

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, June 19, 1990 8:00 p.m.**

Date: 90/06/19

[The House resumed at 8 p.m.]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Government Bills and Orders**

Second Reading

Bill 54

Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 1990

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill 54, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 1990.

[Motion carried; Bill 54 read a second time]

head: **Government Bills and Orders**

Third Reading

Bill 33

Metis Settlements Accord Implementation Act

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, I move third reading of Bill 33, Metis Settlements Accord Implementation Act.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Stony Plain.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View and myself I would like to indicate that we are generally in support of the Bill, as was outlined in the debates previously. There are some areas that we do have concerns about. However, the New Democrats, our caucus, do support the general direction that this Bill takes. That direction appears to be an effort on the part of the government to sort out what has been a very, very long-term blight on Albertans and indeed on Canadians, and that is the fact that the Metis people have not, up until this point at any rate, had the privilege of having a true land base. The general direction of the Bill seems to be with trying to get the Metis people to become more self-sufficient, to give them a degree of self-determination, and on that basis I think it is a step in the right direction.

There's also built into the Bill a degree of hope for some level of economic self-sufficiency, although I feel that perhaps this area is going to need a little bit or maybe a lot of work as time goes on. I would hope that the government does not forget about the Bill once it's in place, does not assume that everything is going wonderfully well but does in fact continue to keep a very, very close and supportive role with respect to the Metis and their colonies, if you will, as well as branching out and helping them branch out to off-colony problems too.

I would assume – and it's just an assumption, because it's really not mentioned there directly – that the commissioner and perhaps the Metis council along with the appropriate levels of this government will be addressing educational concerns. They weren't mentioned there specifically in the Bill, and I would think that's a bit of an omission that perhaps should be looked at. I do appreciate the fact that Alberta Education is responsible, but I think there would be room for a large degree of Metis involvement in their educational system in conjunction and co-operation with Alberta Education.

This Bill, if it's implemented and if it's in fact adjusted as time goes on, if it's improved where required and reviewed, should go a long way to seeing the Metis renew the pride in themselves as a culture, renew something that we all take for granted, something called self-esteem. On that basis, because this is a small step in that direction, I think if the Bill succeeds, that will be just excellent.

I might add, though, that I can see some areas in the process of it that I have some reluctance at this point, as the minister is well aware. But I would like to assure this House that if problems do occur in the future, the New Democrats will, as they have in the past, offer continued support for any legislation that would in fact be directed towards improving the state of the aboriginal people in this province. We are committed to having all people in Alberta improve their life-style, whether they be the poor people of the urban areas or in this case the Metis people scattered throughout the province. I know our position is nothing new to the government because we've historically supported the concept of helping Canada's aboriginal peoples help themselves.

Just a few comments in passing. I do concur, as my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View does, with the principles as outlined in the Bill: the principle of co-operation, the principle outlined of benefiting the people of the settlements. I do have some difficulty that this transition process is going to be what we hope it will. However, I do have a degree of faith that it will be monitored and perhaps adjusted if need be.

The area of self-sufficiency and local government autonomy I find very interesting, and I would imagine that as time goes on that one will have to be expanded and defined better. We as a New Democrat caucus will be there to assist in any way, shape, or form to help the Metis people achieve a level of self-determination within our Alberta society, a degree of local government, of autonomy that is acceptable to the people of Alberta in general and indeed to the Metis themselves. I think from that point of view this Bill could in fact be the first step towards achieving that goal.

I would like to also point out that the principle of equity with other local governments is of interest. I would like to follow that particular premise closely, because when that shifts – the settlements operations when they indeed become self-sufficient – I would suspect that if we follow that, the settlements would eventually be functioning in the same way that other local municipalities are in the province. I would wonder if that is in fact what the Metis people are striving for, but if that comes to pass and they are happy with it, then indeed we would be supportive of it.

The last principle as outlined in the Bill, one of respect for the political process, I think is a good one, because if the intent of that is taken the way it's written, it appears that the minister – and I could approve of this – is prepared to have a hands-off approach to the general council and the settlement councils themselves. If the minister and the Lieutenant Governor in Council are prepared to let the Bill take its course and the wrinkles work out with the minimum of interference, then I think we have the possibility of having a piece of legislation here that would be the beginning for something we can look back on in the future and say that in fact something positive has been done for the Metis people of Alberta.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On that basis I believe our caucus will be supporting the Bill.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, in rising to speak on second reading of Bill 33, I too would like to signal that the Liberal

caucus will be supporting this. I suppose the minister might wonder what he's done wrong to get both the opposition parties supporting him, but after this length of time I think that this is not a culmination but almost a culmination of something that started in 1938 when our forefathers and the old Social Credit government picked up where the UFA had left off and actually established the Metis Settlement Council. I know everyone tries to claim some record with a success story. It's unfortunate that from the time of Riel to now, these people have had to fight to get full recognition for partnership both as Canadians and as Albertans. It's to this government and, I guess, Social Credit, the government that ran before, and I guess a lot of credit to the opposition, too, who now and again served as a conscience prod to the governments of the day, that the Metis are very close to achieving full partnership in Canada.

They still have a ways to go on aboriginal rights on the national scene, and although this government could take some credit for recognizing . . . In spite of the fact that the Metis had to sue them for hundreds of millions of dollars to get them to the table, they can take some credit, begrudging as I might want to be to give it to them, for at least coming this far, which is more than their federal cousins down in Ottawa. I am a little disappointed that this government hasn't shown more interest in the whole aboriginal cause and that they actually were one of the provinces that were instrumental in moving aboriginal rights off the top of the Edmonton accord hearings.

So let's be thankful for small mercies. Let's thank them for going this far with the Metis, and I, too, in pledging the caucus' support to this Bill, give it, I guess, qualified support. I think we are a bit concerned. The minister may be able to assuage that a bit in the fact that a commissioner – it's called a commissioner, but this is a very age-old system of governing peoples that we feel are not really up to our level. Queen Victoria used it: a uniform and great medals, and put somebody in charge. I think the commissioner is still an odious position but maybe a necessary one at this stage. I would have liked to have to seen something in the legislation that had a sunset clause to the commissioner or some way that when the Metis themselves felt they didn't need a commissioner, they could dispense with it and go to a government without the system of commissioner, with an elected person in charge, because the commissioner is still a vestige of the colonial days, Mr. Speaker.

In closing, I guess I would say that the Bill is a big step, particularly for this government, knowing the record it has had in the past with entrenching aboriginal rights. So I'll congratulate them for being dragged, kicking and squealing, into the 1990s, and look forward to maybe making a few constructive amendments: who knows?

Thanks.

[Motion carried; Bill 33 read a third time]

Bill 36

Constitution of Alberta Amendment Act, 1990

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, I move third reading of Bill 36, Constitution of Alberta Amendment Act, 1990.

MR. SPEAKER: Comments? The Member for Stony Plain.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that Bill 36 logically would follow in what the legislation is trying to do.

I would like to commend the Metis Association of Alberta on working with the province both through Bill 33 and indeed

placing the faith that they have in this province to go along with the assurances as they're laid out in Bill 36. We can appreciate that this is just an Act of this Legislature and I think is an indication of good faith both on behalf of the Metis Association and the provincial government in accepting this Bill as an assurance of their rights being to a degree placed in legislation until such time as some changes can be made to the Canadian Constitution.

On that basis I would like to say that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, myself, and the caucus will be supporting this Bill also.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, another great amen coming from farther over to the left here. I am a bit disappointed. I had expected, actually, a government amendment covering section 7, I guess it was, to tell about the Metis settlement Act being replaced if it ever gets recognized in the Constitution. I felt that possibly the minister was a little fuzzy there in that he was leaving it entirely up to the Legislature to decide that indeed the Metis settlement Act can be interpreted as being superseded by some changes in the Constitution in the future. I sort of felt that I would have liked to have seen that the Metis as well as the Legislature would both have to agree that they didn't need the Act anymore, that indeed things had been superseded by the Constitution.

However, in view of that, this is still light years ahead of where we were, Mr. Speaker, a year ago or even two years ago, and I assure the Liberal caucus' support to the Bill in third reading.

[Motion carried; Bill 36 read a third time]

[It was moved by the members indicated that the following Bills be read a third time, and the motions were carried]

No.	Title	Moved by
55	International Conventions Implementation Act	Rostad
56	Gratuitous Passengers and Interspousal Tort Immunity Statutes Amendment Act	Rostad

Bill 44

Dental Disciplines Act

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, I move third reading of Bill 44, Dental Disciplines Act.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The Member for Edmonton-Centre.

REV. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we come to third reading of this important Bill, it's with some gratitude that we finally see it meeting the light of legislative day and that we want to support it. I know many of us have been lobbied by dental hygienists and assistants in terms of having this kind of statute that they can more fully practise their craft and their trade in the whole field of dental health. So we want to congratulate the member for bringing it forward with such speed and ensuring with the Bill and the regulations that the public health will be improved by virtue of these professionals having a clearer understanding of their role within the whole field of dental health. We say that, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the

professional regulations and associations and all that this Bill represents.

I must say, however, that on behalf of Albertans – even a constituent this afternoon who called up and said she went to the orthodontist and found that it was going to cost \$3,800 for some orthodontic work for her and her family and that she just couldn't afford it, that she was going to continue to have a poor bite and headaches, and that one child was going to continue to suffer poor dental health as a result of lack of orthodontic care, not to mention the many other thousands of Albertans, Mr. Speaker, who don't have any private insurance for even basic dental health services. As I say, it's all well and good to have this Bill give them the kind of professional status they deserve in terms of their different professions, but whether Albertans need to access dental assistants or dental hygienists or dentists or denturists or orthodontists or the rest, it's about time that this government and the people across the way learned that oral health care is a very important part of the body and of the health of individual Albertans.

We raised the issue a while ago about the elderly for whom coverage has sort of reached the maximum; that they're even being extra billed by some dentists because the amount that's paid to dentists for the care of the elderly the dentists feel isn't quite enough. Well, it may be voluntary; it may be "You don't have to pay, but we'd suggest if you could send us an extra \$75 or \$100, that would be well and good for us." Many elderly feel intimidated by that and as a result don't get the kind of oral health care they need and deserve in this province, Mr. Speaker, after they have helped, as I say, to build this province in the pioneering spirit that they have. Any geriatrician or the rest will tell you that when the oral health of a senior goes, much of their health care goes. If they have poor dental care or poor oral health, their nutrition suffers, and their health status suffers as a result.

So it's again important that we have in statute now that dental hygienists can do the things that they want to do, but the access to hygienists for seniors or others needs to be improved, not to mention those on social assistance, Mr. Speaker: again, a great segment of the population of this province who have had tough luck in terms of employment or difficulty and problems for having low income. Their being hard on their luck and being on social assistance does not mean that they should have any less access to good oral and dental health from these providers. Yet we've heard time and time again, since I think about 1984, that this government refuses to pay dentists the amount they feel they deserve for delivering dental care for those on social assistance. It's sort of a second tier, a second class of health care. "If someone's on social assistance, we're not going to get paid," say the dentists, so they won't give them the kind of care that they might, by professional statute, want to give them; not just dentists, but as I say, hygienists and dental assistants and all the rest.

Why is that? Why do people in this province have to have a sort of second class, second tier of dental health because this government fails to adequately fund the system? I mean, we're all prepared to sit down in this Assembly with this member and the government to work out how their association is going to work, how they're registered, how they're disciplined, and how they can be the professional people that they want to be. That's fine and dandy. But clearly, as legislators, as people who represent constituents, we want to ensure that they have access to these professionals, that they have the access to good dental health and to good oral health that Albertans deserve. As I say, it's one thing to pass these statutes, but it's another thing to

incorporate a full spectrum of assured access to the kind of oral health that Albertans deserve from these professionals.

So I would encourage this member to continue to work with her caucus and maybe some members of Executive Council. If they can get onto this issue, we're going to see that one's teeth and gums and oral health should not be separate from the rest of the body or the rest of health care in terms of coverage, in terms of access to good health care, because it's very related, very integrated. Unless and until this government gets that basic principle straight, all this kind of Bill and statute for professions in the dental field is going to be lacking in terms of what they can and what they should be providing for Albertans. I can't stress that enough, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad to have had the opportunity at third reading to raise this key point with respect to the Bill.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 44 read a third time]

Bill 45

Professional Statutes Amendment Act, 1990

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, I rise to move third reading of Bill 45, Professional Statutes Amendment Act, 1990.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Centre.

REV. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's so good to be in dialogue with the Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Third reading of this Bill raises a number of other concerns with other health care professionals, and again we're glad that the member is able to keep up to speed with the wishes and desires of a number of other professionals, be they from the Pharmaceutical Association, the physiotherapists, not to mention the nurses.

I continue to have some concern with respect to the ability of certain persons in our society, in our province, to administer medications. Now, I thought I raised this before, and I'm sorry to have been away at committee stage, so I haven't heard. I do thank the member for the guidelines on medications and the administration of medications which she circulated. However, I'm still not convinced. As I've talked to several people, they still claim that by virtue of this Bill and the amendment to the Nursing Profession Act it does not enable Registered Nursing Assistants to administer medications to people in nursing homes and auxiliary hospitals, but that is . . . [interjection] I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. It seems to me that in fact registered nursing assistants in some regard have wanted to pull back from what used to be an issue a couple of years ago: that they want to get into this area of administering medications.

I basically don't care who administers medications to Albertans. I just want to ensure that they have basic training in pharmacology and in pharmaceutical sciences so that they know what adverse drug reactions to look for, know what the side effects and deleterious effects of certain medications are for people, and that they can monitor that. I mean, it's very easy to pop a pill, whether it's a measured dose or whatever else, and say, "Here's your medication for the day," in this long-term care facility, "Just take it." I think it engenders a need for much more care with respect to seeing how that medication may affect one's emotional or psychological health at the time, whether someone's depressed or not feeling well from some other side effect.

