

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Friday, December 14, 1990 10:00 a.m.**

Date: 1990/12/14

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

Prayers

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Let us pray.

Our divine Father, as we conclude for this week our work in this Assembly, we renew our thanks and ask that we may continue our work under Your guidance.

Amen.

head: Presenting Petitions

MR. SEVERTSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table a petition presented by the Red Deer College Students' Association containing signatures of 2,200 students who strongly support the proposal to give degree-granting status to that institution, a proposal I strongly supported last spring in Motion 213.

head: Tabling Returns and Reports

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Recreation and Parks.

DR. WEST: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table four copies of the seventh annual report of the Advisory Committee on Wilderness Areas and Ecological Reserves for the year ended March 31, 1990, as required by statute.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Associate Minister of Family and Social Services.

MR. BRASSARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the responses to questions 188 and 216 on behalf of the Minister of Family and Social Services.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of the Environment.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to file Motion for a Return 183.

head: Introduction of Special Guests

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly 50 students from the New Sarepta community high school. Forty of them are located in the members' gallery, and 10 are having to sit down in the audiovisual room; a special welcome to them. I would ask that the students, who are accompanied by teachers Roberta Hay and Cheryl Alexander and bus driver Ebby Schlender, stand and receive the cordial welcome of the Assembly.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Culture and Multiculturalism.

MR. MAIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to the Assembly today the chairman of the board of governors of the Glenbow Museum, a fine cultural institution based in Calgary. Catherine Evamy is in the members' gallery. I'd ask her to rise and receive a warm welcome.

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a group of 28 students from St. Joe's school in Wetaskiwin. They are grade 6 students from my constituency. They're seated in both the members' and public galleries. I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

head: Oral Question Period**Health Care System**

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Anyone who has been watching the Mulroney government in action can see plain as day that it has one goal in mind: the dismantling of our country's institutions, including medicare. I say that this government would gladly comply with his wishes. Let me make this simple. If the federal government is removed from the health care picture for tax dollars transferred to the provinces, then it will have absolutely no clout to enforce the essential five principles of the Canada Health Act, such as accessibility to quality health care for all citizens without regard to income, against provinces that wish to breach these principles. You can't support the medicare system and also support the concept of disentanglement. If you do, our medicare system will erode. My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier admit that a system which has the provinces collecting their own income taxes would make the Canada Health Act obsolete, as the only way the federal government has to ensure compliance is through its transfer payments for health?

MR. GETTY: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member in a way is dealing with a hypothetical situation. But let me just say that first I don't agree with his position at all. Particularly from this government's point of view we are unequivocally in support of and will continue the principles of the health care system we have now in Canada and Alberta.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. That's very nice rhetoric. But I want to ask him: how you can transfer tax points to the provinces and still have some clout on those provinces to maintain the principles of health care? You can't have it both ways. Explain how it's done.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member may know that tax points have been passed to provinces over the years, and we have been able to maintain the quality of the programs. There's nothing magic, that the federal government are the only nice people in the world that are going to insist on a certain kind of health care in Canada. Obviously, the people of Alberta and this government, supported by the people of Alberta, are unequivocally committed to the health care system we have now, which is the best in Canada.

MR. MARTIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the Premier brought this up, because let's look at this government's record. We watched when Mr. Moore was health minister and attempted to deinsure things like eye examinations and contraceptive counseling, and I would remind this Premier that it was because of the Canada Health Act that they had to end extra billing. That's the record of this province. My question is to the Premier. After their record, why is it that we should believe them now, that they stand for the principles of medicare? It was the Canada Health Act that forced them in the first place.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, it's hard to believe the hon. member would be taking a position today that the government is against health care when you look at the tremendous health care system which this government has built in this province. I mean, it's the best in Canada. Now, it may be that the Minister of Health, who is absent today, may follow up in a letter or in some additional way to the hon. member, if he has further questions. We have a magnificent health care system. Only people blind to the future, though, would say that we must continue to have a health care system increasing in costs and dollars as wildly as it has across Canada. All of us have a responsibility to maintain the best health care system but to make it as efficient as possible so that future taxpayers are able to keep this kind of health care system for the future.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The second main question.

MR. MARTIN: Well, there you go, Mr. Speaker, the two-tiered system is coming. We heard it.

I'd like to designate my second question to the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place.

Alberta-Pacific Project

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At least two sources have said that the government would be making an announcement next week on the Alberta-Pacific project . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Who are your sources?

MR. McINNIS: The member wants sources. . . paving the way for a confrontation of historic proportions in the province of Alberta between the proponents of cowboy capitalism – you know, spill first and ask questions later – and the people who want to do things a different way. Al-Pac is a low-yield technology. Only half the wood that goes into it comes out as pulp. It's a poor producer of jobs. In fact, I say it will cost a lot of aboriginal people their jobs. And worse, it's old technology. It doesn't meet the zero-effluent standard of mills which are under construction in our neighbouring provinces. So I'd like to ask the Minister of the Environment why the government is even considering this lemon at this time.

10:10

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's the responsibility, in fact the duty of this government to consider any and every project that comes to us that is deemed to contribute to the economic viability of this province but at the same time is deemed to perhaps cause some environmental problems. That's what it's all about. That's why we're waiting to make an announcement, because we have a project that is deemed to be a viable project but we do want to determine the environmental stability and worthiness of this particular project. That's precisely the exercise we're going through right now. When all this information is brought together, and I've said this before, there will be an announcement one way or the other. All I can say to the hon. member is what I've said to him before: stay tuned.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, the minister says they are considering the project because the proponents asked them. Well, this is a government that dances to the tune of the construction barons, who can make money on building a project like that, and the pulp industry that can make big bucks. I'd like the minister to say why he doesn't push for a more environmen-

tally sound type of development for that area which will produce more value-added to the timber instead of this lemon.

MR. KLEIN: I'm really quite surprised that the hon. member would question our standards, even the standard that applies to the mill in the constituency of West Yellowhead, which is represented by the NDP. I'm still waiting for this member to go to West Yellowhead and tell the people there, "I want this mill to be closed down." He won't do it, Mr. Speaker. He's very, very selective in the mills that he wants to address in this particular province.

It's very, very interesting to note that the Environment minister in British Columbia had a dispute over levels of chlorinated organics. The Premier in that province said that 2.5 was quite fine, and the minister in that province said, "No; we want to go down to 1.5 by the year 1994." One point five is deemed to be the best achievable relative to bleached kraft mills in the world today. Well, Mr. Speaker, just for the information of the hon. member in case he has forgotten, we have been achieving 1.5 and below for over a year now.

MR. McINNIS: The last time we tried to get him up to West Yellowhead, he chickened out, the bum.

You want to talk about standards? Let's talk about zero, because that's what the impact of this minister has been: zero. Zero effluent is the standard he should be seeking. [interjections]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. McINNIS: I'd like to ask the minister this. He's the one who came to this Legislature talking about the end of confrontation. He wants us all to get along together and be nice to the minister. Right? Well, I want to know if he's going to apologize, in light of the looming confrontation over this project, for having wasted the time of the Prosperity farmers and their trust and wasted the time of everybody who's tried to warn the government about this lemon project. Why doesn't he apologize to them?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not about to apologize to anyone, because this government is doing what is absolutely appropriate and right. We're giving this project the fullest of consideration. I can't think of a pulp mill project anywhere in this world that has been submitted to such an extensive public review, two public reviews, probably the most comprehensive of public reviews relative to any pulp mill anywhere in the world. Once that information is properly assessed, once it all comes together, once all departments and other jurisdictions have had their input, there will be a report to this government. This government will make a decision, will make a sound decision based on sustainable development, and that decision will be announced. I ask the hon. member once again: stay tuned.

Speaker's Ruling Parliamentary Language

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. The Chair would ask the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place if he would reconsider his characterization of the minister in the way he did earlier.

MR. McINNIS: I'm sorry that I made an improper reference to the minister.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. leader of the Liberal opposition.

Provincial Tax Regime

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, thank you. My questions are to the newest chief of the Whitefish band. Our party congratulates the Premier on the receipt of that chief's position.

Mr. Speaker, during the last election the chief of the Whitefish band said there would be no new taxes. We know, though, that there were other taxes. On December 3 the chief of the Whitefish band again said there would be no new personal taxes. But the Liberal Party has been saying that the government has been loading up indirect taxes on Albertans in other areas. Now, my first question to the Premier is this: will the Premier admit that he's simply playing a shell game when he says that there will be no new taxes on Albertans and he knows full well that other taxes, indirect taxes, have been a very heavy burden on Albertans?

MR. GETTY: Well, Mr. Speaker, obviously the hon. leader is trying to anticipate a budget and considerations that are currently before the government Treasury Board. I want to make it very clear to all Albertans that what I said was that there would not be an increase in personal income tax, and there will not be. We have the lowest taxes in Canada, we have no sales tax, and we're going to keep it that way. That's what we're telling the people of Alberta.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Premier to the most recent statistics that come from the Alberta Treasury Bureau of Statistics. From 1986 to 1989 they show a 160 percent increase in net indirect taxes paid by Albertans: 160 percent. Those are the taxes that are being paid by small Albertans. Admit it; you are playing a shell game, Mr. Premier.

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member may wish to get into details with the Provincial Treasurer regarding such things as federal excise taxes that are shown in the document he's waving about. But again, the thing I'm determined to do and I'm going to make sure happens is that the people of Alberta do not get an increase in personal income tax. They're going to stay with the lowest personal taxes in Canada and no sales tax.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Premier, these are your government's statistics. These are statistics that say that Albertans are paying net indirect taxes of 160 percent from '86 to '89. That's where the slack is being picked up. Won't you admit that's what's happening, Mr. Premier? Admit that you're trying to fool Albertans.

