interest shielding program on which he had spent some \$3 million in the last month and which only benefits a small group of citizens and completely ignores 50 percent of Alberta citizens who live in rental homes. Now, Mr. Speaker, the minister may argue that renters have it good because the vacancy rates have gone up, but in fact the vacancy rates are lower now than they were a year ago at this time, and this government has done very little to help renters during this period. Now, my question to the minister: will the minister agree now that renters need help and go to his

cabinet colleagues and get a commitment for the renewal of the renter's tax credit program?

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, one of the commitments that I've pursued in joining the government was the object of trying to balance the budget as we proceeded from one fiscal year to the other. The judgment we have to make with regards to these programs in terms of their value and lack of value is the amount of money. To implement the tax credit program, we have to look at an annual expenditure of some \$70 million, and I think that's the key question as to whether we can do that at this point and whether it's critical enough to allocate that kind of funding towards that program, good or bad as it may be.

The second point, Mr. Speaker, is that vacancy rates have gone to the 2.6, 2.7 percent range, up from 1.3 in the early part of this year, which is a significant increase. That opportunity or increased vacancy rate has occurred because of some significant programs we've had in this province that have helped with new homeowners in terms of the family first home program and the mortgage interest shielding program. It stimulated people owning their own property, which is the basic tenet of this government: that as individuals, property rights, ownership of property is a proper thing rather than an increase in maybe the rental area.

MR. EWASIUK: Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation has done very little to provide new units for decent, affordable housing, particularly for families on moderate and fixed incomes. This particularly affects the people in the inner cities. In fact, Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation is now handing out large increases in rent as are the private landlords. Earlier this week the minister indicated that there were subsidies available just for the asking and that a rental supplement could be applied to a private residence. This is quite different from the information that I have. In fact, the subsidy is not flexible, and people aren't even being told about it when they apply for new units with the AMHC. Now, my question to the minister is: did the minister in his comments indicate that he will change the way the subsidy program works and make it more flexible, or was he simply painting a rosy picture?

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, it was certainly not my intent in my response to the hon. member to mislead him in any way. The rent supplement program is in place in Canada in co-operation with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and the cost of that program is split 70 percent federal and 30 percent provincial. So the ground rules are established on a partnership basis in terms of that.

Units of accommodation that are for rent, whether it's in public housing or private multiple residential accommodation in the province of Alberta, qualify for the rent supplement program. I thought after my answer yesterday where I said residential that it could be misinterpreted as the private residence of a person. That was not my intent in terms of the policy with regards to that. But that program is working in the province, and there are rent supplement units available for those people in need in terms of supplementing their rent in residential multiple-unit accommodation.

MR. SPEAKER: Might we have unanimous consent to revert to the Introduction of Special Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

MR. SPEAKER: First, Rocky Mountain House; second, Calgary-Forest Lawn.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a great pleasure for me today to have the opportunity to introduce to you and to other members of the Assembly some 38 bright young students from the school and the village of Caroline, the home of the two-time winner of the men's world figure skating championship, Kurt Browning. They are today accompanied by their teachers Mr. Leavitt and Miss King, and parents Mr. Fay, Mrs. Tammy Paradis, Mrs. Ruth Paradis, Mrs. Long, Ms Barnhardt, and Mrs. Hewitt. They have been driven up here today by locally famous school bus driver Ed Keim. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Forest Lawn.

MR. PASHAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is one of those, for me, rare but delightful occasions in which a group of students from Calgary-Forest Lawn visits the Alberta Legislature. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 17 keen business students from the Ernest Morrow junior high school. They are accompanied today by their teacher Mr. A. Engelhardt and a parent, Mr. A. Terplawy. I would ask that they rise and receive the warm greetings of this Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Point of order, question period, Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, the point of order I raised during question period relates to the rule of anticipation, which has several citations, the most important of which, I would suggest, would be 409(12) under the *B* and *Beauchesne* 512. The question that was called to order was one put by the Leader of the Official Opposition, who asked the Minister of Advanced Education with respect to some – I won't editorialize on the nature of the legislation. I'll resist that temptation. In any event, the question was: will you agree to either put it on hold or amend it? Mr. Speaker, you said that that anticipated debate, but in fact Bill 27 has not been scheduled for debate either today or tomorrow to the best of my knowledge, and I've been given the queue of government business for tomorrow already. Therefore, I can't understand why it would be out of order to ask what you're planning to do.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker, but I have never seen any citation that says you can't ask whether a minister plans to amend his legislation. In fact, it's a pretty conventional question, especially when it comes to certain types of legislation. I remind you that that type of question was allowed on several occasions with respect to Bill 14 in I think it was 1988, although it could be '87: the two-tier medicare system. There have been other occasions since then; I could look them up. In any event, if you could provide the citation, I'd be interested. Otherwise, I'd just make the point that I think it was in order because it has not been called for debate either tonight or tomorrow. Subsequent to a conversation we had on the anticipation rule last week, I acknowledged that if it's on schedule for that day, then no

questions are to be put, at least from our caucus, but it isn't on schedule, and I think the Government House Leader would agree with that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: With regard to the questions today the Chair was listening as carefully as is possible during question period. The first two questions with regard to Bill 27 as raised by the Leader of the Official Opposition were indeed in order because they were questions dealing with process. Then when it came to the second supplementary, there were two subsets there. The first part was dealing with process; that part was in order. The second part was then asking questions about amendments, and in the opinion of the Chair that was not in order.

The House is also well aware of the fact that Bill 27 is at Committee of the Whole stage, and that relates to three earlier rulings that have been made in this House. The dates are – and I'm sure hon. members are keen to dash out and do the research – April 19, 1988, June 30, 1988, and again, June 15, 1989. That, therefore, should give some light to the question.

Members also should refer to *Erskine May*, since it was quoted at great length yesterday while I was listening to it on CKUA. In terms of no matter who's in the Chair, page 284:

(g) Speaker's control of questions. The Speaker is the final authority as to the admissibility of questions.

Later, in the second paragraph:

When a question has been refused and the Member concerned wishes to make representations to the Speaker on the matter, the practice is for these to be made privately to the Speaker and not raised by way of a point of order in the House.

Orders of the Day

MS BARRETT: I'm going to write my own standing orders.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, hon. member. Edmonton-Highlands, please control yourself.

MS BARRETT: No.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member.

MS BARRETT: If you can write the rules, I can write rules.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Order. It's really not worth the hassle. [interjections] Order.

Orders of the Day have been called.

head: Written Questions

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, I move that the following written questions stand and retain their places on the Order Paper: 337, 358, 385, 391, and 392.

[Motion carried]

316. Mrs. Hewes asked the government the following question:

- (1) What are the wage levels for each classification of social workers, child care counselors, and psychologists employed by the Department of Family and Social Services, and
- (2) how many workers are employed for each classification listed and for each salary period for all employees in division 6 as of March 31, 1990?

MR. STEWART: That's accepted, Mr. Speaker.

328. Mrs. Hewes asked the government the following question: What was the total number of managers and supervisors employed by the Department of Family and Social Services as at March 31, 1986, March 31, 1987, March 31, 1988, March 31, 1989, and the present?

MR. STEWART: Accept, Mr. Speaker.

343. Mr. Bruseker asked the government the following question: What has been the total net financial contribution of Alberta Government Telephones to the General Revenue Fund since January 1, 1980?

MR. STEWART: Accept.

344. Mr. Bruseker asked the government the following question:

- (1) In any future management plan for Alberta Government Telephones have provisions been made for reducing positions through attrition?
- (2) If so, what are those provisions?

MR. STEWART: Reject.

345. Mr. Bruseker asked the government the following question:

- (1) What will be the cost of the interest-free installment purchase plan for the purchase of Alberta Government Telephones shares?
- (2) What will the requirements be in order for an Albertan to be eligible for the program?
- (3) Will there be a limit to the number of shares an individual may purchase through the program?
- (4) Who will be the legal owner of the shares which are purchased through the installment program during the purchase period, the government or the purchaser?

MR. STEWART: Reject, Mr. Speaker.

346. Mr. Bruseker asked the government the following question: What does the government intend to do with proceeds generated by the sale of Alberta Government Telephones shares?

MR. STEWART: Reject.

347. Mr. Bruseker asked the government the following question: How many management positions have been reclassified within Alberta Government Telephones

- (1) between January 1, 1988, and January 1, 1989; and
- (2) between January 1, 1989, and May 1, 1990?

MR. STEWART: Reject.

348. Mr. Bruseker asked the government the following question: How much did the government pay Mr. Keith Alexander and/or RBC Dominion Securities for undertaking their study on possible future directions of Alberta Government Telephones?

MR. STEWART: Reject.

MR. WICKMAN: Not too talkative these days, are we?

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

349. Mr. Bruseker asked the government the following question:

- (1) What is the government's estimate of the time a privatized Alberta Government Telephones would pay corporate income taxes?
- (2) What is the expected tax load for AGT over the next five years?
- (3) Does the province plan to levy some tax other than income tax on AGT once privatization has taken place?

MR. STEWART: Reject.

350. Mr. Bruseker asked the government the following question:

What is the debt/equity ratio that the government has projected for Alberta Government Telephones for the first, second, fifth, and 10th year of privatization?

MR. STEWART: Reject.

351. Mr. Bruseker asked the government the following question:

- (1) How much has it cost the government to produce and telecast the Science City television commercials?
- (2) How many times are the commercials being run?
- (3) Where were the commercials produced?

MR. STEWART: Accept.

359. Mr. Bruseker asked the government the following question:

- (1) What is the total number of Alberta Government Telephone out-WATS lines?
- (2) What is the total number of AGT in-WATS lines?

MR. STEWART: Accept.

