

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, July 4, 1990 2:30 p.m.**

Date: 90/07/04

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

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Prayers

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

Earlier this morning in Calgary I had the honour of conducting the interment service for one of our colleagues, the hon. Merv Leitch. Later this afternoon at Christ Church in Calgary a special memorial service will be held.

Merv Leitch was first elected to the Legislature in 1971 and served until 1982 as the Member for Calgary-Egmont. While in government he had the position and served these various offices with great distinction: Attorney General and Provincial Secretary, Provincial Treasurer, Minister of Energy and Natural Resources.

Those of us who were fortunate enough to know him, however briefly, realized he was a man of great talents, but above all, he was a very humble and good person.

Let us offer unto God our thanksgiving for the life of Merv Leitch. Into Thy hands, O Lord, we commend his spirit.

Amen.

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

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

Amen.

head: Presenting Petitions

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to present a petition from over 500 young people in northern Alberta proclaiming their belief that life begins at the moment of conception and should be completely protected from its beginning till its completion. They strongly encourage all efforts by both federal and provincial governments to increase both financial and social support for all those individuals affected by a pregnancy before, during, and after the birth of a child.

head: Tabling Returns and Reports

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, today I announced a new forest management public involvement process, and I'm pleased to file with the Assembly four copies of a package which includes a brochure on forest management planning, a brochure on integrated resource planning, a news release, and a copy of remarks I gave at noon today.

MR. HORSMAN: I wish to table a reply to Order for a Return 201.

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the annual report of the Public Health Advisory and Appeal Board for the period August 1, '88, to July 31, '89.

I'm also tabling the financial statement of the Foothills Provincial General hospital for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1990.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I wish to file responses to motions for returns 222 and 240: at least a tree's worth.

REV. ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table a motion unanimously agreed to by over 300 chiefs at the Chiefs Summit currently going on here in Edmonton calling on the provincial government to amend the current Bill 49, the Ambulance Services Act.

head: Introduction of Special Guests

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce three distinguished gentlemen to you and the members of the Assembly. These gentlemen are from the municipal district of Sturgeon; they are in the members' gallery. We have Reeve Frank Schoenberger; municipal administrator Gilbert Boddez; and Larry Kirkpatrick, who's the assistant administrator. I'd ask these guests to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: Oral Question Period

Mortgage and Housing Corporation

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, to the Deputy Premier. This weekend Albertans learned that the government's sale of AMHC mortgages includes a discount of some \$18.5 million. That information from a vice-president of AMHC is a direct contradiction of this government's claim that these mortgages would be sold at full value. In fact the Minister of Municipal Affairs went out of his way last week to insist that references to this deal as a fire sale were wrong. Here's what he said in the Assembly last Thursday, and I quote:

When we speak in terms of the single-family mortgages of \$620 million that are being sold to the private sector starting as of today, those mortgages are of full value: \$620 million.

I wonder if the Deputy Premier can set the record straight for Albertans who wonder what's going on here. Will the Deputy Premier tell us what the full value of these mortgages is and whether the government is unloading them at a discount or not?

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, as Acting Minister of Municipal Affairs, I would advise the Leader of the Official Opposition that I have been asked on behalf of the Minister of Municipal Affairs to take any questions on notice, and he will respond to the member at the next opportunity.

MR. MARTIN: Well, I'll look forward to that. I might be a little grayer by then, Mr. Speaker.

My question, then, following up to the Acting Minister of Municipal Affairs. I think he's read the report – surely they've had time to look at it – that taxpayers will take a loss of more than \$18 million on this deal. The VP of finance and administration of AMHC says it will not be sold for the full value, and this government said it will: it's a direct contradiction. My question is to this minister, if he's talking to the other minister: how does the Minister of Energy justify the selling of AMHC assets at such a bargain basement price?

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on a comment made by a staff person reporting to another minister. All I can do is repeat that I will advise the Minister of Municipal Affairs on his return and let him know of

the leader's concerns. I'm sure that he would be pleased to respond in short order.

MR. MARTIN: Maybe as he's acting minister I'll try a little different tack here, Mr. Speaker. Even if all the proceeds of this sale go towards paying the corporation's debt to the trust fund, the corporation will still owe the trust fund over \$2 billion. Now, once these assets have been sold off, over 70 percent of the corporation's portfolio will be nonperforming, which means they're either insolvent or in arrears. Now, my question to the Minister of Energy: will the minister admit that in addition to taxpayers taking on an \$18.5 million loss in the sale, the only way Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation is ever going to repay the trust fund debt is through the transfer of millions of dollars more from the General Revenue Fund?

MR. ORMAN: No, Mr. Speaker, I will not admit that.

MR. SPEAKER: The second main question, Leader of the Opposition.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to designate my second question to the Member for Edmonton-Beverly.

Edmonton Sewage Discharges

MR. EWASIUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday over 110 millimetres or some four and a half inches of rain fell in the Edmonton area over a 24-hour period. Unfortunately, the result was that the city of Edmonton was forced to pump raw sewage into the North Saskatchewan River in order to prevent this gunk from backing up into people's basements. Because of poor planning, the present mayor and city council have inherited a problem that is going to be very expensive to repair. Now, my question to the Minister of the Environment: instead of making threats and criticizing from the sidelines, what concrete steps is this government prepared to take so that long-term solutions can be found to this unacceptable situation?

MR. KLEIN: Well, very basically, Mr. Speaker, as a result of the rainfall and as the result of a planning mistake, I would say back in the mid-50s and the early '60s . . .

MR. TRYNCHY: The '70s and '80s.

MR. KLEIN: It could have gone into the '70s and '80s too. . . there is a problem that results in storm sewerage being combined with sanitary sewerage and the sewerage treatment plant, especially in the city of Edmonton, not being able to handle it, and we have to issue a letter of permission to allow the city to discharge raw sewerage into the North Saskatchewan River. The situation can't go on forever, Mr. Speaker, and we have asked the city of Edmonton for an action plan as to how they're going to deal with this particular problem, understanding the problem is not that of the Alberta government although we are willing to assist if we have a reasonable proposal before us. Right now we have a number of options under consideration. We have been working with the city.

I will today apologize to the mayor. It becomes very, very frustrating to me when we have to issue these letters of permission. It's a state of affairs that should have been cleaned up many, many years ago, and unfortunately, whenever this happens I get a lot of nasty letters from the people who have to cope with this situation downstream.

MR. EWASIUK: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the minister's department is responsible for protecting water quality in the North Saskatchewan River and given that dumping raw sewage into the river is clearly unacceptable regardless of how diluted it might be – certainly we all agree with that – what kind of financial support is the government willing to give the city of Edmonton to help to clean up this act? [some applause]

MR. KLEIN: Well . . . Great; you can thump all you want, because the problem is anywhere from a \$200 million problem to a billion dollar problem, and it's not a problem that was brought on by the government of the province of Alberta. It was a problem that was brought on by the municipal councils of the day and subsequent councils who failed to correct the problem.

MR. FOX: Let's not point fingers. Let's correct it.

MR. KLEIN: Well, no one is pointing any fingers at all. I have said to the hon. member that we are working with the city of Edmonton to try and rectify this situation, to determine what of the options are rational and how much it's going to cost. When we have all that figured out, we will then determine how, if, and when the government of Alberta will participate.

MR. EWASIUK: Well, Mr. Speaker, one of the uncertainties facing the city of Edmonton at the moment is the fact that the provincial government has failed to set a water quality standard for the North Saskatchewan River, and that's part of the problem.

Now, to the minister: given that it's impossible for the city to design and upgrade its sewer system and expect to meet these standards if it doesn't know what the quality standards are, will the minister commit to setting such standards and working co-operatively with the city of Edmonton to meet them?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, there are standards relative to the emission of effluent from a sewerage treatment plant. For instance, we just filed some 14 charges against the city of Lethbridge for violation of their particular standards. In this particular case, the case of Edmonton, they do apply for and receive a letter of permission to discharge to exceed their limits. Now, there's another solution to this. I don't know where the hon. member lives, but maybe he lives in one of those houses that has a combined sanitary and storm sewerage runoff. What we can do is block the system, and he can live with all that stuff in his basement.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Buffalo.

Goods and Services Tax

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like it or not – and we don't like it – the goods and services tax is scheduled to come into effect on January 1 of next year, and this raises a number of questions about what action the provincial government intends to take in order to protect Albertans. My first question is to the minister of social services, and it relates to the intention of the federal government to provide a minimum credit of \$190 a year in respect of the goods and services tax to lower income individuals. I'm wondering whether the minister will make a commitment that this goods and services credit to be paid by the federal government will not be deducted from social service or AISH payments but will go to the full benefit of the

individuals involved in order to compensate for the increased costs of the goods and services tax.

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the Member for Calgary-Buffalo and I can assure this Assembly that we'll take into consideration all effects and impacts of the GST proposal on our clientele, and if there's anything that we can do to offset it, we will.

MR. CHUMIR: Well, that's not adequate, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to address my second question to the Deputy Premier with the hopes that we'll get a more precise answer. Last year in question period the Provincial Treasurer stated that the government strongly advocated – I emphasize "strongly advocated" – that the goods and services tax be up front and very visible. Since the federal government is not requiring that the goods and services tax be revealed and in light of the Provincial Treasurer's statement that it should be visible, will the Deputy Premier undertake, on behalf of his government, to bring forward provincial legislation requiring that the tax be disclosed in transactions in this province?

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, as Acting Provincial Treasurer I can assure the hon. member that the Provincial Treasurer will respond at the earliest possible opportunity when he returns to the House. I'll make sure he's aware of the question.

MR. CHUMIR: We're batting a thousand here.

I'd like to ask my final question to the Minister of Labour, and that is, Mr. Speaker: since the goods and services tax will increase the rate of inflation, what is the policy of the provincial government with respect to ensuring that provincial employees are protected from the impact of that special inflationary effect?

MS McCOY: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, we are in negotiations now for a two-year contract, and the union has not brought that up at the table. Also, I can advise the hon. member that at this stage the exact impact on the consumer price index is unknown, and although everyone is anticipating some impact, it is difficult to deal with it until there is a better understanding of what that impact will be. I know that all employers and all employees and unions in the province have an eye on that. I'm sure we will all be dealing with it as employers and respective employee associations and unions, and we'll find ways with which to deal with it at the appropriate time.

MR. SPEAKER: Rocky Mountain House.

Forest Management

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife announced the process for public involvement into the management of forestry projects within areas covered by forest management agreements. Can the minister assure the House and the people of Alberta that the announced process has had comprehensive public involvement before its implementation?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, yes, it has. It had the input of a wide variety of environmental groups and other stakeholders to make sure that the process we've established is one that is workable and flexible enough to fit all parts of Alberta.

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, I realize that the process does have a lot of public involvement in it, but I'm really concerned: how can we be assured that the public's concerns are going to be addressed and not just heard?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, that's the key element that we wanted to design into the process when we established it: to make absolutely sure that input that's received from the public is acted upon. Effective immediately it is now mandatory for each company to have a public involvement process that they've had approved by us and that they act upon, and we must be satisfied that the public has had that input into the process and had their concern addressed; if not, the annual plans will not be approved and the company will not be able to cut any wood. So the pressure is on the companies now to deliver, and I must say that the companies have fully agreed with the process. They were part of it, with the Fish & Game Association, the improvement districts, the Indian Association, and others, to make sure we had a process that was effective and that will stand in good stead for years to come.