MR. GETTY: Well, I wouldn't do that, Mr. Speaker, and the hon. member knows that. What he is waving about there is a document that includes federal government increases, that type of thing, that have been done over a period of time. We know that has happened in Canada. But the important thing is that the personal income taxes that Albertans carry are the lowest in Canada, and they're going to stay that way. Now, what does that mean? It means that when you have the best economy in Canada and you have the lowest taxes in Canada, then you have the people who have the dollars, and they're making this the best place to live in Canada.

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

10:20

Crow Benefit

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Many northern Alberta farmers are extremely concerned about replacing the Crow benefit with the freedom to choose. One of these concerns is that northern farmers will have to pay greater amounts of money due to the fact that they are farther away from the ports. Given this situation, would the minister please indicate what considerations are provided for northern farmers?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, the Freedom to Choose proposal, which would redirect the Crow benefit into the producers' pockets, has a number of factors in it to try to distribute that money as fairly and equitably as possible. Once the average per acre amount is determined, then there is an adjustment factor based upon the productivity of the land and a second adjustment factor based upon distance from port. For those communities that are far from port and far from major rail lines, that distance adjustment factor increases to compensate for the conditions they're facing.

MR. TAYLOR: The Peace River is closer to port, Ernie. Why don't you get your map?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please.

MS CALAHASEN: You had your chance.

Mr. Speaker, will changing this method of payment ultimately lead to changes in the makeup of agriculture in northern Alberta?

MR. ISLEY: The studies that were conducted – and I would add that these studies were conducted in conjunction with the Alberta Wheat Pool – were done by outside consultants. An assessment was made of what would have happened over the past 10 years had the new method of payment been in place. That study would show that the net farm income in northern Alberta from grain would actually go up after you net out transportation costs. It would also indicate some growth in the livestock sector in that region of the province.

I think it would be fair to say in passing that a plant like our canola processing plant in Sexsmith would have a far better chance of hitting a bottom black line if we remove the artificial distortion that exists today in domestically used grain because of the Crow benefit flowing to the railway. I think the next thing you would see occur is that there would be more interest from entrepreneurs in putting value-added plants into that area of the province. Hence there would then be more options for farmers to sell their product as opposed to shipping it directly to port.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Calgary-Mountain View.

AOSTRA Publication

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Oil Sands Technology and Research Authority recently put out a publication entitled AOSTRA: A 15 Year Portfolio of Achievement. This book is filled with lots of glossy pictures of Premiers and Energy ministers past and present. Twelve thousand copies of this book, in fact, were given away to

Canada's Members of Parliament, its Senators, a number of school libraries, and it cost \$20 a copy. I'd like to ask the Energy minister if he could tell us why it is that this government can lavish a quarter of a million dollars of taxpayers' money on an unnecessary publication like this. Wouldn't he admit that it would be better spent on promoting energy conservation than promoting Conservative politicians?

MR. ORMAN: Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Oil Sands Technology and Research Authority has done tremendous work over the last decade. Contained in that document is a historical background on all of the projects that have come forward through AOSTRA and a catalogue of all the tremendous breakthroughs we have had in this province in our support for oil sands research.

Mr. Speaker, this province produces 13 million barrels a day of oil. Two hundred and fifty thousand barrels a day come from synthetic crude oil, and it is making up a very important component of our oil supply today. AOSTRA has played a very significant role in the development of oil sands and the incremental supply of synthetic crude oil to our declining conventional supply.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Well, Mr. Speaker, to spend a quarter of a million dollars to tell our Senators about it is highly questionable. Obviously, he has his department's priorities mixed up. This government has its priorities mixed up as well. Shelters for battered women are underfunded, our hospitals are overcrowded, health units are closing, students are being turned away from our postsecondary institutions. I'd like to ask the Premier why it is that his government says yes to publications like this and says no to the needs of Alberta's students, battered women, kids, and senior citizens.

MR. GETTY: First of all, Mr. Speaker, this Alberta government says yes to assistance to battered women, yes to senior citizens, and yes to students, with the best programs in Canada. That's what this government says.

The AOSTRA document is not unlike documents that the Heritage Foundation for Medical Research group puts out. Albertans are very proud of it, but they need to know about it. There has been a history of tremendous breakthroughs in research in advanced technology, medical research, and oil sands research. As the minister just pointed out, we have almost a quarter of our total oil production coming from the oil sands. There is more oil in place there than anywhere in the world, including all of the Middle East. The important job that AOSTRA has is to unlock the ability to produce those barrels, Mr. Speaker, and then we know that for all time in the future, because of AOSTRA, Albertans will have a supply of oil that can't be matched anywhere in the world. That's a story the world should know about, and that's what we're doing.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

Milk Marketing

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Agriculture minister on the question of supply management. On November 22 the federal government presented a brief to a dairy task force, saying that a consumer body should set farmers' milk prices, replacing the current system of negotiations between government and milk marketing boards. Later federal Agriculture minister Mr. Mazankowski is quoted as saying that he wants

the government to get out of setting milk prices and be replaced by the consumers. My question to the minister is: does the minister agree with his federal counterpart that consumers should control the price of milk?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, the price of fluid table milk in the province of Alberta is currently established by the Public Utilities Board, which certainly takes into consideration the consumer's position. I see no need at this point in time to change that.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: A supplemental question.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, in view of the minister's past comments about supply management being on its way out, does he agree with the federal government's opinion on supply management, that it can be retained provided it is responsive to the prices of imported products? In other words, it cannot set its own price; it has to be controlled by the import prices of competing products.

MR. ISLEY: I would share the federal minister's view that supply management must become more market responsive. I have never taken the position and neither has this government that supply management should be eliminated in totality. I think there are sectors of supply management that could be adjusted and could become more market responsive. Those discussions are ongoing with the various supply management boards, and hopefully as time goes on, changes will unfold.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Tolerance and Understanding

MRS. MIROSH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this week I had the opportunity to celebrate Hanukkah with the Member for Calgary-Buffalo and met with a number of people in the Jewish community who expressed their concern and anxiety regarding the Supreme Court decision and the rights of minority groups in Canada to be free from persistent racist and hateful attacks. By its decision yesterday the conviction of James Keegstra was upheld, and the Jewish community applauds this decision. To the Minister of Culture and Multiculturalism: how does the court decision and ruling affect this government and his department and his efforts in what they are doing?

10:30

MR. DECORE: He's going to say a few words about the Sikhs and turbans now.

MR. FOX: Tell us about the Reform Party, Doug.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. MAIN: Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court has said in effect that you can't use the fundamental freedoms that are available in this country to attack other people. Whether they're individuals or religious groups or minorities, you can't launch vicious, false attacks on people in that manner. For Albertans who have found themselves the victims of those kinds of attacks, the ruling from the Supreme Court yesterday I would expect would be some considerable comfort. More to the point, for those people who tend to launch these kinds of attacks, one would hope that this Supreme Court ruling would act as a bit of

a deterrent and we'll begin to see a decline, because it has been a difficult time over the past period without a substantial law in place that was reaffirmed to keep the tone of some of these comments down.

So, Mr. Speaker, myself as the minister responsible for the Multiculturalism Commission and, I'm sure, the chairman applaud this ruling. It'll make our efforts a great deal easier.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, I have press releases from the B'nai Brith of Canada, the Canadian Jewish Congress, and the Calgary Jewish community outlining their response to this decision, yet the decision will not by itself end racism and discrimination in our society. Can the minister respond to these comments, and what will the government do in response to this? People are saying that government should do more, and I would like a response from the minister in regards to this.

MR. MAIN: Mr. Speaker, the comments have often been made that this is the responsibility of government: "Why don't you do something? Why don't you prosecute? Why don't you launch a campaign? Why don't you launch a program? Why don't you stop these people? Why can't you make them stop?" It's not possible to legislate against people's feelings. You can't force people to like one another, but you can attempt to create an atmosphere in which people respond to each other. I quote from the remarks of the Calgary Jewish Community Council because I think it's good advice. They say that this ruling should not be viewed as an invitation to seek legal recourse. For each and every negative comment or incident of discrimination, the burden is upon us as Canadians and members of this society to deal with racism and discrimination within our midst on a social level. Mr. Speaker, that's a statement with which I agree. It's one with which the government concurs, and with that kind of an attitude the government will be able to play a continuing role in providing leadership in this area, not only leading our nation but perhaps the world in fostering an atmosphere in which diversity is not only appreciated and encouraged but is, in fact, celebrated.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Social Policy Reform

MS MJOLNESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have thousands of children in Alberta who are living in poverty, and as Christmas draws near, we are reminded of just how difficult life is for these children. The recent meagre increases in the rates which this government gave to social allowance recipients do not begin to address the serious problems that children have growing up in poverty, who clearly do not have the opportunities that other children have. In fact, the government's only response to the needs of these children in the social reform package was to cut their recreational allowance in half. My questions are to the Premier because I believe he is ultimately responsible for these families and their children. In view of the fact that recreation is part of a child's healthy development, how does the Premier justify to these families that \$9 a month is enough to cover their children's recreational needs?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the Associate Minister of Family and Social Services deals with this matter and will reply for the hon. member.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The associate minister.

MR. BRASSARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we all know, the reforms that have been introduced in this last round of discussions cover a great variety of services to these families. It is true that recreation is one of the main considerations in a healthy family, but it is not the only consideration. We are addressing all of the concerns, we believe, most adequately.