360. Mr. Bruseker asked the government the following question:

Will the government continue to guarantee all employees' pensions should Bill 37, Alberta Government Telephones Reorganization Act, be enacted?

MR. STEWART: Reject.

361. Mr. Wickman asked the government the following question:

- (1) What is the total budgetary allocation for the Department of Municipal Affairs' local development initiatives program for the fiscal year 1990-91?
- (2) From which element in the Department of Municipal Affairs' budget estimates does the local development initiative program receive funding?

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, accept and table the answer.

362. Mr. Bruseker asked the government the following question: Has Alberta Government Telephones engaged in any meetings or does it have any studies for a possible future merger of a fully privatized AGT with other prairie telephone companies?

MR. STEWART: Reject.

363. Mr. Bruseker asked the government the following question:

- (1) Does Alberta Government Telephones have plans to move into areas currently served by other private Alberta companies?
- (2) What shares of which markets does AGT anticipate taking over within five years currently served by privately-owned Alberta companies?
- (3) What is the gross annual revenue expected from each of these expansions?

MR. STEWART: Reject.

364. Mr. Bruseker asked the government the following question: Outside of St. Albert, Sherwood Park, Spruce Grove, Calgary, Airdrie, Red Deer, Lethbridge, and Medicine Hat

- (1) how many households does Alberta Government Telephones serve and
- (2) with how many access lines?

MR. STEWART: Accept.

383. Mr. Bruseker asked the government the following question:

What is the value of the fixed assets of Alberta Government Telephones to be used in determining the share value?

MR. STEWART: Reject.

384. Mr. Bruseker asked the government the following question:

What is the total amount of interest payable on outstanding Alberta Government Telephones debt owing to the Provincial Corporation Loan Fund?

MR. STEWART: Reject.

head: **Motions for Returns**

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, I move that the following motions for returns stand and retain their places on the Order Paper: 183, 331, 332, 334, 340, 386.

[Motion carried]

280. Mr. Chumir moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of any Treasury Department analyses of the effects of federal government budget transfer payment cuts on the Alberta economy.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, we will reject this motion for a return. Of course, it's well known that information which is generated internally for purposes of policy considerations or analysis of events, in particular analysis which affect the relationships between two governments, cannot be provided because of the confidential nature of that information, and of course *Beauchesne* speaks to that point in 428(gg).

We will reject that motion.

MR. CHUMIR: All I can say, Mr. Speaker, is: what else is new, and what took the minister so long?

[Motion lost]

281. Mr. Chumir moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of the most recent consolidation of the tax collection agreement between the government of Canada and the government of Alberta.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, the government will reject this motion. There is quite a series of questions which have been put forward by the opposition which in many cases have been dealt with before, and in still further cases the information is available elsewhere. In particular, 281 is well available in libraries in this province.

Now, the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, having practised in the area of law for some time, should well know that this information is available elsewhere. Again, Mr. Speaker, I call upon the reference in *Beauchesne* to support the fact that the government is *not* required to provide this information. *Beauchesne* 428(ff) says very clearly that a motion for a return is inappropriate if it seeks "information set forth in documents equally accessible to the questioner, as Statutes, published reports, etc."

So, Mr. Speaker, this question is clearly out of order, and we reject the question.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Calgary-Buffalo, summation.

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're getting sheer sophistry on the part of the minister. This is one of the most phenomenal refusals of information in the four years that I've been in the Legislature.

I must say that if we weren't having difficulty locating a copy of that agreement, we'd never have made the request. It is difficult to locate. Of course, the government ministry's refused to release it. "Go through the minister's office." They, of course, probably act under the illusion that some information does emanate from the minister's office. However, with this decision here we find this minister going from being the most secretive minister in the most secretive government in Canada to perhaps being the most secretive minister of any government on earth.

[Motion lost]

297. Mr. Bruseker moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all information relating to the expenditure of \$123,018,013 with sundry vendors at less than \$10,000 and more than \$1,000 in the 1988-89 fiscal year, identified in the 1988-89 supplement to the public accounts.

MR. JOHNSTON: While it is true, Mr. Speaker, that this information likely could be provided, the government, mostly acting on my advice, is going to reject this motion primarily because it would be a voluminous reporting process, would take an extensive amount of time to prepare, and frankly I'm not going to ask the people in the Budget Bureau side to run the numbers and to devote their energies for this kind of really immaterial information.

AN HON. MEMBER: Frivolous.

MR. JOHNSTON: Frivolous is even more accurate.

For that reason, Mr. Speaker, because we have other objectives to serve within the limited resources of Treasury and because it is unusual that this information would be used – we report very fully in the public accounts already an abundance of information, a copious amount of information with respect to whom the various payments are made. Obviously, to call upon the department to produce this for really limited results is not

acceptable to the government. Therefore, we reject this motion for a return.

MR. BRUSEKER: Certainly the response from the minister comes as no surprise. However, again we're looking at a total-figure expenditure of \$123 million. The minister used the term "frivolous," and to avoid the frivolity to which the minister refers in the wording of the motion for a return, I realized that there's no point in going very low, which is why I put a bottom end of \$1,000. Basically what we're hearing from the minister in turning this down is that the minister *chooses not to* share with the public and with this Legislature the place, the means, and the purpose for which \$123 million-plus has been expended.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the minister has said that much information is provided in the public accounts, and that's certainly true. We see a very large document produced in that regard, but I would suspect and I would contend that probably the vast majority of this information is already on a computer disk or a computer program somewhere, and it would simply be a matter of, in his expert accounting procedures I'm sure, adding a line to the computer program and asking it to print out this information. I have no idea how many pages it would probably entail, but I would suspect that it could be done actually with fairly little of the labour to which the minister has referred.

So I would, in the interests of Albertans and in the interests of the Legislature, urge all members to support Motion for a Return 297.

[Motion lost]

303. Mr. Chumir moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing:

- (1) copies of all working papers relating to the calculation behind the original \$1.1 billion deposit to the pension fund in 1981;
- (2) copies of all actuarial studies and forecasts completed since 1981 on each of the following pension plans:
 - (a) judges' pension plan,
 - (b) MLA pension plan,
 - (c) public service pension plan,
 - (d) public service management pension plan,
 - (e) special forces pension plan,
 - (f) local authorities pension plan,
 - (g) universities academic pension plan, and
 - (h) teachers' retirement plan; and
- (3) copies of all statements which show the date of the receipt for pension contributions and dates of payment to the pension fund for any net surplus since 1981.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, not to disappoint the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, the government will refuse this motion for a return. There are a variety of reasons, but among them would be the fact that this calls for a release of working papers related to the calculation behind the deposit of the pension fund in '81. Clearly, clearly this is out of order. It's not a question of asking for information that is public. This is asking for working papers, which fall within the clear ambit of government privacy in terms of forming policy and are not in that sense available to the public because, of course, they're used to form policy and, among a matter of other choices, to select options which are pursued by the government.

Those reasons, among others, are found and cited in *Beauchesne*, the sections I've already referred to, and therefore the government refuses this motion for a return.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Forest Lawn.

MR. PASHAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to speak in support of this motion. I think it's a very important request for information, because as members know, the unfunded pension liability of this province is in excess of \$5 billion. There's a further \$33 billion worth of commitments made to the Teachers' Retirement Fund. I do know that when people make pension payments who are employed under these various plans, that money goes into the province's pension fund. As I understand it, that pension fund has somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$4 billion worth of assets, and at the moment we're actually seeing a net transfer of money into that fund because pension liabilities are paid out of it. I think we're probably putting in something in the neighbourhood of maybe as much as \$100 million a year. I'd ask for the public accounts book in order to get the specific amount. But at some point in the future, the draws on that pension fund are going to be greater than the contributions going into it, and I think it would be in the interests of all Albertans to know exactly when that date will come about in which we will be experiencing a decrease in the actual amount that's in the pension fund, because we could be in some serious financial difficulty down the road. Without this information I don't think we can get a handle on what the actual, true state of our provincial situation is.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Buffalo, summation.

MR. CHUMIR: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me assure the minister that I am neither disappointed nor surprised. We have consistency from him: four refusals in a row. I certainly wouldn't want to see him deviate from his firm and fixed – shall we call it iron – rule of not providing information to the people of this province.

Now, he gave us some purported reasons for not producing this information, but let's be clear that those were just excuses, not reasons. What we are seeking is important information with respect to the pension funds of this province, not only working papers but copies of actuarial studies and forecasts as well as information with respect to the dates of certain payments into and out of the pension fund. These are worthy pieces of information that should be in the hands of the public, but I don't feel disappointed or singled out. I had no expectations. This government has steadfastly refused to provide this information for many years now, notwithstanding a well-known promise in *Hansard* of the former Provincial Treasurer, Mr. Hyndman, that a great deal of this information would be provided. It hasn't been, of course. Even representatives of employers' organizations, union people, people who are right in the midst of dealing on behalf of employees with respect to pensions, have been denied access to this information.

Now, let me make it clear – and I'm sure the minister must realize this – that it's not just a few people here in the opposition that want this information that he's saying no to. There are lots of people out there who are taking an increasing interest in pensions and are looking very, very negatively at the way in which this government is addressing the problem and particularly the secretive nature. I've received a tremendous amount of comment on this, and I think the government should reflect on the fact that ultimately this form of secrecy backfires. People won't stand for it, they shouldn't stand for it, and they're not going to stand for it.