MR. McINNIS: Well, no doubt, Mr. Speaker, the companies are absolutely thrilled with the announcement today because from the point of view of the public this policy announcement is a sham, a snare, and an absolute delusion. The minister has made it clear that it's business as usual as far Pulp Incorporated is concerned in Alberta: the minister will continue to subsidize timber harvesting from the taxpayers; there'll be secret negotiations on forest management agreements; the pulp companies can appoint whoever they like to these so-called liaison committees. [interjections] Get this: right out of the minister's pamphlet, it says the "company develops a public involvement" program and the company has to inform the public whether their involvement's going to be accepted or not. I would like the minister to say how he can possibly justify a public involvement program which promises public involvement but delivers the same old backroom deals and wheeling and dealings we've had in the past.

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, I only have one thing to say to the leader of the Vote No Society: he should at least read the material before he makes silly statements like he just made.

MR. McINNIS: Guess what, LeRoy? I just read it to you out loud, and I'll read it again: the company develops the public involvement plan and the company advises the public on how their concerns have been addressed. How's he going to stand here and tell me that I have to read a document when I've just read it out loud to him?

One of these public advisory committees to Daishowa has written the government. They've asked to know why they were frozen out of the negotiations on the ground rules which determine how steep a slope they can log, how close to water-courses. Why are these liaison committees frozen out of the ground rules process?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, I don't know what he's talking about. The public involvement process that has been established here gets into great detail on what each company can harvest each year. All I can do is say again: for heaven's sake, the member should read the material and understand it before he responds.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister's process of public involvement into forestry management planning announced today is a process that is rife with weaknesses and seems to be little more than more public relations. Most notably, this public input process follows the signing of a forestry management agreement – if you can believe that, Mr. Speaker – and the company controls the public input process which comes after the agreement is signed. To the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife: does this minister honestly expect anyone to believe that he is actually going to step in and stop some company from cutting down trees after they have negotiated and signed an agreement with this minister, regardless of what level of public input they get following the signing of the agreement?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, there is public input into each project, and that's when they go through the environmental impact assessment process. On the second question of the hon. member with respect to would I step in and stop them from cutting wood: my department has been stopping them from cutting wood and making them go back, and it wasn't even mandatory. Now it's mandatory. They have to design a process of public involvement. It'll work well one way in Peace River. That same process won't work well, maybe in Sundre. They have to adapt that. We are going to work with each of the companies. We'll monitor each one of them. If we're not totally satisfied that they have had public involvement, addressed the concerns that have been identified, they won't get the permit to cut wood in the next year. It's mandatory. I intend to enforce it.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, given that the minister continues to state that he consulted native groups before he established this process of public involvement, why would it be that native groups have not been listed in this important brochure as one of the key participants in the forestry management planning process? What guarantees can he give us and native groups in this province that in fact they will be involved each step of the way in this public input process?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is quite right. The Indian Association of Alberta and the Metis Association of Alberta certainly should be involved. The focus group I established to go over the management process we had designed to make sure that it was workable and was proper included the president of the Indian Association of Alberta and the president of the Metis Association of Alberta to go through it. As well, there is an environmental liaison committee that's already been established at Daishowa. They have asked for the native input into that liaison committee, which has a wide variety of the stakeholder user groups on it. To this point the natives have not come forward and recommended any names or attended any meetings, but the opportunity is there if they do decide to do so.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Bow.

SAIT Paramedic Program

MRS. B. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is for the Minister of Advanced Education. Mr. Minister, there was a lineup of over 200 potential students outside the registrar's office at SAIT in Calgary for most of this past long weekend.

They were there to register for 32 spaces in the EMT program. Could the minister please explain why this camping out was necessary?

MR. GOGO: Well, Mr. Speaker, I suppose the short and obvious answer is that the emergency medical technicians program is very popular to a lot of people. How SAIT or any other institution, because we had that same program with computer assisted learning at many locations in Alberta . . . I guess SAIT rates very high, and people decided that they wanted to go to SAIT. The opportunity was offered either to register in person or by mail, and I guess, recognizing the policy of first come, first served, they decided to line up.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

MRS. B. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As this system of registration seems to not guarantee the best quality of student for the paramedic program by virtue of the first come, first served policy, has consideration been given to a change in the process?

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I don't want to sit in judgment of those who apply. Admission standards are determined by the board governed institutions. The member may be aware, as other members perhaps are, that the funding of the EMT program with regard to the ambulance has been temporary for many years. This year my department has now made that funding permanent, and I am advised, as a result of the question from the Member for Stony Plain, that in future SAIT will adopt a different system now that the funding's in place for the continuation of the program. So I would suggest that as regards SAIT, although it's their jurisdiction – I would advise the House that in my judgment that problem is now resolved.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Avonmore.

Alcohol and Drug Abuse

MS M. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Minister of Health. Last Friday the Minister of Health tabled a report from her policy advisory committee on the proposed Alberta family life and drug abuse foundation. Mr. Speaker, substance abuse is not new in Alberta, and in fact the Alberta government has in place two Acts governing research and treatment programs: first, the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Foundation Act, which establishes a corporation to provide financial assistance for research and to maintain university chairs for research; and secondly, the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Act, which establishes AADAC to operate programs for prevention and treatment of alcohol and drug abuse and to conduct and fund research. My question is: in view of the fact that these Acts have been in place for a decade, will the minister tell this Assembly what is new in these recommendations that hasn't been already covered?

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, I did a ministerial statement in this Assembly last August. I asked the ministerial review committee to go out and canvass the province, both from the research side as well as the general interest side, with respect to the proposed foundation. That committee has now made its report to me. I thought it a courtesy to the House to table the report, and it will be part of the information base that govern-

ment will review in a very thorough review of the issue before responding to the House in the form of legislation. The earliest that I would see legislation coming forward would be the spring of 1991.

MS M. LAING: Mr. Speaker, even though the commission acknowledged the widely complimentary public perception of AADAC and the fact that AADAC educated the committee on substance abuse in Alberta, the underlying tone of the report suggests that AADAC is not addressing the needs of Albertans. AADAC, in fact, recently has suffered funding cuts. My question to the minister: what guarantee can the minister provide that the family life and drug abuse foundation will not assume some of the responsibilities so effectively shouldered by AADAC and thus weaken AADAC's active and effective role in addressing substance abuse in Alberta?

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, I think we as Albertans and certainly as legislators are all exceedingly proud of the role that AADAC has played in our province. [some applause] I am pleased to join in that applause, Mr. Speaker. But I guess the hon. member points to some of the issues beyond what AADAC is currently doing, some of the issues which have been identified by the committee itself. As for reasons for the recommendations that the committee has given to me as minister, I am not going to try and second-guess the reasons for the committee. The only thing I can tell and assure the hon. member is that the review will take place in the atmosphere to complement as opposed to make any difficulty for the role of AADAC – certainly that's a commitment that we make not only as a government but I would make as minister – and to ensure that we're using the resources in Alberta and the proposed fund in the most effective way. That review will continue, and as I say, the earliest it would come back to this Assembly would be the spring of '91.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Social Services Canmore Office

MRS. HEWES: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. There's been evidence of disarray in the Department of Family and Social Services for a number of years, but the events of this past year clearly indicate to me that we have a department that's adrift and seems more concerned with alienating workers and making life more difficult for its constituency, already very vulnerable. Now we have yet another example from this rudderless ship: the closure of the Canmore social services office, or as the department itself puts it when asked, an office without the staff. What a clever answer. What an insult to the people of Canmore, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Minister of Family and Social Services. Did the minister make any effort to discuss this closure personally with other community agencies who are already overburdened with the growing responsibility placed on them by the department, such as family and community support services, the Mount Rundle school district, the local town councillors? Was there any consultation, Mr. Speaker?

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, the Canmore office is not being closed.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, as we talk, the people in Canmore are meeting to try to develop a means to get around this decision. Will the minister, then, undertake to provide increased resources and support to family and community social services

in the community, to the local school boards, who are undoubtedly reeling from the impact of already overburdened workers? Will he at least sit down with them and talk about how he can relieve their overburdened situation?

MR. OLDRING: Well, it's interesting to listen to the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar talk about overburdened workers in Canmore. I should probably point out to the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar that they're carrying amongst the lowest caseload in the province of Alberta. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, again I would want to say that, yes, we're very interested in continuing to work with the community. The Member for Banff-Cochrane has been in my office on many occasions to talk to me about the needs in Canmore and to talk to me about that office in particular. All I can say is that we're going to continue to man that office at a level consistent with the caseload in the Canmore area, that we're going to continue to work with residents, community agencies, school boards, and other concerned citizens in Canmore, as we have in the past. Of course, it goes without saying that I'm going to continue to work very closely with the Member for Banff-Cochrane, who has put forward some very persuasive arguments on behalf of the situation there on many occasions.

MR. SPEAKER: Drayton Valley.

Flooding

MR. THURBER: Yes, Mr. Speaker. My first question today would be to the Minister of Agriculture. In view of the very wet conditions that have prevailed in the central Alberta foothills both last fall and this spring and with the advent of more moisture in the last two or three days, I would like to ask the minister if he is monitoring the unseeded acreage in that area with an eye to providing some kind of assistance to the farmers and ranchers all along the central Alberta foothills?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, it would be fair to say that we are continually monitoring the situation. I also went out and personally viewed much of the situation on Saturday of last week and would have to agree with the member that there is a serious problem in certain sectors west of Highway 2.

MR. THURBER: The supplementary, Mr. Speaker, would be to the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services. When we hear what kind of damage is done in the city of Edmonton with a small shower and when you look at the area southwest of Edmonton where we had from seven to 10 inches and in some places 11 or 12 inches of rain in the last 24 hours, there have been some disaster areas proclaimed, there's been disastrous flooding, and a lot of people have suffered hardship not only publicly but on private property. I would ask the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services if you are monitoring this situation as well, what your intent is, and how do people access this disaster funding if necessary in their area?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, there is a state of emergency that was declared in the community of Thorsby yesterday and at 8 o'clock this morning in the town of Ponoka. Quite frankly, in terms of all the waterways that would basically go along the Eastern Slopes in the province of Alberta from the Sundre area up to Grande Prairie and beyond, there is a high stream advisory in effect now. The waters will peak at various times today and through to tomorrow.

What has to happen is that municipal authorities will respond. They're all trained, and they've responded very, very well in terms of all the events that have occurred in the last several months. As soon as the waters subside, there will be an assessment made. That assessment will be made by the local authority. In the case of assistance the government has asked all local municipal governments to do what they have to do to protect life and property, and the province through Alberta Public Safety Services will sit down with the local municipalities with respect to that matter.

If individuals have been affected, the first thing they should do is contact their insurance company to ensure that they have adequate insurance and then access it in that particular way. The second thing that might happen is that individuals might then contact their local disaster assistance officer in each of these various municipalities throughout the province of Alberta.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Kingsway.

Free Trade

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Deputy Premier. The Mulroney government has refused to monitor the effects of the free trade deal with the United States and is now refusing to make any public statement of its tacit approval for the Mexico/United States free trade deal that's being negotiated. Given the warnings of the Washington Institute of International Economics of the dangers to both Canada and United States of Mexico's huge supply of cheap labour in any continental trade alliance, what steps is the Alberta government taking to protect Alberta's workers and small businesses as we rush headlong into a continental free trade bloc?