MS MJOLNESS: Mr. Speaker, people receiving social assistance and AISH have waited for an increase which in no way was adequate enough, and they waited for years for the increase. In view of the fact that the increase to the food allowance still does not cover the price of infant formula and thousands of children are still being fed by the 30 food banks throughout this province, will the associate minister at least, at the very minimum, commit today to an annual cost of living increase to the rates of social assistance and to the AISH program?

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to be able to respond to the Member for Edmonton-Calder and welcome the opportunity of being able to talk about some very progressive welfare reforms that have been introduced in this province as of late. I'd again point out to the member that these changes were the effort not only of this government but of a great many Albertans who participated in the process and helped us with some good, sound advice and direction and leadership as it relates to these changes. I understand that the recreation allowance was brought up, and I'd want to say what a progressive change that was. The member perhaps wouldn't know that up until this point only about 25 percent of the caseload were able to access the recreation allowance. What we've done is that we've taken that recreation allowance and made it an ongoing benefit for all those that are entitled, not something they have to apply for, not something they have to appeal for, but something they're going to receive month after month after month.

Mr. Speaker, again I can only say that these reforms have been well thought through, they're well supported by Albertans, and we look forward to an exciting 1991 as we progress with these changes and as we see Albertans and clients respond in a very positive way.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Pulp Mill Technology

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In defending the construction of bleached kraft pulp mills and their organochlorine effluent pollution, this government argues that bleached kraft pulp creates a particularly high-quality paper for which there is no substitute and for which there is a very special market demand. On the other hand, Louisiana-Pacific Ltd., the zero-effluent pulp company at Chetwynd, B.C., claims that in fact its product is exactly interchangeable with bleached kraft pulp paper. Moreover, in 1989 Daishowa, while building a \$500 million bleached kraft pulp plant here in Alberta – and get this – at that time was proposing a non bleached kraft mill for Coos Bay, Oregon. Funnily enough, Daishowa doesn't have that concern with that special market demand. Has the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife had the presence of mind to confirm the claims of Louisiana-Pacific about its product being interchangeable with the Daishowa product, or is he going to

proceed with Al-Pac without having done that very basic research?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, the research on the pulp markets around the world would indicate that there are markets for both. There are lots of claims being made on both sides. We've looked at it very closely ourselves. The hon. member asking the question maybe should do a little more research instead of believing everything he reads in the newspapers.

MR. MITCHELL: Well, if there's demand for both, why does B.C. meet the demand that doesn't pollute and we meet the demand that does pollute?

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: could the minister tell us why it is that Daishowa would be allowed to build a bleached kraft pulp mill here in Alberta at exactly the same time that it is proposing a non bleached kraft pulp mill for Coos Bay, Oregon?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, to give the hon. member a little lesson in the real world, the real world is that there are different kinds of trees; there are different kinds of wood; there are different kinds of paper. We have also announced recently CTMP mills in Alberta at the same time as bleached kraft mills. They're a different resource, a different utilization, to meet a different end use.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Highwood.

10:40 Eastern Slopes Flood Forecasting

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good news comes from the Department of Tourism, which indicates some of the best snow conditions in the eastern Rockies on record. Sunshine has indicated that the snow conditions are just superb. So we have some of the heaviest snowfalls in the eastern Rockies for many, many years. My question, then, is to the Minister of the Environment. In light of last year's so-called 1 in 10 year floods, there is a strong possibility of a 1 in 25 or perhaps even a 1 in 100 year flood in rivers such as the Highwood River and the Sheep River. Can the minister assure the people of Alberta and the people of Highwood that proper monitoring of this snowfall will be carried out throughout this winter and spring?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of the Environment.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, the Department of the Environment has had in place for some time a river forecast centre. Essentially this centre monitors consistently the snow-packs in the mountains, makes estimations of runoff throughout the spring, and virtually is in a position to advise people at a moment's notice of any flood danger. As a matter of fact, this is something that has been ongoing for some time. We're able with this monitoring equipment to advise people very early that floods might occur and to take appropriate measures in conjunction with Public Works, Supply and Services.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My supplementary is again to the Minister of the Environment with perhaps the minister responsible for disaster assistance adding supplementary information. What protective measures, then, has your department

worked on and prepared for a possible 1 in 25 year flood for the coming spring?

MR. KLEIN: Throughout the province there are numerous programs that relate to flood control. There are various channelization programs; there are various diversion programs. There's one, indeed, on the Highwood River that is the subject now of an environmental impact assessment with respect to the widening and the upgrading of that diversion. There are numerous dams throughout the province. All of these actions are designed to control floods and to minimize the damage that could come about as a result of heavy snowpacks, rain, and other factors that contribute to flooding.

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

Court Caseloads

MR. PASHAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On November 29 in this Assembly the Attorney General denied that there were serious delays in the court system of the province. In fact, he defied me to show something different. Well, he has his own government's report that shows that the volume of court cases in this province has increased by 50 percent overall in the past four years and by nearly 100 percent in youth court. Also, I have with me a stack of other documents that would support my charge. Apparently, most Crown prosecutors, defence lawyers, and judges in the city of Calgary also disagree with the minister. My question is: given that in Calgary these year-long waits are resulting in numerous applications to have charges dismissed on grounds of unreasonable delay, will the Attorney General now concede that there is a serious problem and tell this Assembly what he intends to do about it?

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, I'd be pleased to receive the documents that the hon. member is waving about and ask that he perhaps table them. In my comments before I said that we have some stress points in our justice system. We do not have a serious crisis in this justice system. Our court delays are the envy of every other jurisdiction. Sure, there are instances – and probably one that the hon. Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn could bring forward – where a defence counsel can't meet at an appropriate time and you jockey back and forth and you have something delayed for a year. That's not the fault of the system. I am delighted with the statistics the hon. member is putting forward. Once he's tabled them, perhaps they'll help me with my Treasury Board representation as well.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Supplemental question.

MR. PASHAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, these delays are causing a lot of suffering for a lot of people in the province. How does the minister justify the fact that in Calgary, because of the delay caused by this jam in the courts, a Calgary mother whose children were seized by welfare authorities in October and whose children are suffering from not being with their mother can't even get before a judge until next September?

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, again, if the hon. member would like to table the details of that specific case, I'd be delighted to look at the details from our side and give him an answer. The justice system, as I mentioned, has some stress points which we are addressing. We have a resourcing study under way; we're

getting parts of that together. I have representations before the Treasury Board to do some of this. I think anyone that wants to grandstand, be it an MLA, be it a lawyer, be it a judge or anything, to try and paint a crisis is not doing the system any justice. By working together, we can have and continue to have the best justice system in Canada.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House.

Sheep-feeding Industry

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we all know the very difficult situation that agriculture is in in all of Canada. In Alberta many farmers have diversified, and of course we have many support and insurance type programs. However, one very important, albeit small, sector has been omitted from the tripartite red meat stabilization program. To the Minister of Agriculture: why is it that this sector has been omitted?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member is referring to is the feedlot component of the sheep industry. The sheep industry across Canada currently enjoys one tripartite program. Our producers in Alberta, who are developing a different and, I would say, a more advanced industry than the balance in Canada, have been lobbying for some time to get a tripartite component for the feeder of lambs. At this point in time we've received no support from any other provinces, and hence it's been turned down at the federal/provincial committee level.

MR. LUND: Well, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if it wouldn't be possible for the province of Alberta to work with the federal government, even though the other provinces may not want to participate, to work out some type of program for these people.

MR. ISLEY: That is a matter that is being explored. The other matter that is being explored is a proposal that the industry has in front of us to begin with two participants in the program as opposed to three, which would mean the province of Alberta and the producers developing a program of their own that could eventually fit into the tripartite system. Those possibilities are currently under consideration.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore.

Family Violence

MS M. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the minister of social services. Women's emergency shelters spend a lot of their time fund-raising because the province funds only 80 percent of the cost of a person's basic needs while she is in the shelter and the shelter has to raise the other 20 percent of the cost from their community. This underfunding clearly displays that sheltering women is not a government priority, because in contrast the full cost of keeping people in prison is paid by the government. To the Minister of Family and Social Services: will the minister commit today to providing 100 percent core funding to women's shelters in this province?

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to listen to the member opposite saying "only 80 percent." I would say this again: our funding has increased substantively in recent years. We've talked about that on many occasions in this Assembly. The formula that we have in place today is a formula based on

a model that was established between the Department of Family and Social Services and the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters. It's there to provide funding for their very basic needs. We're very fortunate that as a result of the commitment that individual women's shelters bring forward, some of them are able to provide services beyond the basic level that's required. I don't think it's unreasonable for communities to be able to respond along with the provincial government and other concerned Albertans. Again, our funding has increased substantively. We've clearly made it a high priority from a governmental perspective. We're not happy about the amount of family violence and family abuse in society today, but we're doing everything we can, and we know there's an awful lot of caring Albertans out there that are prepared to share those responsibilities with us.

10:50

MS M. LAING: Mr. Speaker, the Council of Women's Shelters wants 100 percent core funding, and communities want to give money for treatment, not essential services.

Mr. Speaker, in Grande Prairie a successful treatment program for men who batter their partners is continually having to shut down because this government refuses to commit funds to operate it. We all know that violence will not stop unless the batterer is treated, yet no government department will take responsibility for funding this important preventative program. My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier today prove his commitment to healthy family life in this province by assigning the responsibility for treating men who batter to one government department and directing that that department fund the programs consistently and on an ongoing basis?