[Motion lost]

319. Mr. Pashak moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of the 1989 agreement covering the loan guarantee between the government of Alberta and Alert Disaster Control Inc.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, in responding to the motion by the hon. Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn – the hon. member is asking for this Assembly to order information to be released covering a loan guarantee between the government of Alberta and a private commercial company by the name of Alert Disaster Control Inc. I don't believe that information should be released for a couple of very good reasons. First and foremost, when loan guarantees are issued by the government, I want to assure the hon. member there's a great deal in terms of criteria that must be met in order for that to be granted. One could say, "Well, okay, but if it's criteria, what's different about criteria for Alert Disaster Control Inc. compared to anybody else?" Well, perhaps there's not a great deal in that criteria.

But what is particularly important, Mr. Speaker: Alert Disaster Control Inc., a Calgary firm, is a commercial firm, and if the government were at any time, in my view anyway, to start releasing information of a commercial nature, I think it would destroy the whole question of commercial confidentiality when government's involved with loan guarantees. It's not an issue whether or not one is excited about the loan guarantee. That's a criterion that's been met by the government and answered by the government; therefore, the loan guarantee is issued. I think the principle reason I recommend against this is that we're dealing with commercial confidential information, and as a matter of principle the government has not released it in the past, and my recommendation is that the government certainly not release it now.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Forest Lawn. [interjection] The Chair has recognized Calgary-Forest Lawn. Is the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway trying to get in or just sitting down?

MR. McEACHERN: I was trying to get in first.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Then the Chair now recognizes Edmonton-Kingsway.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister gives us the same poppycock answer that the government gives us every time in this case. If a private company is taking provincial money, then there is no reason in the world that the terms under which they take it should not be made public to the people of Alberta who put up that money. That is the most ridiculous statement we've heard from that side, and we hear it over and over again. I see no reason for it whatsoever.

The fact is that this government is able to make loan guarantees to firms without ever owing up to them, if they're approved by the Treasury Board, without ever putting out a release or telling anybody that they've done it. It only shows up in the public accounts, which is a year later at least if not two years later, depending on the timing of the loan guarantee and when the public accounts come out. Then they make it impossible for you to tell the amount given to the particular company under the particular loan guarantee. Yet sometimes, when the government thinks they've done a loan guarantee that they want to brag about, they put out a whole press release and tell the whole world about it and say, "Isn't this wonderful; we're doing this big economic development thing," or something.

Now, it seems to me that what it is is a release of information when it's convenient and when they think they can get some good publicity out of it; otherwise, it's straight secretiveness. That is not the way to handle the taxpayers' money in this province, and I think it's totally ridiculous that the minister somehow thinks he can give away the taxpayers' money to some private company, make a deal with them, say, "Here's this loan guarantee, here's this deal," and then not tell anybody what it is. I think it's time that the government realized that's exactly the kind of policies, that's exactly the type of secrecy that built the Meech Lake accord that is going to throw both this provincial government and the federal government out of office next time around.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Belmont.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to speak briefly to quickly underscore what my colleague from Edmonton-Kingsway said. You know, we get a number of applications that come in from community groups, and those community groups have public documentation. They make application either for funding under the community facility enhancement program or through a variety of departments of the government, and those documents are always public. They're public when they go through the community; they're public when they come to the departments. If you request information, seemingly you always get it.

What we've got, Mr. Speaker, are taxpayers sharing their information to get tax dollars. But when we ask a question about contracts for a loan guarantee between the government and, in this instance, Alert Disaster Control Inc., what do we get? Well, it's taxpayers' money once again, but do you think we can get the information? No, we can't. That's rather unfortunate. It's another example of this government closing up and shutting out the process and shutting down the process. Again it's sad. If it's good enough for one group that is in a very public way getting some of their own money back, I think it's good enough for all Alberta taxpayers to get the information that goes off into private groups.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Forest Lawn, summation.

MR. PASHAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think this motion should be seen in the context of the total amount of loan guarantees that are outstanding by the province of Alberta. I finally did get a copy of the public accounts for '88-'89. In the '88 fiscal year there was almost a billion dollars' worth of loan guarantees and in '89, \$1,582 billion worth of loan guarantees.

When the Treasurer appeared before the Public Accounts Committee, Mr. Speaker, we attempted to get from him the criteria under which these loan guarantees are made, and we didn't get any firm indication of just what that criteria are. The Minister of Education just referred to that in his remarks. I think, if nothing else, we would like to at least see the criteria by which loan guarantees are made, and one way to get that would be through getting the answer to the question that's on the Order Paper. The public accounts show that this particular company has received a loan guarantee from the province of Alberta in the amount of \$4,452,000, which is a substantial amount of public money.

In the earlier debate on other motions for returns similar to this that were also denied by the minister, we pointed out that the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology may have exceeded

its mandate by entering into a particular program that involves training oilfield workers on a for-profit basis on an island called Batam in the South Pacific. It's cost that institute a lot of money just to send people down there, but in addition to that, part of the program involved an agreement with Alert Disaster Control Inc. to provide a barge for training purposes. That barge, as I just indicated - the company sought a bank loan, I think with the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, for almost four and a half million dollars, and the province of Alberta guaranteed it. I think that because the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology may have exceeded its mandate by getting involved in that program in the first place, it's important that the public find out just what the details are of the loan agreement that was entered into between the government of Alberta and Alert Disaster Control Inc. Also, as I said, in getting the information to that question, we may find out just a little bit more about how it is that the province issues loan guarantees in the first place. The government pretends all the time that it's managing the public purse well and effectively, that they've got all these businesspeople on their side, but I can't imagine a businessman that would enter into the kind of shaky loan guarantees this government has entered into with a variety of different ... A lot of these loans seem to me to be provided on the basis of political expediency rather than economic merit - I mean, what in the world are we giving loans to the Calgary Stampeder Football Club for or Fletcher's Fine Foods, what ever? I don't know. We don't know enough about the details of these loans, and we have to have that information and it has to be on the public record.

AN HON. MEMBER: Question.

MR. SIGURDSON: Answer.

MR. SPEAKER: Speaker.

[Motion lost]

325. Mr. Bruseker moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of all agreements, correspondence, and documents exchanged between the government, the Cormie family, and the Japanese investors regarding the sale of the Cormie ranch, and a schedule specifying the disposition of the proceeds from that sale.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, we'll reject this motion. Let me point out that we are citing here common references found in *Beauchesne* which guide all of us as to how to frame the motion, and these conditions and terms and agreements and, I guess, principles have been thought through before by others for a variety of reasons. While the opposition, of course, continues to suggest that we are withholding information, in fact we are providing so much information on a day-to-day basis that I don't think the opposition can fully assimilate it.

Moreover, many of the motions for returns are in fact improper - improper, Mr. Speaker - and that's the point we've been trying to make here. In fact, the impropriety of those motions for returns is well spelt out in the sections I have alluded to, including section 446 as well, and we must be guided by these rules. Now, from time to time we're called to order, we're told that we're speaking too long or asking long questions or challenging the Chair's decision, and the Chair's decision essentially is based upon precedent, upon *Beauchesne*, upon *Erskine May* and other traditions and precedents which have

emerged and now form part of the framework under which we operate.

So I can say, Mr. Speaker, particularly in the case of 325, which not only calls for legal opinion documents, documents between the government and private sector, documents with others outside the government, which for some reason we're supposed to have, and in fact suggests that we have some information before a contract, which we don't know has been completed or not, which clearly is in violation of 428(j) and 428(gg) – in fact, those are the reasons why these motions for returns are being turned down. If the opposition wants to frame their motions for returns in an appropriate fashion, if the opposition wants to focus their work on reasonable questions which fulfill the outline, the framework, the principles of *Beauchesne*; then of course we would have to consider them. But at this point, let it not be said that we're refusing these because we do not want to provide the information. I want to go on record as saying we provide an abundance of information, more information than any other government provides. But there are fundamental principles under which we must abide in coming to a conclusion as to whether or not we agree to this motion. In the case of 425, I can cite exhaustively reasons why we cannot accept it. Suffice to say we simply do not accept it.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Kingsway, followed by the Minister of Culture and Multiculturalism.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As usual, the Treasurer sort of glosses over things in a rather extraordinary manner. He knows very well that when we very specifically ask for information, he turns it down 99 percent of the time. Then when we ask for all the possible information that could be connected to some particular thing, hoping they will give some small part of it, he says, "Oh, you've asked for everything, and obviously we can't give you everything, so we'll have to give you nothing." So it doesn't matter whether we specify one thing . . . An example is the information on what made this government decide the free trade deal was good for Alberta. I asked him for studies. They never ever had one study; they never had several studies. It didn't matter what words we used. They were never the right words, because they never triggered any particular information they had that they might want to release. Consequently, we went into a free trade deal without release of one document on the part of the government that had any merit whatsoever in terms of being called a study. It's exactly the same problem here. You ask for specific information and don't get it, so you put in a blanket thing and say: "Have you got anything you'll give us? Amend it and tell us what you'll give us." Then he says, "Oh, you've asked for everything; you can't have anything," and claims *Beauchesne* as being the reason why.

Mr. Speaker, I'll come back to the specific kinds of information that were asked for here and suggest to the Treasurer that he's been kind of snowing us a little bit on this issue. For instance, he started off in the House not too long ago by jumping up and saying, "By golly, we might have a sale of this ranch, but not if one nickel is going to go to the Cormie family." Finally, he had to find a way to weasel out of that particular statement, so he said, "Okay, we'll turn it over to the courts." That's always a good way out. Then you can blame somebody else if they decide to give the family the nickel you said you weren't going to give them.

The other thing about turning it over to the courts is that he then decided he should bring a suit against the Cormies for almost \$240 million, knowing full well, of course, that they don't

have anything like \$240 million. They might have something around \$5 million or \$10 million – who knows exactly? – but certainly not \$240 million. He claimed he was doing this to protect the FIC and AIC contract holders and the taxpayers of Alberta. Well, I would like to inform him that he can't do both. It is not possible. Their positions are diametrically opposite. If one of them gets the money, then the other one doesn't. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Through the Chair, hon. members.