MR. HORSMAN: Well, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Kingsway is, as usual, running ahead of himself and in circles. Mr. Speaker, it's quite clear that discussions which have been suggested by the President of Mexico to the President of the United States and taken up in some measure there relative to the potential of discussions may indeed have a considerable impact on Canada, should they come to fruition. However, it's a very long leap indeed to suggest that such discussions are in fact going to result in a free trade agreement between Mexico and the United States. I think it's significant to note that the hon. Minister for International Trade has indicated clearly that Canada should be very much involved in any discussions which do take place, if and when they do commence, and that it would be extremely important to involve the provinces in discussions relative to any such developments. There is, of course, a continuing committee of ministers responsible for international trade, which meets on a regular basis. I attend those meetings, and I can assure the hon. member and all members of this Assembly and Albertans that Alberta will watch this matter with a great deal of care to make sure that if developments are taking place, the interests of Albertans will be looked after.

MR. McEACHERN: Sold out again like last time.

Mr. Speaker, my second question is to the Minister of Energy. The Alberta government has been promising ever since deregulation and the free trade sellout that the American gas bubble would burst and Albertans would get a decent return for our natural gas exports. Now Bob Lyman, a senior official from the Department of Energy, has stated his concern that Mexico may be able to supply the California market cheaper than we can. What steps is the minister taking to protect Alberta's

energy companies and the Alberta Treasury from this new threat?

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, the member in his question lacks the same knowledge as the person that made the comment in Ottawa. There is no way that Mexico can compete with Alberta gas into California. First off, the infrastructure has not been used for a number of years. Secondly, they have traditionally and intend, as I understand it, to use their natural gas for domestic consumption. The cost of investment to develop natural gas reserves in the Gulf would make it such that it would be nowhere near competitive with Alberta gas landed into California. The states of Wyoming, New Mexico, and Texas can't compete with Alberta gas into California, so I don't know where he would get the idea – other than another uninformed source – that Mexico could compete with Alberta gas. Whether it's the gas industry or any other industry, Albertans will compete toe-to-toe in the U.S. market with anyone.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-North West.

Automotive Mechanics Training

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Minister of Career Development and Employment. Good day, sir. My question is regarding the automotive industry. Apparently, recently there's an acknowledged crisis in the automotive industry regarding a shortage of certified mechanics. The Southern Alberta Institute of Technology offers an apprenticeship program to provide training in precisely the area that we need more mechanics. Currently they accept 54 students per year and turn at least that many away again. My question is to the minister in charge of the apprenticeship program: will the minister increase accessibility to the automotive mechanics service program so that Albertans can have opportunities to create the jobs and get the jobs that are there rather than allowing outsiders to come in and take those jobs away from Albertans?

MR. WEISS: Well, Mr. Speaker, through the Assembly and to the hon. member, first of all, he surprised me by the question because I just returned today and appreciate the question with great interest.

Yes, we are reviewing the concern. We'll be working very closely with our colleagues on the other side of it to determine the need. But I would indicate to the Assembly and to the hon. member that I have met with representatives from within the industry as well – from the General Motors group, the Motor Dealers' Association of Alberta, and others – to try and ascertain the overall needs. I recognize that in some areas there is a concern. We're endeavouring to try and correct it, and we'll be working in that area.

MR. BRUSEKER: My supplementary question, then, to the minister. The government has a direct hand in recruitment of new apprentice trainees through their field workers. Very often those positions are not filled thoroughly. My question to the minister is simply this: will he direct those field workers to ensure that the quotas for the different automotive apprenticeship program courses are in fact filled so that we can get as many students in there – that that should be the top priority?

MR. WEISS: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware that is a problem, but I'll certainly review it. I might indicate to the hon.

member that just recently, as of about two and a half weeks ago, I was present with a group of students with a combined program under English as a Second Language and a group of foreign students who we specifically designed a motor trades apprenticeship program for, and all were graduates and have gone on to employment in that field. I'm quite surprised the hon. member would raise that as a problem area, because I'm not aware of it but will certainly look into it for him.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Strathcona.

Automobile Insurance Rates

MR. WRIGHT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and concerns the vexed question of automobile insurance rates. News today is that the automobile insurance industry is saying that because they have experienced a first quarter loss in 1990 of \$29 million, they'll have to put up all our insurance rates for motor vehicles, irrespective of what happens in the other quarters. My question, therefore, is: how satisfied is the minister that in fact Albertans have incurred greater losses or greater expense in repairing their vehicles, or is he perhaps suspicious that the insurance companies are taking the Alberta drivers for another ride and fattening their profits?

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Speaker, I, in fact, have no basis for that suspicion. Our evaluation, though, of statistics of the past couple of years would indicate that the insurance claims have by and large not kept up with the income that's been received by insurance companies. I would indicate to the hon. member that decisions with respect to insurance rates are brought before the Alberta Automobile Insurance Board, which independently adjudicates what would be fair and what wouldn't in that respect, and I expect that to continue.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I think it's all the more important then, given that the facts are incontrovertible, that the publicly run auto insurance schemes in the other provinces where they are normally run as such, namely Saskatchewan and Manitoba, are remarkably cheaper than in this province, that the minister should cast off his ideological blinkers, if I can put it that way, and admit that the inherent efficiencies of simply cranking out the insurance with the licence every year is so great that it transcends any advantage that one can get from a competitive market.

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Speaker, the data that I've reviewed with respect to the publicly owned companies which the hon. member refers to would not bear out the same facts. I realize one can look at the statistics involved there from a number of perspectives. However, one has to assess both the costs from the government side and from any involvement that the government may have in paying for those costs along with the costs of the insurance that is provided within those provinces. However, I am more than pleased to review once again those provinces and all other possibilities that might exist to ensure that consumers have fairness and equity with respect to the insurance market in Alberta.

MR. SPEAKER: Westlock-Sturgeon.

Soil Conservation

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. One of the major concerns that not only farmers but westerners have is the erosion and loss of our fertile or grain-raising land due to wind, water, and various forms of erosion. Consequently, I was interested to note that the British Columbia government in about March of this year came out with loans to farmers at half the prime rate provided the loans are used for environmentally friendly purposes, anything from tree belts to bringing land back or land restoration. Is the Minister of Agriculture considering such a program in this province?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'll take the hon. member's lobbying under consideration.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, we all know what that means. It sort of disappears in a big four-litre plastic jug.

So may I transfer the supplemental to the Minister of the Environment, who is responsible for land reclamation, if I may remind him. Has he and his department – seeing as the Minister of Agriculture is about 20 years behind time – considered the possibility of keeping up with British Columbia and making half rate loans available to those farmers that want environmentally friendly loans to restore the land?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I can't answer with respect to loans. But with respect to the environmental aspects of the question, we have now referred to the round table on the environment a conservation strategy for the province which deals with this issue along with other issues as it relates to conservation of our land.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Could I just offer a supplement to the member to inform him that it is really not necessary to implement a loan program because under the Canada/Alberta soil conservation initiative we have programs in place to deal with shelterbelt planting, permanent cover programs, conservation equipment and support programs. We work with the Indian reserves on soil conservation, and we also have a fair awareness network through that program. I would be very happy to share that with the member.

MR. SPEAKER: West Yellowhead.

Train Tours

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In this House on June 20 the Minister of Tourism stated that he would support an application for western diversification funding to assemble a heritage passenger train pulled by steam engine 6050, *Bullet-nosed Betty*, and to get it running as a tourist service in Alberta. Suitable vintage Via Rail rolling stock is now being sold to the U.S. or offered to the U.S. and international markets, but these must be secured with 30 percent down payment. So, Mr. Minister, time is of the essence. Since his statement two weeks ago, what has the minister done to bring the project to realization?

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, as you know, we put out requests for proposals for the use of 6050, and all four proposals that came in did not meet the department's requests for proposals. We've since encouraged those groups to get together to put together a package. We have supported their request to

the federal government to extend the time frame. They have made an application for those cars, and they've received that consideration of extending that time frame for the acquisition of the cars that they requested.

MR. DOYLE: It's my understanding, Mr. Minister, that the proposal for *Bullet-nosed Betty*, which your department has been considering, includes a business plan, which they have now completed, and the financial viability of this project. Given that there's widespread support from the public and tourism people in the province for this project, will the department consider a start-up loan to kick-start this project so that interested parties can begin to acquire the necessary assets of this rolling stock?

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, we're not in the loaning business in the Department of Tourism. We're in the business of helping proponents put financially viable projects together, and the staff are working with their proponents. They have indicated – and we've had the federal MPs involved in making sure – that if they do put their business plan together, an application to the western diversification fund would be considered. I hope that they will follow through and make that application, as has been suggested to them. That is the source of funds that are available for these types of projects, and we're working with them to try to make it a reality.

MR. McINNIS: Point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, one should call out, hon. member. I'm sure you've been around here long enough. What's the reference, please?

MR. McINNIS: *Beauchesne*, 495. I'd simply like to file three copies of a letter that I referred to in question period from the public advisory committee to Daishowa complaining about the lack of involvement in ground rules on the forest management agreement.

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

MR. McINNIS: I'm tabling documents.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, hon. member, it's a most unusual practice. We have the appropriate procedure during the routine of the day to do it. When you were speaking in question period, you had the opportunity to do it. At this stage of the game it's really a reversion to previous business of the House, and usually that calls for the House's unanimous consent, not on a point of order.

So is there unanimous agreement in the House to revert to the tabling of documents?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. SPEAKER: Try tomorrow. Thank you, hon. member.

Orders of the Day

head: Government Motions

14. Moved by Mr. Horsman:

Be it resolved that the interim report and recommendations contained therein, presented to the Assembly on March 21, 1990, by the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries, appointed pursuant to Motion 14 passed by this Assembly on August 15, 1989, be now received and concurred in, and if the Assembly is not sitting when the final report of the committee is completed, the committee shall make it public by delivering a copy to the Speaker and all members of the Assembly and subsequently releasing it to the general public.

Moved by Mr. McInnis that the motion be amended by striking out all the words after "that" and substituting "this House regrets that the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries has been unable to complete its consideration of the appropriateness of the provisions of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act and that it directs the committee to prepare a recommended timetable for the completion of the process leading to the commencement of enumeration on the new electoral boundaries not later than September 15, 1991."

[Adjourned debate June 29: Mr. Hyland]

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Speaker, in participating in the amendment to Motion 14, I think we were in the same position a week or plus ago in requesting the House to defeat a different amendment to the same motion. I would encourage all members to defeat the amendment, and let's get on with the motion as it can be discussed and pass it so that we can get on with the study of the electoral boundaries group that are going around the province.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to speak very briefly in support of this amendment. We are supporting it because of the belief that it's important that this House move with reasonable dispatch on this issue. We, of course, have to be thorough in our deliberations and ensure that all groups are heard, but we can't be seen to be dragging our feet. So far there has been a great deal of foot-dragging by the committee that's seized with reporting to this House. Now, I made extensive comments about that during the initial debate on this motion.

Now, I believe that in light of the delay so far it's important to provide a time frame to keep this issue moving along, particularly when we note that there has been very distinct delay and foot-dragging by the government majority on the committee. The committee was appointed nearly one year ago, and we still don't have a report. This report should have been completed long ago so that the matter could have been dealt with by this House during this very lengthy spring session.

Now, the clearest evidence, of course, of their casual approach to the issue is the refusal to hold hearings of the committee during this past session while the House was in session even as the government Whip, the MLA for Red Deer-North, found eight days to head off to Japan.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, order please. That's got nothing to do with this subamendment.

MR. CHUMIR: But it certainly . . .

MR. SPEAKER: No, I'm sorry. Trips to Japan have got nothing to do with this.