MR. GETTY: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Family and Social Services may well want to augment my reply, but he has just given the hon. member the government's position and the wonderful and terrific job that's being done in the area of support in this unfortunate matter in Alberta, in Canada, and in the world. The minister may well want to augment my answer.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: No?

Could there be unanimous consent to revert to Introduction of Special Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife.

head: Introduction of Special Guests (reversion)

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me today on behalf of the hon. Member for Sherwood Park to introduce to you students from the Wes Hosford elementary school and teachers and parents. The teachers are Mrs. Marilyn Macyk, Mr. Colin Sturdy, Mrs. Maggie Carr, and Mrs. Gwen Allison. They're accompanied today by parents Mrs. Carol Portas, Mrs. Debbie Mohn, Mr. Randie James, Mrs. Gwen Lyle, Mrs. Laura Andre, and Mrs. Flo Zawalek, and Bev Clark is along with them as well. They're in both galleries, I believe, if they're still here, and I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services.

MR. KOWALSKI: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the constituency of Barrhead there is one community school, Muir Lake community school. The school is located in a geographic position in the constituency where the children who attend the school come from three different constituencies. So on behalf of my colleagues the MLA for Stony Plain and the MLA for Westlock-Sturgeon, I would like to welcome to this Assembly 34 young people from Muir Lake community school. They're in the public gallery, and they're accompanied by three teachers Mrs. McCormick, Mrs. Bernardin, and Mr. Sleeman. I would ask our guests to rise and receive the warm welcome of all members of the Assembly.

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have had two groups with us this morning. Some of them have come and gone, but for the record it's a pleasure to introduce a group of students from Leduc Christian Academy, located in my constituency. There are 16 students from grades 7 to 9, and they were seated, I believe, in the members' gallery. If they're still there, I'd ask them to rise.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce 44 students from the Broxton Park school in the city of Spruce Grove, which is in the constituency of Stony Plain. They are accompanied by their teachers Dianne McLean, Tony Esposito, and Elaine Henry. I'd ask them all to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Point of Order Citing Documents

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order coming out of question period. During question period the Minister of the Environment stated that every pulp mill in Alberta was meeting a standard of 1.5 kilograms per air-dried tonne of organic chloride material. Now, the minister is probably aware, or should be, that Procter & Gamble has to meet no standard . . . [interjections] I'm under *Beauchesne* 495. Look it up.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Order, order.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. [interjections] Order please. Order.

The Chair missed the hon. member's reference to *Beauchesne*.

MR. McINNIS: *Beauchesne* 495.

Procter & Gamble meets no standard for AOX until the end of this year, and even then it's three kilograms per air-dried tonne on a monthly basis and six kilograms per day. I would like to table an excerpt from the . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Order, order.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. Order. [interjections] Order.

MR. FOX: Tell them this isn't the House of Commons, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: It's beginning to look like it.

The hon. member cites 495, which is Documents Cited. I don't recall the hon. Minister of the Environment citing a document in his reference to . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: He didn't.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, I have the document here, which I would like to table. Also, there are documents involved, [interjections]

I'm having difficulty being heard, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. The Chair does not believe that the hon. member has substantiated a point.

MR. McINNIS: Well, how can you hear me? [interjections]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. Order please. The Chair still does not believe that the hon. member – if the hon. member can come quickly to his point of order instead of making a speech, the Chair will entertain it. Otherwise, the Chair will not entertain this point of order.

MR. McINNIS: I appreciate the Chair has trouble hearing. I'll try to speak as loudly as I can.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Order, order.

MR. McINNIS: The document that was tabled . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. [interjections] Order please. The hon. member has lost his chance to pursue this point of order because he refuses to come directly to the point of order.

Orders of the Day. [interjections] Order please.

MR. McEACHERN: How can you rule if you don't hear what he's saying?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please.

The Chair gave the hon. member the chance to come to his point of order quickly. He did not choose to accept that invitation; therefore, this point of order is closed. There is no point of order.

MR. MARTIN: On a point of order.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, citation on this point of order?

MR. MARTIN: My point of order is simply this, Mr. Speaker . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Quickly. The Chair asked the hon. Leader of the Opposition for his citation.

MR. MARTIN: *Beauchesne* 422.

Now, Mr. Speaker . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: And how does 422 relate to this point of order?

MR. MARTIN: All we're trying to do is tell you you couldn't hear it through the yelling. He has a document . . . [interjections]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Leader of the Opposition knows there is no point of order on a point of order. [interjections] Order please. This matter is closed. The Chair has called Orders of the Day, and we will proceed with Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

head: **Government Bills and Orders** **Third Reading**

Bill 57

Electoral Boundaries Commission Act

MR. ROSTAD: Mr. Speaker, I move third reading of Bill 57, Electoral Boundaries Commission Act.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Question. All those in favour of the motion?

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Pam is standing. It's hard to tell.

AN HON. MEMBER: Get on the chair, Pam.

[Ms Barrett stood on her chair]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Oh, sorry. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: I'm glad I got your attention, Mr. Speaker. Before I get into the debate on this motion, I've got to tell you that my worst dream is that after the Electoral Boundaries Commission is struck, they're going to rename Edmonton-Highlands Edmonton-Shortlands. [laughter]

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker, this is sort of like crying over spilt milk, I suppose. I will make my comments very brief. I was a member of the committee that went around the province and contemplated the old provisions of the electoral boundaries and what I thought was going to be, in light of the provisions of the Constitution, the Charter of Rights, the concept that is embodied therein that confirms the right to equality for all citizens of Canada. In fact, it goes beyond that: all residents of Canada.

11:00

I must say I'm extremely disappointed that through the course of the deliberations the mind-set that came to dominate was that voter equality was less important than convenience to MLAs. That is what it amounts to. I recognize that people who have to travel a great distance between the capital and their home riding have an extra burden in that regard, but I also recognize that the Members' Services Committee, of which I am also a member, has gone out of its way to allow members to charter flights into remote constituencies. I would not be surprised if it is petitioned to do so in an increasing number of constituencies, and I for one will continue to cast my vote yes. I for one will continue to cast my ballot yes when it comes to the request for high technology to facilitate MLAs whose ridings are geographically large and demanding as a result of sparse

populations.

But you see, my vote is consistent with my vote in this matter. If I am willing and the New Democrat caucus is willing to go out of our way to accommodate the needs of members whose ridings are remote, whose ridings are geographically difficult, lengthy, and sparsely populated, then I say that their problems are to some degree accommodated by our goodwill. It is no excuse that the principle of equality under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is being expended and short shifted in the context of accommodating convenience for members.

The issue here is votes. If you have a person representing a riding that has half the number of people of another person representing a riding that has twice the number of people – and believe me, that scenario is not far off the mark – what you have in the first instance is people who have twice as much voting power. Remember, that is ultimately what we are elected to do: to vote on policy, to vote on legislation, and to vote on the expenditure of money. It is not fair that there shall be such gross discrepancies in those votes as there will be under the provisions of this Bill. This has nothing to do with convenience of MLAs. I believe I would say that as strongly and as emotionally if I represented the riding of Cardston or if I represented the riding of Peace River, knowing full well, as I do – because I don't fly, I drive to all those locations – how difficult it is to get around this province. For heaven's sake, I also know full well how difficult it is to get around to Hannah in the riding of Chinook. I am well aware of that. Voter equality should not be expended for the convenience of MLAs who are supposed to be the servants of the people when you have a committee, which we do have, a standing committee of this Assembly, which has bent over backwards to accommodate the needs of MLAs who represent remote ridings with sparse populations.

I regret deeply that the committee reading of this Bill did not accommodate and support the one small provision that would have made this Bill so much better, and that was the provision that the commission shall keep in mind the desirability of achieving voter equality. That was all it would need to do. That is the primary remedy necessary. That was not supported. I believe you will find unanimity between members of the New Democrat caucus in our vote on this Bill. We know it has to get through, and it will get through, but you will find that members of our caucus, whether they represent an Edmonton riding or a distant, mountainous, sparsely-populated riding, will almost certainly be voting no for third reading of this Bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Prior to proceeding to the next speaker, could we revert briefly to Introduction of Special Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Edmonton-Belmont.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly, I am pleased to introduce 23 individuals from the settlement language program. They're seated in the public gallery at the moment. They are accompanied by their teachers Joan McKenzie and Linda Draginda. I'd ask them to rise and receive the usual warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Third Reading

Bill 57
Electoral Boundaries Commission Act
(continued)

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

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to speak just very briefly on this to reinforce a number of the comments that have been made by the leader of the Liberal Party and by the Member for Calgary-North West. After months of study and of hearings across this province, I suppose our fears have been realized in this Bill. The Bill is flawed, and I think we've made that very clear in our remarks. The process, too, was a curious one, and it has become more and more evident as we have moved through the debate that the decisions were made in advance of or certainly in my view exclusive of the process of the hearings.

Mr. Speaker, I have to relate back to what the main object of the entire exercise is intended to be, and that is to produce voter equality. I suggest to you that this is not achieved. This is the driving principle behind the establishment of this all-party committee and the Bill and, hopefully, the work of the commission. We cannot guarantee that electoral divisions will all have the same quality of representation. That is their choice. But it is our responsibility as far as possible to ensure that there is equality for the voter, that there is voter equality from one electoral division to another. This has been challenged in British Columbia, as we know, and we have in this particular Bill attempted to adhere to the British Columbia decision.