Clearly, the adverse drug reactions that Albertans and Canadians suffer under are enormous, and far, far more needs to be done in the area of pharmacology. You know, we are a pill-pushing society in many respects, and I think it behooves us to ensure, whether they're over the counter or whether they're in controlled settings as may be the place for nurses and nursing assistants and registered nursing assistants, that much more care needs to be exercised with monitoring adverse drug reactions and ensuring that whoever is administering medications is fully aware and fully trained in detecting, as I say, the adverse drug reactions which may come up just when you don't expect them and you don't understand it. It can be of great deleterious consequence to patients in nursing homes or auxiliary hospitals or wherever.

Not to mention the issue I think we got into with the previous Minister of Health, who seemed to want to encourage registered nursing assistants to have this ability so that they could almost be — he didn't say cheap labour, but he seemed to think when you get RNAs with just a diploma and not even two years of training getting into long-term care settings or hospitals, and since the nursing trade is one that is primarily responsible for the administration of medications, then maybe RNAs could sort of undercut RNs with respect to this. Now, from what I hear from the Alberta Association of Registered Nurses, they want to hold fast to their being the primary people responsible for administration. I've not heard to the contrary. What they're saying is that people who want to self-administer, whether they're diabetics or others or in certain settings or in a child care setting where there isn't a registered nurse around, other people who can meet the guidelines would be able to administer the medications.

But I don't think — and I want it to be clear — that by supporting this Bill we in the New Democrat caucus are opening the door to RNAs and NAs or anybody else who can meet certain guidelines to just administer medications without the proper training. I think if that becomes the case, then certainly we're going to be asking questions about this later on.

Again, Mr. Speaker, this Bill pertains largely to health care providers. Again I can only wish that this government would spend as much time developing state-of-the-art legislation with respect to the professional statute for health care professionals — or they should spend as much time on the ability for health professionals to enter into collective bargaining with their employer, which seems to be much more the case at issue for so many in the health care field. They can have their professional association and their disciplining and their registering moving ahead, yet they see around the collective bargaining table their rights and their profession being so much eroded and so much neglected. Whether it's registered nurses or other members of the health care field who are deemed not to have the right to strike, thereby cutting out any power they might have at the collective bargaining table, it's clearly in error.

Again, this government is falling far, far, far behind where the health care field and the health care professionals are wanting to move. Until they get that lesson straight, all they might want to do on the professional statutes side might be nice window dressing. But the main issue of contention for health care workers is that they have their rights maintained in the full collective bargaining process. If there's some discussion about essential services and the rest, we'll get into that, but clearly, as it stands now, health care workers have their collective bargaining rights so cut asunder by this government and have fallen so far behind in terms of bringing not just their professional statute up to snuff but their wages and their salaries and their other benefits up to where they need to be. I want to thank the

member for bringing us up to speed on these aspects, but there's much more work to be done.

As well, I think I mentioned in second reading how it's been interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, in the province of Ontario. They have gone not just . . .

MRS. MIROSH: This is third reading.

REV. ROBERTS: I know. But at third reading I want to re-emphasize, Mr. Speaker, that there are other provinces, notably the province of Ontario, which has gone very much into looking at the whole gamut of health care professionals, right from psychologists to midwives to pastoral care: all kinds of other health care people in the field who need to have their profession examined with respect to regulation and their associations and their rights.

Again, this is, I guess, a good start, a good step forward, but there are many more steps that need to be taken. I'll be following this member and other members of cabinet as we follow down the road that needs to be followed for the benefit of many, many Albertans in the health care field.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 45 read a third time]

head: **Government Bills and Orders** **Second Reading** (continued)

Bill 49 **Ambulance Services Act**

[Adjourned debate June 12: Mr. Bogle]

MR. SPEAKER: Taber-Warner. Additional?
Stony Plain.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think Albertans have waited a very, very long time for an ambulance Act, and in some ways perhaps it's unfortunate they didn't wait a little longer and have the Act done up just a bit better. I can't fault the intention of the legislation, because we certainly support having an ambulance Act, having what we feel would be good ambulance service to all Albertans. However, I'm not totally sure that this Act will in fact accomplish all these things.

The level of service that is to be provided is not indicated anywhere. It's not even alluded to. It refers to transporting of patients and things of that nature. However, I would like to point out that an ambulance service and a level of service . . . I would feel the Albertans that I have spoken to would have expected some standards which they would have found enshrined in the legislation. Instead, what we have here is the fact that the minister has the authority to establish districts, name them, define the boundaries, define the wards within them, and so on and so forth. The minister appears to have the powers to implement almost anything to do with the ambulances, and the municipalities appear to have inherited all the liabilities that go with the operation of an ambulance service.

I think that's probably an indication of the trend of how things have been happening lately in Alberta. In education the shift has gone more and more to the local authority. Over the last 20 years we've gone from the local taxation picking up 10 percent in education, and now we're up to 40 percent. Health is the same thing. In health care the premiums go up. Taxes didn't go up but premiums went up. What's the difference? So we're

getting more and more into the fact that the poor old local individual who can least afford to pay is being expected to pay more. The approach that I see in this Act seems to be coming along the same lines. I would have to say that, on that basis, it leaves me with a lot of concern. Again, the minister becomes quite influential in the Act, and nowhere do I see the minister having the right to describe a certain amount of funding to any particular district.

We must also appreciate that ambulance services in a province such as ours are not really easy to define and implement. For example, the Member for Taber-Warner alluded to the long distances and the waiting times for his volunteer ambulance service, and that is indicative of many, many areas of Alberta. Yet the people who live in these areas should be able to rely on a certain level of service, and I don't see in the Act anything that would assure or guarantee people in all parts of Alberta at least a minimal level, a minimal standard, of ambulance service. I think for that reason it's sadly lacking.

Getting back to the design of the ambulance districts themselves or the boards. It seems that any kind of arrangement can be put together, whether it includes a part of a municipality, a whole municipality, whether the borders are coterminous or not. Again, the minister is the one who establishes the district board and all that goes with it. I wonder if this is really the best approach to this particular legislation, to have so much authority continually coming back to the minister.

Now, we know that somebody has to be accountable in the long run. We know that the minister in this case seems to be the logical one, but the Minister of Health has the plate full with that portfolio alone, and now we add all the things that go with setting up the individual ambulance boards, setting up how they're going to collect their funds and so on. I think that's quite a heavy load to expect of any minister, to combine the ambulances with Health. I would have liked to see some sort of other mechanism that would assist the minister in making those decisions, some mechanism that would have solicited and in fact received local input as to the kind of ambulance board they want, as to what the municipalities want in there. I don't see it in this legislation. All I see is that "the Minister may," "the Minister may."

Quite frankly, I think that is one of areas that I hope the minister really considers seriously: to review this piece of legislation, to enlist the help of other areas, to maybe make some sort of provision where if you're going to have an ambulance board, you're going to demand, require, whatever, the input of the municipality involved, of the hospital districts involved. These are extremely important people in providing this service, which to my mind is just an extension of the hospital service. So I would stress to the minister that she may want to review the powers in the creation of these boards, the powers that are vested in the minister at the expense of the local authorities, who are going to be left with the Bill that goes along with paying for this service and left with the administration of the service and left with the praise or criticism if in fact that service is of a high level or of a substandard level.

I don't notice in here, in the Act anywhere, any kinds of provisions made for special circumstances that have to deal with special situations. What I'm alluding to is that there are highways in this province which go through remote areas, but we have an inordinately high number of accidents on them. Now, some consideration should be given to local ambulance boards who all of a sudden by default are going to become the people responsible for providing the paramedic service at the scene on highways throughout this province because I think the expecta-

tions and the requirements of an ambulance authority in an area that has primary highways, especially primary highways with high accident rates on them – and these are identified. I don't know; perhaps there should have been some provision made to have a special kind of assistance, even a different standard or different level of service provided here because of the continued emergency nature of having to deal with highway accidents.

As we all know, and the Act alludes to these things, we now have eight bona fide Metis settlements, and the only reference to that is that there is, I believe, somewhere in the Act a reference to the fact that the Metis council may be called an ambulance board. But as we spoke about earlier when we discussed the situation with the Metis people, there should be in this particular Act a very specific provision directed at the Metis settlements if they are in fact going to operate their own ambulance authorities, and I stress if they are going to operate them. If they choose to operate them within the colonies, then I think there should be a special status set in here in keeping with the spirit of Bill 33.

Now, Bill 33, as we know, is setting up the parameters for the Metis to go on self-determination and so on, and I would suggest to you that one of the primary, most important areas that we could have to deal with these particular people and to help them is in providing paramedic ambulance service. I think if these councils are going to take on the responsibility of having an ambulance service within their own communities and in fact that could serve not only their communities but the surrounding areas, the minister should be looking at providing for and assuring a very specific level of training, a lot of assistance so that in fact any settlement that would take on the ambulance service would be guaranteed success. I think that's extremely important. To just have the settlement council become an ambulance board I don't think would lead to anything more but probably – and I stress the word probably – confrontation, whereas we could avoid it and guarantee a very, very good service.

We get into the other area, slightly different. We can conclude that the provincial government has agreed to the fact that the Metis people are a provincial responsibility, but we have, I believe, 42 Indian reserves in Alberta, four of which are currently operating ambulance services. We all know that the relationship, the fields of responsibility, the expectations of the treaty Indian people have not been defined properly in the field of health, in the field of social services, in the field of education. Now, there is the assumption – and it's an accurate one, I believe – that the government of Canada is in fact responsible for and does all the wonderful things relative to Indian people via the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. However, if we look at the fact that we are having ambulance services come onto the reserves – we have them there already. If, as this Act indicates to me, the establishment of the authorities on the reserves, the agreements if you will, to provide service is done directly with the government of Canada, we can be looking at repeating the errors that we have compounded over our years of dealing with native people.

I would hope that the minister has had extensive discussions with the people on the reserves, because I would suggest that the area of involvement gets a little bit broader once we look at treaty Indians. There is the area of their activities right on the reserve, and then the activities of the ambulance service that would occur off the reserve. In most instances, obviously the minute that we have a need for an ambulance on a reserve, we would get into off-reserve situations, because the majority of the hospitals, if not all of them, are off reserves, so we'd have that

to look at. Then we have the other aspect of ambulance activities, and that is transferring patients between hospitals. I would wonder if there has been thought given to what this may in fact entail with respect to treaty Indian-operated ambulances. Will they be given preferential treatment? Will they be given equal treatment in transferring patients between hospitals off-reserve?

Now, all that we have in this particular Act is about five lines referring to the fact that anything that may be agreed to may disagree with everything else, and not a single reference to establishing the working arrangements on the local level with the bands – and I stress working level with the bands – before we move on to enter into an agreement with the federal government. I would strongly recommend that that section in the Act dealing with treaty Indians and ambulance service be reviewed in consultation with the people representing the treaty Indians who have an interest in the ambulance service, with the idea of establishing a service on the reserves that will be effective and will operate very efficiently and be operated by the treaty Indians. Now, that kind of service cannot occur if we don't involve the operators in the first instance. We have high level of expectations for the service, and I think the native people would want to meet that kind of level of service on their own.

Again, I think it would be quite important that if we enter into agreements for ambulance service on reservations, the commitment be made to these reservations by the government, by the Department of Health or whomever, or by the minister who has the authority to do everything else, perhaps we should have another addition in this Act that says the minister shall ensure that people get proper training and expertise to operate an ambulance service that is effective and efficient and meets the needs of the communities involved. So I would like to stress very strongly and recommend to the minister that she in fact have a good look at the overall relationship between the treaty Indians, the Alberta government, and the Department of Health and how ambulance service is going to be provided to these particular areas.

Now, there are other areas in the Act that give me a large degree of concern, and that is the lack of definition. I believe the air ambulance is going to be defined, again by the minister. Now, what is air ambulance service? Is it fixed wing? Is it helicopter? What is it? All of the above? I don't know. If we are going to enter or pursue or have air ambulance service, I would have liked to have seen, other than "the Minister may" define air ambulance, a significant portion of the legislation devoted to the air ambulance, what it is, how it will be established, who it will be accountable to, and how it will operate. I would sort of wonder what's going to happen if all of a sudden a hospital board decides to go into the air ambulance service. Is that permitted? Is that going to be encouraged? Who's going to pick up the bills?

Again, we keep coming back to this business of finances, and it keeps creeping up here and there and elsewhere. We look at what an ambulance board is going to do. The board is going to ensure that services are provided. The board is going to determine

the level of ambulance services provided in that district is not less than basic life support unless the Minister authorizes another level.

Now, I know it's debate in principle, Mr. Speaker, but if you're not going to have a basic life support and the minister is going to authorize another level, is that level going to be less than basic life support? Certainly I could not imagine the minister having to approve a level of service which is in fact better than

basic life support. So I guess the board is going to have to determine whether they're going to have basic life or less, and the minister will approve that one.

The boards are also going to be making bylaws for the administration of the service in the district. By itself you look at that, and all of a sudden what can we conclude? That we could have as many different sets of laws and rules for ambulance operations as there are boards, because each one is going to have their own set of bylaws. Quite frankly, I find that to be a little bit on the scary side. If that happens or is going to happen without a considerable degree of guidance, will we be improving ambulance service in Alberta with this particular legislation? The way it appears to be shaping up, I'm beginning to have my doubts about that.

The next one as we get on to their roles is that they're going to have the right to borrow money. They're going to have the right to "make requisitions on the councils of . . . municipalities for the required portion of the board's operating" expenses and so on. So here we go. The minister will appoint a board who now has the right to increase the local taxes on the participating municipalities. I would suggest that the way the legislation appears to be coming through on this, the local municipalities will not have a very high degree of say in the nature of the service that is being provided or they won't have any say in whether or not they are going to have to pay for this service. From there on in, I would suspect that the powers of the board, if you will, are quite realistic in that they go into the kinds of, shall we say, things that a board should be doing administratively.