MR. CHUMIR: It certainly does.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, the answer is no. Please proceed to other items. I'm sure you have a wealth of information to discuss.

MR. CHUMIR: With all due respect – with all due disrespect in that event . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. "With all due disrespect"? Is that what the Chair heard? Would the member care to withdraw that.

MR. CHUMIR: I certainly withdraw that, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, hon. member. Please continue.

MR. CHUMIR: Now, this amendment to the motion is directed towards the need to set a time frame, and the issue of why we need to set a time frame is at the heart of whether or not we do proceed with that. What I'm directing my comments to is the reality that a time frame has to be imposed by this House upon the committee because the committee has shown very clearly that it has no intention of proceeding with due dispatch. That is the issue to which my comments are, I believe, so relevantly and pertinently directed in respect of this motion.

I was about to note, Mr. Speaker, that the ultimate in the casual approach of this committee was the proposal to take off the whole of this summer without deliberations, which proposal I hope has now been scotched as a result of our concerns. These factors are an invitation for courts to intervene. Now, what is likely to happen in respect of a court intervention? The Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place has suggested that the courts lack remedies. Well, I'm not too sure that is the case. The issue is that of course the courts would be loath to interfere, but in the event of inordinate delay, I think it's very possible that our courts could clearly direct that a new election be held with appropriate amendments to the boundaries in order to comply with the Charter of Rights. In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, I believe a court would, if there were a delay, be prepared to take charge of the time frame and the process being followed by this House. Now, in the United States there are numerous precedents where the courts in different contexts have intervened and taken charge of matters which are administrative in nature.

The point I would make, Mr. Speaker, is that it's unfair to Albertans and to the democratic process to leave the very strong degree of uncertainty which would prevail with respect to the validity of the next election if we don't proceed with all due dispatch. We clearly don't want the courts to take over the job of this Legislature, and to avoid that end, we do need a time frame which is being proposed to be established by this motion. So I believe it would be very advisable for the government to get down to the business of setting out a very clear time frame with realistic but firm goals to reflect that the government does take this issue seriously, a reflection which is not borne out by the record to date, because actions speak louder than words, and the

action to date has been an invitation for the courts to intervene in some manner. So we would support this amendment on that basis.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
Edmonton-Mill Woods.

MR. GIBEAULT: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I also want to rise in support of my colleague for Edmonton-Jasper Place's amendment to this motion, because really what it does, by providing the date of September 15, 1991, as the target date for an enumeration, is make the whole exercise very results oriented, and that's what New Democrats are; we're results oriented. We don't want to get into a wishy-washy, never-never land kind of a process in terms of boundary realignments. We know the Election Act provides for that process every second election. We want to make sure, on behalf of our constituents and the people of Alberta, that the next election respects the integrity of that spirit of the Election Act, and we're just very doubtful the way the process is going now that that is going to happen. That is why my colleague has proposed this amendment and why I want to speak in support of it.

I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that if the government does not support this amendment, the doubts will be there in the public mind about the government's sincerity in proposing to run the next election on new electoral boundaries as provided by the Election Act. I would suspect that the government would not want to have that public doubt, because it would leave the legitimacy of an elected Legislative Assembly in doubt and the possibility of an election being reheld: a great deal of uncertainty, confusion, doubt, and so on that need not exist if the government will simply adopt this particular amendment. By adopting that amendment providing September 15 as the time line for the next enumeration, of course, then the preceding steps of the commission and the final report of the Electoral Boundaries Committee itself flow from that. We make sure that we get the report of the committee, and then we have the commission all done in time to have the enumeration done in September of 1991.

Again, if the government does not accept this amendment, people are going to be having their doubts about it. I mean, it's clear to anybody who's looked at the demographic changes in Alberta since the last time we went through this exercise that the increases in population have been in the urban areas, and particularly the cities. While we want to make sure that rural Albertans are properly represented as well, we want to make sure there's more equitable representation, because the amount of disparity between urban and rural ridings now has really become gross, Mr. Speaker. It's ranged from a low of some 7,000 in ridings like Cardston to in the neighbourhood of 32,000 or more in Edmonton-Whitemud. In my own constituency in '89 we had 25,000 voters, significantly above the 18,000 average per voter if you just divided arithmetically. There will be some 32,000 in the very near future with additional subdivisions and so on coming on stream.

I want to be able to go to my constituents and tell them that I have faith in the government's commitment to running the next election on boundaries which give all Albertans, whether they be urban or rural, equal weighting in terms of their representation in this Assembly. Unless the government supports this amendment, Mr. Speaker, I will not be able to do that. In fact, I will have to go to them and say that I don't have confidence in the government's commitment to this process and that there are a lot of doubts about it, and I'm going to have to reflect on why

the government would refuse to commit itself to a commitment as we've provided for in this amendment. I guess I'm going to have to discuss with my constituents how they feel about the prospect that we may have another election with the existing boundaries with the kind of disparities that I just referred to. They will not be impressed; I know that.

I want to go to my next town hall meeting with my constituents and be able to tell them that we can trust the government, that we can have confidence in them, that they are taking this process seriously. In order to do that, Mr. Speaker, we have to get the government to support this amendment that is before us, and I encourage all members to do just that.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

[Motion on amendment lost]

MR. SPEAKER: On the main motion as amended.

MR. HORSMAN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I just want to briefly restate the position that the government is anxious to have this committee of this Legislature complete its work, come forward with a new system for redistributing the boundaries which will comply with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms of Canada to make sure that whatever legislation is in place will not be subject to challenge successfully in the courts, that we can thus make sure that Albertans are properly represented in this Assembly whether they be from urban or rural Alberta; that whatever design comes forward, I'm hopeful it will be done in conjunction with the members of the committee working together in the best interests of all Albertans; and that partisanship, as best can be done, will be set aside as has been done many times in the past by the work of select committees of this Assembly.

That's my hope on behalf of the government, and I wish the committee well in the balance of their deliberations. I'm hopeful that what they come forward with will be draft legislation which will meet with the approval of all members of this Assembly as we move towards the fall sittings. I would therefore urge hon. members to support the motion now before the Assembly.

[Motion as amended carried]

head: **Government Bills and Orders** **Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Schumacher in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please.

Bill 49 **Ambulance Services Act**

MR. CHAIRMAN: There are some amendments. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

REV. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't know quite how we feel about getting back to this Bill after trying to get at it two or three or four times before this date, yet finally we're here, and I hope that in the next couple of hours we can get a number of points clarified and convince the government of the merits of many amendments that we've presented. As you

can see, I circulated I think a week or so ago amendments that our caucus wants to bring to the Ambulance Services Act. I don't know the degree to which the government is already committed to this no matter what other information or what other concerns might be raised. I even heard that they've now gone and hired some people to implement the legislation, and some people from Saskatchewan, at least one gentleman, are now part of the government's employ to help put this all into place, so obviously they're moving ahead with it. But I think it would be better if we had a full and public debate on these matters in the Legislature.

Also, Mr. Chairman, as we said at second reading, it's hard to know how to amend a Bill that we feel in its many ways is so fundamentally flawed that it just doesn't bring into statute at all some very fundamental principles with respect to prehospital emergency care. What we have is an Act that talks about the ambulance industry and keeps it controlled and regulated at local levels, and who knows how the funding is going to work its way through. It just doesn't have the comprehensiveness that we in the New Democrat caucus were really wanting. So it's hard to know how to in a sense amend comprehensiveness into the Bill, but we're going to try with respect to a couple more full amendments: section E particularly and section L, as I've provided them in the amendments we've tabled already.

Mr. Chairman, before we begin, I'm just wondering if we can see how we might vote on these amendments. I certainly wouldn't mind speaking to them as a package, but there are at least three – D, E, and L – that I'd like to have separate votes on, if that could be accommodated.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair is in the hands of the committee. If the committee agrees with that, there will be no problem. Is there agreement?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's agreement, hon. member.

REV. ROBERTS: I appreciate that very much, members of the committee.

With respect to section A, it addresses some of the definitions in Bill 49. It's not meant to quibble in any semantic way, but clearly, Mr. Chairman, there are a couple of things here that really I think do bear the benefit of some reflection, some amendment. The first one, that I've proposed in A(a), is that the clause "ambulance attendant" be taken out and replaced with a much more contemporary term, which I know might have some awkwardness in terms of language, but still I think what we really want to talk about here are "members of the emergency response team." Because certainly "members of the emergency response team" is a broader concept and one that many people who work in emergency care can get some meaning out of. The phrase "ambulance attendant" – I'm not sure if the minister or government is aware – is really seen in some pejorative sense these days. An ambulance attendant is sort of seen like an ambulance driver, someone who has some basic skills and helps to run the ambulance.

But clearly you don't want to go around calling a paramedic an ambulance attendant, or you don't want to call somebody now with EMT training just an ambulance attendant. In fact, it was brought to my attention when they built the new Grey Nuns hospital down in Mill Woods that here were all these very highly trained paramedics in the city of Edmonton who were quite affronted when they went in and there was a meeting room and

it said "ambulance attendants". It was their meeting room. Again, I don't mean to quibble on semantics here, but there is a lot of training, a lot of professionalism, and it's not just a person who is attending an ambulance in some functionary way; rather, I think, in a broader, more contemporary way to phrase it, we're talking about members of the emergency response team or persons who are employed to attend or transport patients in an ambulance.

Mr. Chairman, as we know, it's not just a few people here. This could include registered nurses who could help in this way or even emergency physicians who can sometimes board an ambulance if they happen to be in the neighbourhood or be sent out on a call, not to mention the driver and the EMTAs and the EMTs. There is a variety of people who are members of the response team, and I don't think any of them really can be designated as ambulance attendants. So I would argue most strenuously for changing that phrase to give them the kind of due that is deserved, but also to bring this up to a kind of statute that we want to be proud of over the next 10 years, because this area is just going to improve with training and professionalism. I think that if we have "members of the emergency response team," the minister and others might argue, "Well, they're not always responding to an emergency; they could be involved in interhospital transfer and so on," but I don't think that's a good enough argument. They're members of a team, and in most cases they're responding to emergencies or even the transfer of patients between facilities. So I just would like to get that on the record as being, I think, a necessary amendment.

The second one I'm wanting to argue for, Mr. Chairman, is a way I'm trying to find in what is currently section 1(m), talking about a "patient". It's interesting; there's some debate in health care these days whether in fact we have patients or whether we have clients or whether we have consumers of health care or individual Albertans. It's interesting that the government here in this Bill does use the term "patient" and says it's a person who's "in need of medical attention." Well, I would just like to take that a bit further. If we're talking about them as patients in that true health care sense, then they take on a status as being those who are involved with the health care system, so what qualifies them as patients and not just individual Albertans is that they're part of the system which is covered by a universal health care system and funding. As I argued at second reading, once they're into the system, once they've begun to be called "patients," then the medical services they receive should be fully covered by the Alberta health care insurance plan. So I very much want to argue that universal coverage needs to extend to these "patients." They're not customers; they're not clients; they're not people who might have the benefit of private insurance. They are patients in that true sense of the word; they've entered the system; they've been touched by hands of people who are employed in the health care system, and they need to have the medical services that they receive to be not taken out of their own pocket but to be covered by a comprehensive health care plan.