MR. McEACHERN: Furthermore, the suit for \$240 million is really a political suit. He's really saying, "Aren't we the good guys suing the bad guys, the Cormies?" when in fact any casual reading or understanding of the Code inquiry would say that this government, because of its lack of regulations, regulated those companies so badly that they became complicit in the cover-up that defrauded a lot of people of this province of their money. Any reasonable lawsuit of the type he was putting forward should be brought by the contract holders or the noteholders – and in fact they have done so just recently – not only against the Cormie family but against this government and the ministers that perpetuated that fraud upon the people of this province.

So this so-called lawsuit that he's bringing against the Cormies is nothing more than a bunch of window dressing. He knows he's not going to get any money out of it. He knows it is going to lead nowhere. But he can then stand up and say, "I'm protecting the interests of the FIC and AIC contract holders, and I'm protecting the interests of the taxpayers of this province." That is nonsense. Any judge listening to a court case of that type in which one person stood up and said, "Mr. Speaker, as co-defendants we want not only the Cormies here but we want this government of Alberta here" – the judge would have the right to levy more taxpayers' dollars against the wrongs done to the noteholders and the contract holders of this province, and the Treasurer knows that, Mr. Speaker.

So this suit is nothing more than a political move in the hope that he can calm the people of Alberta into believing that somehow he can blame everything on the Cormies. We know the Cormies were wrong in what they did, but we also know this government was complicit in that wrongdoing. So, Mr. Speaker, I don't know what information . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order, hon. member. The Chair has been very concerned about the way this is going. You, hon. member, have been wandering off the motion for a return that's before us. In fact, you should give grave consideration to withdrawing what you have just said, because the matter is in court – documents and so forth that can be taken with regard to comments made here. You accused the government of complicity.

MR. McEACHERN: Yes.

MR. SPEAKER: Now, I think you should really take another deep breath and think about withdrawing that statement. Will you withdraw the statement?

MR. McEACHERN: Mr. Speaker, I don't really see why I should withdraw it. I think it's true, and I think I can back it up.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. You may have got yourself in a bit of a pickle there. Take your place, please.

Is this a point of order, Provincial Treasurer?

MR. JOHNSTON: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: What's the point of order, please?

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, if I heard him accurately, the member claimed that the government was by its own actions involved in complicity with respect to the actions of Mr. Cormie. In fact, the Code report does not come to that conclusion. It is in fact inaccurate. If it's not unparliamentary to make that kind of outright misleading statement, it certainly must well be . . . I don't want to go any further. Simply to say, Mr. Speaker, that the government has been proven not to be complicit. It is certainly unparliamentary to make that kind of statement. I can give you citations, but you know them as well as I. In fact, I would ask the member to consider his remarks.

MR. McEACHERN: Mr. Speaker, the statement stands whether Code came right out and said it in words or not. When the regulators of this province decided to help the company change the wording on the guarantees for FIC and AIC contract holders, they became complicit in the defrauding of the people of this province that bought into those FIC and AIC contracts, because they implied that there was a guarantee there that was not there. The changing of that wording made them part of convincing people that there was a guarantee there that was not there. So I see no reason to back off the statement at all.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, this is a very delicate matter because you then went further before you just spoke, when you last spoke prior to this comment with regard to the point of order. You went further not only to say that you could prove complicity. I think, hon. member, that discretion as the better part of valour in this case would be to withdraw the comments, and I invite you to do so.

MR. McEACHERN: I don't choose to.

MR. SPEAKER: All right. Thank you, hon. member. If you would be good enough to examine *Erskine May*, page 287, there are a number of difficulties there, and it does relate ostensibly to questions, but it can also refer to debate. Remember, it's not just simply with questions.

Factual basis. The facts on which a question is based may be set out as briefly as practicable within the framework of a question, provided that the Member asking it makes himself responsible for their accuracy, but extracts from newspapers or books, and paraphrases of or quotations from speeches, etc., are not admissible. Where the facts are of sufficient moment the Speaker has required prima facie proof of their authenticity.

Hon. member, please, the matter is too delicate, in the opinion of the Chair, for any member to stand up and say that you can absolutely prove complicity.

MR. McEACHERN: Would you give me tomorrow to bring the documents to the Assembly?

MR. SPEAKER: You can bring it to . . .

MR. FOX: Mr. Speaker, on the point of order. Might I suggest that members in the Assembly have a chance to peruse the Blues and examine the wording carefully and deal with the matter at a later date.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member.
On the point of order, Member for Three Hills.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Yes. Mr. Speaker, in responding to the hon. Provincial Treasurer's point of order as well, I thought I heard the hon. Member for Edmonton-Kingsway say something to the effect that the Code report had spoken to investors' being defrauded. I believe "fraud" is a word that brings some criminal connotation and would be used very carefully in such a report. I think as well that that should be examined, because without a report of a very serious nature like that in front of us, to start interpreting it in this Legislative Assembly, I think we should all take some care.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, throughout this the Chair has been gently admonishing, and the Chair appreciates the various comments on the point of order and in particular the suggestion by the Member for Vegreville. Perhaps the Member for Vegreville and the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway would be pleased to examine the Blues, which I shall call for, which hopefully should be in my office no later than 5 o'clock. Thank you.

Now, Edmonton-Kingsway, back to the comments with regard to a motion for a return, which have some very specific wordings.

MR. McEACHERN: I've finished my comments on the motion for a return.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Culture and Multiculturalism.

MR. MAIN: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was hoping to make a few comments on this, but the debate has taken a bit of a painful turn. Nevertheless, I will shake that off and just make a few remarks. I don't normally get into this, but I am offended by Motion 325 because I see in the galleries every day young students who come here. They come to observe the lawmakers of the province make laws and decisions. I'm also an editor; I've spent most of my life communicating with people. I read this, and I am unable to understand it, for two reasons. Asking for a copy of various things exchanged between the government, the Cormie family, and the Japanese investors, it doesn't say whether it's between the government and the Cormie family and the government and the Japanese investors, number one, or all people. All learned individuals in this high office should certainly know, especially in this Year of Literacy, that "between" involves two individuals. Involving two or more requires "among." Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I support the Treasurer in urging all members to reject this terrible piece of grammatical claptrap.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Avonmore, followed by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

MS M. LAING: Well, Mr. Speaker, I was sitting quietly in my place until the recent articulation by the Member for Edmonton-Parkallen.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Culture and Multiculturalism.

MS M. LAING: The minister. I'm sorry. My apologies. What a way to detract from the serious matter of this motion and the seriousness of the issues that are being addressed here and the serious matter of these motions for returns as we as Members of this Legislative Assembly try to respond to the concerns of our constituents and hold this government accountable for its

actions. We would be taken off on some frivolous matter as to grammar by the minister, who should know better.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't going to involve myself in this particular motion for a return, but I do have a few comments. I think when it comes to having motions for returns on the Order Paper, they've got to be taken very seriously. There are some instances where questions pop up that may not be appropriate. There may be information that is of a confidential nature because it may relate to a personal matter, for example, or involve some individuals or directly involve the impact of some lawsuit, and that's legitimate, when a government member will stand up and give good, commonsense reasons as to why a motion for a return should not be accepted.

But I don't think we're serving any purpose, whether it's that side or this side, to look at the flimsiest type of rationale as to why a motion for a return isn't acceptable. If a government member doesn't want to accept a motion for a return, at least have the guts to stand up and say, "We simply don't want to provide that information" or "We can't provide that information," for whatever reason.

But it isn't difficult to tell that the intent of this relates to correspondence and documents that involve the government and the Cormie family and the government and the Japanese investors. It's not practical to expect that the question would pertain to documentation or correspondence between the Cormie family and the Japanese investors. I'm just saying let's use a bit of common sense.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-North West, summation.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to simply respond to the appropriate minister's comments over there first. I'll deal with the Minister of Culture and Multiculturalism and respond to his comments in appropriate fashion. So to the Provincial Treasurer: I appreciate your comments. Unfortunately, however, citing *Beauchesne* and saying that for various reasons you cannot accept these to me is not a reasonable response. As you're aware, of course, we have to submit all motions for returns. Written questions go through Parliamentary Counsel. Parliamentary Counsel reads them and approves them, and before they can appear on the Order Paper, they must be approved by Parliamentary Counsel. Therefore, the argument the Provincial Treasurer has made is, I believe, a spurious decision and spurious reasons.

Now, with respect to the Cormie ranch . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, hon. member. I hate to be an editor as well, but "spurious" is not a word we're using around this place. If that's what I was hearing, withdraw it.

MR. BRUSEKER: Certainly I will withdraw that and substitute "unacceptable" then.

The reasons for this particular motion for a return on the Order Paper are simply that the proposal we've heard about — and some members may have seen Createm International's proposal for the proposed development — is a very exciting proposal, and the potential for economic diversification, jobs, and Provincial Treasurer revenue in the form of income tax is very exciting. Now, over the course of the last few weeks we have seen that at the Provincial Treasurer's direction there have been a number of injunctions placed before the courts asking for

an injunction against the sale, against this asset, against that asset, and so forth. So what this particular motion for a return is simply trying to do is find out what it is the Provincial Treasurer has done to put roadblocks in the way of this or, perhaps if they're not roadblocks, to facilitate the process. Goodness knows the Provincial Treasurer would like us to believe that he is working in the best interests of all Albertans in keeping the taxes the lowest in the land, as we've heard the Provincial Treasurer say. But I would like to have a little firm indication of that; therefore, I have placed this motion for a return on here. I want to see what it is the Provincial Treasurer is doing to keep those taxes as low as he would like us to believe they are.