If we look at the opposite side of the coin, we have the municipalities now, if they get assessed with this bill for running the ambulance service, all of a sudden I notice that the municipality can borrow money, can get loans, without the approval of the electors, to pay for the costs of providing that ambulance service. I find that extremely hard to accept. We have an ambulance authority that can, without question, assess a municipality. That same municipality can go to the bank and borrow money to pay for a service which it has had very little or no input into deciding the level of or the kind of, and for the purpose of that loan the electors of that municipality are not approached in any way, shape, or form as to whether in fact they want it or it should be. So I find this just strictly a method of unfair, imposed taxation that really should not happen. That's one area: the relationship between the powers of the ambulance board and the municipality. We should look at that and see what that relationship is, to make sure that it is not what it appears to be in this legislation. If that's what it is, I don't feel that is the right approach that should be happening at this point.

The other one I must admit I have difficulty understanding. Perhaps it's the vagueness of the clause or the fact that I find it almost shocking, I would say: that an ambulance authority is able to assess a school board. Now, the fact that the school board is located in a national park is one thing, but if all of a sudden we're going to be assessing school boards for ambulance services, that is becoming quite scary to me. I have a very strong conviction that school boards are currently underfunded to provide educational services. They are underfunded. There's no question of it. And now they are being looked at to provide other services, supposedly within the scope of education, which leaves me to question whether it should be social services or health or some other unit. Now we find that school boards who happen to be located partly or completely in a national park may in fact be looking at an additional assessment for an ambulance service that I would suggest to you they may never use. Why

and how that crept into this particular legislation is, quite frankly, beyond me.

We must keep in mind, however, that this Act was intended to cure all the ails that we had along the way, and as I suggested in the beginning, it's been a long time in coming. I don't think I would question the minister's personal intent on this particular piece of legislation. However, the way it's showing up here indicates to me that we should have another and longer look at it. The minister, I'm sure, will agree with me when she has a chance to look through it further, that this is perhaps not such a bad idea.

Then I find, upon going through the Act, that we get into legal problems. All of a sudden people are going to be asked to testify at something or other to do with ambulances. We all have vivid imaginations, and I could certainly see us being asked to testify on a wide and wonderful number of subjects. However, how we could have a stripping of our civil liberties creep up in an ambulance Act is beyond me. There is a section in the Act, unless I'm reading it incorrectly, that a witness must testify even if his testimony incriminates him – and as a cosmetic thing in that particular section, Madam Minister, I think you should have "him/her" – or establish liability or make them liable to a civil proceeding.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, hon. member. The member has about three minutes left but perhaps could deal with the principle of the Bill and not get down into these subclauses. This has been a problem. Please.

MR. WOLOSCHYN: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, I am on the principle of the Bill, and I find it extremely difficult to see how civil rights are eroded . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please, hon. member. Continue with the principle, please.

MR. WOLOSCHYN: Okay. We'll go on with a different principle. Now we'll get to the good part, and I'll go quickly because I understood I have two and a half minutes left.

The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations about capital and operating costs, and that's good stuff. But then we have the minister's area of the making of regulations, which covers not only the whole alphabet; it goes beyond the alphabet and goes into double digits, which to me would suggest that the Bill needs an awful lot of work, because when we have the whole alphabet used up on what the minister may or may not do, that indicates that the Bill has not been fully addressed. I would respectfully submit that this Bill be worked on a lot further before it comes back to this House.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a person that can't remember how many times when we had a caucus of two – we had a leader and I was the caucus. This was one of the Bills that I brought in on a number of occasions because it made good common sense both from the health field but also from an economic field. Now I'm glad that finally the government is bringing forth some sort of Bill. But again I find that it has many flaws in terms of the principle of the Bill. Now, I suggest to the minister, we have to look at a universal health care system. What is the best way to deliver that system for all the people in the province regardless of their pocketbooks? That's

what medicare is all about, and I suggest that we begin to look at the delivery system in a different way. Not only can we provide a better service, but I believe that over the long haul we can actually save money: if you like, the bottom line.

It's been said many times. I believe that we've made tremendous mistakes in terms of the delivery of services to rural Alberta. You know, I expect that in the late '70s and early '80s we seemed to have lots of money rolling in. "Oh, you want a building? Here's a building. The local MLA can put the plaque up." But as a result of that we have, as the minister is well aware, hospitals all over rural Alberta that cannot provide service. Now, the point that we were making way back at that time, in the early '80s, is that if we looked at a different delivery system, we wouldn't need as many acute care hospitals. Certainly we're in desperate need of auxiliary care in rural Alberta, but a provincial ambulance scheme would provide at least part of the answers in terms of that delivery of service.

Clearly, when you're dealing with an accident, the things that happen in rural Alberta, as I recall growing up, are usually some sort of accident that you need quick help for. It could be a serious matter like a heart attack or whatever. Those are the types of ailments, if I can put it that way, that you have to deal with quickly. What do you need then? Anybody knows that if you can get that service quickly, say in the first five or 10 minutes, most importantly you're going to save lives, but the bottom line is that you also save money, because if that service is done quickly, then it's well documented that you spend less time in the hospitals, in acute care. I think the minister is perhaps recognizing this. But they have not gone far enough, because there are some real problems with this particular Bill, Mr. Speaker, as I see it.

First of all, if we believe that it's part of a universal health care system, then surely as part of that health care system we should have full coverage, because if you don't have full coverage, what you're again leading to, at least in part of this system, is a two-tiered system of medicine. I think it's a false economy that if a person doesn't have money or they don't have Blue Cross or some other means of paying for that ambulance, then probably they're going to try to get to a hospital in a car and end up costing either a life or costing us more money in the long run. That's why you have full coverage. The government may argue that it's too expensive. I say it isn't too expensive if it saves one life. But more importantly, if it cuts out time in the hospital when they get there, you will save money. That's what I believe is wrong with this particular Bill. It should have moved towards full coverage, because, again, if you have insurance or you have the money, you're going to get a different type of ambulance care, if I can put it that way, Mr. Speaker.

The other part of it is again flowing from the idea of it being part of the universal health care system, the very part of a delivery service, especially in rural Alberta. It seems to me that we should, as other provinces have done, be tagging in the air ambulance with that also. I see the minister nodding her head. Perhaps that's coming along the way, but it's not here, and this of course is what we are debating. I would have hoped that that would have been part of the overall scheme, if you like, when we brought this Bill forward.

The other part of it. I don't understand the reason for the minister not having it as a universal system. But as I understand it, the Bill still allows the minister power to interfere at will in the operation of local ambulance services by waiving improved standards and overseeing ambulance district budgets but does not commit the province to any responsibility for cost. So what I see happening, Mr. Speaker, is that many municipalities are

feeling the crunch and they say, "Well, we can't afford this right now." Rather than the province providing the universal ambulance and providing the money to get away from a problem for that municipality, the minister then has the power – and I think this is why it's there – to say: "Okay, we'll wait for a year or two or three. You can go back to the old standards." I say frankly to the government and to the minister that that's unacceptable, because again that's leading to a different tiered system depending on where you live in the province.

As I say, Mr. Speaker, it's nice to finally see a Bill after many years of pushing the government by both the municipalities and the Official Opposition. I wish they'd taken our particular Act and brought it in. They'd be in much better shape if they had. I really do believe that besides the important role of a good provincial ambulance system – the most important, obviously, is to save lives – tying in a delivery system of more auxiliary care, less acute care hospitals but where you can get people to hospitals where they can do something for them, over the long haul you're actually going to save money.

I say that this is sort of that half step forward with the provincial ambulance scheme, but because of the limitations that I talked about, it's not good enough. I would hope that the minister would go back, or perhaps she might be bringing in some amendments – it would be nice to know if she were – to make this Bill more acceptable, certainly from our perspective but I think from the perspective of Albertans generally. It's an important Bill, a very important Bill, Mr. Speaker, and as I say, one that we fought for for a long period of time. I just wish that we could look at it not that we're providing another service and we're worried about spending money here, there, and everywhere on it. If we had an overall plan in health delivery as in other areas, again, besides saving lives, I believe we'd save money. I think that's the bottom line.

So as I say, having been in the caucus when there were two us and bringing in ambulance Bills, I should at least go on the record with this particular Bill at this time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to address a few remarks at second reading of Bill 49. With the introduction of Bill 49 Alberta becomes, I believe, the last province in Canada that has basic legislation governing standards, organization of the ambulance service. I think that's a milestone; that's a step toward the development of a provincial ambulance system in the province of Alberta. It is a small step. It's a completely modest step, in my opinion.

One of the previous speakers suggested that more work should be done on the Bill. It's hard to know what good that would do, Mr. Speaker, because my understanding is that this Bill results from a report that was issued in May of 1988, which was followed up by draft legislation tabled in this House a year ago, August 1989. The result of a review of that is Bill 49 before us today. I think that indicates to me that an awful lot of work has been done on this legislation, and perhaps effort is not what we should be striving for. I think we should be looking for results in this Assembly rather than more effort.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

I appreciate that the previous governments have ignored the problem for a long period of time so the present minister has a difficult situation to try to pull together. I believe in her

opening comments the minister outlined a sum of \$41 million that the provincial government now invests in ambulance, some of it, a good chunk of it, through the health care portfolio, through the Blue Cross system, through the system of transfers of patients between hospitals. I'm sure the minister must be aware that a certain manipulation of that goes on. If you can be somehow admitted to one hospital, you can have your entire ambulance costs to the target hospital paid by the health care system, whereas if you're not fortunate enough to be admitted partway through, you can be stuck with the entire cost of getting to the hospital where you're going to have the treatment. That's kind of an arbitrary gate that people pass through in their access to the health care system: if they're admitted to a hospital, they become the responsibility of the province through the health care system, but if they're not, they're their own responsibility.

I believe the Member for Edmonton-Centre discussed the importance of air ambulance because a lot of people who are air ambulated are not necessarily admitted to a hospital, and so they're not falling within that transfer provision. They're being treated as picked-up patients.

But anyway, the interhospital transfer was a big chunk of the money that was spent. The motor vehicle accident fund or the uninsured motorists' fund, where people are injured in traffic accidents and the responsible party, whether that's the driver themselves or another party . . .

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, hon. member. It's the observation of the Chair that these remarks are perhaps appropriate to the estimates, which are some time past. I have difficulty relating them to the Bill and the principle of the Bill. Please.

MR. McINNIS: Well, it would be my pleasure to explain to the Chair how these figures are related to the Bill before us. They are, in fact, the very same figures that were mentioned by the Minister of Health in the introduction of this Bill. It was part of the \$25 million which was broadly identified as being health care expenditure. There was a further sum of \$16 million, which was identified by the hon. minister in her opening remarks, attributed to ambulance expenditure. That was money that goes to the Department of Municipal Affairs, into municipal coffers to subsidize municipal ambulance services. If Mr. Speaker cares to read Bill 49, he will see very clearly that the Bill provides for the regulation of municipally operated ambulance systems.

How it is funded is a very key issue related to ambulance expenditure. Now, my point about the \$41 million figure is that it's . . . The minister spoke with a small amount of pride in the fact that the provincial government supports ambulance service to the tune of \$41 million. But my point is that this comes piecemeal through quite a number of programs. That is why perhaps it seemed to the Chair that I was straying from the principle of the Bill as I outlined the various programs. It was because I had to make the point, to the satisfaction of the Chair at least, that this expenditure comes through a variety of different avenues and it isn't necessarily focused directly on the problem of providing ambulance service as a part of the health care system. I think ambulance service should be compared to the health care system. The Chair will appreciate that this Assembly votes staggering sums of money for health care. The health care expenditure authorized by this Assembly is \$3,618,000,000; that's \$3,618 million.

Now I would like the Assembly to compare that \$3,618 million to the \$41 million which is the total of this grab bag that comes from a variety of different programs, a variety of different

departments, funnelled through one trickle-down mechanism or another into the ambulance service. Well, you compare those two gross numbers, the \$41 million spent by the province on ambulance with the \$3,618 million allocated by this Assembly towards health care. It's simple mathematics to determine that that's approximately 1.1 percent. That's the total commitment of the province through the various mechanisms towards the absolutely most critical delivery point of health care in an emergency situation.

Now, everyone in this Assembly hopes that they themselves and their loved ones and the people they know will not face a critical emergency situation, but you know that unfortunately these things happen. That's where the delivery of health care becomes important. A matter of minutes and seconds of course is the difference between life and death. I recall that when I prepared these remarks – it was the last time we were up on second reading – on my way here to the Assembly I saw an unfortunate accident at the corner of 149th Street and 107th Avenue where a vehicle was turned upside down. There were several policemen trying to take apart the wreck and get at the people inside, and they had a very difficult job to do. I'm sure they would have appreciated being assisted by some life support people in the ambulance system.

Now, I spent a little bit of time in the province of British Columbia where they have a provincial ambulance service, and perhaps one or two remarks on that experience might serve the members in assessing the merits of second reading of Bill 49. There is a very close connection, of course, with this Assembly as far as the B.C. Ambulance Service is concerned. The Minister of the Environment has a family member who is in charge of that service. Now, there was at least one member of that family who made good, I can assure you in this Assembly. There is one member of that family, and I think if you pay attention to the career of your brother . . .

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. McINNIS: I'm sorry. If the minister paid close attention to the career of his brother who operates that very excellent ambulance service in the province of British Columbia, I'm sure he will be guided on how he should vote on Bill 49. Because, you know, there is a conservative style of administration in the province of British Columbia; has been, unfortunately, since 1975.