Mr. Speaker, the Alberta geography, which has given rise to many of the comments and presumably is the excuse given for the rather curious, as I mentioned, parts of the Bill, is no mystery. This is not unique to Alberta. Other provinces in this country have the same kinds of difficulties in achieving voter equality. It's not a mystery at all. The sparse population in certain electoral divisions is common right across our country. There are great distances. No question; there are hardships to those members who represent those very large electoral divisions a long distance from the capital, and I sympathize with those. But, of course, as has also been mentioned, that cuts both ways. Those of us who represent electoral divisions with large, concentrated populations have an easier time making contact with our constituencies; however, we also have more of the problems. The size is greater. The quantity is greater to deal with. It cuts both ways.

Mr. Speaker, I have supported and will continue to support without equivocation those things that are necessary to make the representation of people in those electoral divisions where the population is widespread – to make their work easier, to make it efficient, to make it effective. My sympathy goes out to them. I understand their difficulties. I believe this House is prepared to supply all the kinds of new technology, new communications techniques, transportation, extra allowances, extra offices, whatever is necessary, to make it possible for them to serve their constituencies in the very best way. I think members of this House are prepared to go along with that. So while I understand the problems of geography, I do not think they're insurmountable, and I do not believe that this Bill in any way really deals with or resolves those problems.

11:10

Well, what does the Bill promote? It promotes essentially three kinds of electoral divisions: the multimunicipality, the single municipality, and the kind of division referred to in 17(2), the special needs municipality, of which there may be four. Now, in the report that the committee gave to us earlier – I have one major question that doesn't appear ever to have been answered – it isn't evident to me that anyone in any of the submissions ever suggested these particular moves. I don't have any evidence that these three kinds of municipalities with their respective descriptions are in fact supported by any of the submissions that were made to the committee. Where did they come from? They were manufactured. They came from someplace. They're someone's brainchild.

Mr. Speaker, I have to ask myself why we now need a commission. This Bill is very directive, is very specific. Our amendments and the amendments of the New Democratic Party have attempted to make it less confining for the commission, to allow the commission to do in a responsible fashion what they are expected by the electorate to do. But the Bill itself is very, very confining and very directive.

Will the decisions of the B.C. court be met? Yes, I suppose in the way the Bill is constructed, they can be met in the very, very narrow sense of the word. But, Mr. Speaker, I submit to you that with the curve that exists with the plus 25 percent and the minus 25 percent, very few people are going to be in the average. Very few electoral divisions will find themselves at the average point. They are all going to be either at the far end of the spectrum, plus 25 percent, or at minus 25 percent. I further suggest that that does not conform to the intent of the B.C. directive.

It appears to me, Mr. Speaker, that what we have now done is create a Bill that leaves us with circumstances where a computer can finish the job. The Bill is very precise; it tells us exactly what electoral divisions fall in one category or the other. I think the report is clearly a political report done by a political committee with political type hearings. Now we can just turn it over to a computer. The numbers and the various things can be punched in, and a computer can spit out the boundaries. In fact, I think this committee has constrained the work of the commission. The commission itself I believe to be flawed in its makeup, but more importantly I think we have tied the hands of the commission by the legislation that's created here. The commission then cannot be as objective as it ought to be, it can't be as practical as it ought to be, and its decisions are going to be constrained by a political piece of legislation. It therefore, in my view, cannot with certainty achieve that driving principle that I think started this whole process in the first place, which is the principle of voter equality.

Mr. Speaker, I suggest to you that this is a shabby Bill and that it's flawed. I am glad and pleased that the government has agreed that it should go to court and be tested. I believe it will lead to further court challenges. I must say that I'm very disappointed in the process and that the Liberal caucus does not support Bill 57.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for Three Hills.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a very few observations on third reading of this Bill, because I realize that according to custom we don't normally get into major debate. We've had many, many hours of representation by most hon.

members in the House, and I think that was very appropriate given the seriousness of this Bill.

My observation is about the term "voter equality," because I think that's the term I have heard used most often in the Legislature over the last several weeks and in reading *Hansard* when I wasn't present. I think it's important for all of us to talk about what voter equality means, and I want to make these observations bearing in mind that I represent the Three Hills constituency. It is a large rural area and fairly accessible in terms of all manner of transportation; also, very importantly to me, very proudly the home of the triple E. The triple E was born in the Three Hills constituency. So that provides, I think, some understanding for where my people have come from. Voter equality for them means their ability to influence the democratic system in terms of their opinion. They personally want to influence the system.

Now, how do they do that? I remember sitting here listening to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore talk about telephones being available to everyone. I think most of us in the Legislature are aware that when we communicate with people, we want to do it in important matters on a face-to-face basis. Face-to-face there are words, there is body language, any number of things that influence that communication. So I guess I would observe that for people in larger geographic areas to communicate face-to-face, they obviously can't do it on the telephone. It is impossible. It is not because we're looking for an easy road for the MLA.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has mentioned that somehow we are trying to make it easier for MLAs to do this representation. I'd say it's precisely the opposite. We are trying to facilitate the citizens of Alberta, their ability to get in touch with their MLA, and we can't unless we have a jet helicopter. Again, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar may say that their caucus would advocate an absolutely bottomless pit in terms of dollars. I would love to have a jet helicopter at my disposal to swish around the Three Hills constituency at a moment's notice when I get that heartrending call from somebody who wants to see me almost now. I can't get to every corner of that constituency when it is "now." When somebody has a crisis, they don't say, "Well, I will see you in your constituency office," when you are trying to make it convenient for everybody to come and see you. That is not what they want. They want to be able to see their MLA. How can they do that? Is everybody equal in Alberta in terms of being able to drive 50 miles or 100 miles now to get to where their MLA is? It is impossible, Mr. Speaker, I submit, for there to be equality based on numbers only. That equality for all of us here represents the citizens' ability to access their MLA, not the MLA's ability to access their citizens.

So I hope we will think very, very hard and give second thoughts for those who have voiced major concerns about voter equality. Especially for the Member for Edmonton-Avonmore, who advocated using the telephone: I would hope the hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore would realize, given her training, that she is not going to get the sense and the heartfelt feelings from her constituent over the telephone. They have a right to see us face-to-face, and in order to do that, the boundaries commission, I believe, has had some flexible rules given in order to perform their task. They can't do it by computer. Once again, people in Alberta are not numbers. They are thinking, feeling human beings that want to hear from people face-to-face, whether it's their MLA or the boundaries commission that is going to influence how it is that they are represented. I would hope that all hon. members, especially those who

have had grave concerns, would seriously rethink their opposition to the Bill based on voter equality. Please think about what real voter equality means.

11:20

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Prior to proceeding to the next speaker, could we have the Assembly's unanimous consent to revert briefly to the introduction of guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

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

MR. EWASIUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Assembly. I have the pleasure this morning of introducing to you and to members of the Assembly 23 guests from the settlement language program which is taking place in the constituency of Edmonton-Beverly. They are accompanied this morning by their instructors Joan McKenzie and Linda Draginda. I'd ask them to rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Government Bills and Orders** **Third Reading**

Bill 57 **Electoral Boundaries Commission Act** (*continued*)

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

MR. GIBEAULT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to rise on this third reading debate of Bill 57 to indicate my grave disappointment with the government submitting this for us and asking us to support a Bill which in my opinion and in the opinion of many people will not survive any basic judicial review of fairness. It disturbs me that so many of the members from the government side keep talking about how they want to maintain basically a status quo position of having ridings that have such a disparity between rural and urban areas of the province. That disparity as it is now is gross, from the range of 8,200 voters in a riding like Cardston to over 30,000 in a riding like Edmonton-Mill Woods. I just do not have confidence that this particular Bill 57 is going to improve the situation.

We've got this reference in here to multimunicipality electoral divisions and single-municipality electoral divisions. Really this is nothing more than a rehash of the old rural/urban split that currently exists and that previously existed and is of no usefulness *in* terms of the Electoral Boundaries Commission coming up with 83 constituencies that are divided on an equitable basis of population.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

Now, the provision in the Bill that provides for a variance of 25 percent I would suggest is going to be one of the key provisions that will get this government into a lot of hot water when it goes for a judicial review. I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the admission by the government that it has to submit this Bill to a judicial review is an admission of failure. I'm sure the

government side must know that, having not done this before. At least, in my time as a member of this Assembly I recall that this is the first time a Bill has been submitted by the government for a judicial review. They just don't have confidence in it, and that's easy to see.

We have this provision of 25 percent variance. What has that meant in the past? What it's meant is that the constituencies in urban areas are very much at the high end of that variance and that the ridings in rural areas are very often at the low end of the variance scale. In this case, if we're suggesting 25 percent, what's likely going to happen is that the urban ridings will be that much more above the average and the rural ridings below that, so we'll have a variance in fact of 50 percent. Mr. Speaker, 50 percent: that really is not acceptable, and I don't believe fair-minded Albertans will accept that. We have argued before that a variance of 10 percent would be one that fair-minded citizens would accept much more, because even at 10 percent we're still looking at 10 percent above the average and 10 percent below, so within that 10 it's still really a 20 percent variance, which would allow for the various factors that have to be considered in remote and disparate constituencies.

My other colleagues have talked about the kind of resources that already exist for those MLAs that serve the rural and remote constituencies and how we're prepared to look at even more if that's necessary. We have to recognize the new technological developments and so on, developments that have made communications much easier than in years past. So to argue that that constitutes a reason for making a gross unfairness in the electoral boundaries of the province is simply not acceptable.