I know the government hasn't been enlightened to this point yet in terms of the full system as in B.C. and Ontario, but I think it's paramount and fundamental to any comprehensive ambulance legislation. I mean, instead we have the case of a woman in Stony Plain who contacted me recently and had to have her son transported in an ambulance and didn't have coverage, and it was costing her over \$300 for the trip to the Misericordia and then back out again. It left her out of pocket over \$300, and she's on a very fixed income and has difficulty

paying it. Or the issue that we got into in Edmonton a while ago with the disparity between what the government was paying and what the city was charging, so seniors were being extra-billed \$10 or \$20. All kinds of anomalies in terms of payment for services continue to wreak havoc with the system. Let's just make it clean. Let's have an Alberta health care card, and the moment you become a patient in this sense, the moment you begin to receive medical services, you should have those services covered through your Alberta health care registration number.

Finally, then, in the definition section, Mr. Chairman, I just would like to add another section, because I want to use it later, which is to set out the definition of the commission: that for the purposes of my argument, "the Commission" means the Emergency Health Services Commission." Again, as I said at second reading, it seems to me vital that if we're going to have a fully comprehensive, well-worked, well-managed system, we need to well take into consideration the recommendations in the new emergency health services report, which as one of its most fundamental recommendations calls for the establishment of such a commission. So basically I'm just putting into statute here what the report has already called for in terms of an emergency health services commission. It would be a commission that would most effectively manage the system, that would have the authority to do the co-ordination of the system, to do planning, to do research, to do investigation and also, I believe – and this might be open to some debate and argument – to have the function of hearing appeals by people who feel they've been hard done by by the registrar or whatever.

Clearly, if we're going to have a solid system here that's well managed, that's going to be able to do these co-ordinating and research functions, to do the investigation, to hear the appeals, to streamline the funding, and to do a range of things, I'm convinced by the arguments in the Schumacher report that we need to have such a commission. You know, in all due respect, I just feel the minister is already burdened enough with responsibilities, and to give her the however many there are further jobs under the regulations section – I know it looked like about 20 or 25 further areas of responsibility; "the minister may or may not do this." I just think it's not fair to continue to put these responsibilities onto the minister or onto her office and others that she would have to delegate them to. So for a variety of reasons I would just want to go with the Schumacher report recommendation for this commission. I'll argue it more when we get to it under the final amendment, but it needed to be included here in the definitions section.

Now, just moving on, then, to section B. It opens up this very difficult area of how boundaries are set and established for service delivery; in this particular instance, of emergency services or other health services. Again, I just think this should be debated. I don't recall having debated any of the nitty-gritty, thorny matters of how boundaries are set in the Legislature here for anything before. Clearly, we have so many boundaries, so many districts already existing in this province, whether they're improvement districts or the municipal districts or the electoral boundaries, as we just had debate about. Now the Hyndman report is calling for health authorities which would have certain geographical definitions and districts to them. There just seems to be an array of boundaries that are not coterminous with the health unit and auxiliary hospital, acute care, and now we're adding to it the whole business of ambulance districts. I'm glad to see in the department that there's a woman that's responsible for looking at boundaries and requisitioning and all that. I mean, she must have quite a task to work through how any or all of this makes sense.

I don't think there's a need to draw any more boundaries or lines or to build up any more districts than are already existing, so for discussion purposes at least – and I'm sure the minister has some response in terms of how she's already looking at these ambulance districts – I'm wondering about the degree to which the health unit boundaries, as they're already drawn and understood, cannot also function as the ambulance districts. There are 27 of them. It seemed to me that to have 27 ambulance districts makes some sense. The health units: I think their boundaries are municipally driven in the sense that here you have the board of health and it encompasses the city of Edmonton; the same with Calgary and others. So if we're going to have this municipal partnership in ambulance service, it would make sense to ensure that the city is primary in it. I don't know if the single point of entry as it's developed in the health unit boundaries might also be applied to emergency ambulance services.

I think that many advantages would accrue to simply looking at the currently existing 27 health units and their boundaries and not drawing any new ones, not having to sit down and create anything else – because we already have enough, as I've said – but really to use the health unit boundaries as the ones that would serve the purpose of these ambulance district boundaries. I haven't thought this entirely through, so I'm sure others might have some ideas here. But I would like, before we get to finishing committee study of this very important piece of legislation, to have more of a debate on that issue, given my suggestion under amendment B there.

Then amendment C, Mr. Chairman, is I think a very important one that's also come to our attention, to do with the board of the new ambulance district. I understand that currently there is nothing to stop a member from being on a hospital board who also owns and operates an ambulance which does business with that hospital. It seems to me that some real conflict of interest can be at work there: that an ambulance which does a lot of work through a hospital and its emergency unit, even getting much of its funding from a particular hospital, can have the owner and operator of an ambulance on the hospital board making those funding decisions. It would seem to me that that's not a level playing field; that's not fair ball at all. So I would like to move in this amendment C that with respect to the appointing of members to these new district ambulance boards, there needs to be a section (9), which says that no operator of an ambulance may be a member of the district ambulance board. I think clearly for purposes of not just appearing to be in a conflict of interest but to have that possibility entirely removed, it should be in there, and I'm surprised that it's not already. I mean, certainly under section 5 of Bill 49 the board has a lot of powers, and to give anybody a leg up on that is problematic. So I just flag that for the attention of government and members of the committee in the amendment stage here now.

Then, Mr. Chairman, we come to a very difficult and very important area to do with native rights and native ambulance operators operating as they need to in the province of Alberta. It's currently section 4 of the Bill. I don't need to tell members of the Assembly that despite the work that has gone into changing section 4 from how it previously read in Bill 25 – to take out any reference to Indian reserves and lands under federal jurisdiction – the current wording under section 4 of this Bill is still entirely unacceptable because it continues not to recognize the inalienable treaty rights of the native people in this province and this country. Though there might be other issues that I want to argue, I think the fundamental issue is that it does not recognize the principle of jurisdiction, that this province has

very little business, has no business at all, in having any agreement that a native ambulance operator wants to enter into with the federal government subject to the Minister of Health in this province. It's a jurisdictional issue; it's a matter of deep principle, which is being violated by the current wording of section 4.

Now, I don't want to argue it on the basis of there being a lack of trust. I mean, I've heard certain people say: "Well, the native ambulance operators can go on and do what they want to do. They can sign agreements with the federal government, and we're not going to impinge on that; we're not going to affect that in any way; just trust us." It's unfortunate that that trust is not there. You know, obviously the native peoples in this country have heard that talk for far too long and are more adamant than ever that they want to have their rights enshrined in language in a statute where it's clearly laid out, so that any reference to anything they might want to enter being subject to the Minister of Health in this province is anathema, is outside jurisdiction, and violates treaty rights.

Certainly the issue of self-determination for native peoples in this province – I mean, we've been fortunate that we have bands in this province who have taken on a degree of self-determination, with respect to their emergency ambulance services, far better than bands who have been able to do so in other provinces. I think in fact there's a history behind why that's been the case. Nonetheless, if we've had in this session the whole discussion centring around self-determination for Metis people and the government has tried to show faith in the powers of Metis people to have self-determination in this province, surely the government can understand that the Indian bands in this country want to have self-determination to continue to do what they want and feel is for their own benefit, for their own interest, and not have that threatened in any way.

Like it or not, section 4 does threaten their autonomy and their treaty rights. What would work against that or amend it in a far better language – which is agreeable not only to, as we've said before, the native ambulance operators in this province and the chiefs of the bands of the province, but even today we have the full endorsement of the 300 chiefs who are meeting at the all-chiefs conference here in Edmonton. They too now say that much better wording, or wording that is going to be acceptable and adequate to them, is:

the Minister may enter into an agreement with the Government of Canada and a third party to provide ambulance services outside a district to the benefit [and in the interests] of the third party.

Now, this is the only way to go. I guess this could be understood in some ways as a tripartite agreement or an agreement in a double sense that allows for the integrity of the treaty rights to be observed as well as the functioning of the system as a whole in the province. To go on, it doesn't say that the agreement between the band and the federal government is subject to the Minister of Health at all. It just says that "the Minister may enter into an agreement with the Government of Canada and a third party" to protect and promote and preserve the interests of that third party. If anything goes awry, if anything is not acceptable, then the third party has every way and every right and every power to pull out of that agreement.

That is the language and the powers that need to be maintained. Although I try to speak with some praise about the investigation of this important section by government officials between Bill 25 and now, I must say that the native ambulance operators, the Indian Health Care Commission, and the chiefs in this province do not feel they have been consulted at all properly, that this has been a matter . . . Perhaps the govern-

ment feels they're walking on eggshells, they don't know how to deal with it, but that's no excuse for not sitting down as long and hard as it takes to hammer out some agreement that's mutually beneficial and agreed upon. Instead, there are feelings now of great alienation and misgivings and lack of trust because even the consultation process has not been what it should be. I regret that, but that is the way they strongly feel.

The Indian people have put out three position papers on this matter, two last year and one just recently after Bill 49 was tabled. I think the information in those position papers is based on the fundamental clause of the medicine chest, being that the main treaty right for health care determination for Indian people – ambulance service is part of that medicine chest. We can learn a lot by reading through those three position papers and seeing where they're coming from. They're fully referenced and I think have shown the good faith of the treaty peoples and Indian peoples in this province in terms of their reading of this issue and what they want to see and how they see it. I don't know. I haven't heard from them that they have received a full response and critique from government about those three position papers. They seem to have gone into some government office, been looked at by someone, and no adequate response has been made to them. Finally, meetings were forced at the final hour, and satisfaction is still not there. I don't like to talk about shades of Meech Lake, but there seems to be a lot of that parallel sense: we know how we're going to word it, and we're going to ram it through here, come what may. Now the backlash is very strong and very real and in fact will continue if this is not amended.

As I've said, I think the only amendment is the one before us here as I proposed in section D. The minister must make this change and make this amendment to honour the medicine chest, to honour the provincial and federal jurisdictional powers and areas, and to affirm the indigenous peoples and the hard work they have already done with respect to this issue in the province. The minister must amend it to enable health care delivery for native peoples to be carried on in terms of the area of language and culture and the whole issue of interhospital transfer. If an Indian person is in the hospital in Ponoka and wants to be transferred to the University of Alberta hospital, they need to have the right to have their ambulance service make that transfer. Certainly the ambulance services as they've already been developed are not just good health care delivery services for Indian peoples in this province but also are part of their economic diversification on treaty lands and need to be strengthened, not threatened as we currently have and as they currently feel.

Finally, I think we need to make this change and this amendment to be true Canadians. We talk about loving this country of ours and all we've been through with Meech Lake, but if we're going to be Canadians, we clearly need to know that part of our coming together as a nation is the coming together of the founding peoples of this nation, which are the first nations and the aboriginal peoples, and working to redeem the centuries of harm and error and threat which have gone on, to redeem that by affirming what they've done with their own ambulance services and strengthening that and not continuing to allow them to feel threatened and have the language really be in violation of treaty rights, which do not allow for the Minister of Health in this province to be subject at all to anything to do with health services for native peoples.

Mr. Chairman, I know other members would like to say more to this amendment as I've proposed it. I think it's a crucial area.

It represents a lot and means a lot to a lot of people and needs much further clarification here this afternoon.