So I would hope all members in the Legislature would support Motion for a Return 325.

[Motion lost]

352. Mr. Bruseker moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a detailed list of all contracts between Alberta Government Telephones and NovAtel Communications Ltd. and Alta-Can Telecom Inc., and its affiliated companies.

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, Motion for a Return 352 is rejected. We cannot accept it. The documentation to which the hon. member refers: to the extent it exists, I don't know. There are contracts presumably between Crown corporations and subsidiaries of those. The motion asks for a detailed list of all contracts, and the only way I could see in which you could list all contracts is by saying the parties to the contract and the date of the contract, unless, indeed, the hon. member is asking for copies of contracts that exist or some summary with respect to the contents. But certainly the way the motion is framed, a detailed list of all contracts would be nothing more than that, the date of the contract and the parties to the contract, which would not provide the information which the hon. member, I'm sure, would want to have.

In any event, Mr. Speaker, I do believe that the nature of any such contracts, being those that may exist between Crown corporations and subsidiaries, would not be the appropriate subject of a return, and therefore we will reject the motion.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, here we have the minister responsible for this particular area, Technology, Research, and Telecommunications, which includes Alberta Government Telephones, and indeed by extrapolation, therefore, responsible for all those subsidiaries . . . What in fact is being asked for, of course, is simply a list of what the contracts are, what dollar values have exchanged hands between one and the other. So I hope all members would support 352.

[Motion lost]

353. Mr. Bruseker moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of all studies showing the benefits of privatization of Alberta Government Telephones either prepared for or by departments of the government for use in analysis and preparation of privatization proposals for AGT.

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, moments ago the Provincial Treasurer made reference to the precedents and traditions of our parliamentary system and made reference also to certain

provisions of *Beauchesne* which obviously govern the workings of this Assembly. It's clearly evident from the motion for a return that the types of information requested are internal working documents that relate to decisions to be made by government in relation to the whole matter of Alberta Government Telephones, and accordingly, it's not appropriate for those to be produced. So on the basis of that – and indeed the nature of the studies that have gone into the whole question of Alberta Government Telephones and its future have been basically carried out on a day-to-day basis by memoranda and other communications between departments and individuals within the departments. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, on the basis of precedent and traditions and the fact that these are internal working documents, we reject the motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The Member for Edmonton-Belmont.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to support the motion that was moved by the Member for Calgary-North West. The reason I rise to support this is that the minister of recreation and TRT, whatever that is – I may as well get in my "whatevers" today – stands up and says, "What we have are internal working documents." Well, you know, it's rather amazing. Those documents have probably been shared around the cabinet table, and perhaps they even shed some light on the government backbenchers so those hon. members would have some reason to support the privatization initiatives of the government.

You know, maybe if those documents were shared, what you would find is that the Liberal caucus might be able to take a position on it.

MRS. GAGNON: Exactly. We need information. Absolutely.

MR. SIGURDSON: I know.

I would hope that if these documents were provided . . . Maybe, Mr. Speaker, the government, if they were to provide this kind of information to the Assembly – and indeed it would be broadcast throughout Alberta through the papers and journals of our province – might even convince more Albertans to support the government's initiative. But as it is, that's not the case.

What have we got? We've got doubt on this side, and I think for some very good reasons. I wish I could have some of the information the minister has, because I'll tell you, it would probably support the doubts we have. We've got doubt over there for whatever reason, and I'm sure it's probably justifiable given the position of that party. Mr. Speaker, I'm indeed sad, because this was an opportunity for the Progressive Conservatives to stand up and say, "These are the reasons; these are the concrete reasons why we want to privatize AGT." But what do we get? We get that excuse that's put behind darkened curtains. The mushroom treatment, as my colleague from Edmonton-Jasper Place says: put in the dark, kept in the dark, and fed you know what.

Well, it's just a sad day, and I would urge that all members from all sides of the House support this motion for a return.

MR. BRUSEKER: Mr. Speaker, I would say that I would be extremely disappointed by the provincial Minister for Technology, Research and Telecommunications. This particular motion for a return asks for a variety of documents that would support what the government's position has been regarding privatization.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I've alluded to it before; the Provincial Treasurer has alluded to it before: this offering is going to be the largest single offering of shares certainly in the history of the province and perhaps in the history of the entire country. Given the magnitude and the importance of that particular offering and the fact that the Provincial Treasurer and the minister involved and the Premier have all asked Albertans to buy into this proposal that is being put forward in Bill 37, it is in fact a very important proposal. So in order for not only members of this Legislature but also Albertans to understand and accept and buy in, as they would like us to do, Albertans have the right, Mr. Speaker – notwithstanding *Beauchesne*, notwithstanding *Erskine May*, notwithstanding any Standing Orders, Albertans have the right to and the government has the obligation to give access to that information. So I would urge that all members support Motion for a Return 353.

[Motion lost]

MR. SPEAKER: Before calling the Bill, the Chair apologizes to the Member for Calgary-North West for making him withdraw a certain word earlier. Advice has been received from another member that it indeed is regarded as a parliamentary term these days, so in future you can feel free to use it if you wish.

Thank you.

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

**Bill 212
Alberta Youth Conservation Corps Act**

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to rise to present my first Bill in this Assembly. Although I had two on the Order Paper last year, of course they never saw the light of day.

This Bill, the Alberta Youth Conservation Corps Act, is, I think, an exciting and innovative concept; not original, because other parts of our continent have developed such a corps, but it would certainly be original and unique in Canada. The intent of the youth conservation corps would be to provide an alternative for high school graduates upon their graduation. There would be two specific purposes: to foster conservation and also to develop young people. It would be a peace corps for our cities and our rural communities. The youth corps would work with nonprofit organizations and parks and wildlife groups on projects which have a lasting benefit to the province, projects such as beautification, cleanup, work at historic sites, and clearing hiking trails, just to name a few.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

The administration and participation of the program would be similar to that of Katimavik, a recent federal program. Students would be provided with room and board, a stipend, and a payment upon completing their one-year term.

California, under the governorship of Jerry Brown, was the first state to introduce such a program. Today over 20 states have similar programs.

Our young people represent Alberta's future. They are our investment. I believe that this type of corps could provide them

with a perspective that currently is not available. Let's help them to develop a love for nature, a love for service to others. It is extremely important to provide a variety of experiences which would develop a conservation ethic within our young people. Many of our young people are saturated with material comforts, but they are not saturated with respect for the natural environment, with an appreciation for high-order values. Many of our young people have no purpose in life. They have no goals, no direction. They really don't know where they're going. Working with a conservation corps could bring about a transition in their attitudes, could help them to discover leadership and other skills which they possess.

The advantage of a made-in-Alberta youth corps is that it would provide local services dreamed up by and for Albertans. It would provide well-supervised opportunities for teamwork, something that is not always a high priority for some of our "do your own thing" young people. It would encourage public service, a commitment which would last through all of their lives.

Who would join? Those who are unable to find a job, those who don't know what they want to do after coming out of high school, or those who wish to travel Alberta, to see Alberta, to know Alberta and its citizens before settling down to further studies. The demands of exercise, discipline, and hard work would provide healthy therapy and structure, could help the kids to find themselves and become productive, responsible citizens. I believe there would be a lasting benefit not only to Alberta's natural environment but to Alberta's young people.

I would like to just quickly go through some of the details of the Bill. The moneys would be provided through the lotteries foundation or any gift or bequest to the fund. The fund would be administered by a board consisting of members appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, and the board would administer the service program under the name the Alberta youth conservation corps. The board would submit an annual report on the program and financial statement of the fund to the Minister of Recreation and Parks, who would table it in the Legislative Assembly if it is then sitting, and if not then sitting, within 15 days of the commencement of the next sitting.

The purpose of the fund would be to provide a program for high school graduates to work for a period of one year in the provincial and national parks in Alberta. The board would establish rules for the administration of the fund and other regulations such as the qualifications required and the terms of employment and so on. A high school graduate participating in the program would be paid a wage of \$5 per day, receive room and board without payment on conditions established by the board. At the end of the one-year program the high school graduate would receive a single payment of \$2,500.

Members of the Assembly, I'm sure those who are interested would read the rest of the details to the Bill, so I don't think it's necessary that I do. I would just urge members of this Assembly to support Bill 212.

Thank you.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for Calgary-Foothills.

MRS. BLACK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to speak to Bill 212. I will not criticize the Member for Calgary-McKnight for her concern for youth and her intent in this Bill. However, I have found a few flaws within the Bill which prevent me from supporting the Bill.

My first concern has to do with the proposed pay structure. I have some serious reservations with paying high school

graduates \$5 a day and then a single payment of \$2,500 upon the completion of the program after one year of service. If you're working eight hours a day, five days a week, for one year, it works out to 62 cents an hour under the proposed pay structure. This is well below the minimum wage of this province of \$4.50 an hour. With this type of pay structure the Alberta youth conservation corps would essentially be a volunteer program. I think it is unreasonable to expect high school graduates to volunteer one year of their lives to maintain Alberta's parks for 62 cents an hour. Upon graduating from high school, most students are eager to further their education or to find employment where they will earn a decent living. I find it again inconceivable that a program structured in this way would attract many high school graduates. There is also a strong likelihood that morale problems would exist in a situation where program participants would be earning \$5 a day and working side by side with regular staff and supervisors earning \$16 a hour.

I also have difficulty understanding what the purpose is of the \$2,500 single payment. My interpretation of it is to encourage program participants to put in a full year of service. However, I do not think this will prove to be a successful incentive if the hourly wage works out to only 62 cents an hour. Another consideration is whether or not the \$2,500 single payment is based on performance and not just on attendance. Even if it is conditional upon performance, I doubt very much that it will be successful in encouraging quality performance. It is difficult for anyone to get motivated to do their best work for an extra \$1.24 an hour. So once again I'm drawn to the same conclusion, that the proposed pay structure will not work. Firstly, it will not attract high school graduates to the program, and secondly, even if someone does join the program, it is not going to provide adequate incentives to do good work or to complete the one year of service.