Then, of course, we take a look at the population of electoral divisions in section 17 of this particular Act, and there are all these particular criteria that have been established. These again, Mr. Speaker, are very strange. We've got, as we've mentioned in earlier debate, very vague kinds of provisions that the Electoral Boundaries Commission is somehow going to have to consider: whether or not a higher population requirement "would significantly and negatively affect the community of interests of the inhabitants of the proposed electoral division." Well, how is anybody going to judge that?

I just don't have confidence that with this process we're going to end up with electoral boundaries that are going to be fair for all Albertans. That's what we're asking for. We're not asking for special favours for urban Albertans; we're just asking for fairness for all Albertans. The best way to do that is to say that we're going to have 83 constituencies; we'll divide the population equally and equitably; we'll accept a variance in the neighbourhood of 10 percent to allow for the legitimate factors that can be involved in dividing constituency boundaries. Then we end up with a Legislative Assembly that truly represents the population of Alberta as it exists today.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I am not going to vote for Bill 57 on third reading and neither are my colleagues, because it is simply unfair to the people of the province of Alberta.

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

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to make a final comment or two on Bill 57 as we go through third reading. Much has been said about this issue over the past year and a half that the government has been dealing with it. The committee has made quite a considerable personal sacrifice in

traveling the province on behalf of all of us, and I want to say that I appreciate that and I think most Albertans do.

Unfortunately, we can't say quite the same for the outcome of the process, and that is a shame. I think that the Assembly has the ability to initiate a process for determining boundaries which is fair to urban and rural voters and which will withstand any potential challenge under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I think this effort before us in Bill 57 fails on both counts. I think it fails on the count of being fair to every Albertan, because it's not. It introduces a host of factors that ought to be irrelevant in the determination of electoral boundaries, and it stretches the population base of electoral districts beyond what can be considered fair and reasonable.

Secondly, as I said, I believe it will fail the test of the Charter ultimately. Madam Justice McLachlin was speaking for the court when she said that population has to be the basis for drawing electoral boundaries. That has to be the base that underlies and underscores the entire system. She says that a modest deviation from the principle of equality is acceptable in Canada, and she dubbed that concept "relative equality." That's a Canadian concept going back to the days of Sir John A. Macdonald, and it reflects that things other than population are in the legislation. We don't have any quarrel with doing that, and we don't have any quarrel with that probably meaning having some smaller electoral districts in what would usually be sparsely populated areas.

But the problem we have is that the government brought in two sets of variations. They brought in one set which deals with a list of quotas that were put forward in the legislation in sections 14 and 15, which are drawn on political lines, on lines that somebody thinks will give them a partisan advantage. That's where the variation was put, and the government is giving to the commission a very ironclad instruction on how that's to take place dealing with all the urban areas of the province.

11:30

Then they were left with not having dealt with the serious problems that were to be faced in the first place: the problems of geography, regional problems that have to be worked through in the process. So they had to invent a second category under section 17, what I call the pocket boroughs, the much smaller districts which are intended, one presumes, to deal with the things that should have been dealt with by the commission using their concept of fairness, using the Charter, using the legislation, the jurisprudence, and all the rest of it.

Now, the government thought it might temper some of these concerns by directing that the commission give due consideration to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I have to say that that amendment indicates the bankruptcy of the government's position from an intellectual point of view, because everybody's bound by the Charter. You don't have to pass a law saying that this commission is bound by the Charter. The Charter is within the Constitution of our country. You know, it's not open to any appointed body to override the Charter. This Legislative Assembly can override the Charter under the provisions of our Constitution, but it can do so only by putting in a notwithstanding clause, and that clause is valid for only five years and then it would have to come back to the Assembly again. But nowhere is it written that any electoral boundaries commission could override the Charter. To insert that clause in this legislation at the stage it came is perhaps a deathbed repentance, but I think it will amount to nothing in terms of the law and legislation because the Charter does bind us one and all, including the commission. So I believe the government has gone

too far in its effort to try to make a more palatable map, I suppose one that resembles, in very many respects, the status quo.

That takes us to a what-if question. I think it is appropriate at third reading to speculate as to what will happen if the courts rule that this legislation offends the Charter. Where will we be then? Well, we will have wasted two years in the process rather than the one year and nine months that have been wasted to date. Then it will be very difficult to come back and do the job correctly. I hope at that time the government will look at the amendments put forward by the Official Opposition, the very positive suggestions on how to clean up this legislation, and get us back on track right away. If they don't, then I think we can only interpret that their objective all along was to maintain the status quo, and if they get it through Bill 57 they're happy or if they get it if Bill 57 is struck down they're happy too. So the government thinks it's a win-win proposition. I'm not sure it's that simple. From a legal point of view and a political point of view I think it's wrong, and that's why I'm opposing third reading of this Bill.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Being a rural member in the caucus for the New Democrats, I'd like to voice my concerns in rejecting Bill 57. I feel that it's a Bill drafted by the government to assure that they hold many of their seats in the Legislature, which are so shaky at this time.

Mr. Speaker, as a rural member for West Yellowhead with almost three-quarters of my riding boundary along the Rocky Mountains and the rest of it along Conservative ridings, I well know how those people are represented. I have some 17,000 voters in my riding, where the riding of Whitecourt has some 13,000. That riding apparently likes to use my office more so than the riding of Whitecourt, thereby causing great strain on the employment and the funds I have available for my constituency. [interjections] It's very obvious, because the member spends most of his time in my riding hand in hand with his friends in the Conservative Party.

Last year in my travels throughout my riding and between the Legislature and work within the riding, Mr. Speaker, I traveled some 96,000 kilometres. The amount of mileage allowed me, because I have no air service, only regular bus service, and the cuts to Via Rail . . . I have no other way to travel but in my own personal vehicle. The miles traveled were somewhere double what I get paid by the Legislative Assembly to do my work in my riding for my constituents. [interjections] Many other members of this Legislature have to use their vehicles to get to their ridings regardless of what party they represent. But on those travels, I travel through four ridings just to get to my riding, like many other members of the Legislature. In keeping track of the hours I spent just in my vehicle – and thanks to a cellular phone; they could have been useless hours – I spent some 1,400 hours in a 12-month period. So rather than the government looking at ways of conniving and gerrymandering to try and hold power in this province, perhaps they should be more reasonable and think about the taxpayers in Alberta who pay their salaries and make sure these ridings are set up in fairness to the taxpayers and not just gerrymander to make sure some of their seats are protected. The ridings are so small for some members of the Legislature that they're able to serve as chairmen of committees, have government vehicles, capitalize on

extra dollars, and in fact collect their pensions while they're driving around this province.

So I think fairness has to be used. My colleague from Edmonton-Jasper Place put it very clearly when suggesting that, based on Madam Justice McLachlin's decision, this Bill will not be supported by a court challenge. I'm sure this Bill will be shot down in the courts, Mr. Speaker, and I will not be supporting it.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to make a few comments in closing on Bill 57. I think I've made most of the comments I would like to make, but there are a few things I would like to say with respect to Bill 57.

In fairness, Bill 57 is an improvement over the Bill we did have in place prior to this one. There is some move towards improving the equality of voter representation in the Legislature. You know, Mr. Speaker, there's more to representing your voters than simply getting to them or them getting to you. The part we haven't heard much about is the number of people that get to stand up in this Legislative Assembly and vote on behalf of their constituents, because what ends up happening is that a group of people are represented by their MLA and that MLA comes in here and tries to represent his or her constituents in the best way possible. Unfortunately we don't have voter equality right now, and although this Bill is an improvement, I think the major problem with it is that it's going to perpetuate that inequality and there will be inequalities in voter representation.

As I said, there are some highlights, some improvements in this Bill, and I want to mention them. I think one thing that is an improvement is that it eliminates two terms that are very, very contentious, have been very contentious, and that is urban/rural. I think the concepts of single municipality, multi-municipality are terms that are appropriate; they really do describe the nature of the constituencies, and I think that is an improvement. It's a small point perhaps, but I think it is a change from what we've had there.

There is an improvement in the makeup of the commission from the point of view that there are no current sitting MLAs, and that's a first in this province. In the past we've had current sitting MLAs as part of the commission, and I think removal of those members is an improvement. I'm still not satisfied with the commission makeup as proposed here, because there is still the partisan nature there. But I think, Mr. Speaker, we are seeing an improvement with respect to the makeup of the commission, both by the removal of MLAs and also in the small size. Reduction from seven down to five members will be an improvement and will in fact expedite the process. Those are the things that I thought were pretty good.

There are a lot of things, Mr. Speaker, that I think unfortunately are not appropriate in this Bill and are really not appropriate for this province. I think the length of time between redistributions that could elapse here is really a concern. It's a concern of mine. I know it's a concern of members of the New Democrat caucus as well. I think we really want to be representing the people as best we can, and I'm not sure that what is being proposed here is really in their best interests.

11:40

The argument we've heard many, many times both in this Legislature and in the committee, in travels around the province, is: you know, we urban guys can walk across our constituencies

in 10 or 15 minutes or drive across them in 10 or 15 minutes. Well, that's true, Mr. Speaker. But if I just drive across my constituency in 10 or 15 minutes, I really haven't represented any of them at all. I've heard from a great number of rural MLAs and a great number of rural residents that a lot of distance between homes and a lot of distance between towns, a whole lot of space between one house to the next is a concern. Even though I don't have that whole lot of space between one house and the next, I've got a whole lot of houses between one house and the next if I look at the same kind of distance. Where a rural MLA may take 10 minutes to drive 10 miles on a highway, if I were to try and cover that distance in terms of the number of homes I've got here, it would take me a heck of a lot longer to get to all those doors than it would take that rural member to drive that distance. So there is inequality, and I think the fact of simply being able to drive across your constituency, the length of time it takes to get across the constituency, quite honestly is a very spurious kind of argument.