MR. FOX: I hear that's changing.

MR. McINNIS: It may change. I think the member perhaps has his finger on the pulse of that great province, realizing the government may change.

But when the government changed in 1975, the conservative administration thought they could save some money by cutting back on the provincial ambulance system established by the previous New Democrat government. One of the ministers, I believe it was the hon. Allan Williams, in the middle of this great debate within government about whether they should get rid of this provincial ambulance service, which everybody knew was an outrageous expenditure that the province couldn't possibly afford, had a coronary in his living room, and along came the provincial ambulance service and administered advanced life support and saved the guy's life. He went on to finish a successful career in politics and retire and enjoy the benefits of the indexed pensions which are available in some jurisdictions to people who retire from the profession of politics.

He became, of course, an overnight convert to the benefit of advanced life support, and I think understandably so, because you know nobody plans for an emergency, except the ambulance service, and if it's there for you when you need it, then of course it's very important.

Now, I find some of the particular provisions of Bill 49 do require some attention, and I'm hoping that we have the opportunity to do that within committee study. But on the broad principle of it this is legislation to provide standards and a degree of organization to the ambulance service, to try to bring some element of a system. It's not at all clear in the legislation what the standard is to be in terms of training. It's not at all clear what the definition of basic life support is actually going to be. As a matter of fact, I have a problem with legislation that says in six very important, substantive sections that the minister may do this or may do that. Now, it would be improper of me to go through each one, but suffice it to say that sections 2, 3, 5, 10, 11, 33, and 36 are in the category where the minister has latitude to do this or do that. The word "may" means "can and might," but it certainly doesn't mean "should or shall." So it is that type of legislation that provides a great deal of ministerial discretion.

Now, I think that if we look honestly at the question of how important ambulance service is in the delivery of our health care, we would come to appreciate that it's probably a little more than 1 percent of the equation. If you can get people who would otherwise pass away and not enjoy the benefits of the long life that might be available to them, give them a chance to access all of the rest of the \$3.6 billion of the system, that makes some sense. Instead of trying to put an umbrella over the patchwork of Blue Cross and interhospital transfer and the motor vehicle fund and municipal transfer payments, maybe it is time we looked at having a provincial system and looked at establishing in legislation what constitutes basic life support, what constitutes advanced life support, who is entitled to the one rather than the other, how that applies geographically, how that applies financially.

Many of these questions, of course, will be answered sooner or later as the minister exercises the discretion that's available under sections 2, 3, 5, 10, 11, 33, and 36 and also as the regulations are developed. But it as a whole lacks a vision, a sense of direction. It doesn't get us to the point where we would look at having a system which is somewhere near as good as the one that's administered by the brother of the hon. Minister of the Environment, because I think that we need to look to a day when people who suffer unfortunate incidents have a right to attain the kind of life support which is currently available. Technology and training are advancing to the point where it's quite possible that a lot of people who would have not had a chance to enjoy their right to a good health care system and the right to a healthy future might miss that altogether. So the ambulance system is a crucial part of the health care system, and I really think that our province is capable of doing a great deal better than Bill 49.

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

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to go back a little bit in time to a couple of events that I think are significant. It wasn't all that terribly long ago, when money was plentiful in our province and we didn't know what to do with it, that in the city of Edmonton we were promised two additional medical facilities, one in northeast Edmonton and one in the

southeast part of our city. Both areas were being developed. Well, then money got a little bit tighter. We developed the hospital facility down in Mill Woods. We have the Mill Woods hospital. But we didn't get a facility into the northeast end.

As I said, I wanted to take you back a bit in history to get to the point about ambulance services, because I think it's an important point to make. It's understandable that when money dries up, priorities change. But along with that there was the development of residential single family housing units in the northeast end, and a number of families that moved into those areas were left without facilities to look after medical needs.

Mr. Speaker, the other event that I wanted to speak about was the tornado that struck Edmonton a few years ago. In my constituency in the north end the southern border is the railway track. There are a number of overpasses at 97 Street, 82 Street, 66 Street, and it goes on down the line. We were cut off. We were completely cut off by all of the water that had collected under those railway overpasses. We had a lot of difficulty in trying to get people out of the Evergreen trailer court and from that housing facility, the trailer court, down into the Royal Alex or over to the Charles Camsell or to any other medical emergency facility. It's that I want to speak about. Without a facility in the northeast end, although there was Alberta Hospital Edmonton that opened up its doors to its neighbours living in the Evergreen trailer court and allowed them to stabilize a number of the victims of the tornado at that facility, we did not have the ability to transport people readily to a medical facility that was certainly required by the victims of the tornado. There were other avenues of access to the disaster area in the northeast end. It took a great deal of time for ambulance attendants to get there. It took a great deal of time for all medical services to get there. In fact, the reason they had difficulty getting there is that we haven't got an ambulance facility in that north end north of 118 Avenue. So those folk that required medical evacuation services, any kind of medical services, had to go an amazing route to get around the disaster area.

Now, that was an uncommon event; I grant you that. But what it shows is that by the time those people arrived, those services were more than necessary. There was an awful lot of difficulty in trying to get those people back into a full medical service facility. Perhaps there could have been . . . I'm not being at all critical of the delivery of medical attention once people were there. But I'm concerned about what in this Act constitutes basic life support services. I understand that that's the minimum standard, but I don't understand what that minimum standard is. Again, if we have a crisis of major proportion in parts of our province, we're going to have to make sure that those people that are providing the prehospital care are properly qualified to deal with the trauma or the crisis that is created in remote areas or areas that may not necessarily be remote but are made difficult to access because of any form of natural disaster.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I've often seen ambulance services as an extension of the hospital system. If you have properly trained paramedics inside the vehicle that's taking a patient from point A to point B, they can provide a service to that person that's needing obvious medical attention. When I've spoken with a number of people in my constituency about medical services in the northeast end, the comments that usually come back are: well, by the time you call an ambulance, by the time the ambulance gets to the house, by the time the ambulance leaves the house and gets to the hospital, an incredible amount of time has gone by: 30, 35, 40 minutes sometimes. That is in many instances, whether it's a person that's choking, a person that's

having an asthma attack or cardiac arrest, a long – too often, perhaps, for some – period of time that is costing the life of the individual. If we had paramedic service so that by the time the call was initiated and the ambulance attendants arrived – to provide that prehospital care, that level of service is going to go way up. That level of service, the level of medical attention, is going to increase so that the person, in the time they're traveling from where the victim is to the full medical facility, is going to be perhaps not more than properly cared for but cared for in a better way than the current level of service may very well be.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of other concerns I have with respect to this Bill. Again it relates to the level of care or qualification of the attendant. I have in my constituency a good number of workers that travel from site to site around the province. Construction workers, carpenters, plumbers and pipefitters travel from wherever their jobs may take them: Fort McMurray or Whitecourt or down in southern Alberta. Now, surely to goodness, if they are injured on the worksite, they should be able to expect that they're going to have a level of care that's consistent across the province. Would it be too much to ask – I don't think it is – that the kind of care they get in Blairmore is the same kind of care they would get in Berwyn?

If we had a standard that was consistent – and it's not necessarily here in this Bill – and somewhat higher, I would argue, than just basic life support, I think that would truly enhance this Bill. I would hope that we're not going to be too terribly far away from that. We have 60,000 worksite accidents a year, and I don't think it's too awfully much to express on behalf of those workers who go outside major centres, who are somewhat removed from medical facilities, that they should be able to expect a level of care better than the first aid attendant that may or may not be at the worksite. Surely to goodness, if the worker is going to be injured to the point where a medical facility or medical services are required in the form of an ambulance, that level of care is something greater than what a person with a first aid ticket may be able to provide at the worksite. So I don't think it's too much to ask that we try and apply a level of medical care in the ambulance that's a little bit higher than basic life support.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, having the different levels that are being proposed here makes one wonder whether or not the person is going to take the closest ambulance available or the best ambulance. That's why I worry about the different degrees of service that are going to be provided in the facility and the services, because I think people are going to move away from that which is physically closest to looking at that which may be best. We want to make sure all ambulance attendants are fully qualified to look after the needs of their patients and in close proximity to those people as well.

Thank you.

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

MR. GIBEAULT: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I would like to get in on the debate of Bill 49 as well, the Ambulance Services Act, because there are a number of things that concern me about this particular piece of legislation. Now, to the extent that this Bill provides some new legislated minimum standards, there is some merit to it, but it does concern me that the standards seem to be fairly limited. We talk about basic life service standards, and I have to wonder sometimes whether or not, particularly in rural areas where the level of ambulance care is less than it is in the urban communities, the major cities of Edmonton and Calgary,

we're going as far as we should. I think all Albertans need to know that in times of emergency they can count on getting the best possible emergency care and that those people who provide ambulance service, particularly those who give that care on the frontline basis, the ambulance personnel, do have extensive training. I'm not sure the standards that are provided here are going to provide comfort to many citizens of the province.

So while we acknowledge that there is some movement to standards which should have been set a long time ago, which is good – and my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Centre has been pressing this for a number of years now – I'm not convinced that it's going to give all the citizens of this province the kind of ambulance service they deserve. Just as an example of that – and I don't see any provision for it here in Bill 49 – we had the case of a construction worker working on a project at the Daishowa plant near Peace River who had a heart attack. Due in large part, it appears, to an inadequate ambulance service to get this worker to a hospital facility, this worker died. That was an incident that should not have happened. There should be a provision in any kind of ambulance services Bill we can be proud of in this province for ambulance service to be part of any major new development, a project in the province, where a lot of construction workers and others are going to be removed from easy access to emergency health care. They've got to have that kind of access to quality ambulance service. Now, we've had one death already, and I hope it doesn't take more deaths before the minister of health care is going to ensure that at sites like that across the province, those workers have access to emergency health care when there's a serious accident or a heart attack, as I mentioned before, or some other life threatening situation. The workers of this province surely should be entitled to be able to count on easy access to high-quality ambulance service to ensure that they don't lose their lives or suffer other serious injury by default.

Certainly the work force of the province deserves better than that. In a lot of these large projects like Daishowa there are hundreds, if not thousands, of construction workers at the peak of the project, and they are a group at risk, Mr. Speaker. So I hope the minister might be able to address that point, because it does concern particularly the construction workers and many others that work on these major projects across the province.

Another concern we have here with Bill 49 is the fact that this legislation is being introduced without any assurance that there will be proper financial support forthcoming from the province. Now, it looks like the municipalities are going to be on the hook for most of the expense related to this upgrading of ambulance service. I think most taxpayers, if you spoke to them, would feel their property tax bill is already onerous, and if that has to increase to allow for additional enhancements of the ambulance service in their communities, it will become increasingly burdensome, particularly for those who are on low incomes or fixed incomes – seniors, single parents and so on – who are already facing squeezes of all kinds from government. To add an additional one through the municipal tax structure is just adding to an unfairness in the overall tax system, Mr. Speaker. So we need to have some kind of indication from the minister that there is going to be financial support available to the municipalities to provide this valuable and necessary service to their citizens in their respective jurisdictions.

As my colleague for Edmonton-Centre did mention already, really the way we should be dealing with this is providing ambulance service as an integrated component of the health care system. You know, it's really not good enough, Mr. Speaker, to say, "Well, hospital care is free, but if you need an ambulance

because you've had an accident or an auto accident at your work site or whatever and you need emergency treatment, you have to pay for that." In a state of trauma somehow you've got to pay fees to pay ambulance operators and then maybe get a reimbursement later on or something like that. It's a very cumbersome, American sort of approach to the situation, and it's a weak link, I would suggest, in the whole health care system that we have in this province, which in other ways is so very good. So I would appreciate the minister's comments to that effect.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

One of the other problems we have with Bill 49 is the lack of clarity in terms of the role of native ambulance services in the province. Many reserves and communities where we have predominantly native citizens have developed ambulance services, and it's unclear what the arrangements will be here in terms of integrating them and providing an opportunity to make sure they provide services of good quality to their respective constituents and members of reserves and so on, Mr. Speaker. I think there's really a need to have that addressed specifically in the Bill.

So there are a number of concerns that we have about this Bill, Mr. Speaker, and I would look forward to the minister speaking to some of those concerns we've raised.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
Edmonton-Calder.

MS MJOLSNESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a few comments to make on Bill 49 as well. I am concerned about some of the flaws in this Bill. When we're talking about the principle of Bill 49, supposedly this Bill is bringing in an improved ambulance service for the people of Alberta. When we talk about bringing in minimum standards, again, as I think my colleague from Edmonton-Jasper Place said, this is the last province to do this.

Mr. Speaker, there are some serious gaps in this Bill when it does come to the principle of providing improved service for the people of Alberta. We already have fragmentation throughout the province when it comes to ambulance service, and it's a disappointment that this Bill doesn't correct this. I think it's unacceptable that every Albertan in this province is not guaranteed a very high standard of service. I think every Albertan has the right to know that no matter where they live in this province, they have access to good-quality ambulance service, and they deserve access to good-quality service.

When we talk about training, I'm very disturbed that there is a provision in the Bill that allows the minister to decide who can provide ambulance service. In fact, there can be exceptions made to who provides services, and there are exceptions when it comes to the standards that are being introduced here. Mr. Speaker, I grew up in a rural area in Alberta. I remember that when I was very young, our neighbour was the ambulance driver. He owned and operated the ambulance in the small town I grew up in. He was also the undertaker in the town. There seemed to be a little bit of a conflict of interest there, but anyway it kept things quite interesting. I'm not sure what qualifications he had when he was driving that ambulance and providing ambulance service to the people of Alberta in that particular community, but I do know that the man that took over from him in providing ambulance service certainly didn't have any qualifications that I'm aware of. In fact, before he took over the ambulance service, he was probably the number one speed driver in the

town and would drive through the town so fast that he would literally scare people when they saw him coming. So the point is that the minister is responsible to bring in minimum standards of training for ambulance attendants, and I think there should be some guarantee that those standards are implemented throughout this province so that no matter where you live in the province, you are guaranteed that you will have good-quality ambulance service. Why penalize those Albertans who live in less populated areas of the province?