Then under section E of my amendments, which amends section 5 of the Bill in terms of the powers of the board, the first amendment I'd like to offer, under 5(1)(a), is that ambulance services which the board shall have powers over are both air and ground service. Currently it simply says that "ambulance services are provided in the district for which the board was established." Now, this might throw a bureaucratic monkey wrench into the works in that they would be involved in the provision of air ambulance service as well as ground, but it just does not make any sense to have a board with jurisdiction over a certain district and have those powers only deal with ground ambulance services. Because how do you know in terms of dispatch whether we just can't access a certain area at a certain time and we need to call an air ambulance? The board at that level needs to be able to make that decision. I guess they could continue to call the department and say, "Could you send an air ambulance out here?" I'm not arguing by including the words "air and ground" that they should fully manage all of that, but at the board level they should be able to know fully what air services are available, how much on call they are, what the response time would be, how they'd be integrated into their ground service.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. The Chair would invite the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to maybe participate, particularly with regard to amendment D, because if the committee expresses itself and decides on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre's amendment, it sort of encompasses the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar's amendment, and her amendment will be out of order if that happens. So this would be a good opportunity, the Chair would suggest, for her to . . .

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will speak only briefly to them, because I want an opportunity to ask the minister a good number of questions, and I hope we can get her answers on them before we leave this Bill in committee.

Mr. Chairman, speaking, as you've invited, to the amendments submitted by the Member for Edmonton-Centre, to be honest with you I don't have much disagreement with any of them, but section 4, the amendment, does in fact closely cover the same detail as my amendment submitted to you on the matter as well. There's no question that all of us have had many letters, many meetings, many submissions from native people in our province of Alberta. I think their concerns are very well founded and well taken. I was in correspondence with the minister earlier on, before this Act came before us, and felt confident that the concerns expressed by the native people and the native ambulance services would be met prior to the Act being tabled here in the Legislature. Reading section 4 does not cover for me the expressed concerns. I believe it still leaves the matter of ambulance services on the reserves in the hands and to the decision-making and determination of the minister. I believe that is not what has been expressed as being wanted here.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

Mr. Chairman, it says "subject to the approval . . . a board may enter into an agreement with the Government of Canada." What I believe is wanted and what is now verified with the document that was submitted today from the chiefs' summit and what has been in every document I have received on the subject is the capacity for a tripartite agreement. Three equal members

– the members being the federal government of Canada, the provincial government, and a third party – can enter into an agreement. I think this would satisfy the needs of the reserves in our province, would meet their needs, and would leave them in control. Otherwise, Madam Minister, I believe this flies in the face of our moves throughout the country to native control of health and social services. I don't believe ambulance service on a reserve should be subject to ministerial decisions and ministerial disposition. I think that is exactly the point that's being talked about in all the pleas we have had and the calls and letters we have had. Perhaps the minister will explain to us why it was not considered and wasn't dealt with before. I think this part of the Act, in fact, is unsatisfactory.

I want to support this particular piece of legislation because we've come to it late. It's high time we had an ambulance Bill in our province, and I want to get on with it. I have suggested before, Mr. Chairman, that there are many things, many questions, still left in my mind that hopefully will be dealt with in regulations. I want to ask these of the minister. But this particular one – I had hoped by submitting the amendments in advance, the minister would give consideration to adopting them as government amendments and placing them in the Act as part of the government's submission to us.

Mr. Chairman, I'm going to yield there and hope that I'll have another opportunity, because a good many of my amendments are not precisely the same and not in any way the same as the Member for Edmonton-Centre's. I think it's very important that we deal with all of them.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Stony Plain.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to support the amendment to section 4. I think it's very, very important that the government and the minister have a look at the implications of getting involved in ambulance service with Indian reserves and getting involved without their consent and without the direction they choose.

I would like to state quite clearly that the whole area of Indian health care has to be assessed very carefully. I think it's very relevant to note at this time that there is a chiefs' summit going on in Edmonton, and it's also quite relevant to note that at that summit the chiefs from across Canada have taken the position very strongly – I guess it would be today – to endorse an amendment which would parallel very, very closely what we've suggested here. Their reason for doing it is not to get involved in Alberta politics as such but to ensure that the rights they still have are not eroded by the albeit goodwill entrance into the area by this particular government. I think the minister would have no excuse whatsoever other than to accept this particular amendment, because it is a healthy one.

I think it's also quite relevant to note that Indian ambulance service as such is very, very desirable. It's desirable in a lot of ways, but one that hasn't been brought up at the moment is the fact that very frequently when you get into transferring patients from one hospital to another, you could be dealing with the elderly. I would strongly recommend that if an elderly native person were given the choice to have an ambulance from one of the reserves, if you will, manned by people of the same culture and language, that person would feel very, very much more comfortable. Because I think something we really can't appreciate is, for an individual who would enter a hospital in the first instance, the trauma they would go through in being taken out of their particular environment and placed in a very, very foreign situation. Then if you go the next step and have to

move them for whatever good reasons there might be, the trauma associated with that could be quite extreme, especially if that individual did not have a command of the language of the people around. This could and, I'm sure, does happen. So I would like to see that addressed very closely, along with the tripartite approach. Could it be specifically stated that the patient's request for ambulance service in areas where it's feasible should certainly be adhered to? I mean the patient's request for transferring between hospitals.

So I would strongly recommend that the minister pay attention to this, keep in mind that the proposed amendment here by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre is actually verbatim from the people from the Alberta Indian Health Care Commission. It is verbatim what the chiefs from all across Canada have endorsed. It does not in any way, shape, or form infringe upon the ability of the minister or this Act to provide service to Indian reserves, which is what the intent is. So I would strongly suggest that that amendment be taken as printed. That would do a couple of things. One, from the Indians' point of view, it would make them comfortable that their rights are not being intentionally or otherwise eroded; secondly, it would guarantee the minister that there would be full co-operation from the Indian reserves involved; and thirdly, it would guarantee, if you will, a better level of service to the Indian people, who would be the primary – although not restricted to – users of this service.

On that basis, Mr. Chairman, I strongly recommend to the minister that she in fact accept this amendment as it is and incorporate it into the legislation.

Thank you very much.

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Chairman, perhaps I can deal with the amendments thus far that have been proposed.

First, the Member for Edmonton-Centre. I think it's important to note that this Bill has been through extensive review throughout the province. Many, many interest groups have had a look at it since it was first introduced last summer in the Assembly as Bill 25 and then reintroduced with substantial amendments in the form of Bill 49. So I think that's an important introductory remark with respect to the Bill.

The amendments proposed by Edmonton-Centre are; first of all, his A amendments. There's certainly no intent in clause (b) of section 1 that the term "ambulance attendant" be a pejorative one. I don't see that in any way. As the hon. member himself suggested, it really is a matter of semantics, because the members of a emergency response team could include fire, could include rescue workers, not just the prehospital. Right now we have the reality that the establishment within hospital is under the Hospitals Act, and the pre-prelude into that system is what the Ambulance Services Act is about. To me it complements existing legislation as opposed to adding a new definition by legislation as opposed to a new definition by practice, which is in fact occurring.

In clause (m), section 1, the second amendment, the hon. member and I will not agree on that amendment no matter what, because that is basically suggesting that we bring ambulance service right into the universal health care plan. I know he feels strongly about it, but I would point out to him there is not a single province in Canada which has brought the ambulance service into its universal plan in the manner he is suggesting.

Secondly, the services covered by the health care insurance plan: that's not necessarily an assessment that can be made right there on site under the existing plan. The definition very clearly states that the patient is one who "appears to be in need of

medical attention." It isn't restricted by the definition that they be covered under the health care plan. Nonetheless, I know the intent of his amendment was to make the system universal, and that is not what is occurring by this legislation.

The third point with respect to the commission: I do want to get into the issue of the commission, because the hon. member is correct that it's one the advisory committee, chaired by the Member for Drumheller, spent a good deal of time on recommending. I think the best way to respond is that I looked very carefully at the commission structure, and in my view the proposal we have brought in in terms of organization has a consistency with the organization in some other provinces. It's not identical. I believe it's one that will work within Alberta. In my view, certainly, the advisory and appeal board function will meet the intent of that recommendation by the committee of the Member for Drumheller rather than setting up an arm's-length administration of this service, arm's-length from the rest of the health care system. My interest as Minister of Health – and it's a growing interest – as I see the arm's-length kinds of bodies that are dealing with the issue of health, is that it is completely inconsistent with some of the recommendations we've seen recently, which is to draw some of these efforts together, to integrate this system as opposed to disintegrating the system. In my view, the commission was a fine suggestion. I believe the advisory and appeal board function will meet that recommendation's intent in a very clear way.

The section 2 amendment proposed with respect to linking the boundaries of health units and ambulance districts: I agree with the hon. member that we do have a proliferation of boundaries in health and it would be wonderful if we could replace those with a single or double set of boundaries, whatever, certainly fewer than we have now. However, my view is that that shouldn't be imposed from the top down. It should be a process that comes by way of health units and hospital boards coming together and saying, "We might be able to do this better if we combine our efforts."

The second point I would make is that there is no link between a health unit's operation today and ambulance services. And is that the best model? I don't know, and frankly I don't have any preconceived idea as to what the boundary should come out as. Although it says in the Act that the minister "may establish any area," it's been left like that in order that those areas could be established, including things like hospital boards, which was one of the amendments proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. If there isn't an operator, perhaps the hospital board is the best operator of the ambulance service. So I'm saying I don't have any preconceived ideas of how the boundaries should fall out in the ambulance system. All I am saying is that we must cover the whole province on principle and we must meet a basic standard. How we get there by the boundary structure is something I want the areas to look at as opposed to the minister to establish.

Did you deal with section C? Section C on section 3 is really the question of conflict of interest. I would suggest it's dealt with under 36(1)(c) of the Bill. I believe the hon. member dealt with section E on his amendments as well. No, he just went to D. Okay.

Then let's get into section D, which is the proposed amendments on section 4. I think it's very important that I walk through each step on this, because the amendments between the Member for Edmonton-Centre and the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar are really quite consistent. With respect to the discussions that took place, I met with members of the Alberta Indian Health Care Commission as well as representatives of the

Indian Association of Alberta, the Blood tribe board of health, and the Alberta Native Ambulance Operators Association on June 18. I think it's important that I go through the kinds of discussions that have occurred as a result of the third position paper that was provided to me at that meeting on Bill 49.

Bill 25, I think it's important to back up, was introduced in August and was allowed to die on the Order Paper. As I indicated, there were more than 130 submissions received from across the province about the proposed revisions, including two major position papers from the Alberta Indian Health Care Commission and the Alberta Native Ambulance Operators Association. Section 4(1) of Bill 25, the former legislation, provided, and I quote:

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

Our intent with section 4 in Bill 25 was to recognize the very unique arrangements that exist and might be required for these particular lands under federal jurisdiction.

Section 4(1) in Bill 49 is substantially different from that. It was introduced, as the hon. members know, on May 29 and it's now July 4. We've had a good deal of time to review it. Section 4(1) now provides that

Subject to the approval of the Minister, a board may enter into an agreement with the Government of Canada respecting the provision . . . of ambulance services within or outside its district.

The change was really made in response to the criticism by those two submissions of the previous section 4 – taken out, that reference – and any reference, as it was advocated within that position paper, to Indian reserves should be deleted, similar to the revisions in the Saskatchewan legislation which were reviewed, and they don't have any specific reference to the reserves.

I want, however, to draw the attention of both hon. members and the Member for Stony Plain, who spoke as well, to section 32(2) of the legislation, because it is the section which would permit exactly what is being proposed by both members in their amendments with respect to an agreement with a third party. It's a section that I think has been forgotten in terms of looking at the entirety of the Act. It says, and I quote:

Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act or the regulations . . .

In other words, it takes supremacy.