Bill 212 proposes to pay room and board for program participants. I don't think the hon. member has fully considered the implications of this. It will be a major administrative undertaking. How much are we going to pay: \$300 a month, \$500 a month? Or is this just left up to one's imagination?

With regard to room and board let me provide two examples of the many complications Bill 212 poses. Will room and board be paid to parents of a program participant if he or she is living with them in Calgary and participating in the maintenance of Fish Creek Provincial Park? What if the same high school graduate wants to move away from home and live on their own? Will this be possible, and will adequate funds be available to cover their cost of living? It makes much more sense to avoid this administrative nightmare by paying program participants at least the minimum wage and leaving it up to them to pay for their own living expenses.

In addition to the inappropriate pay structure and the administrative problems of room and board, the proposed funding mechanisms of Bill 212 are also inappropriate. I'd like to first address the proposal to use lottery dollars to fund the program. This is not the first time that a member from the Liberal Party has proposed using lottery funds for the purpose of funding new or existing programs that should more appropriately be funded through tax dollars from the General Revenue Fund. For example, on May 28, 1990, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar implied in a question to the Premier that the government should use lottery funds to alleviate poverty rather than for community enhancement. We cannot use lottery funds to fund government programs. There must be some guidelines. The government has always believed that lottery funds should not be used to pay for regular government

programming. For the past 16 years the government's policy has been to use lottery dollars for cultural and recreational purposes only. Clearly, a youth employment and training program as proposed in Bill 212 does not qualify under the cultural and recreational guidelines. If this Legislature makes a commitment to the youth of Alberta, we must be able to commit the appropriate funds to the program on an annual basis. This would not be possible if it is funded through such insecure funds as revenue from lottery funds, gifts, and bequests.

If the use of lottery funds, gifts, or bequests is not appropriate, then the only other alternative funding mechanism would be to use dollars from the General Revenue Fund, and this, too, is not appropriate. In a time of fiscal restraint governments must be very selective in establishing new programs. When funds are scarce, difficult choices must be made. The government of Alberta is committed to balancing the budget by 1991-92. To accomplish this, many departments and programs have had to endure freezes or cuts to their budgets. In fact, the Department of Recreation and Parks had a 4.5 percent reduction in its budget this year. Given these fiscal realities, it would be inappropriate to expend general revenue funds for a new program.

I would suggest to the hon. Member for Calgary-McKnight that I possibly would have accepted this Bill and even supported it had this program been tied to a program of postsecondary education. I would suggest that she investigate the possibility of a work co-operative program for students who are endeavouring to study environmental concerns or forestry concerns within the postsecondary facilities, and I would highly suggest that she review the pay structure because \$5 a day is inappropriate. It would not provide the student with the ability to save funds for their further education. I feel that that is very important, and \$2,500 after being out of the educational field for one year would not be enough to pay for postsecondary education.

The member is quite right that other jurisdictions have indeed put in programs that have been youth programs. We have seen them in the past. We had one in the province of Alberta in the '60s. But we have programs that are in place right now that we have to review and see how they are established. We currently have a junior forest rangers program. The participants receive \$21 a day, and 70 percent to go to the careers in forestry. We have a Junior Forest Wardens program as well. These programs are directed towards future careers and future postsecondary studies.

I cannot support this Bill as I feel, first of all, that the pay structure is far too low, and I don't feel that it is tied to any postsecondary education. So for those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I cannot support Bill 212.

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

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to direct a very brief comment on Bill 212. The idea of a youth conservation corps, a youth action corps to get out and do the work to clean up, to restore functioning ecosystems in the province, to help people take advantage of recreational opportunities – to have that experience, to do something good for the environment, is a good idea. I think the member is dead wrong to suggest that the model for this or the first example of this came from Governor Moonbeam in California. In fact, the Social Credit government of Alberta in 1971 established the Alberta Ecology Corps. Students were able to go out and do the kind of thing in this Bill, but that Social Credit government found it within its

heart to pay every one of those students the minimum wage. I was one of them. It was a great program.

I think if that government could find it in its heart to pay the minimum wage to students, surely the Liberal Party could do the same. For that reason the Official Opposition will have to oppose this Bill.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, just a few comments. There was reference made – I think first of all we have to recognize the intent of the Bill. The intent of the Bill is not going to suit the requirements or the desires or the wishes of all persons. It's a select group that wants to combine two elements, in my opinion. One is further education, a feel for environmental concerns, and secondly, the self-development that would occur. It's not that much different, Mr. Speaker, than the federal program referred to by the Member for Calgary-McKnight. The same principles are involved. Some of the members here may be aware of the CUSO program, the Canadian university students overseas. I was involved with that program a number of years ago in screening applications. It was surprising, the number of young people coming out of various educational institutions who had some academic background that were prepared to accept working conditions and wage levels that did not reflect anything close to a minimum standard of living here simply for that self-development, simply for that experience, simply because they wanted to contribute, in that case, to a Third World country, an underdeveloped country. Here is a Bill that proposes the opportunity to contribute, to make a contribution within the province of Alberta in the area of one of our biggest concerns, our number one concern of today, and that is enhancement of protection of the environment.

Reference was made to tuition fees and the \$2,500 proposed at the completion of the term. The only valid point about that reference would be that if the tuition fees keep going up the way they have been going up because of pressure by this government, that \$2,500 isn't going to cover tuition fees fairly shortly. If we want to look at the per hourly basis, it was equated to 62 cents, not including the bonus paid at the completion of the term. We can just look at legislation passed by this very government that allows employers to pay disabled people 50 cents an hour, but yet that seems to be acceptable to government members. Why isn't 62 cents an hour for somebody that wants to make a contribution to society and protect our environment acceptable? Let's not have two standards here. Or is what's being said that if you're disabled, it's all right to put you in a sheltered workshop at 50 cents an hour, but if you're not and you want to get involved in the environment and get involved in this type of program, it's a whole different ball game?

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, the one area I want to touch on that is fairly dear to my heart is the reference that was made to lottery funds and the number of areas where the Liberal caucus have proposed the use of lottery funds or the potential use of lottery funds. Some members within this House may not be aware that there is a surplus of lottery funds at the present time that is estimated by good sources to be between \$200 million and \$250 million. That's the estimated surplus at the present time. Now, we can't get the exact figure, of course, because those figures are not provided to members within this House, are not provided to Alberta taxpayers, are not provided to anyone other than members of the government, because we've got to bear in mind there are two standards of levels here. We're told there are government members, and then there are MLAs. On this side we're MLAs; on that side they're MLAs plus government members. I'm continuously reminded of that

by the minister responsible for lotteries. Now, that's the surplus we're talking about, \$200 million to \$250 million, with revenues last year in the neighbourhood of about \$109 million, far exceeding the expenditures that were committed from lottery funds.

When we talk in terms of priorities, when we want to see some benefit from lottery funds, when we compare this to some other types of expenditures that are very, very questionable in terms of any benefit to the general public – without getting too specific, I think we're all aware of some of the instances I'm referring to, some of the instances when we'd gotten information that related to those particular expenditures. But when we talk in terms of lottery funds, what better use could you possibly suggest than an area that allows for the development of our youth and at the same time enhances even further the protection of our environment? I would encourage all members to support this particular Bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for Lesser Slave Lake? The Member for Edmonton-Belmont.

MR. SIGURDSON: I feel like Doug Henning. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just wanted to very briefly comment on the comment that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud made when he spoke of handicapped people being paid an hourly rate of 50 cents an hour. That's wholly unacceptable to the New Democrat caucus, but it's even more regressive, I submit, when he advocates that young people who join up in this program be offered a wage of 62 cents an hour. Mr. Speaker, that just compounds an already rotten situation. I'm surprised that it came out of the Liberal caucus; I would have expected something more from them. I regret that after the arguments presented by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, the New Democrat caucus still will not be supporting this Bill.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you. Just a few comments, Mr. Speaker. I welcome the opportunity to rise and speak on this particular Bill. Although the intention is a worthy one and it's very difficult to argue against providing employment and training programs for Alberta's youth, it's possible to argue against this Bill from the perspective that it seeks to establish a program which is essentially a duplication of existing programs, which many of the members have brought forward to date.

I would actually like to ask to have some time to assess some of the remarks that have been brought forward and perhaps present the principles to the government at a later time. This, Mr. Speaker, may take some time, so I would like to beg leave to adjourn debate.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Having heard the motion by the Member for Lesser Slave Lake to adjourn debate, all those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say no. It's carried.

Bill 213

An Act to Amend the Alberta Income Tax Act

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is the first opportunity I've had to move second reading of a Bill. I'm not quite clear how to do it. But I'll move second reading of Bill 213, An Act to Amend the Alberta Income Tax Act, and take my chances with that particular terminology.

Mr. Speaker, speaking to this Bill very briefly – and I'm going to keep it quite brief because I do want to give the opportunity to the New Democratic caucus to also respond to it and to allow government members and, in particular, the minister responsible to respond to it if he has the opportunity.

Basically, if one looks at the Bill very, very clearly, it does one thing, and that is to attempt to address a situation where the vacancy rate in this city can become dangerously low. The Bill is worded in such a way that it talks in terms of not less than that 2.5 percent, as determined by two consecutive semiannual surveys conducted by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation. In other words, if the vacancy rate were to fall below that level of 2.5 percent, then this would kick in. At the present time, for example, it would be getting very, very marginal. I'm sure it would have to kick in based on the latest figures, but if you're looking at two sets of figures, it may be a different story.