I believe, Mr. Speaker – and others have alluded to this – that ambulance service in the province should be an integral part of a health care system. I feel that anyone in the province being able to operate an ambulance is cause for some concern. I know of a case where a man in Whitecourt was being transported into Edmonton – he'd had a heart attack – and the ambulance had two flat tires, I think, on the way into the city. There were some complications, and he had to come into the city. Now, I realize, Mr. Speaker, that that could happen to any ambulance driver, but the fact is that if people don't need training, then I suppose you would say we are lowering the quality of care available to people in the province.

There are a lot of unanswered questions, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to quality of service. What about the administration of drugs while people are in the ambulance? These are the kinds of things that I think need to be addressed.

I think Bill 49, the Ambulance Services Act, in principle should bring improved service to all Albertans no matter where they live and no matter what their income is. Recently, Mr. Speaker, I talked to a woman who lived about 40 or 50 kilometres outside the city and had to take an ambulance to a city hospital. She showed me the bill that was sent to her after that little trip in the ambulance. It was something in the neighbourhood of \$250. She had no idea at that particular time how she was going to pay for that. So I think this is something that needs to be addressed in this Bill. If we're talking about providing increased quality of service to Albertans with Bill 49, we certainly need to make sure that every single Albertan, no matter where they live, can afford to take an ambulance. As the Leader of the Official Opposition said earlier, it's an extension of our health care system, it's part of our health care system, and you can't simply provide hospital care and not provide the emergency care prior to people being admitted into the hospital.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about fragmentation of service throughout the province, I think this is very serious, and this Bill in principle doesn't address the variety and the degree of services that are provided to Albertans throughout the province. Many of us know that the first 10 minutes after an accident or an injury are the most crucial in getting some assistance. If people are being further injured because of delays in ambulances coming to their aid, then we have to be very concerned about this. If this is the case, I don't think people are getting the kinds of services they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, we could look at something like the need for a 911 emergency number throughout the province so that services could be co-ordinated and services would be provided for people throughout the province. It would ensure that people, no matter where they live, would have access to emergency care. So again, in principle I think the Bill is to improve the ambulance service in Alberta as part of our health care system, and yet it does have serious flaws.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when we're talking about somebody being transported in an ambulance to get some medical help, that is one thing. But we can't end it there. We can't say that once a person has been picked up by an ambulance, the game is over,

because in many instances there is not appropriate care for the person in the ambulance. So in principle, when we're talking about this Bill and we're looking at a certain vision for emergency care for Albertans, we have to extend our vision a little bit further than the actual ambulance. I'm talking about many people who, for example, suffer from serious mental illness. When they get into the ambulance, there is no appropriate place to take these people. So again, I'm disappointed that this Bill 49 doesn't address this concern, at least in terms of some kind of vision. As a total health care system, we do have to address the lack of appropriate services for people suffering from certain illnesses.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that while the intention of the Bill is to improve service, there are some major concerns with the Bill. I thank you for the opportunity to be able to express those.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Avonmore.

MS M. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I welcome the opportunity to speak to this Bill. In looking at this Bill I could only think: who can be against a Bill that promises a quality ambulance service throughout the province? But it doesn't deliver on that promise. It really provides for a patchwork of ambulance districts with varying levels of service.

I was raised on a farm also, a long way from a hospital, it seemed, in those days. There were no telephones. In the context of knowing how inaccessible health care was, my commitment to quality ambulance service is emphasized when I think of my own children. Three of my children have health-threatening diseases, and on more than one occasion an ambulance has been at our door. There have been trained paramedics to administer oxygen and adrenalin, and two of my children are alive because of the kind of quality ambulance service we have in this city. More importantly, just six months ago my year-old granddaughter stopped breathing. We had an ambulance at my door in four minutes, and I think she's alive because they were able to be there that quickly. I would hope that every person in this province would have access to that kind of service, that there would be ambulance care there quickly, with trained paramedics that can provide the kind of service that will ensure the person that needs care will arrive at the hospital alive. Particularly as I reflect on living on a farm in rural Alberta, I think how different my life would be now if my children had the kinds of illnesses they have with the lack of service that is in many areas. My brother also drove an ambulance, and I don't think he had any training. He's a fast driver to boot anyway.

I guess one of the concerns I have about this Bill is that a great deal of the Bill deals with: and this and that and the other thing will be dealt with by regulations. Regulations do not open the issues up for public debate, so I believe there is too much power given to the Lieutenant Governor in Council and the minister. The minister will define ambulance districts, will have the power to appoint boards – and we have to say: on what basis will they be chosen? – will be able to define things like remuneration, qualifications. Again, who sets the standards for ambulance attendants? What kind of training? The provision for a transition period when the present attendants without training may continue – we're all very worried because we don't know how long that period will be. Again, the Lieutenant Governor in Council and the minister will have the power to determine the level of service standards in rural areas. So there is great concern about what is not in the Bill. What we want is a universally accessible ambulance system that provides for

quality care that's available to everybody. Universality should be a key in any kind of health care system.

One has to be concerned, then, about the payment required from patients. What does this mean for those who cannot afford to pay for the ambulance? We hear stories from the States of people being asked for their medicare card or payment before they're picked up. Such a system encodes a two-tier system of medical care, something that I think is repugnant to Albertans. We think of the cost of ambulance service. I am four minutes, five minutes from a hospital: \$55. What about the cost of air ambulance or interprovincial transport? It might well be beyond the means of many people or extremely difficult for them.

Another concern I have is the extensive powers given to appointed boards. They will have, as I say, extensive and broad powers, including the power to borrow money and requisition capital and operating funds from municipalities within the district. This seems undemocratic to me, inasmuch as the money can be requisitioned from duly elected municipal boards. We have to say: where's the accountability, and who will be taking care of this? We have to say: where is the funding to municipalities so that the funds do not have to be taken from another area that that municipality has responsibility for? Again we see in the area of education that an increasing burden is being placed on local taxpayers as the central government abrogates its responsibility to provide for a level of service throughout the province. We have to ask: how will things like air ambulance service be integrated into existing services? If we need a landing pad for an air ambulance, who will build it? Who will pay for it? Where will that money come from? We think of the rural areas. Many rural municipalities are already strapped for funds. How will they manage to provide for a level of service?

I think all these questions are of grave concern to us. I think we have to have a vision of an ambulance service as part of an overall health care system because people have to get to hospitals. Many situations are life threatening without proper care, and we know that many people die from heart attacks and accidents because they do not get the kind of care they need in the first five minutes. So I would say that an ambulance service must be integrated into the health care system and should be properly and fully funded through the public purse.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Forest Lawn.

MR. PASHAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the key provisions in the Bill is for the establishment of an ambulance district board, and I don't necessarily have concerns but just some questions about the role that board will play, particularly in a city such as Calgary, which has a population of some 700,000 people and has an ambulance system and an emergency system that seems to work quite well. But what powers will the board have? How will it interact with existing hospitals and the kinds of emergency services that are currently provided?

As the minister knows, there's been quite a bit of controversy in the city of Calgary with respect to emergency services, going back not just to the tenure of the previous minister of hospitals but to the minister before that. In the inner city of Calgary the Holy Cross hospital was threatened with being closed as an active treatment hospital and being converted to a long-term care hospital. That created an awful lot of concern within the community because a lot of people felt that the emergency service that would be provided at that hospital would be curtailed or would no longer exist. And currently there are proposals, as I understand it, to put a complete emergency

service into the Calgary Peter Lougheed hospital. If they do that, will there be an emergency service at the former Calgary General hospital, the Bow Valley hospital? These are real concerns to the city residents because response time becomes the critical factor. If these emergency services are provided to the outlying hospitals, will the inner city residents, where most of the emergencies are apparently generated, have adequate access to emergency services? Now, that may or may not be a role for the ambulance district board to look at; I don't know. It's not clear to me from reading the Act.

Could the minister just clarify some of those questions with respect to the powers the board would have? Will the board have the powers to work with existing hospital boards or district hospital boards to affect or change or modify in any way the kinds of emergency services that are provided within the greater Calgary area? Like, I don't even know to what extent – if a board is set up for the city of Calgary, will it cover the whole city, the existing district boards, and this kind of thing? If the minister could clarify some of those questions, I for one at least, and I think the citizens of Calgary, would appreciate the answers.

MR. FOX: If I might address a couple of comments on behalf of the people in the Vegreville constituency and, in particular, the ambulance operators in that area. There are indeed some very supportable things in the Bill, and the minister is aware of the things that we've been advocating over the last number of years. The Leader of the Official Opposition referred to them again in debate tonight.

There are, however, some ways in which this Bill is fatally flawed, and most of them relate to money. Some relate to jurisdiction, as the minister is well aware, but most of them relate to money. The minister is trying in a limited sort of way to create a level playing field in terms of standards across the province, but we have anything but a level playing field when it comes to funding when we measure the ability of these different ambulance operators, be they private or associated with the hospitals – whatever the case may be – to provide the same sort of service, and I think that's a real mistake. Many of the ambulance operators in fact feel they will bear the financial burden of these improved standards because they're not going to be able to get extra money from their sponsoring municipalities. Some of them operate in communities where they get absolutely nothing in terms of per capita funding from the municipality. It may in other areas be \$2, \$4, up to \$10 per capita. So the ability of people to access quality ambulance service varies dramatically in different communities in the province.

I'm hoping the minister has heard the arguments that we've made and will come forward with some amendments in the committee stage of this Bill that will make a commitment on the part of the provincial government to provide funding for ambulance service in a way that would guarantee Albertans, regardless of where they live, access to properly funded, top-quality ambulance service. I make those arguments along with members of our caucus, and I hope the minister is listening.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The minister, in summation.

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Thank you. In closing debate, Mr. Speaker, I would like to first of all thank all the members who have spoken on Bill 49, Ambulance Services Act. I think there's been a very thoughtful input, and I very much appreciate that.

I think it's important to address the principles of the Act again. We are moving from a voluntary ambulance service right across this province to a mandatory service; that's a very fundamental principle that's embodied in the Bill. Second is the question of access, on which many have spoken, and third is with respect to standards.

Many have talked about – and certainly Edmonton-Centre, when he opened up – why the Act was not called the emergency health services Act. The Ambulance Services Act, Bill 49, governs ground and air ambulances and interhospital transfer. Emergency health services could very much imply the operation of emergency rooms, of disaster services, all of which are covered under different legislation. The terms Ambulance Act or Ambulance Services Act are used in Saskatchewan, Ontario, and Manitoba. B.C. uses Health Emergency Act, but their Act is still primarily dealing with the regulation of an ambulance service, though province run and owned.

In terms of now we bring the pieces together, which was Edmonton-Centre's question on emergency room, disaster, all of those, I want to advise him of the existence recently of the Provincial Advisory Committee on Trauma Services. I would be happy to get into that a little bit more in third reading and discuss the objectives of that study: what's being done with respect to trauma development, identifying triage services, the principles and the components of applicable service standards, made in Alberta, that apply to an Alberta ambulance service. So the Provincial Advisory Committee on Trauma Services is working towards putting a network in place that links services to hospitals to other services. The registrar, appointed pursuant to the Ambulance Services Act, and the ambulance advisory and appeal board, all of which is covered in the Act, are going to work toward the integration of emergency help service in the province. We can get into that more in committee study.

Many people dealt with the question of interhospital transfer and the question of air ambulance and the fact that it's covered in the regulations. I want to advise all members that as soon as the Bill proceeds through the House this session, the regulations will be circulated to all interested parties, and interhospital transfer and air ambulance will be part of that.

The hon. Member for Stony Plain asked: what is air ambulance? Well, really, the Act enables regulations to be developed, and as I said, they'll be circulated this summer. The transfers can be conducted by a private vehicle, by hospital vans, by ground and air ambulance, or even by commercial aircraft, depending upon the medical status of the patient and the location of the patient. So when the hon. member asks me what it is, that is why it is going to be covered under the regulatory sections of the Bill, and I would say appropriately so. But they will certainly be fully discussed in the province before proclamation of the Bill.

The type of transportation and the urgency will continue to be determined by the attending physician, which I think always must be on interhospital, the medical decision that has to be made.

Some members have scoffed at the \$41 million. [interjections] No, I wasn't referring to you, Edmonton-Jasper Place. Some have. I've very much appreciated your attendance in listening to the components of the \$41 million. I won't repeat them here, but I think it's important to look at how much other provinces are putting into ambulance services. Saskatchewan, by the report of the Member for Drumheller, is funding at about the \$10 million level; Manitoba at a \$7 million level; British Columbia at a \$54 million level. Given that at this point we don't have mandatory service in the absence of legislation, I think Alberta is well situated with its \$41 million support.

Several members asked: who is in control of the legislation? Who's ultimately responsible for ambulance services? Well, clearly, the Minister of Health. I'm ultimately responsible for all prehospital care. The registrar would ensure compliance with provincial standards, and the registrar will be working closely with the ambulance advisory and appeal board and the Provincial Advisory Committee on Trauma Services. But in terms of the setting of standards, in terms of the province saying, "We shall meet basic life support," that requirement is one that the Minister of Health is demanding, and we'll go from there.

Several members, certainly Edmonton-Gold Bar, raised the concern that we were not all at BLS and that there was provision to permit less than BLS. I can appreciate the concern that's been expressed in the House with respect to less than a BLS level, but I think we have to have due regard for communities in our province where the call volume at this point is simply not one where they can meet BLS service. I think we have to respect that, though not be complacent about it, which is why the Act contemplates a review of that status, granted only by the minister at specific time periods, to ensure that we are pushing – pushing – towards BLS. I would remind hon. members that we have 89 percent of the province presently covered by a BLS level, but I think we have to respect the difficulties that are being faced by some of our communities.