. . . the Minister may enter into agreements for the purposes of this Act with the Government of Canada, the government of a province, the government of a country other than Canada or of a state in another country or any person.

And I highlight "or any person," because that, of course, is the corporate definition of "person"; that is, the third party, if you like. This clause will permit the kinds of agreements between the federal and provincial governments and the Indian bands that had been suggested as permissive by both the Member for Edmonton-Centre and the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. Just to highlight it: 32(2) overrides or could override section 4 because it takes supremacy, and in fact it could override the entire Act. Notwithstanding anything in this Act or the regulations, these agreements could take precedence. I think it's a very important point to look at in the discussion of the issue.

The other point I would make, and it was one that was raised by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, is the issue of requiring a standard provincewide. That is, in fact, the purpose of this legislation, to get us to the point of basic life support. I know some of the hon. members don't agree that there should be anything but basic life support, and that discussion we had quite

extensively in second reading. But meeting basic life support provincewide is the intent of this legislation, and there is every possibility, with respect to native reserves, that they can establish their own district board. There's nothing in this Act to prevent that. In fact, I've had some discussions, and I think that may well occur. So there's one option, that the reserve could be its own district board to meet the standards, or the district could be part of a broader geographic area for dealing with ambulance services.

So it's certainly not my intent to in any way infringe on the constitutional or treaty rights of our native people, of our aboriginal peoples, and I believe that both of the amendments suggested by the hon. members are ones which are fully covered under the sections of the Act which I referred to.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

REV. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the minister drawing our attention to that section 32(2), but it leaves me in a bit of a quandary. I thought, in fact, under section 4(3) that it was kind of a clause that would waive any other agreement of the Act. It's nice to see 32(2) doing that as well, particularly with respect to the government of Canada. [interjection] Right. It seems that it would kick in in terms of any other governments. So I'm just not sure, then, why we're left with section 4 as it is, other than to cause great alarm and some confusion that if section 32 doesn't take effect, then section 4(1) could. So I'm wondering: is the minister suggesting she can delete section 4(1) and (2) and put in its place section 32(2)? I see that she's saying it would be a supreme statute that would kick in in place of section 4(1). I just would like to see how the dynamics of that would work. If we're going to go with 32(2) to satisfy the needs of native peoples, then why do we need 4(1) and (2) at all? Or could we not just strengthen subsection 3 under section 4? That might be another alternative, which I had thought of.

Then the other thing – and again I guess it's hard to fully comprehend this in some sense, but clearly there is a perception on behalf of native peoples that no matter what agreement goes on with any person or third party, however that is defined or however it gains its statutory powers, there also needs to be in writing that such agreements need to be for the benefit of and in the best interests of that third party. I don't see under section 32(2) it saying that. It says that "the Minister may enter into agreements . . . with the Government of Canada." We're assuming that they're both beneficent, that they just think they're going to enter into agreements that are going to be to the benefit of any person, understood in the corporate sense, or any band. But I think we need also to have in, as we've worded it in our amendment, that it has to be for the benefit of and to the best interest of that person. So maybe I could be satisfied if section 32(2) was amended to include that, and would appreciate any response the minister would have.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Thanks, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the minister for the explanation. Yes, I read and understood 32(2), but I didn't understand it to be bearing on the same issue as 4. As I read it, I thought it had to do with interprovince and intercountry ambulance transfers, which I believe it also covers,

and air ambulance from territories and things of that nature. Having read it that way, I can understand why others did too.

Now, Mr. Chairman, the minister indicated that a meeting had been held as late as June 18 with native groups. If these explanations were given to them, then why on earth are we still getting a lot of correspondence? The native health groups that I am hearing from and the submission that we had today certainly don't indicate that they are satisfied with this explanation, if in fact that was the explanation given, because they are still desiring something quite different than that.

Mr. Chairman, I think there is – it's not just confusion in how the Act is being read. I believe there is distortion in 4 as to what is wanted and what is probably in the best interests of the reserves, and I would like to see that section amended as has been suggested by the Member for Edmonton-Centre and by myself.

Perhaps the minister could answer that. Are they not satisfied at this point?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Ready for the question on the amendments?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: As the Chair understands, what was established previously is that we will vote on amendments A, B, and C as a group first.

[Motion on amendments A, B, and C lost]

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Then on the amendment proposed by the Member for Edmonton-Centre in section D. All those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Those opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Defeated.

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

[Eight minutes having elapsed, the House divided]

For the motion:

Barrett	Hewes	McInnis
Bruseker	Laing, M.	Roberts
Ewasiuk	Martin	Taylor
Fox	McEachern	Woloshyn
Gibeault		

Against the motion:

Anderson	Fowler	Osterman
Betkowski	Gesell	Paszkowski
Black	Horsman	Payne
Bradley	Hyland	Schumacher
Cherry	Klein	Severtson
Clegg	Kowalski	Shrake
Day	Laing, B.	Sparrow
Dinning	Lund	Tannas
Drobot	McClellan	Thurber

Elzinga	Moore	Trynchy
Evans	Musgrove	Weiss
Fischer	Oldring	West
Fjordbotten		
Totals:	Ayes – 13	Noes – 37

[Motion on amendment D lost]

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, have some amendments, and I have a number of questions. I'm going to go through them as quickly as I can, hopefully . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Just a moment, please. Just a clarification. We did have additional amendments proposed by the Member for Edmonton-Centre. Are those being moved?

REV. ROBERTS: Yes.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Perhaps to just keep things *in* order, hon. member, we should deal with these amendments and then proceed to yours.

The Member for Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move for unanimous consent that we deal with future divisions in committee on this Bill by observing the following: letting the bells ring for 30 seconds, followed by a one-minute lapse, and then bells ring for 30 seconds prior to the calling of the standing vote.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Any debate on the procedural motion? All those in favour of this motion.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.
Edmonton-Centre.

REV. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If I could just quickly go through some of my other amendments here. I know Edmonton-Gold Bar wants to get to . . . Wait till you're in the Official Opposition and we're in government; then you'll have this . . .

So another most contentious item is the section to do with this giant loophole in the Bill that gives the minister in section 5(b) the ability to authorize another level of care, of service, for ambulance services in a particular district. We're just basically calling that that be struck out, the "unless the Minister authorizes another level."

[Mr. Schumacher in the Chair]

Now, we've had a bit of discussion about this at second reading, and, you know, I was persuaded by some arguments that said, "Well, in some very remote and isolated areas it's going to be hard to have the personnel there that are going to be trained at a sufficient level to meet the basic life support level, difficult either to achieve or to attain that." Again, I thought the recommendation of the advisory committee saying, "Well, let's have instead a kind of emergency team that would have first responders there who could then be supported by and work

together with EMT level personnel that would sort of work in tandem together" – I thought maybe we should amend it to include that sort of proposal.

But, you know, I've done some calling around too. I know the minister said this has been through every interest group or person who is concerned with ambulance services and, in a sense, we should just accept it *carte blanche*. I don't accept that. I mean, I've been calling around too, and I find very few people who are in support of this section as it's currently worded, to say that the minister can have the ability to have this loophole and have another level. I discovered, despite the problems at SAIT over the weekend in terms of people wanting to get into the EMT program, that it is not that difficult to get that level of training anyway. Particularly through SAIT, the program is oversubscribed, but we need to expand that if we want to have that service. If people want to develop this service and this training, whether they're in High Level or whatever remote part of the province, they can, through the good graces of SAIT and computer-assisted learning and other programs, attain the EMT level. It's not that difficult.

I thought I heard the minister say, "Well, we just can't expect that of people in certain districts, to achieve that level." I mean, it's not like it's a graduate degree that's going to take forever to come up to that basic standard. I would say, for the benefit of Albertans, why would they deserve basically a second level of care just because the on-call times are fewer and the difficulty in attaining that level? I mean, as I said before, we don't have physicians who haven't done their basic medical training deliver medical services in those areas, or we don't have nurses who haven't met the requirements of a registered nursing designation. So why allow this to go on even if it is the excuse of isolated and remote areas? I think instead we need to have a time frame, and I thought this was part of the matter as well. I'll say three to six months to come up to a certain standard, and there would be flexibility in implementing it. There would be support for those who need extra support, through SAIT or whatever, to come up to get that EMTA training. But let's still make a standard a standard and have it at work throughout the province and not allow this loophole of the minister allowing another level.

Again, the dynamics of one community saying, "The minister is not going to enforce the basic standard in our district." Well, maybe the neighbouring district could say, "We don't have to work as hard; we don't have to come up to that level." It begins to erode and deteriorate, though I thought I heard the minister say the intent of the Bill is to have the basic standard and to have it in place. I agree this is a problem area in terms of remote districts, but still let's call a standard a standard and find ways to enable and support everyone to meet that standard and deliver the service that that standard would entail, especially in those parts of the province. I know many in the Ambulance Operators Association and others have not liked the designation that we don't have an ambulance Act and the rest because, as they say – and it's well true – we do have a very good record in Alberta in terms of paramedics and in terms of standards, but not in terms of legislation. If we've got a good record, let's make it unanimous. Let's make it one that can be counted on in any part of this province at any time, and not at a lowered level because the minister thinks that's the way it needs to go because of some difficulties.

Also with section 5, Mr. Chairman, I'd like some clarification from the minister. She mentioned a number of changes that went from Bill 25 previously to Bill 49 as we have it today. One of the changes was to take out the word "training" in that section

and that subsection 2(g). I would like to know why. It would seem to me again that the board should take some initiative in helping to provide the training for certain of its employees or certain people in the ambulance service under its jurisdiction, whether they need some grants, some loans, some time off, whatever. Training should be a part of the board's duties and powers, to assist with training for those persons that want to either come up to the standard or exceed it. I just wonder why it was omitted from what had been in that subsection before.

The last one of this section is this business of having fund-raising events, that the board may "accept gifts, grants, donations and bequests and conduct fund-raising events." Now, really, you might think that some boards would have to move in that direction anyway. I mean, it would be regrettable if they did, but to actually put it in the statute here before us I think is really unbelievable. We want district boards to be in the business of delivering first quality ambulance services in this province to the people of Alberta. We don't want them to have to spend time having bingos or casinos or bake sales or whatever they might want to do for fund-raising events. Certainly, as the minister will see later with my amendment, if in fact more funding comes from the province to support this, it wouldn't be necessary anyway. But maybe that's the point, that the government wants to put this in to encourage boards, to say: "Well, with the falling price of oil and with the deficit increasing, you can't expect much more from us at the provincial level anyway, so you'd better get ready as board members when I appoint you to this board. We'll need a fund-raising committee, chairman of the board, and get ready to have all kinds of fund-raising events." I mean, that's no way to run a life-and-death service, which is the ambulance service in this province, to slough it off and to off-load it onto boards and for them to have to go out and raise money to do what they need to do. So I don't know what more you can say except let's delete that and instead have boards: "accept gifts, grants, donations and bequests" as might come their way.

I'll go through the rest, and then I guess we'll have, as we did before, just sort of quick votes on them all. I think we might have some action on that.

Okay. Amending section 6 is an idea that was first brought to this Chamber by the former Member for Clover Bar. I'm sorry that the Minister of Municipal Affairs in his former Representative Party days isn't here. But it was their proposal that in a publicly operated ambulance system in this province it should be an 80-20 split between the province and the municipalities. You know, I thought, well, we could live with that. We do so with school boards. I guess we do so with — well, FCSS was supposed to have been at that level. I know we want to retain the municipalities to have jurisdiction and to have control. So with that, I guess 20 percent of the capital and operating costs of ambulance services might still be their burden to bear, but F together with G calls for . . . I must credit this amendment to Walter Buck. I mean, it was his idea, and I think a good one, that it should be an 80-20 split. Section 6 would then say that 80 percent of estimated capital and operating costs of all boards shall be included in the estimate for the Department of Health each year, as it is, I understand, for school boards and the rest. I think that just shows the partnership, shows the commitment, and shows a good historical idea from the former excellent Member for Clover Bar and the Representative Party in their day.