I know one of the things MLAs – every MLA regardless of party – will agree with is that the biggest problem with their job is there's not enough hours in the day. I don't think it matters what party you represent. I don't think it matters what town, village, city you represent. Every MLA would love to have more time, because the job we have is getting to see our constituents wherever they may be and whatever their concern may be. If somehow we could write a Bill that would give us more time, I think that's one thing we would all appreciate, but unfortunately we can't do that.

Mr. Speaker, one of the concerns I have with the Bill, in particular sections 14 and 15 to which amendments were proposed, is that it's going to maintain that inequality. One of the things I think people need to know about urban constituencies is that there is a difference between – now we're calling them single municipality, multimunicipality. Many of my constituents don't work in my constituency. Many of them, I would guess the vast majority, probably 90 percent, will travel outside. Some of them will even travel outside the city of Calgary to find their place of employment. I just want to mention one, Joe Couillard. Joe Couillard is the owner of the Fortress ski resort. Now, here's a man who has distance to travel and he wants me to go to his business. I've got to travel that same distance, that distance I keep hearing rural members talking about. So, you know, you've got to cross that distance. You want to go to his place of business. He has concerns about the tourism industry, concerns about the hotel industry. So all these concerns that people claim are not concerns of urban members quite frankly are irrelevant. What has to happen: if he wants me to understand his concerns, then I've got to go to his place of business.

If I have people in the oil and gas industry, I have to leave my constituency; I have to cross town. I have to go out to Turner Valley and talk to people in Turner Valley because they want me to see what's going on out there and see what their concerns are. [interjections] Now, maybe the Member for Calgary-Glenmore doesn't do that sort of thing. Maybe she figures that if the members will come to her constituency office, that's the only time they'll talk to her. But I believe members have to go to their constituents as well as the constituents coming to them, so I try to include that as well. Unfortunately not all members have got that same concern, and I guess we'll see the results of that in the next general election.

One of the concerns I do have, though, is something that is in the Bill. I have a question about it, and I hope one of the government members will answer the question. In particular, it

says in section 18(1), The Commission . . . shall be appointed during the 2nd session of the 22nd Legislature of the Province." Now, Mr. Speaker, I could be wrong, but I think we're rapidly coming to an end of this "2nd session of the 22nd Legislature"; I suspect that end could be in a matter of hours. So my question really is: I haven't heard any announcement that a commission has been or is even imminently being proposed, so . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please, hon. member. Just for the hon. member's information, the Second Session of this Legislature will not end until probably sometime in late February or early March.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you for that clarification, Mr. Speaker.

Nonetheless my concern – and it's something that I think all members of the committee have talked about – is the process of getting this electoral boundaries commission created, getting them in gear, getting them going, looking at maps, and getting the process completed so that the entire redistribution process, including enumerations, boundaries, returning officers, et cetera, et cetera, the whole sequential process, can in fact be completed in time so we can have new boundaries for the next general election, whenever that may be. So I do want to raise that as a concern, because I think we need and want this process to get expedited as quickly as possible.

Mr. Speaker, I guess that sort of wraps up my comments. I'm sure it will be no surprise to anyone that we'll be voting against this Bill. I do not support the Bill as it is currently before us today, and unfortunately we'll have to vote against it. I guess my concern is reflected in the community from the standpoint that there are a couple of court challenges right now, and the courts presumably will look at this piece of legislation once it comes into effect and rule upon its validity, its constitutionality.

I just want to make one quote that I think sort of sums up my concern with respect to this Bill. It's a quote from page 40 of the McLachlin decision. It's just a couple of sentences. Madam Justice McLachlin says:

The right to a high degree of equality of voting power is one of great importance; it is one of the most fundamental freedoms granted by the Charter upon which all the other rights and freedoms guaranteed ultimately depend. Therefore, it cannot lightly be undermined.

I guess, Mr. Speaker, in summing up all my concerns, that really says it. I don't believe this Bill satisfies the concern that Madam Justice McLachlin points out in that quote that I just read . . . So, regretfully, I will have to vote against Bill 57.

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

MRS. BLACK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to stand today in support of Bill 57, but before I start, I'd like to thank our Premier and our government for having the foresight to see that this is a very important issue and for having a select standing committee go throughout this province and listen to the people. I was very pleased to have been a member of that committee. It showed me a side of Alberta that I had not had the privilege or honour to have seen before. As I've said in debate before, I visited locations that quite frankly I'm embarrassed to say I hadn't even heard of before. We heard from the people, and as a result of hearing from the people, our report was prepared and submitted. We had a lot of

deliberations, we reached a lot of consensus, and I think generally we worked very well as a committee. We didn't reach consensus on all issues, but we all had concerns and we all had commitment. We were determined to do what we thought was the best for Alberta and the people of Alberta. I feel that that is reflected in Bill 57.

I won't go over all the details, because they've been dealt with in quite a bit of debate in the Assembly through second reading and through committee. I do think it's unfortunate that not all members participated in second reading and committee, but I guess they'll have to rely on *Hansard* to see what transpired.

I think it's important if you look at just this short session we've held and think of the issues today in Canada and in Alberta, right here in Alberta, things that people are upset about. We've heard about them in this House. The GST: we're all opposed to that. We're all opposed to the closing of CBC; we don't like that. We're opposed to these positions. And why are we opposed to them? Because we don't have full enough representation in Ottawa. It's been held by Quebec and Ontario for how many years? For many years it didn't matter who we sent down to Ottawa; we don't have enough to have any weight in decisions down there. That's why . . . [interjections] Listen; you might learn something. This is something that the people in Alberta have had to face back to the NEP, CBC, GST, you name it, the changes. I mean, it goes all the way through the history of our development in western Canada that because of our lack of population, we have not had a strong enough voice in Ottawa. I'll go back to the nights when many of you, I'm sure, worked very hard for your various parties on federal election campaigns. You put in 62 days of hard, slaving work only to find out that the campaign and the election was over when it hit the Ontario/Manitoba border. It really didn't matter who you sent down, because it was all over but the crying at Ontario-Manitoba.

11:50

Now, the point I'm trying to make is that the triple E Senate came out in this province and was embraced by Albertans. It was a sign of hope that finally we would have a fair voice in central Canada, that we would be heard, that our concerns would be there and listened to. We saw some support develop through the Meech Lake accord talks, and unfortunately they failed. But that doesn't mean that that belief and principle is not still there with Albertans. Albertans really believe they have got to be heard in this country. When we traveled through Alberta, that concept came out very loud and clear. People said to us, "We don't feel that we are going to have fair representation, a fair voice in government, if we stick strictly to representation by population," which is half of the American formula, not the Canadian formula; it doesn't even enter into our Constitution or into our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is very difficult to stand up in a Legislature that has supported the Senatorial Selection Act, taken the lead for years and years to respond to representation in the Senate equal, elected, and effective, actually gone through the process of electing the first Senator in this country and say that only applies when we're dealing with Ottawa but in our own backyard there's a different set of rules, two sets. It would be a little hypocritical to say that I believe in a triple E Senate as long as it applies outside my borders but in my own borders I want the American formula of rep by pop. I won't do that, and I can't do that. I would say that anyone in this House, particularly in this Legislature, that stands up and says that is not being very true and very honest to their own principles and they'd better go home and readdress

them, because that is a principle that Alberta and Albertans uphold. I think you have to do that.

The Member for Calgary-North West, my neighbouring constituency, alluded to a massive improvement in this Bill, and he's absolutely right. I think this Bill is good from the standpoint that it does take the MLAs off the commission. I think it's important to have that happen. In fact, all committee members felt that was important. Now, I cannot agree with the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar who thinks we should have a computer do it . . .

MRS. HEWES: I didn't say we should have a computer do it. I said it could. Might as well.

MRS. BLACK: . . . because it gives me a little bit of concern when you're going to put high-tech communication out in rural Alberta and then have a computer come in and draw lines. I think the next step is going to be a robot sitting somewhere in here and we won't have any people around or any communication with the people.

Anyway, I won't go on about it, but I do feel that if you're fair to Albertans . . . This legislation is fair to all Albertans. It brings us to a point where we are in line with the other provinces and the federal government. It brings us in line where we have recognized the most recent court case. We have brought our legislation up to and in line and in fact even strengthened that position, and for that reason, Mr. Speaker, I fully support Bill 57.

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

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's almost to the day some 16 or perhaps 17 months ago that the committee was struck. It was August 15, 1989, when a motion was passed in the Assembly that struck a committee to go out and take a look at the needs of Albertans in light of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We went out and listened, as you well know, sir, to hundreds of Albertans throughout the province.

But did we do the job? We came back with the committee report that was introduced in the Assembly not three weeks ago. We debated that for a short while, and out of that we have a piece of legislation, Bill 57, that's going to be voted upon today. Did we satisfy the directives of the motion that was passed here August 15, 1989? Well, those who vote in favour of Bill 57 will say that, yes, the committee did its work, and those who vote against Bill 57 will be of the other opinion that no, we didn't do the job; we didn't fully comprehend the importance of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms or how Madam Justice McLachlin, then of the Supreme Court of British Columbia, interpreted the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We tried to look for equality and what we ended up with was some kind of mathematical formula that fits into four different categories. We haven't got, sir, one formula for all Alberta. We have four different formulas, and I'll get to that momentarily.