Several members raised the question: where will training occur? It will occur in our advanced education institutions, including NAIT, SAIT, and the Alberta Vocational Centre in Lac La Biche. And who is setting up the responsibility for the training of ambulance officers? Yes, it will be under the regulations, and the regulations will link the individual operator into the health disciplines process so that it'll be a very prescribed level of training that must be there.

Several members raised a question with respect to the concerns raised by the native people, the aboriginal people, with respect to Bill 49. I can say that the principles upon which the Bill is based and the intent of the lawyers in drafting the legislation was not to in any way detract from the treaty or constitutional rights of the aboriginal people. I've had the benefit of their two position papers, and my staff who've been working on the legislation have met on several occasions with groups and individuals representing native interests. As well, as I committed previously, I had the opportunity yesterday to meet with representatives of the Alberta Indian Health Care Commission, the Indian Association of Alberta, and the Alberta Native Ambulance Operators Association. It should be noted, I think, that there are significant changes in Bill 49 to accommodate the concerns which have been expressed previously, and I will get into that in more detail during Committee of the Whole study of the legislation. I'm reviewing very carefully the views that have been expressed to me in the past and reiterated yesterday to determine if there are any further steps necessary to ensure that the treaty and constitutional rights of the aboriginal people are not detracted from. I committed yesterday in my meeting that discussions would take place with the aboriginal groups during the drafting of the regulations as well.

The question of communication has been raised and the whole question of why we've not chosen to provide for a central dispatch of ground ambulance. The fundamental principle of the legislation is the continued local management of ambulance services, subject to provincially administered standards. However, we are certainly collaborating at this point with the Department of Public Works, Supply and Services on a feasibility study with respect to the 911 number and the possibility of expanding it, which was a question. As members will know, 911

is presently available in Edmonton, the county of Strathcona, Red Deer, and Calgary, and I'm hopeful that it will be introduced provincewide in the next few years, which would certainly provide a central mechanism for ambulance service.

The hon. Member for Taber-Warner raised the whole question of the role of volunteers in the ambulance service, and I think this is where there's probably a difference in the point of view between some members of the opposition and the government. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre described it as – he didn't like the half public, half private component of the ambulance service. We have in fact built on the private and the public component of ambulance that exists in this province by supporting volunteer groups and not thinking that we would have to wipe out the volunteer groups, not having to prevent the ambulance services that are presently operating right across Alberta in a very fine way. We don't want this legislation to remove those kinds of services, which have had a very key role for volunteers throughout the health system. That's clearly a different point of view than has been taken by the opposition.

In addition, some of the members of the opposition have expressed concern that we should be moving towards the British Columbia model. British Columbia's is very centrally planned, centrally owned. It's not the kind of model we're working from in Alberta, where we are being in a partnership with our municipalities, with our volunteer ambulance services, with the goal of covering the whole province with an emergency plan of access. So my view is that the Alberta solution is one that was contemplated in the Schumacher report and one that I think is appropriate for the level of sophistication that has been reached in Alberta.

I think my final point that I want to just touch upon is the whole issue of basic life support. Basic life support is in fact defined. Basic life support means that at least one ambulance attendant per ambulance must be qualified as an emergency medical technician, which requires the six-week course. So BLS is in fact very much defined. Certainly, if the hon. members are more interested in the contemplation between BLS and advanced life support and EMR, they will find the only difference between BLS and emergency responder service is in the level of training of the technician.

Finally, I guess my conclusion would be that I agree with those members who have said that we need to look at how we fund ambulance services, and certainly this Bill goes a long way to contemplating that. My view is that as resources are freed up in Health and new resources come into Health, the first place for those resources to go is into the community side, including the emergency access side. I also believe that because we don't have everything we want – none of us has that all the time – we have to target those resources into the areas that need them most. My preference would be to target those who are least able to pay, as we do, frankly, with coverage for the Family and Social Services payment as part of the \$25 million component, and also to help those communities who are least able to meet BLS, to help them to get to that level. So I would prefer, as we move into funding of the service, that we target those areas that are of the greatest need as opposed to general across-the-board grants.

Mr. Speaker, those, I believe, are the main points of principle raised by the members. The specific points on the sections of the Bill obviously will be dealt with in committee study.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Health has moved second reading of Bill 49, Ambulance Services Act. Those in favour of second reading, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: Carried.

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

[Eight minutes having elapsed, the House divided]

For the motion:

Ady	Drobot	Orman
Anderson	Elliott	Osterman
Betkowski	Fischer	Paszkowski
Black	Hewes	Payne
Bogle	Hyland	Severtson
Bradley	Jonson	Shrake
Bruseker	Klein	Speaker, R.
Calahasen	Lund	Stewart
Cherry	McCoy	Thurber
Chumir	Mirosh	Trynchy
Clegg	Moore	Zarusky
Day	Nelson	

Against the motion:

Fox	McEachern	Roberts
Gibeault	McInnis	Sigurdson
Laing, M.	Mjolsness	Woloshyn
Martin	Pashak	

Totals: Ayes – 35 Noes – 11

[Motion carried; Bill 49 read a second time]

Bill 37

Alberta Government Telephones Reorganization Act

Moved by Ms Barrett:

The motion for second reading be amended to read:

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

Moved by Mr. Ewasiuk:

The amendment be amended by adding after "corporations": , and because this House believes that any foreign ownership or partial ownership of a public utility in Alberta is wholly inappropriate.

[Adjourned debate June 18: Mrs. Osterman]

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that all my colleagues are waiting for a long speech, because there have been no speeches made about this Bill before. [interjections] No.

Just so that hon. members who may not have been awake at a quarter to twelve last night will remember, we were dealing with a subamendment on the amendment, as I recall, which said, "and because this House believes that any foreign ownership or partial ownership of a public utility in Alberta is wholly inappropriate." Well, Mr. Speaker, I only wanted to say that I believe the hon. members who supported this subamendment thus far have made absolutely no reasonable argument in support of it. This utility is so incredibly regulated by government and other authorities that to say there is some kind of danger because there would be any outside ownership at all I think is a fallacious argument. So I would ask all hon. members to reject the subamendment.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The Member for Edmonton-Kingsway, speaking to the narrow profile of the subamendment.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I rise to support my colleague from Edmonton-Beverly who moved this subamendment, and I say to the Member for Three Hills that if she had been listening the other day, the Member for Edmonton-Highlands made a very long and reasonable speech on why this amendment should be supported. It certainly makes her speech look very pale by comparison. She made no points whatsoever and yet purported to refute the thesis. Now, if you're going to refute a thesis or put forward a thesis, you have to have some reasoned arguments as to why you should or shouldn't do something.

So I would like to take up the argument where my colleague from Edmonton-Highlands left off the other night and say that this thesis makes a lot of sense. We spent quite a lot of time on the amendment, suggesting that privatization was not a good idea compared to keeping AGT as a public utility. I think those arguments were well laid out, and we've heard very little from the opposition to refute those arguments. What this subamendment does is say that privatizing it is bad enough but that to privatize it and give it or any portion of it to foreigners is even more ridiculous, Mr. Speaker. So that's basically the thesis we're putting forward, and I wish to explain why in more detail, even, than my colleague did last night.

There are a number of good reasons one should not want one's industries to be controlled by foreigners. For a simple start, it's harder to collect taxes from foreign corporations than it is from your own corporations, and I'll just use an example to illustrate that. I guess I'm going to pick on Imperial Oil again. I don't really mean to; they just do what you'd expect a multinational corporation to do. Nonetheless, when you have a government in Ottawa and a government here in Alberta that cater to them and seem to think that what's good for Imperial is always good for us, instead of sort of keeping your powder dry and doing what is right for the people of Alberta or right for the people of Canada and then letting the multinationals fit in where they can, then somebody needs to state these things.

I would say of Imperial Oil – a friend of mine who was in the business of helping Revenue Canada collect its taxes used to tell me this story. He said that every year somebody from the Revenue Canada department would go down to Chicago – and it's probably changed now because this is a number of years old, but it still illustrates the point, Mr. Speaker. Somebody would be invited down to Chicago for a month, or the question would be, "Do we bring our books up to you in Ottawa?" So some of the top echelons of the company and the government would talk about it on the phone a bit, and they would decide that two

people from the tax department would go down to the offices in Chicago and spend a month there and go through the books and then report back as to whether or not they were paying their fair share of taxes. My friend assured me that every time they came back, the people who were looking over the books would just shake their heads and sort of throw up their hands and say: "We have no idea if they're paying their fair share of taxes. It is just not possible to tell." The company with its worldwide empire could manipulate and move funds around in so many different directions and so many different times and for so many different reasons that it was impossible to tell if they were paying their fair share of taxes.

Another thing we do know that happened in the early 70s with Imperial Oil . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. PAYNE: On the subamendment.

MR. McEACHERN: Well, this is on the subamendment. I'm explaining why you don't want foreign companies to get control of your industries, particularly the telecommunication industries, and I'm using a parallel example of the oil industry to show the difficulty of collecting taxes from foreign corporations.

Basically what Imperial did was purchase oil in Venezuela and import it into New Brunswick, where the New Brunswick Power corporation would purchase it. They ended up in a court case, with the New Brunswick Power corporation proving that Imperial Oil was finding ways to avoid paying taxes. They would purchase the oil in Venezuela and then pass it through two or three holding companies or subsidiary companies, one of which was registered in the Bahamas, where there were no taxes particularly, and they would up the price through these two or three companies so that by the time it got to Nova Scotia, the price was so near to what they charged the Nova Scotia Power Corporation that there were really no taxes owing. Yet the company was making incredible profits because the price they were paying in Venezuela was much, much lower than what they were charging in Nova Scotia. Those kinds of things are what make it difficult for a country like Canada to see to it that foreign corporations are in fact good corporate citizens. So, Mr. Speaker, that's one of the reasons.

There are a number of others. When you have a monopoly situation, it makes it even worse and even harder to justify handing it over, particularly in a service like telecommunications industries, which is providing a service to people. It makes it even more ridiculous to hand that over to foreigners to control.

As a basic tool of developing the economy, encouraging foreign control doesn't make much sense. I know the Mulroney government has bought into this idea of Investment Canada and the idea that we should have a lot of foreign investment, and the Alberta government went along with it with the free trade deal and has tried to encourage foreign investment into this country, but in fact foreign investment doesn't really pay off all that much, and I'll quote a couple of reasons I believe that to be true.

A person by the name of Phil Shragge, for example, who worked for the Economic Development and Trade department here for the Alberta government not too long ago, wrote a very learned, I thought, and sensible article to the *Journal*, and Rod Ziegler wrote the ideas up in his column. The basic thesis he put forward was that one of the worst ways to develop an economy is to ask foreigners to come in and take over huge bunches of your resources and develop them. He said that

somehow people think that's one way to get development, but he said that in the long run it doesn't pay. What he suggested was that we should be developing an economy at the local level, starting with local entrepreneurs on a small scale and letting it develop where it may. Also he said that . . . Well, no, they weren't directly related to foreign investment, so I'll pass on a couple of the other things he said that were appropriate to economic development but perhaps not to this particular argument.

It's also true, Mr. Speaker, that research and development by foreign corporations is notoriously low – I'll get back to some stats on that later – and that jobs created by foreign companies are usually very small. We get caught up in takeovers and mergers and layoffs and that sort of thing and in fact often end up losing jobs if you get too much foreign investment. It's difficult to control the flow of dividends out of the country, so your balance of payments often suffers. There's a basic loss of autonomy, a loss of control of your economy, when you get too much foreign investment. Canada already has more than any of the other modern industrial nations.

Now, we were comparing notes on the oil industry on this very point the other day, about how effectively they've developed our oil industry in this province and some of the pros and cons of that. The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek got quite exercised at some points I made and stood up to refute them, with some partial success but not totally. I think there are a couple of points to be made. One is that I said that the big oil companies have pretty much ripped off the resources of this province over the last 15 or 20 years. I stand by that to a certain extent, Mr. Speaker. I think the development of the oil industry in this province would have been much more beneficial to the people of this province and to this nation had it been done with more Canadian ownership. The old argument that, well, Canadians weren't willing to do it really isn't true. We had a lot of small companies that were starting to work the oil patch and developing into moderate-sized companies, and we were getting more and more Canadian and Alberta ownership of our industry during the '70s and in the early '80s. Then when Mulroney got in power and sort of opened up to Investment Canada, that whole process got reversed. We were up at one stage to where 60 percent of our industry was Canadian-owned; we're back down to 35 percent now under the free trade arrangements. I fear that under the free trade arrangements we will never recover a higher percentage of local ownership of our oil industry.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if we do the same thing with the telecommunications industries, we're asking for trouble. The minister likes to get up and say that we're moving into a globalized economy of the world and that companies are getting bigger and that this is a \$300 billion industry and that we're going to have to compete on that international level, and therefore we need to grow and expand. I don't know what makes him think that somehow AGT is going to grow and expand to control a big chunk of the international telecommunications industry. More likely some of the big international telecommunications giants like Rogers Communications Inc. and Bell telephones are going to end up owning Alberta Government Telephones, and I think that will be to the detriment of service and rates in this province.

Now, just in comparison to the oil industry again, where we have an example of too much foreign control of our economy – you know, we gave the oil companies an incredible amount of incentives. From '77 to '81 we gave them a billion dollars a year under ALPEP. From '82 to '88 we gave them two billion a year in royalty write-offs or programs of one kind or another. The

manipulation that we've seen in the oil industry by the big multinational oil companies is just incredible. I take you back to the days before Petro-Canada existed and everybody wondered why we wanted Petro-Canada to be a Canadian-owned, government-owned company. I think they've ultimately been somewhat disappointing, but that's because they've been controlled by a Tory government that didn't really believe in Crown corporations. Nonetheless, they did serve a useful purpose when it was started.