It's unfortunate that the minister responsible – and I may have an opportunity to pass on some comments to him at a later time. I do have to state, as the critic for municipal affairs in the Liberal caucus, that the vacancy situation at the present time is not as bad as what was originally projected. However, the next set of figures that come out may, in fact, turn that situation again. None of us want to sit here and hope for a low vacancy rate so we can argue that this type of program is good.

Mr. Speaker, to kind of sum up, this program is sort of a preventative measure, so that it's in the books, it is law, it is passed so that if the vacancy rate does fall below the 2.5, renters that are hard hit by those increases can expect the same type of assistance they got three years ago. That would allow the renters' rebate program, administered similar to the child tax credit or to the proposed GST tax credit, to automatically kick in to give them that buffering during that period of time when they're faced with that crisis. Then of course the program would be withdrawn once the vacancy rate climbs above that particular level.

I think it's the type of program that is much better than attempting to impose rent controls or other measures that would simply compound problems that occur when the vacancy rate does fall to a very dangerously low rate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to all hon. members for that example of support. I have read over this very short Bill, and notwithstanding the length of the Bill, it has some very long-term and far-reaching implications.

On a matter of principle I think we in this House have to be very conscious of the need to review what is happening in the rental market and to always be adaptable to changing circumstances. As the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, who brought this Bill forward, has pointed out, when the vacancy rate gets below 2 or 1 – you know, when it gets very close to no vacancy – it does create very substantial problems for the rental

market. However, I think what the hon. Provincial Treasurer has recognized on a number of occasions is really a two-pronged recognition. Number one, market fluctuations do occur. By my own research I think market fluctuations in real estate are virtually on a seven-year fluctuation time frame, such that prices are high, people are renting, and the vacancy rate does go down quite substantially every seven year's.

Then, of course, there is a change in the economy during that same time frame, and that results in a higher vacancy rate and not as much economic boon in an area.

What the Provincial Treasurer has said is that to legislate a specific time period or a specific interest rate that would trigger over a long period of time some type of an assistance program is far too arbitrary to allow government to be as responsive as possible to the needs of Albertans. I agree with that philosophy, Mr. Speaker, because 2.5 percent is no more and no less an absolute figure than is 1.5 percent or 2 percent or 3 percent. So I think we must be very, very cautious before we were to institute a provision such as is suggested by the hon. member here at a 2.5 percent vacancy or whatever else.

The second concern that I do have, Mr. Speaker, is that we have in this province and in this government a recognition of the needs of all Albertans, and we have a recognition of the need to be fiscally responsible. Because of that need to be fiscally responsible, we cannot support this particular Bill. Although I appreciate the sentiment of the hon. member, it does not have my support.

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

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was a little surprised to hear that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud wanted us to speak on his Bill, but of course we usually put our opinions on the record on most things, so I don't know why he was worried that we wouldn't.

MR. WICKMAN: That's anticipation, eh, Alex?

MRS. GAGNON: That's the understatement of the year.

MR. McEACHERN: Well, actually, it doesn't happen to be my critic area, and I know that the Member for Edmonton-Beverly, if he can get back here, would like to speak to this, but in his absence there are a number of comments I would like to make.

Without going into the details of the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud's Bill, I don't think it's as adequate as some of things that we have been proposing. I would bring to the attention of the Assembly the motion other than government motion by Mr. Ewasiuk, the Member for Edmonton-Beverly, which is, I believe, the next one up for debate. It's number 215.

Mr. Ewasiuk to propose the following motion:

Be it resolved that because of the crisis in the availability of affordable rental housing in Alberta, the Assembly urge . . .

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. I'd just like to caution the hon. member. The Member for Edmonton-Beverly has a motion on the Order Paper. It is his to debate. Reference to it is fine, but I believe we should separate . . .

MR. McEACHERN: All right. It is quite long, so I won't read the whole thing. I'll just hit a couple of the main points that are raised by it then, perhaps. It is suggested that we should be creating a rent review commissioner, with a certain amount of

powers for a rent review, that would work much like the Public Utilities Board. Landlords, if they wanted a rent increase above . . . By the way, some of the details are fleshed out in Bill 208, whereas just the main point is made here. The idea is that the rent review board or rent review commission would have the power to hear from landlords, or complaints from tenants for that matter, who felt that they needed a rent increase over and above the rate of increase in the cost of living index. Landlords would have to apply to ask for that higher rate and give good reasons why and justify their increases much the same as utility companies do before the Public Utilities Board. That commission would have the power to grant or not grant those kinds of raises, and of course there would be an appeal process through the courts. So tenants also could bring their problems to the rent review board.

But more specifically in answer to the kinds of things proposed by this Bill that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud brings is the idea that the government should "introduce legislation to provide for a re-institution of the renters' tax credit." Now, this government had a renters' tax credit that operated for a number of years and gave renters the right to claim back some money when they paid their taxes each spring. That was canceled, I believe, in '88 or '89. In any case, it seems to me that that's rather unfair, Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that the government in the last election offered an interest rate shielding program to people buying a home.

When you think about the broad spectrum of people in the province of Alberta, right from the very poorest people who are on social assistance through to very wealthy people, when it comes to housing those people, it seems to me most extraordinary that we would set up a system whereby we expect to subsidize those people at sort of the middle-income level. Roughly half the people rent – I think it's something like 45 percent – and 50 or 55 percent, then, buy their own homes. So what we're saying is that the people with the middle-income level, the ones that are borderline as to whether they can afford their own home or not, should be subsidized in their housing problems. We have first home purchase support where some of the down payment is paid. I realize that the Premier has a little trouble distinguishing between down payment and mortgage payments, but eventually that did get sorted out. So we help people who are in the middle-income level, who are the ones that are borderline as to whether or not they can afford to buy a home.

I realize that building new homes is something we want, and we do want people to be able to own their own homes. Nonetheless, if you look at the broad spectrum of people that need to be housed, it is rather extraordinary that all those people at the bottom end of the scale then, the ones that cannot afford their own homes and can only rent their accommodation – and believe me, they don't get by cheaply just because they happen to be renting. We had a few years in the mid-80s where they had a bit of a bargain relative to mortgage payments. The mortgage payments went sky-high in the '79 to '81 period, and all of a sudden we had a lot of people with mortgages they couldn't handle. We do acknowledge that particular problem. Nonetheless, now that things have settled down somewhat, it does seem a little extraordinary to me that we would say to the people that are renters, "We as a society have no help for you in renting your home, but we do have some money from taxpayers' dollars that can help the people in the middle-income level buy a home." So one of the points that we would like to make is that the renters' tax credit should be reinstituted.

I don't think this Bill is all that good, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't cover the needs of the low-income people as adequately as some of the proposals that our party has put forward. With those comments, I'd turn the floor over to anybody else and let them have a turn.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I wish to close debate. There is another speaker there, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Certainly, if we've progressed that far.

The Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

MR. ANDERSON: With respect to this particular Bill, Mr. Speaker, I think it's innovative in some respects. However, it is not, as the Member for Banff-Cochrane pointed out, a Bill in keeping with the kind of flexibility that's required with respect to our general rental market.

In answer to the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway, this government has programs that deal with senior citizens in terms of the accommodation that we established through the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. We have special housing needs; I most recently opened a home for schizophrenics in Calgary-Currie. We went through a series of different programs to assist Albertans in a variety of ways, and now we're in a circumstance where the rate for vacancies in this province has in fact again increased. We have now seen in the latest statistics that in Edmonton it moved from 2.1 to 2.6 percent and in Calgary over double, from 1.2 to 2.7 percent. So, Mr. Speaker, it is my opinion that the Bill in fact doesn't speak to the need or allow us the flexibility, and I wouldn't be in support of this particular measure at this time in the history of the province. I think we do need to consider all of our options, need to consider all of the possibilities.

In that regard, to give us time to do that, I would beg leave to adjourn the debate.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Having heard the motion by the hon. Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs to adjourn debate, all those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say no. Carried.

Bill 214 Non-Smokers Health Act

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I'll move Bill 214, Non-Smokers Health Act, on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Buffalo. I'm going to speak to it very briefly, because I'm sure as this is debated further down the road, the Member for Calgary-Buffalo will do a much better job in this area than I could as he has a much closer and personal interest in it.

But I do want to say just very, very briefly that myself being one of those persons that don't brag about it but do engage in the odd cigarette, nevertheless I do respect the right of other people to enjoy clean air, and I try and be as inoffensive about it as possible. I think one of the best things that happened was when the Speaker ruled that there would be no smoking allowed

in this particular Chamber. Smoking should not be allowed in certain areas, and I believe the Member for Calgary-Buffalo has that concern that smokers should not infringe on the rights of the nonsmokers. On that particular point, I'll conclude my comments. Possibly my colleague from Calgary-McKnight may want to add to it.

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

MR. PASHAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a former smoker I'm absolutely delighted to be able to participate in this debate.

MR. FOX: Speak at length so they don't adjourn it.

MR. PASHAK: I'm going to try, yes. [interjections] We've got lots of time.

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, that giving up smoking was, I think, the most difficult thing that I've ever done in my life, and I could spend the next 15 minutes telling you about that, which I propose to do. I'm just somewhat afraid that there is a government plot being hatched on the other side to reduce the amount of time that I'd like to spend on my Bill 215, which I think has some important significance for the House.

But given that, let me just tell you the stress that I went through. I never smoked until I got out of high school actually. I liked to play a little football and that kind of thing.

MR. JOHNSTON: Where'd you go to school, Barry?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Is this a trip down memory lane?