H calls to strike out in section 7 that the municipalities can do a variety of things without the assent of the proprietary electors. I just couldn't understand that, didn't believe it, didn't think it

was appropriate, consulted with someone and they didn't understand it either. So I'm just wondering why it's in there and would like some comment on that. It just seems to me that if municipalities have to borrow money and have temporary loans and issue debentures and the rest, it should be with the assent of the proprietary electors. I think, you know, taxpayers want to know how and why the money is being spent and being loaned and the rest. They shouldn't be left in the dark without their assent. Whether this would call for a plebiscite at each time, I guess maybe that might be part of the answer, but at least something has to be done to allow the electors to know why those financial arrangements are being made.

Then the following, I, J, K, and L, really I feel very strongly about in terms of the establishment of an emergency health services commission. To do so, I have suggested that there be an advisory board that would be set up with those involved in the delivery of services, and members of the general public could be there as an advisory to the minister and to the commission. But the commission itself would be established to basically do, as I said before, the management function; the co-ordination function; the 911; the dispatch; all of the communications side; the research, evaluation, and planning; would have under it the registrar, who does the licensing and has the standards implemented; has the appeal process; looks at the funding, whether it's the grants, what certain rates and fees are; looks at capital costs and operating; and would basically be there to implement the legislation instead of having the Lieutenant Governor in Council and the minister having so many, many responsibilities.

I appreciate again that we're going to get a copy of the regulations in due time and see what all is involved there, but I feel strongly that the work of the advisory committee, going around and actually talking with those in the field and talking with them at length and having submissions . . . It wasn't just a way to put some legislation together; it was a way to put an ambulance system together. That advisory committee strongly recommended the establishment of such a commission.

With respect to the minister's comments that such a commission would help to disintegrate the system as opposed to integrate it and keep it under the minister's or the government's purview, I just don't agree. I mean, I think AADAC as a separate commission under the Health department isn't that arm's length. It doesn't show that much disintegration of policy and of planning and the rest.

I heard a very interesting talk given by the new director of mental health services in the province of New Brunswick. There they have set up a whole Mental Health Commission as part of their deployment of mental health dollars and resources. It works very well. I mean, it might not work well necessarily for a government that wants to keep all things to themselves. He apparently only has to report to the Public Accounts Committee each year. Maybe we'll get into this with debate on the Hyndman report too, because they're talking about, you know, separate health authorities and other ways in which the powers, particularly in the management zone, need to be dealt with. I've tended to like the idea and would like more debate and discussion on it. The last thing we need to do is disintegrate or fragment the system any further, but I think the establishment of such a commission as I've called for in these amendments would really go a long way to satisfy what the advisory committee has done to provide ongoing support for an ambulance system in the province, relieve the minister of her myriad number of duties and responsibilities already, not fragment the system any further, and be for the betterment of all Albertans.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to say more, but in view of the time, and the other members, I know . . . Maybe there'll be some time afterwards to raise some other matters with respect to the Grande Prairie ambulance and Out-of-province fees and the rest, but these are, basically, my amendments, and I'd like to call the question on them now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is the committee ready for the question?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Amendment E. All those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

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

[One minute having elapsed, the House divided]

For the motion:

Bruseker	Hewes	McInnis
Ewasiuk	Laing, M.	Roberts
Fox	McEachern	Woloshyn
Gibeault		

Against the motion:

Anderson	Evans	Musgrove
Betkowski	Fischer	Osterman
Black	Gesell	Paszkowski
Bradley	Hyland	Severtson
Calahasen	Jonson	Shrake
Cherry	Klein	Tannas
Clegg	Kowalski	Thurber
Day	Laing, B.	Trynchy
Dinning	Lund	Weiss
Drobot	McClellan	West
Elzinga	Moore	

Totals	Ayes – 10	Noes – 32
--------	-----------	-----------

[Motion on amendment E lost]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Perhaps the Chair was a little premature in calling the vote on this last amendment. The hon. minister, the Chair believes, would like to make a comment or two with respect . . .

MRS. BETKOWSKI: No, I'm fine, Mr. Chairman. I think we can continue, and I can make my points as we go through the amendments.

[Motions on amendments F and G lost]

MR. CHAIRMAN: H, with respect to section 7. The hon. Minister of Health.

MRS. BETKOWSKI: I just wanted to make a point on this amendment, Mr. Chairman, that there really is an accountability

built into the Act, which I know is what the hon. member is trying to build into his amendment, and that is that the district board will be made up of representatives of the municipalities or whatever around that district. So in my view, to encumber that board by requiring a council to go back to its electorate would not serve the purposes of the Act, yet there is a built-in accountability to the section. I think this one is unnecessarily encumbering.

[Motions on amendments H through K lost]

MR. CHAIRMAN: L, as to section 25. All those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The amendment fails.

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

[One minute having elapsed, the House divided]

For the motion:

Bruseker	Hewes	McInnis
Ewasiuk	Laing, M.	Roberts
Fox	McEachern	Woloshyn
Gibeault		

Against the motion:

Anderson	Fischer	Osterman
Betkowski	Gesell	Paszkowski
Black	Horsman	Severtson
Bradley	Hyland	Shrake
Cherry	Klein	Sparrow
Clegg	Kowalski	Tannas
Day	Laing, B.	Thurber
Dinning	Lund	Trynchy
Drobot	McClellan	Weiss
Elzinga	Moore	West
Evans		

Totals:	Ayes – 31	Noes – 10
---------	-----------	-----------

[Motion on amendment L lost]

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. [interjections] Enough already.

Mr. Chairman, I've indicated before that I'm concerned about a number of things that are missing in this particular piece of legislation. Hopefully they will be included in the regulations, but I have quite a few questions that I hope the minister will provide answers to that will give some measure of comfort to those many publics that have waited for this Act and have inquired about it.

Mr. Chairman, if I can go directly to the Act itself, in section 2(1) and (2) under Establishment it doesn't appear here that the minister is going to provide a means to appeal a decision made

at this level, so the minister, then, is not accountable for decisions that are made there. I wondered if some possibility of appeal regarding the establishment could also be included.

Section 2(3). Mr. Chairman, I do have an amendment on it, but it relates to the need for consultation and approval of a municipal government before boundary changes take place. Now, one hopes that this would happen automatically, but I think it needs to be built into the Bill, and I would hope the minister would see fit to accept that amendment when I put it forward.

Section 3, Mr. Chairman, establishes the district board and gives ministerial authority to appoint the first members. The AUMA have suggested that they would like legislation to recognize and provide for local autonomy. The actual diversity among ambulance districts with regard to financing, size, and numbers of municipalities, it seems to me, requires that the legislation provide for local autonomy in determining what the board is composed of. What I need to know from the minister is: under subsection (5) will the regulations provide for appointments by municipalities?

Mr. Chairman, we've dealt with section 4. I won't speak to that again. Section 5, however, sets out the Powers and Duties of a Board. In subsection (2)(b) I question who the money will be borrowed from. Will there be a clarification of that in the regulations, restrictions as to borrowing powers? Who is responsible for liabilities incurred? I asked that question at second reading, and I don't believe it was answered.

Again, the investment of funds. Whose funds are to be invested and for what purposes? Who will claim the benefit or loss from invested funds?

Mr. Chairman, subsection (f), that the board can "act as an operator in respect of its own district": I do not think this is consistent with what we're talking about here, unless I misunderstand this section of the Act. If the board were to provide the actual service, would this not put them in a conflict position? So my amendment to that would be to strike that section.

Mr. Chairman, part (h), to "employ the persons the board considers necessary . . .": will the qualifications be in the regulations for that particular section?

Section 6, the next section of the Bill, the Requisition of Funds. My questions here are: will provincial grants be allocated to local municipalities to help upgrade and maintain service levels? I think all municipalities want and need a direct answer to this. How will these services be put into place at the initial stages as well as continuing? Then further to that, how much involvement will municipalities have in drafting these regulations, the concern here being that a council of a municipality has no direct control over the budget or the expenditure of a board, as I read it from the Bill. So I think we need some reassurance there from the minister.

Section 7, Mr. Chairman, the Powers of Municipalities. Again, a question here of accountability. Criticism has been raised that the use of the word "notwithstanding" implies that there is a lack of accountability to the public. The council of an included municipality can authorize the issue of debentures without the assent of the electors to finance capital costs. The minister has indicated that there should be no problem with this, but I think it still requires some reassurance in written form.

Mr. Chairman, section 9, Disestablishment. The section suggests that local municipalities are responsible for excessive expenditures that are incurred by the ambulance board. Well, if that's the case, then I need to know from the minister: shouldn't those municipalities have veto power over the board's finances? The board is made up of representatives from the

municipalities, but they are not necessarily elected representatives.

Section 10 allows the minister to dismiss board members after the board has been established and appoint someone else to operate it. This again seems to imply to me, Mr. Chairman, pure government control and appears to be working in opposition to the notion of privatization as opposed to supporting it.

Section 11(1), Mr. Chairman, establishes the advisory and appeal board. I want to question the need for public representation on the ambulance appeal board. I believe there should be a set minimum of public persons representative on this appeal board and that that should be provided in the Act. I will have an amendment in that regard as well.

In section 16, Mr. Chairman, a licence can be issued subject to any conditions the registrar considers appropriate if the applicant meets the requirements as prescribed. I found this section somewhat ambiguous. I wish there were a list of statements outlining why the registrar can or cannot provide a licence. I'm assuming that Madam Minister will include these in the regulations and that we will have these almost immediately if this Bill is passed.

Mr. Chairman, again, in 18(1), Suspension in the Public Interest, I don't know by what means the registrar would gain her information to arrive at such an opinion. This is only an opinion, not a judgment based on fact as it appears to be written in the Bill so far.

Now, Mr. Chairman, section 18, Suspension in the Public Interest, subsections (2) and (5). I'm asking the minister why there is not a time span between the actual issuance of a suspension notice and the suspension of operation, if this would not better suit the needs of the population who rely upon the operation of an ambulance system. It doesn't appear to give any bridging, which seems to be a necessity to me. Why should the court system be involved at this early stage? I'm not sure why we would involve a court in the very early stage of a suspension.

Mr. Chairman, section 22(3). Yes, meetings can be held in private if in the opinion of the chairman it's necessary to do so. The question I have is: if the chairperson is going to render a legal opinion, should she not be a lawyer? [interjection] Yes, I see that I've got five minutes more. [interjections] Three minutes and then we finish tomorrow. Two minutes.

Would not the public's interest be better served if all proceedings were open to public scrutiny?

Mr. Chairman, I'm responding to signals from the Deputy Premier that he thinks it's time for me to suggest that I should adjourn the debate and will continue it tomorrow, as I will so do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Having heard the motion of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, all those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no. Carried.
The Hon. Minister of Health.

MRS. BETKOWSKI: Mr. Chairman, I move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. SCHUMACHER: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain Bills. The committee reports progress on the following: Bill 49. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the report, does the House concur?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

[At 5:28 p.m. the House adjourned to Thursday at 2:30 p.m.]