I make this point: before we had a Canadian-controlled oil company, the foreign-owned oil companies manipulated the information they gave us in the most incredible manner, and I'll give you a couple of examples. In 1969 Joe Greene, the minister of energy in the Liberal government, told us that we had over 400 years of gas supplies and over 900 years of oil supplies in Alberta – well, in Canada but mostly in Alberta. Within two years the same minister, based on the information he was getting from the oil companies, as was the original information, told us we would be out of conventional crude within 20 years. Of course, that was because Imperial wanted to go on an advertising campaign saying they needed a higher price for their gas and oil to do the big, tough job of finding more gas and oil, whereas earlier, of course, when they said there was so much of it, they wanted permission to sell it outside of the country. So whatever agenda they had, they gave us the information that backed up what they wanted to do.

Now, is that what we're going to see in the telecommunications industry? Are we going to have foreign companies telling us what's good for us and giving us a lot of information that's only half-truths so that we don't quite know what's going on? Why would we turn over our telecommunications industry to foreign corporations?

The oil companies, by the way, went on in 1973 to create an artificial shortage in North America. Alberta ended up sending gas down into the northwestern states to stop some of the people there from nearly freezing to death in the middle of winter because the big oil companies in OPEC were slowing down the rate at which they brought the tankers across. Actually they had tankers sitting off the Atlantic coast of the United States that were not unloaded, while they were claiming there was a shortage. They put a panic in everybody and raised the price of oil sky-high. In 1979 they did a similar version of the same thing, only this time, because it was embarrassing that somebody found out the tankers were sitting there not being unloaded in the '73 incident, they decided they'd slow the tankers down from 17 knots to 10 knots, so they wouldn't arrive and sit there as an embarrassment while they were lying to the people of North America about how much oil and gas there was available, to create an artificial shortage and scare everybody into paying a higher price.

So, Mr. Speaker, foreign corporations, particularly in the oil industry, have looked after themselves very well. What I'm saying is that it's the job of the Alberta government to look after Albertans, not foreign corporations. So I don't understand why we would go into a free trade deal that makes it almost impossible to control our energy resources in this province. If we carry the same thesis into the telecommunications industry because of some notion that it has to be a global economy and that we can't have any national borders or boundaries or rules that tell corporations how to operate or what's best or what we want for services, then I think we're on the wrong track.

The benefits of foreign ownership and the encouraging of foreign ownership are far overdone. It started, of course, in 1984 with the Tories, the federal cousins of the Tory government

here, and the results have not been very good, Mr. Speaker. From June 30, 1985, to June 30, 1989, a four-year period, we had \$68,596 billion of investment that came into this country under this program of being open for investment and went into mergers and takeovers. That's % percent of the money that came into this country in that period. Now, how much came into the country that actually created new jobs, new industries? Only \$2,932 billion went into new investments and new jobs, only 4 percent, compared to the 96 percent that went into mergers and takeovers.

Now, most countries are concerned about how much of their country is owned by foreigners. Canada is long past the point where they can afford to just say that more foreign ownership is okay. Of the OECD countries, Mr. Speaker, we are by far the most foreign owned. In the nonfinancial Canadian industries 30 percent was owned by foreigners in 1989. Now, in the European economic community it's only an average of 8 percent, in the United States about 4 percent, and in Japan they've only allowed 2 or 3 percent of foreign ownership of their economy. So what are we doing encouraging foreign ownership of something as vital as the telecommunications industry in this province?

Now, one of the arguments that the government likes to make is that all this free trade stuff and all this foreign investment is going to create a lot of jobs. I have news for the minister: foreign investment does not create very many jobs in this country; we just seem to be taken over by foreign corporations, and they own the equity, but they don't create very many new jobs.

In the years 1978 to '85 Canadian controlled companies created 867,000 jobs, American controlled companies created only 1,400, and other foreign companies, because there were more mergers and takeovers than there was new investment from those companies, ended up actually taking away jobs. We lost 12,800 jobs because of other foreign countries like Japan and European countries investing in this country. In other words, they took over companies and laid off people rather than creating new jobs. So, Mr. Speaker, it's not appropriate that we turn to foreign investment in something as vital as our telecommunications industry in this province.

This country is going into debt to foreigners at a rapid rate. Now, it used to be that our debt was mainly within Canada, and it was hard to take the scares about big debts and government debts very seriously back in the '70s, but in the '80s and particularly under this federal government the Canadian debt has gone up tremendously. In 1965 the Canadian debt to foreigners was only 17.9 percent of the gross domestic product of this country; by 1989, the first year of the free trade deal, it was up to 39 percent. The proportion of our foreign debt to the gross domestic product is nearly 40 percent in this country now.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that's like turning this country into one of the Third World countries that is so in debt to foreigners that they can expect the International Monetary Fund to come in and control them if the economy just sneezes and any little thing goes wrong. We've seen the kind of jitters that we have with the Meech Lake accord, so this government should know the dangers of foreign investment and the idea that we are not going to be able to control our own destiny if we allow the foreign investment to get out of hand in this country. We already have, Mr. Speaker. It's time to draw back and not move in that direction. So I don't understand why this government wants to allow 10 percent of AGT to be sold to foreigners and increase the foreign investment.

I mentioned jobs a minute ago, Mr. Speaker. This is, of course, what investment is supposed to do, create jobs. There

is another figure that relates to the kind of jobs created by foreign firms. For every billion dollars of profit United States owned firms make in Canada, they only create 17 jobs. For every billion dollars of profit Canadian companies make, they create 5,765 jobs. Now, this was in the period from 1978 to 1984. So it's very clear from those kinds of statistics that it's really important that we retain control of our own telecommunications and other industries. We should not turn them over to foreigners.

Now, in the telecommunications industry there are some interesting things happening there that already show the point that I'm making. The Unitel application to the CRTC to be able to compete in the long-distance telecommunications industry in this country says that they're going to create a lot of new jobs. That was one of the promises they made, that everything's going to be hunky-dory and wonderful. They've come in here to play Santa Claus if you listen to them in terms of what they're going to do with our telecommunications industries. Let me just disabuse the government of that notion. Bell Telephones in Ontario, anticipating that they're going to get competition in the long-distance market, that the federal government's CRTC will not protect the Canadian industry, decided to lower their long-distance rates by 15 percent. At the same time that they announced that, they announced that they would be laying off 1,100 people over the next few months so they could afford to do that. Now, that's a great way to create jobs, isn't it? So that's why those job statistics about foreign and Canadian companies are important, Mr. Speaker, and the minister should take them to heart.

I guess if the government proceeds in the direction it's going, then our public utility, our company that was created back in 1906 and has been with us for 84 years, has done a good job. The minister himself praised the company and talked about what a good job it was doing, yet he's prepared to put them at risk to become part of those statistics that say we don't control our own destiny. He cannot assure the workers, as he has tried to do in this Assembly, that they will not be laid off under the system that he's moving into.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned that taxes are hard to collect from foreign corporations, and I want to just elaborate that a little bit. In 1980 Canada had \$10 billion in corporate taxes that it couldn't collect. By 1986 it was up to \$25 billion. Right now AGT doesn't pay any taxes because it's a Crown corporation and it's exempt. But if we privatize AGT, it will then have to start paying taxes and not only the normal income taxes but the GST as well. So people are immediately going to have to start paying a lot more money for their telephone services because of the taxes added onto the costs of running the business.

Mr. Speaker, if we turn this company over to foreigners, they may owe those taxes and may very well charge the people as if they were going to pay those taxes, but I've already pointed out to him the difficulty of making sure that foreigners do pay the taxes. So we may lose both ways. We may see our rates go up in the initial stages while the company is still mostly Canadian owned. Of course, you can't expect if the foreign companies take it over – sure they're restricted to 10 percent now, but how long is that going to last under this government, under a free trade deal, and under the attitude of the federal government and the CRTC to this telecommunication world of global competition that they like to talk about? So we'll end up with the worst of both worlds. We'll end up with an AGT – or AGT Limited it's going to be called – that is foreign owned, and it will hard to collect the taxes that they are taking from the people in higher rates.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I mentioned that research and development tends not to be engaged in by foreign corporations. I would just like to say that Canada is the lowest of the OECD countries. It's a really interesting direct reverse correlation: the more you're foreign owned, the less R and D is done. Japan is one of the least foreign owned of the OECD countries, and it has the highest rate of R and D: 1.9 percent of its gross domestic product. Canada, on the other end of the scale, has only .53 percent, which is almost half of the next lowest, Mr. Speaker, which is France with .93 percent of its gross domestic product used for R and D. Now, that's the kind of expectation we can get from Unitel or some foreign corporation in terms of R and D in this country.

The Sherman report makes it clear that there is no proof that to have competition leads to more R and D in the countries where the competition takes place. Monopoly telephone companies, Crown corporations have led the way in research and development in the technological field, and there is no reason to assume that we will make any gains in that area whatsoever from so-called competition in the telecommunication industries.

So, Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is a simple one: why would we let some foreigners come into this country and hook into our telephone systems that we've built up over several decades – in the case of AGT over eight decades – and start competing in the long-distance telephone industries, raise the local rates for the individual residential users, and raise the rates particularly for rural Albertans? We do not need foreigners controlling our telephone system. Our telephone system is a utility. It's a natural monopoly. It does not make any sense to turn natural monopolies over to foreigners. We should keep control of this company ourselves. Just because the minister lost the regulatory fight – and I've got to admit, it was a pretty feeble fight he put up; he gave up rather easily, much more easily than Manitoba and Saskatchewan did in terms of regulating the industry. Now he wants to give up the ownership rights of the people of Alberta: some idea that he can sell it off to the few people that can afford to buy shares and in fact even subsidize those people to buy shares. He's subsidizing the workers to buy them off by offering them three shares for the price of two, so that taxpayers are having to pay that. He's also offering people interest-free loans to buy shares, Mr. Speaker. Now, how are the very poorest people who now own part of AGT going to afford to buy shares with those kinds of terms? So the minister is making a grave mistake here.

There is certainly nobody that I know who has any faith that this Bill will limit people to 5 percent for very long in purchasing shares, and certainly I cannot believe that under a free trade deal the 10 percent limit on foreign investment is going to last any length of time whatsoever. This government will change that. The golden share, which the minister and the Premier bragged so much about, which is supposed to protect all Albertans from any higher rates for local services or rural people from paying any higher services, is not going to protect anybody from anything. There is a list of prohibitions in section 5(1) of the Bill that the company cannot do. What the golden share does is allow the cabinet to waive any of those restrictions. So that's obviously the direction, and besides, it's got a five-year sunset clause on it.

So this government has no intentions in the long term of keeping to a 5 percent ownership share for anybody nor to a 10 percent foreign ownership for anybody. I cannot believe this government. Nobody in this province gives them any credibility on those points over the long term. Once you've lost the ownership, how are you going to control the company from there

when you know that the regulation is under the feds? So you've lost your Public Utilities Board control, and now you voluntarily give away your ownership control of the company. Mr. Speaker, it will fall into the hands of foreigners because this government has no commitment to stop it from doing so.

So I suggest that the minister really think seriously about the move he's making and who's going to benefit from it and quit kidding the people of Alberta that he's got their best interest at heart.

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

MR. GIBEAULT: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I do want to get in a few comments as well tonight on the subamendment of my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Beverly, which is referring to the view that

this House believes that any foreign ownership or [even] partial foreign ownership of a public utility in Alberta is wholly inappropriate.

Mr. Speaker, that ought to be clear to all Members of this Legislative Assembly: the importance of keeping such a valuable public utility, such an important and essential service as a telephone and telecommunication service entirely Canadian if not entirely Alberta owned, let alone selling off any part of it to foreign interests.

Now, the Bill proposes to allow a sale of 10 percent of the shares of AGT to foreign interests. Well, that's where it's going to start, Mr. Speaker, but that's just the thin edge of the wedge. I cannot believe that it's not going to go beyond that, because I can just see how this is going to unfold. First of all, as soon as the Americans get a look at this, I can just see a challenge coming up under the free trade agreement that this will be an unfair restriction against American businesses in Canada. So the first thing you know, they'll strike that down. That'll be struck down by a panel or some body under the free trade agreement, and then AGT will be full, open access to American or other foreign investors, particularly American, of course, under the free trade agreement. So I put it to the government members, to their backbenchers and to the Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications: can he tell us why he is so committed to giving foreigners access to such an essential service as Alberta Government Telephones?

Now, essential service is something that has different meanings to different people, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes we think of hospitals or maybe even schools as being essential services, but I can tell you I haven't been in a hospital as a patient for – I can't remember – it must be 20 years. That might not have been quite as essential for me, just being fortunate to have good health in the past years, but a day doesn't go by that I don't need to use my telephone service. So in terms of an essential service that we may or may not want to allow foreign ownership of, surely telecommunication services has got to come under that category. Again, why we want to sell off or make available a sizable chunk of our telecommunication company, the telecommunication company we have developed here in Alberta to serve our interests, after we as customers and as taxpayers have invested a great deal of money in building up Alberta Government Telephones . . . We don't even have to go back very far just to think about the public investments, the taxpayers' investments that we have put into Alberta Government Telephones in order that it can provide individual line service to rural customers throughout Alberta.