MR. JOHNSTON: Tell us about the good old days when you went behind the barn.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. PASHAK: Well, I could even go back to those days. I remember somewhere back around grade 6 a number of young children, young kids, would – what did we do? I think what we did is we'd collect pop bottles from the back alley or whatever and take them into the local corner grocery store. We'd say that we were getting cigarettes for our parents. We'd turn in these pop bottles. I think in those days you got 2 cents a pop bottle. Let's see; a package of cigarettes I think was around 25 cents. Maybe I'm really betraying something here. Now what's a package of cigarettes cost? A dollar a package or more? I don't know.

MRS. GAGNON: Are you kidding?

AN HON. MEMBER: Four dollars a package.

MR. WICKMAN: When I started, 35 cents.

MR. PASHAK: Oh, they were about 35 cents.

MR. JOHNSTON: Pop bottles have gone up too though.

MR. PASHAK: Yeah. I remember we'd get the package of cigarettes, and there would be half a dozen of these young kids go down to the banks of the Elbow River in Calgary and . . .

MRS. GAGNON: Get sick.

MR. PASHAK: And get sick; that's the way to describe it. It was a test of something, I guess, to see who could take the largest number of puffs without getting sick. In any event, that was an introduction to cigarette smoking that I'm sure a lot of other young people have experienced and maybe people in this Legislature.

In fact, how it is that people come to smoke cigarettes is a reflection of how peer pressure really can work on individuals even if you don't want to smoke. There are a lot of restrictions against the use of cigarettes actually. There are parental pressures not to smoke; there's difficulty in accessing a supply. I indicated that we didn't have money as kids; we had to find other ways of getting the money together. I showed you how we could get around that rule rather creatively by gathering pop bottles. [interjections] Are you going to speak on this Bill? Can I yield the floor to you and you'll guarantee that you'll go on for 15 minutes?

MR. DAY: Yeah.

MR. FOX: I don't trust him.

MR. PASHAK: No, somehow I think I'd better keep the floor now that I have it. I've just watched too many other Bills be adjourned today.

In any event, back to the good old days of young people learning how to smoke cigarettes. [interjections] Now, I keep getting interrupted not just by members across the floor but by my own members.

MR. DAY: Oh, you're on the wrong Bill.

MS CALAHASEN: Oh, this is looking ludicrous.

MR. PASHAK: No, that's fine. I can get back onto track here in a moment if you'd just give me the opportunity.

Well, we're down on the riverbank smoking cigarettes . . . [interjections]

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. Order please. I do feel that I should remind the House that while certain introductory remarks are always appropriate, the principle of the Bill, as the Chair understands it, is how to put into effect measures to stop smoking rather than how to start it. So if you could get to the subject of the Bill.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Citation.

MR. FOX: Citation: *Beauchesne* 987. Is the Speaker addressing the Chamber from the perspective of someone who has not yet beat the habit, Mr. Speaker?

MR. DAY: On that point of order, Mr. Speaker, *Beauchesne* 987 refers to Bills introduced on ways and means resolutions, and I fail to see where there is relevancy either to the point of order or to the remarks of the member. Could we have the correct citation?

MR. FOX: I stand corrected.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. members, the Chair rose merely to point out that I felt that we should be debating

the Bill before us and the principle of the Bill, and it seemed that there was a need for some order in the House at that particular point *in* time.

MR. PASHAK: Mr. Speaker, back to the Bill itself. But before I get into the substance of the Bill, I might want to give you one additional reason as to why it would be important to speed the passage of this particular Bill. Once one does begin to smoke cigarettes, it's very, very difficult to quit. Now, I managed to resist all those peer pressures that were on me when I was in grade 6, but when I left high school, the social pressure to smoke increased rather significantly because most of the people in your crowd smoked cigarettes in those days. They'd give you cigarettes to smoke on these social occasions, so then you'd have to buy a package of cigarettes to pay people back. Then you're carrying them around with you, and you begin to smoke the cigarettes that are in your package, right? So gradually you start buying cigarettes, and eventually you get hooked. I want to tell you that nicotine is recognized by many authorities as one of the most powerful addictive substances on earth.

MR. FISCHER: Point of order.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Point of order, Member for Wainwright.

MR. FISCHER: Mr. Speaker, in view of the quality of debate and the hour, I move that it's 5:30.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. Please resume your seat.

MR. PASHAK: If you wait for two minutes, I may let the bells ring.

But in any event, Mr. Speaker, it's clearly established by authorities around the world that nicotine *is* one of the most powerfully addictive substances known to man. To break that habit of smoking requires an effort of will that – well, fortunately quite a few people in this Assembly, I would imagine, have put it together and have been able to actually accomplish this goal of not smoking. But let me tell you that it's really very, very difficult, so we should be taking all the measures we can to discourage other people from having the opportunity to embrace this habit. It's a habit that's very, very destructive to the individual, and it's very costly.

This Bill provides a lot of I think sensible measures that would assist people to, first of all, not smoke, and it would protect people who don't smoke from those who do smoke. After all, we're becoming increasingly conscious and very much aware of the fact that people's health is very seriously affected by what is called secondhand smoking. Perhaps as an ex-smoker I'm more sensitive to that than maybe people who have never smoked before in their lives.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

I'd just like to draw attention to some of the principles in the Bill. For example, the second section suggests that every employer, and any person acting on behalf of an employer, shall ensure that persons refrain from smoking in any work space under the control of the employer.

I think that would be a very good first step. I know that in a lot of federal offices now smoking is banned in the workplace and the worksite. In the Legislature we've taken the very positive

step of banning smoking on all occasions within the Assembly itself. I think that's a positive step, and I see no reason why we can't extend that to a complete banning of cigarette smoking or nicotine consumption or whatever you want to call it in the Legislature itself at all times and on all occasions. I'd be completely supportive of that measure.

Another important principle in this Act is section 4(1), "Smoking on trains or motor vehicles." The Bill presented by the Member for Calgary-Buffalo would require that

an employee who becomes aware that a passenger is smoking in contravention of section 3 on a train or motor vehicle operated by the employer of the employee shall request the passenger to refrain from smoking.

I wish the Solicitor General, who is responsible for the Alberta Liquor Control Board, would instruct the people that work in liquor stores to monitor that situation, because I've been in those stores and I've actually witnessed people in line smoking.

MR. JOHNSTON: You never gave up drinking?

MR. PASHAK: Never gave up drinking, no. There's some pleasures in life that shouldn't be denied to anyone.

MRS. GAGNON: To each his own poison, eh?

MR. PASHAK: Each to his own vice is right.

But I have noticed, though, that that rule that's very clear in these stores — there are signs that say No Smoking, but those rules and regulations are not enforced within the stores. I'd ask the Solicitor General to take a good look at that and instruct the employees in those stores to enforce the rules.

I notice as well that there's a move afoot to ban smoking on airplane travel. We've done that within Canada, and I think that is a very positive measure. It makes riding in planes much more comfortable. I think smoking there has been banned for some three years now. [interjections] No? No, they've delayed the implementation of extending that ban to international flights for three years now, and I think that's a mistake. I wish the government of Canada would impose some regulations such as the ones that are being called for here by the Member for Calgary-Buffalo and would deal with that situation.

Well, Mr. Speaker, there are many other regulations contained in this Act that I think we should support. Section 10, for example, says:

Every employer who contravenes [some of these other sections] is guilty of an offence and is liable on summary conviction
(a) for a first offence, to a fine not exceeding \$1000; and
(b) for a subsequent offence, to a fine not exceeding \$10 000.

Now, I think those fines are eminently reasonable in light of the destruction to other people that is caused by people who smoke cigarettes and force people to inhale their secondhand smoke. I think people should be more considerate of others and that those fines are justly appropriate.

Now . . .

MR. DAY: Let's see; where were we?

MR. PASHAK: Where were we in this Bill? Yes. Anybody got any other suggestions with respect to . . .

MR. JOHNSTON: Smoking in taxis.

MR. PASHAK: Oh, yes. Yes, smoking in taxis. I take taxis quite frequently between the Legislature and the airport and from the place where I live in Edmonton to the Legislature. I usually walk, but if it's a rainy day, cold, or whatever, I'll take a cab. Believe me, hon. members, there's nothing worse in the morning than getting up and getting into a cab where the cab driver's either smoking or has just put out a cigarette. It's enough to discourage you for the rest of the day. So it's certainly true that we should put an end to smoking in cabs and all other forms of public transportation in this country.

I think this Bill is so important that we should distribute it in every classroom in the province. We should alert the children of this province to the dangers of nicotine smoking. I'd personally be willing to go to these schools and point out the difficulties I had in terms of trying to quit smoking. But I'll be able to be very positive and tell them that if you make up your mind to do this, you can do it.

I wonder if Mr. Speaker would be willing to move the clock to 5:30 if I was prepared to . . . [laughter]

AN HON. MEMBER: Barry, talk about the warnings on the cigarette package.

MR. PASHAK: Oh, yes; that's true. There has been a big long debate in this country over the kind of warning that should appear on cigarette packages. Now, I don't know whether the Member for Calgary-Buffalo included that in his Bill or not, but he certainly should have. If he didn't include it, then it's a significant omission because cigarettes are lethal. There should be at least a skull and a crossbone attached to every package of cigarettes that's sold in this province. I would expect all members of this Assembly to get behind me in supporting that amendment.

Mr. Speaker, with your permission I will adjourn debate.

MR. SPEAKER: I'm quite certain that the Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn and many others were just dying to get in for the last gasp at the debate.

All those in favour of the motion to adjourn debate, 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] Insufficient numbers for a division.

MR. STEWART: Mr. Speaker, I move that when the members reassemble this evening at 8 o'clock, they do so in Committee of the Whole.

[The House recessed at 5:30 p.m.]