My colleague from Calgary-Foothills talked about perhaps the hypocrisy of being from Alberta and not supporting the triple E kind of concept. Well, I want to address that for a moment, because indeed throughout the hearings we did hear on many occasions the triple E concept being offered as a solution to our deliberations. Well, you know, if we have elected, effective, and equal representation, which is my understanding of what triple E stands for, we've lost it. We lost it long ago. We lost it long ago because we haven't got equal in Alberta, we obviously

haven't got effective in Alberta, but what we've got is elected. So we've got one of the three Es, but let's look at the other one, the equal part.

In Alberta currently we have more than 10 percent of the federal government caucus coming from Alberta. Who made the decision to introduce the GST? Wasn't that a government Bill? I don't think the Liberal caucus in Ottawa introduced that Bill, and I know the New Democrat caucus in Ottawa didn't introduce that Bill. So there we have more than 10 percent of the governing party federally introducing a Bill.

MR. McINNIS: Wasn't the only Tory opposed to it kicked out of caucus?

MR. SIGURDSON: That's right. The only two Conservatives that were opposed to it were kicked out of the caucus.

Equality? We had more than our share. Alberta had more than their share in that Progressive Conservative federal government caucus and they were ineffective. They were ineffective. That was the problem, and perhaps part of that problem, the genesis of that problem, came from the fact that there's this idea that seems to permeate throughout the Assembly that urban MLAs can walk across their constituencies in 15 minutes while rural MLAs have to drive for a couple of hours to get from one end to the other. Well, if that's the kind of idea, it's no wonder that the majority of the federal Members of Parliament were ineffective in Ottawa. If all they were doing was driving or walking, they were never listening to their constituents. The point that we should be trying to deliver through Bill 57 is that you have an opportunity to listen to your constituents, an opportunity for each and every constituent to come to you and have effective and equal weight when it comes to the deliberations that are made and the votes that are conducted in this Assembly. That's not what we've got now with the current electoral boundaries Act, and that's not what we're going to have when we get Bill 57 passed on to the commission that will redraw boundaries. We're not going to have equal representation. We're already denying that.

12:00

The formula in Bill 57 is a four-formula process, not one formula. If you take a look at Bill 57, even in the two formulae that are admitted to there, where you've got single- and multiple-municipality constituencies, you have to go a little further than that. Take a look at the two largest urban centres in the province, and you've got those two geographical areas designated with 36 seats. Although they have 51 percent of the population, they will only have 43 percent of the representation. That's formula number one. If everything were equitable, if you had absolute equality, which has never been discussed from this side of the House, they will have 17 percent over the average in terms of total population.

Then you've got the other single-municipality constituencies carved out. They will be close to the mean. That's the second one. You've got another 36 constituencies that are multi-municipal constituencies. If you have absolute equality once again in terms of population, you will have the third category, and they will on average be 9 percent below the mean. Then you've got the magic four. That seems to satisfy some but certainly doesn't satisfy me in terms of the criteria that have to be reached in order to fall into the lucky four category. They will be able to fall up to minus 50 percent. That's the fourth category. Not one category of 83 constituencies – go out and draw some boundaries so that you've got relative equality – but

four different categories. There's the criteria, and there is the problem, Mr. Speaker. That's the problem with this: that we haven't given the commission enough latitude to draw boundaries that will be fair and reflective of the Alberta need.

Throughout the entire process of committee hearings in and around Alberta I asked a number of people who proposed that we make no changes if they believed in majority rule. Now, there's a concept that is somewhat akin to democratic rule: majority rule. But do you know, under the proposed formula, if that's what we end up with, even in a two-party system let alone a multiparty system, which is what we have in our province, we could conceivably have less than 30 percent of Albertans having their will imposed upon the remaining 70-plus percent? The majority of the province will not have equal representation. We're not even close to approaching relative equality. That is part of the problem, and that is why I believe, quite frankly, that it is going to be struck down when it gets to the court. It's because we're not even going to be approaching relative equality. You cannot have the will of a third of the province dominating the majority. If you believe in majority rule, it just can't happen.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Clover Bar asks me if I believe in triple E. The fact of the matter is, no, I don't. I never have; I never will. I don't believe that in our country we need to have an upper House. If you want to have that, you've got to add one more E, and that's called expensive, and I don't believe we need it. I think there are other ways to have negotiations between the jurisdictions that we have in our province, but I do not believe in the triple E concept. No, I don't.

Mr. Speaker, I do not believe this Bill will pass the test of the courts. I don't believe it will meet the needs of Albertans. We had representations made throughout the province, and indeed we had many mayors come forward. Part of the problem is that we only have two mayors representing well over a million people, and we counted that as only two representations. It didn't have relative weight. Then we had many other mayors – not all of them but many other mayors – come forward, and we saw that that was 25 or 30 representations, but again no relative weight.

Through this legislation we've adopted the absolute number, not the relative number, which is somewhat ironic, and that's why we have the problems that we've got. It'll be interesting, sir, when this is referred to the courts. I know that all members of the special select committee will be watching with interest for the outcome. I believe that we'll be back again having to entertain matters about electoral boundaries and electoral fairness.

I will not be supporting it at this time.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Cardston.

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to make a couple of observations on Bill 57. I've sat here during all of these speeches waiting patiently, I believe, for someone from the opposition benches, just one member, to deal with the facts. I'm still waiting on one particular one that they're all very well aware of, and it has to do with the Cardston constituency. Each one of them, they and the press, have had a heyday with the Cardston constituency supposedly being the smallest constituency in Alberta. Not true. Each of you know it, specifically those of you who sat on that committee. You know why Cardston constituency was listed in the annual publication as being the

smallest constituency: the Blood Indian reserve, for their own reasons, was not enumerated.

If you choose for the Blood Indian reserve not to have the right to vote, why don't you stand up and say so? I don't choose that. The Cardston constituency is 14th from the smallest in this province under the present electoral boundaries location. Those are the facts of the day, but not one of you would stand up and say that. Each of you used it as the smallest constituency knowing full well that was not the case.

AN HON. MEMBER: That's not true.

MR. ADY: It is true, hon. member. That is exactly the truth. We have 19,515 people in the Cardston constituency, and those natives, every one of them, are people. Every one of them needs to be represented, and this member is anxious to represent them, as opposed to discounting them as not existing. They do exist, and they're people.

I might also say that when the last election was called, although I have no right to give direction to the returning officer, this member did inquire to ensure that polling stations would be set up in a proximity where the people on the Blood reserve could vote. Even though they were not able to put polling stations in some places on the reservation, they were set up so that they could vote. Ironically, some of them did vote, much to the surprise, I suppose, of the members of the opposition. But they're important, they have a right to vote, and they really should be counted. I think that when you're doing your arithmetic from now on, it would serve you well to count the Blood reserve as people.

12:10

I think Bill 57 has been set up to do a very important thing: it's to allocate time. Really all that elected people have to give is time. After that, what they're able to give in the way of talents and ability is up to them as individuals. But this Bill was designed to allocate time. I heard the Member for Calgary-North West talk this morning on that very important thing, and he made that admission: time is what we have to give as MLAs. Then he started to stretch just a little on the time it takes him to get across his constituency versus the time it takes me to get across mine, the time it takes him to get from his constituency to Edmonton versus what it takes me to get here.

I don't care if I drive or fly, it's going to take me five hours if I don't stop to eat or fill up with gas. It takes me five hours to get here. I don't see one constituent during that time. Hon. member, you can be here in 40 minutes from Calgary, 40 minutes on the airbus, and you can do it as many times as you need to in a year, but I can only drive 52 times in a year. I can't get back to my constituency to give them the service that you can give. Hon. member, I cannot, in all honesty and fairness, serve as many people as you can with the time that I'm given in my 24-hour day, the same as you're given a 24-hour day. It just won't work. I've got some 90-odd elected people in my constituency that I have to meet with. On this given day I have three projects from three municipalities sitting on my desk that require my attention. How many municipalities, hon. member, have you got to meet with? I have eight municipalities in my constituency. I have over 90 elected people to serve. I have 350 miles to travel every week.

Hon. member, the equation just doesn't work quite like that. If we're going to give equal opportunity for MLAs to serve, then

I think Bill 57 has addressed that very adequately.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question having been called, on the motion of the hon. the Attorney General, all those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Carried.

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

[Eight minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

12:20

For the motion:

Ady	Gogo	Osterman
Anderson	Hyland	Paszowski
Black	Isley	Rostad
Bogle	Jonson	Severtson
Brassard	Kowalski	Shrake
Calahasen	Lund	Sparrow
Cardinal	Main	Stewart
Clegg	Mirosh	Tannas
Drobot	Moore	Thurber
Elliott	Musgrove	Trynchy
Fischer	Oldring	West
Gesell	Orman	Zarusky
Getty		

Against the motion:

Barrett	Gibeault	Mjolsness
Bruseker	Hewes	Pashak
Decore	Laing, M.	Roberts
Doyle	Martin	Sigurdson
Ewasiuk	McEachern	Taylor
Fox	McInnis	Woloshyn

Totals:	Ayes – 37	Noes – 18
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[Motion carried; Bill 57 read a third time]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before recognizing the hon. Deputy Government House Leader, the Chair would like to wish Godspeed to all hon. members on their journeys back to their constituencies and wish them a happy, merry, and joyous Christmas with their families and their extended families, their constituents.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn in accordance with Government Motion 22, passed by this Assembly on December 10.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:23 p.m.]