Now, this question of foreign ownership. I'll put to you and to the members of the government side: how much concern do

you think there is going to be by investors in New York or Los Angeles or Tokyo about any of our citizens here in Alberta in smaller communities represented by many of these members across the way, who don't seem to be very concerned about the impact of this Bill on their constituents? How much concern do you think these foreign investors are going to have for the telecommunication service of rural communities here in Alberta? They won't care about that, Mr. Speaker. That's not important. They have no accountability to the people of Alberta, and that is the problem. We will be leaving ourselves wide open to a very different set of criteria upon which judgments will be made, and whether or not it will be in the public interest to provide good telecommunication service to all Albertans is of no concern to foreign investors. Let's be frank about that. All they care about is where they can get the best profit on an investment.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

If it's not profitable to have an individual line service to people in the rural communities of Alberta, there won't be that kind of investment in the future. And if it's not in the interests of foreign investors to have reasonable access to local service, then we simply won't have it. We're just opening an entire can of worms, having all kinds of services that are important to Alberta citizens that are provided now by Alberta Government Telephones come under the direction of foreigners who have no interest in providing service to the people of our province but rather have only one concern, and that's the bottom line and how much money they can get out of an investment in our telephone company.

I would suggest that we don't provide hospital services on the basis that we're prepared to sell off shares or chunks of it to foreigners. I mean, can you imagine how ludicrous it would be if we did the same thing to our hospitals and schools as we're proposing to do to our telecommunications company? We'd have foreigners making decisions about what kind of programs would be offered in our schools or what kind of health care services would be offered, and it wouldn't be long until we have like they have in the United States, where you go in and you're presented with a bill at the end for every bandage and every little item that you've consumed in the hospital. That kind of thing is going to happen in the same exact way with telecommunications.

Now, in other jurisdictions we've got what we call local measured service. That's popular in the United States with telecommunications companies there, in Britain, and in other foreign jurisdictions. So can't you just imagine now that we're going to have foreigners buying up shares in AGT? Oh, yes. Now that we've got shares in AGT, why don't you orient your telecommunications service the way we've done it in the United States and in Britain and introduce local measured service? What that means, of course, is that every time you make a phone call – and it doesn't matter for what purpose; it doesn't matter if it's a charitable or religious or other public service kind of purpose – you have to pay for it. Your phone becomes just like it is on long distance rates now: you have to pay for every call you make for how long and for how far the distance is. So you can have a situation – or you would have if this goes ahead and we get foreigners having a major interest in Alberta Government Telephones – where local measured service is introduced.

We have the situation where such a good record of volunteerism in this province will be severely compromised, because who's going to be willing to pay a quarter every time they make

a phone call on behalf of a church women's group or the Kiwanis Club to organize some benefit for the community or the Boys' and Girls' Club organizing something that provides a service to the youngsters of our community? All of that is going to go right down the tube. We should be learning from the experiences of foreign jurisdictions to that effect. That's been seen to be exactly one of the things that happens there. When you go to local measured service that's so popular in these other foreign jurisdictions, it has a deadly impact on volunteerism.

The minister responsible for briefcases has told us over and over again how important it is to support volunteer efforts in our province, and we ought to be proud of that, Mr. Speaker. I am proud of that record of volunteer service that Albertans give on behalf of their friends and neighbours and their community, and I am telling you that if we allow foreigners to have control of our telecommunications company, that is going to be one of the outcomes.

MR. NELSON: Why don't you tell the truth, Gerry?

MR. GIBEAULT: I don't believe that even the Member for Calgary-McCall could really bring himself to get up publicly and support this kind of nonsense. If he does, I'll look forward to hearing from him. I'd like him to say that because I would like to send that to all his constituents in Calgary-McCall. I think he'd be in for a surprise and would find out that his constituents don't support that kind of nonsense.

Now, 10 percent might not sound like a lot to some people, but in a lot of corporations 10 percent of the stock is control, a very effective control. So I can just see that we open this up at 10 percent and the foreign telecommunications company comes to shareholders' meetings – they've got 10 percent of the stock. You can imagine. Suppose there's a broad take-up on the share offering. How many people are going to be able to come to Calgary or Edmonton, where the annual general meetings are, and cast their votes? But you can be sure somebody who owns 10 percent of the stock, whether it's Bell Tel south of the border or AT&T or Sprint or whoever might want to get their paws on Alberta Government Telephones, is going to have a very sizable controlling interest in Alberta Government Telephones. I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that that is unacceptable to Albertans.

I would go further. I'm talking particularly to the Conservative members now and imploring them to consider this: any member of this Assembly who puts their support behind this provision of allowing foreigners to have 10 percent control of this company – and that's just for starters, but 10 percent for now – is betraying the vision of the former Premier of this province, who would have nothing to do with this kind of foolishness. In fact, I had many occasions to criticize him, but let's give some credit where it is due. The former Premier had some kind of vision for this province, and he never would compromise this kind of talk of selling out the principle telecommunications company that has been built over the years by Albertans for Albertans to serve Albertans, as the members of this Legislature on the government side, on the Tory side, seem to do. They want to sell out that vision and betray it, and I think that is shameful, Mr. Speaker, absolutely shameful.

Now, let's go on here and talk a little bit about other problems. If we were to allow this provision to go ahead, if my colleagues of the Conservative persuasion here refuse to support my colleague's subamendment, what are we going to have? We're going to end up with a situation – and we've seen it already, Mr. Speaker, with General Motors. Now, what happened with General Motors just the other day is they said: "Oh,

by the way, we would like you boys and girls in Canada that work in our plants to harmonize with our operation. We would like you now, instead of imagining that you're Canadians and celebrating Canada Day, to just imagine that you're now Americans, and we want you, instead of celebrating Canada Day, to celebrate July 4." They go on with the other holidays throughout the year. In other words, they want us to be like them. Now, I can just see as soon as this Bill goes ahead that we'll be getting notices from AT&T and the rest of them: "Oh, by the way, we've got to harmonize Alberta Government Telephones, because having Canadians celebrate Canada Day just doesn't fit into our bottom line profit picture, so now we've got to have Albertans celebrating Lincoln's day and George Washington's birthday and Independence Day on July 4 and all the rest of that." It's just the beginning of making Alberta or Canada the 51st state in the Union. Let's be honest about that. It's been a shameless display by General Motors, just this past week.

Surely to goodness the members of the government, the Tories here in this Legislature, are not going to be giving their support to a Bill which is going to require us more and more to integrate into the American picture and have Albertans be token Americans. Now, if they want us to be Americans, let them stand in the Legislature and say that. I don't believe Albertans want to be Americans. I really don't, Mr. Speaker. If the government members across the way have some evidence, if they've held town hall meetings where a majority have said, "Yes, we want to be Americans; we want to celebrate American holidays instead of Canadian holidays," I want them to stand up and tell me that. If they've done their MLA reports, if they've had questionnaires going out to their constituencies where they've got this kind of feedback, where their constituents want us to be like Americans, to have Americans telling us when to have holidays, to celebrate George Washington's birthday and all the rest of it, I want them to tell us that, because we haven't got that evidence yet. If it exists, let them put it on the record, and if it doesn't exist, then I implore these members of the Legislature to support this amendment and make sure that we do not allow a Bill like Bill 37, the Alberta Government Telephones Reorganization Act, to pass this Assembly with such a clause that betrays, as I said, the vision of Albertans who have preceded us.

Surely to goodness, Mr. Speaker, we do not want to end up a couple of years down the road having to explain to our children and to our grandchildren that we countenanced in this Legislative Assembly a Bill which would require employees and others who are associated with telecommunications in the province of Alberta to become nominal or token Americans. Are we going to be the Legislative Assembly, the members of this Assembly, who were leading the capitulation to harmonization with the Americans through this Bill? I don't want to have to explain that to my children or my grandchildren. I don't know if the members of the Conservative caucus can find it in their hearts to do that. I am really having a hard time believing that they would want to say to their children and grandchildren, "Yes, we sold out the vision of our predecessors with a publicly owned telecommunications company, and yes, we are now celebrating George Washington's birthday because here in this Legislature . . .

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please, hon. member. I think I must draw to your attention 23(c) in Standing Orders. We're now going around on holidays for the fourth time and harmonizing for the third. Perhaps the hon. member has some additional points to make.

MR. GIBEAULT: Yes, Mr. Speaker, let us move on to other things here. There are so many problems with this Bill and so many problems associated with foreign ownership that the General Motors example was just one in many. But let us move on.

You know, we should be looking at the whole example of Latin America because Latin American countries are classic examples of what happens when foreign powers control your economy, and much of our economy is already under foreign control. Why on earth would we want to be selling to foreigners more of our economy in such a critical area as telecommunications?

Now, you just look, Mr. Speaker, at the situation in El Salvador, in Chile, in Argentina, and all the countries of Latin America where there is an extensive amount of foreign investment, mainly American investment. The whole economy becomes twisted and perverted, oriented towards satisfying foreign markets, not the needs of the people of those countries. Eventually over a period of years what has happened in those countries, which could happen here if we start with this process – and this is, as I said, the thin edge of the wedge here. We're going to have a situation where the economy of Alberta does not exist to serve the needs of the people of Alberta but rather to satisfy the needs of foreigners, maybe mainly Americans in this case, or others. We surely don't want to get us into a situation where we have to look down the road at a revolution like other countries have done, Mr. Speaker, when foreigners control all aspects of their economy. Then we get a big military presence built up in these countries to protect foreign interests, and we have big conflicts between the ordinary people of these countries and the elites that are tied in with the foreign interests that control so much of the economy.

The members of the Conservative caucus in this Legislature might enjoy cozying up with the foreign executives of AT&T and other companies, Sprint and you name them, who want to get their hands on AGT. But I think we're going down the slippery slope, and we should see all of the examples that exist of the problems that are associated with foreign ownership; as I said, there are so many in our own hemisphere here in the Americas where we should be looking, in Latin America. Surely we should not be going down the same road that has resulted in failure and so much human suffering over the years because of foreign domination of other countries.

Now, Mr. Speaker, some of the other problems that are associated with foreign ownership, of course, are that decisions are made out of the country. After the so-called free trade agreement was passed, we discovered that many multinational companies who had enterprises in Canada decided that it was in their interests – not ours but theirs – to liquidate some of their enterprises here in Canada. We had Gillette, and we had a whole slew of companies who, barely before the ink was dry on the agreement, terminated manufacturing operations here in Canada, and all those jobs went south of the border. The point here is that if we allow this particular Bill to go ahead with the provision of foreign ownership of our telecommunications company, how long is it going to be before the NovAtel plant in Lethbridge is closed? Now, I see the representatives for Lethbridge are not with us tonight, but you know, there are a lot of people that work there. Surely to goodness we're not prepared to say – I hope we're not. Certainly New Democrats are not prepared to sell out those people and tell them to go on welfare.

Now, if that's the Tory approach to job creation, that we have companies like NovAtel and all the other telecommunications,

manufacturing, and service operations that we've got here now associated with Alberta Government Telephones – let them fold and have those jobs go south of the border or go to some low-wage plant in Mexico, maybe in one of those Maquiladoras along the border there with the States. Mr. Speaker, we've got to get some commitment from the MLAs on the Tory side of the House here that they want to protect the jobs that are associated with telecommunications in this province and that they're not prepared to sell them down the river, down the Rio Grande or somewhere down south where there will not be wages paid here, there will not be service being provided, there will not be high-tech jobs here that we need. So I plead with the members of the Conservative caucus here to think about this very carefully.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

We know that when enterprises have significant amounts of foreign ownership, there's no accountability, that they make these kinds of decisions about plant closures, job relocations, and all the rest of it south of the border or outside of our borders and in the interests of investors who are not accountable to the citizens of Alberta. Surely we cannot allow that to happen.

Another thing that we discovered, and statistics have shown this repeatedly: when we have an extensive sort of branch plant economy where our businesses are predominantly owned and controlled by foreign interests, the research and development is done in those foreign countries. It is not done here in Canada. My colleague the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway touched on this issue as well. The record is clear that the research and development activity that is needed for a country and a province like ours to retain its place of leadership in the world economy – we already have a problem with that. Our research and development activity and resources are below the average of the industrial countries, and this kind of a move, Mr. Speaker, allowing foreigners to take a big chunk of our telecommunications company, is only going to exacerbate an already serious problem.

So I would once again encourage the members of the Conservative caucus to consider this very carefully. Do they not want their children and their grandchildren to have high-tech, well-paid jobs in Canada, here in Alberta? Or are they going to say to their children and their grandchildren a few years from now: "Well, I'm sorry; we sold out AGT. It's really too bad that

in Alberta here we no longer have high-tech, well-paying jobs. They've all relocated south of the border or down in Mexico or in Taiwan or some cheap-labour place." Mr. Speaker, I don't want to have to say that to my children and grandchildren, and I hope that my colleagues here of the Conservative persuasion are not going to have to say that to their children.

So we're hoping that members of the Conservative caucus will not allow this measure to go through. In other words, that they will support this subamendment and not allow any foreign ownership, not even partial ownership, of our public utility, Alberta Government Telephones, so that we don't get on that slippery slope towards a banana republic. As I've mentioned in the previous examples of Latin America, that's exactly the way it all started. The more and more they had foreign control of the economy, the less it met the needs and legitimate aspirations of the citizens of those countries. Surely to goodness with all of that historical evidence before us, we here in Alberta will not allow ourselves to get trapped as other countries have.

So, Mr. Speaker, I plead. I would get on my knees to plead if I felt it would make an impact with my Conservative brethren and 'sistern,' but I just implore these members of the Conservative caucus, and I hope that they will see the light, the terrible position we will be in if we do not support this amendment and prohibit any foreign control and ownership of our telecommunications company.

I am proud of AGT. I hope all members of the House are proud of AGT as our company. It has been developed by Albertans for Albertans to serve the people of this province. Let's keep it that way, Mr. Speaker.

DR. ELLIOTT: Mr. Speaker, I wish to adjourn debate.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: The matter carries.

[At 11:24 p.m. the House adjourned to Wednesday at 2:30 p.m.]